

# Children Young People and Families Improvement update



## EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

February 2024

*“Our vision is that children and young people in Plymouth grow up healthy and happy, safe and able to aspire and achieve; living in resilient families and communities, able to take advantage of a broad range of opportunities. Our aim is that no Plymouth child should find that their life chances are defined or limited by the circumstances of their birth or early childhood experiences. If problems emerge, we will step in and seek to work effectively alongside families to improve outcomes.”*



# High-Level Transformation and Improvement Plan



## One Children's Service Programme;

planned across three key tranches:

- **Tranche 1:** Stabilisation and Firm Foundations (6 months).
- **Tranche 2:** Develop, Sustain and Embed (2 – 3 years) **Getting to good.**
- **Tranche 3:** Confident Delivery and Innovation (3 years plus) **Being outstanding.**

### Stabilisation and Firm Foundations Tranche

The focus of this stage will see the delivery of the CSC Improvement Plan, the SEND improvement Plan, the establishment of the Education Improvement Project, the establishment of the Data, Systems and Digitisation Project and the approval of a 3 year strategy for Children's Services.

### Develop, Sustain and Embed Tranche

This stage will be developed through December and January and will be formed in parallel with the creation of the 3 year strategy for Children's Services.

### Confident Delivery and Innovation Tranche

This stage will be developed through December and January and will be formed in parallel with the creation of the 3 year strategy for Children's Services.



# Stabilisation and Firm Foundations Tranche – Vision and Mission Overview



**PLYMOUTH**  
CITY COUNCIL

## One Children's Service Transformation Programme Vision (A Bright Future)

Children and Young People in Plymouth grow up **healthy and happy, safe and able to aspire and achieve** ; living in resilient families and communities, able to take advantage of a broad range of opportunities.

## One Children's Service Children's Transformation Programme Mission

Creating a Culture of High Expectations, High Support and High Challenge

## One Children's Service Children's Transformation Programme Values

### Democratic

All decision making will be undertaken using approved governance and engage with key subject matter experts.

### Responsible

The programme will take responsibility for delivery and reporting on progress, achievements, risks and dependencies.

### Fair

The programme will provide an honest assessment of each project using approved, consistent and transparent reporting methods.

### Co-operative

The programme will provide strong leadership and cooperation across departments, partners and providers to deliver all agreed outcomes.

## Stabilisation and Firm Foundations Workstreams (Tranche I)

### Service Improvement

### Service Assurance

### Service Modernisation

CSC Improvement Plan

Vulnerable Learners Improvement Plan

SEND Local Area Action Plan

Home to School Transport

Homes for Cared for Children (Sufficiency)

Specialist Education (Sufficiency)

TOM Phase I

Data, Systems and Digitisation

## Service Area Business Plans

# Children's Services Stabilisation Project

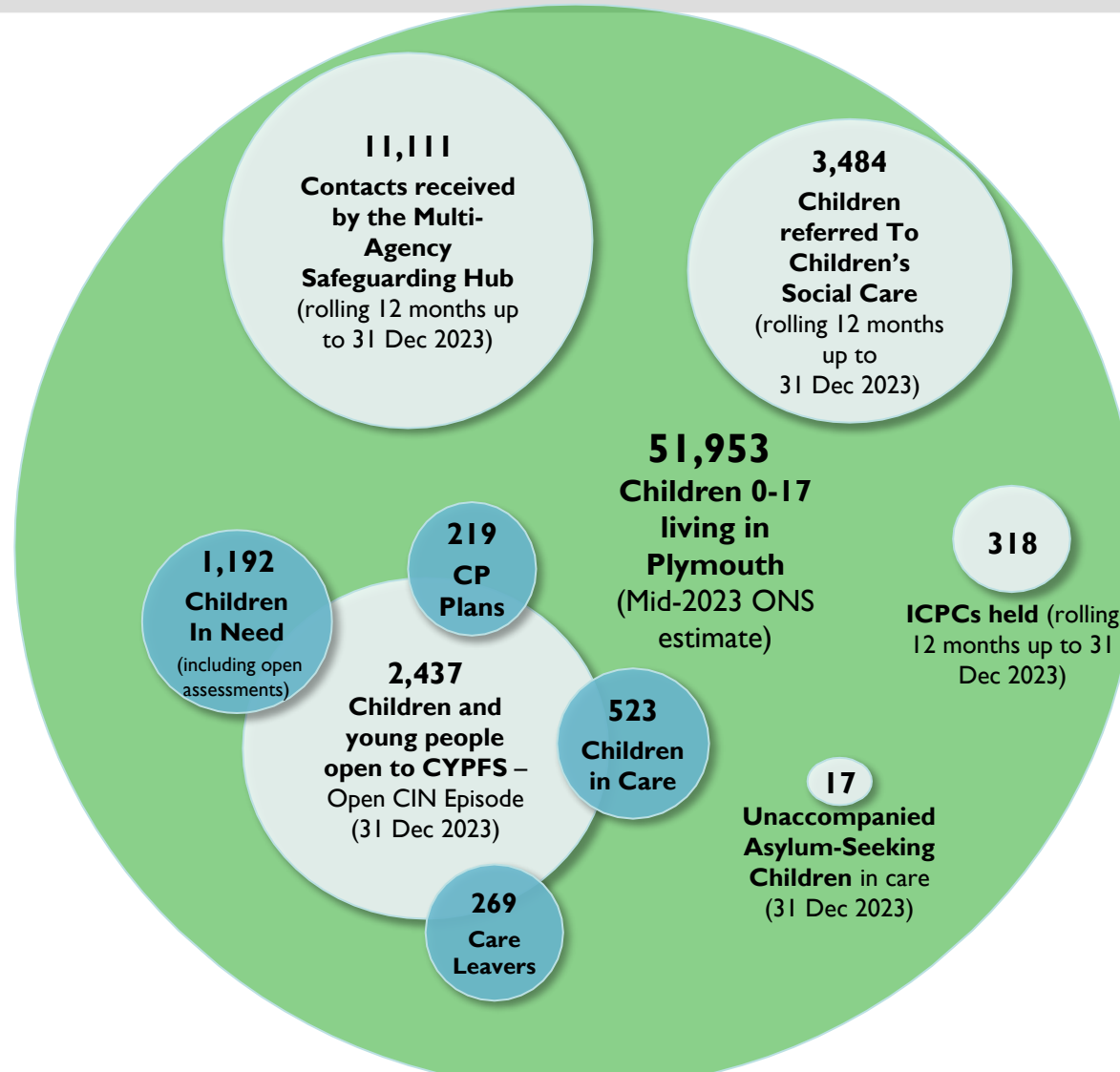
## Breakdown Structure



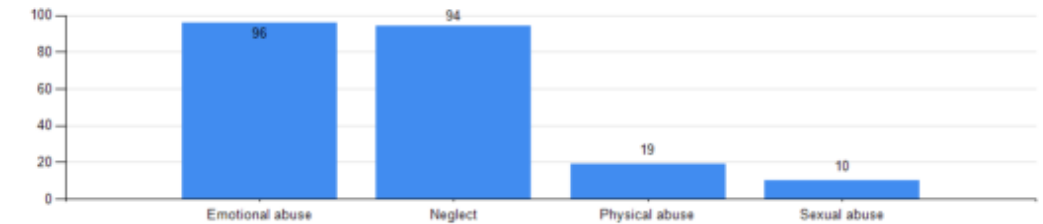
Service Improvement			Service Assurance			Service Modernisation	
CSC Improvement Plan	Vulnerable Learners Improvement Plan	SEND Local Area Plan	Home to School Transport	Homes for Cared for Children (Placement Sufficiency)	Specialist Education (SEND Sufficiency)	TOM Phase 1	Data, Systems and Digitisation
Leadership, Governance and Management	Early Identification and Intervention	Governance, oversight, culture and workforce	Route optimisation	Step forward model for children in residential	State Funded Specialist Provision	CYPFS structure	Eclipse Phase 2 inc. Sprint Plan
Early Help and Front Door Responses	Attendance and Exclusions	Early Identification and Support	Expansion of Travel Training	In House Fostering recruitment and retention	Building Provision (Grants / Capital)	EP&S structure	Business Support Digitisation
Robust and Effective Social Work Practice	Schools and Children (CME/EHE) Causing Concern	Inclusion	Personal Budgets	External market development	Financial Governance	3 Year Strategy and Plan	Automated Intelligence
At Risk of Care, Cared for and Care Experienced Children and Young People	Transforming EHCP Systems	Graduated Response	Cost Efficiency Plans	PCC Residential/ Emergency provision	SEND Placement Governance	Develop TOM Phase 2	Lean Systems
Quality Assurance and Audit	Post 16 Skills	Transitions and Preparations for Adulthood	Post 16 Transport		Post 16 Governance	Locality Working	
A stable and able Workforce	Ambitious Employment	Health Waiting Lists	Future Years Budget Forecasting			Creating a central spine	
		Social Care and Children's Disability Team				Post 16 Transitions	
						Academy and Apprenticeships	

### Service Area Business Plans

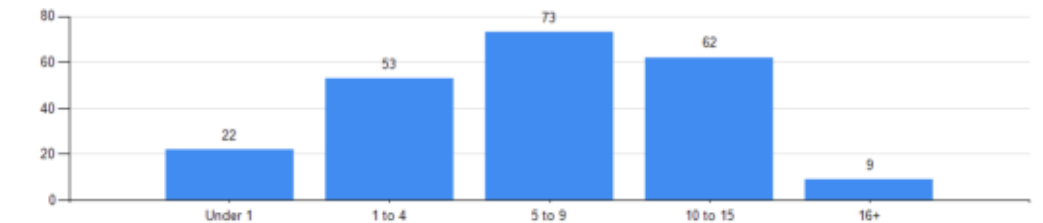
# Profile of children open to Plymouth Children, Young People and Families Service



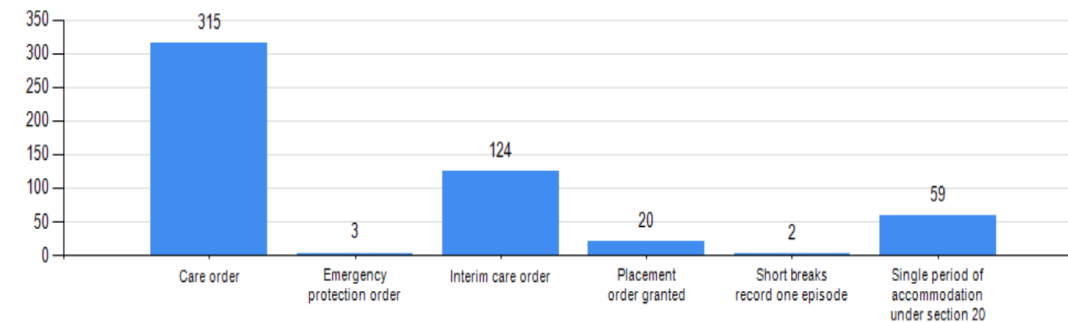
Child Protection Plans Categories (31/12/23)



Ages of children with a CP Plan (31/12/23)



Legal status of children in care (31/12/23)





# What children and young people have told us



**TEN WISHES**  
 What Children and Young People in Plymouth want from you...



- We want professionals to be easier to contact.
- We want professionals to be on time, as they expect us to be.
- We want professionals to be properly trained and for us to be involved in the training.
- We want professionals to ask us what we need and not to assume.
- We want professionals to do what they say they are going to do, to listen and stand up for us.
- We want professionals to use words we understand.
- We want professionals to reassure us something is being done and tell us how long it will take.
- We want professionals to understand when we need to talk to them one-to-one.
- We want professionals to ask us 'do you feel safe?'
- We want professionals to respect us and how we feel.



[Ten-Wishes-The-why-and-the-how-booklet](#)  
[Ten Wishes Film](#)

## What children and young people told us during Practice Week in November;

### Areas of strength;

- We are regularly being asked if we feel safe, workers are easy to contact, workers do what they said they are going to do.
- We understand workers roles and are supported to understand processes, we are fully involved with our Family Group Conference plans.
- Social workers are supportive and check in with us regularly, we are being asked if we feel safe, we have some involvement with our plan and are told about decisions being made.
- The social worker has had a great impact on my child and ensures they are safe.

### Areas to strengthen;

- There can be lots of record keeping during visits which takes away from us building a relationship with you.
- Regular changes of social workers make it difficult to build relationships.
- Children need more support to understand the role of their social worker, what their meetings are for and they need to be more involved in their own care planning.

# Our self-evaluation tells us that



- ✓ The majority of our practice with families requires improvement to be good.
- ✓ Understanding of **thresholds and consent** has improved and **strategy meetings** are timely.
- ✓ Additional capacity in place as a result of increased demand and **caseloads are now at acceptable levels**
- ✓ Responses are **timelier** and assessments are improving in quality.
- ✓ Strengthening our early help and targeted help offer will ensure **families get the right support** when needs first emerge.
- ✓ We engage with children and young people well **and act on what they say**.
- ✓ **Placement sufficiency** is a real challenge, particularly for sibling groups and older children with more complex behaviours - we are taking action to improve choice and increase the number of children cared for in families.
- ✓ Staff understand that **our practice is trauma informed, restorative and relational** and we are working to embed this consistently.
- ✓ A new **rebranded recruitment campaign** has started to increase permanent staffing and strengthen workforce stability.
- ✓ Consistency and impact of **supervision and management oversight** is improving. More focus is needed.
- ✓ There is **a wealth of data** to support staff and managers with performance management.
- ✓ We are improving the **quality and quantity of evidence from quality assurance** activity and ensuring we 'close the loop' on learning with our planned improvement work.

# Key areas of progress to date

## Phase I: stabilisation and firm foundations



- **Strong Corporate and service leadership** and commitment with partners to the improvements needed.
- **Permanent DCS** now appointed and governance of performance and improvement established.
- **Improvements in MASH**; partner confidence in thresholds, timeliness of response and understanding of consent. Confirmed by our Sector Led Improvement Partner, Dorset, and starting to show in our data and quality of practice.
- **Improvements in Initial Response**; impact of accelerated Improvement Plan (October – December) on outstanding assessments, children being seen and reduced caseloads with support from additional Advanced Practitioners.
- **Practice obsessions**; completion of case summaries, plans, supervision, visits.
- **Capacity to meet increased demand**; additional Advanced Practitioners in Initial Response, an additional Service Manager and team in the Children's Social Work Service, additional TM in Permanence. Longer term proposals agreed.
- **Quality assurance**; a new approach to audit and dip sampling to provide evidence of improvements to practice over time. Dedicated capacity and increase to permanent team.
- **Workforce**; targeted SW recruitment and retention measures, Leaders for Excellence programme for managers, a focused offer from the Academy, good induction and international SW recruitment.
- **Placement Sufficiency**; revised strategy and additional capacity to deliver new approaches.



# Increased early help and targeted interventions



## **More families receiving help and support to prevent needs from escalating;**

- ✓ Locality Targeted Early Help Teams have built good relationships with partners and are providing more targeted interventions to address vulnerabilities of identified children, e.g. improved school attendance (in line with the Target Operating Model).
- ✓ Taking forward the MacAlister review and new ways of working to support children and families.
- ✓ Refocused Family Group Conferencing to families at an early help stage (144 families).
- ✓ Increased use of family decision making models, including in the additional Targeted Early Help Team.
- ✓ Edge of Care Team working intensively and effectively with adolescents and their families.
- ✓ Rapid response following Daily Intelligence Briefings.
- ✓ Effective responses to children going missing, starting to see a reduction in the number of young people experiencing repeat missing episodes.
- ✓ Homelessness being prevented effectively for most young people.

# Improved responses in the MASH



- **Following the December focused visit;** removed Gateway, revised Building Support, training to build confidence in thresholds, consent and practice in specific areas (Child Sexual Abuse, neglect, Domestic Abuse).
- **April and July 2023;** our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP), Dorset Council, confirmed progress and areas for further improvements.
- **July 2023;** focused response to children identified as not having been responded to in a timely way. Four week plan with additional resources to progress all contacts and referrals.
- **Sept – Dec 2023;** revised thresholds and consent guidance and extensive training for partners.

**Current position;** our quality assurance and audits by our SLIP in November confirmed;

- Appropriate thresholds, use of consent and strategy meetings on time. Improvements in timeliness and quality of response to contacts.
- Strong governance and Quality Assurance from MASH Strategic and Operational Boards.
- Rates of contacts now reducing from a high in November.

# Improved responses in our Initial Response Teams



- **Remedial work in the MASH in July;** resulted in a high volume of assessments requiring completion at once, children waiting too long and caseloads for some workers rising to unacceptable levels.
- **Focused six-week plan;** to complete outstanding assessments, ensure children were seen and return caseloads to acceptable levels - with weekly updates to the DCS. Good progress made.
- **January 2024, SLIP confirmed that;** appropriate decision making and improved quality of assessment, including Child Sexual Abuse and focus on the child. Children who need to be seen quickly following referral are seen.
- **Improvements in key areas;** assessment timeliness starting to improve (66%), improved supervision (80.5%) Re-referrals returning to acceptable levels (20.5%), improvement in visits on time 90%)
- **Caseloads;** within acceptable range (4-34, average 20.7%)

# Children in need of help and protection



- Focused work in teams to ensure children's plans are outcome focused and are actively progressing with visits being increasingly timely.
- Young carers being supported by our commissioned service Time4U Partnership.
- Focused oversight by Team and Service Managers has reduced children in need open 12m+.
- Improvements in key areas; visits (91%), reviews (93%) and updated plans (94%).
- Additional Team agreed in our Children's Social Work Service whilst we build experience in our qualified social workers (ASYEs and International SWs).
- Recruitment of more permanent staff will enable relationship-based practice to flourish.
- New materials for a new campaign to attract experienced social workers to '**work with us for a bright future**' in Plymouth, promoting targeted rewards and access to career development and support.
- Target Operating Model sets out plan to establish a locality delivery model.
- **Quality assurance tells us that;** risk assessments are being used well and children's lived experience and history is recorded well. Changes of social workers have impacted on children and families.

# Children in need of help and protection



- **PSCP is leading** partnership work to develop revised strategy and practice guidance in priority areas to launch in March; Domestic Abuse, Child Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Adolescent Safety. Delivering Working Together 2023.
- Developing **practice with neglect** through use of the Graded Care Profile, staff now trained and evaluation of impact being completed.
- Initial Child protection Conferences and Reviews consistently being held on time. **Responses increasingly timely** - 91.4% visits on time.
- Reduction in number of children on a Child Protection Plan for more than 12 months (45 in Sept, 21 now).
- Low rate of children with a repeat plan in year - 7 children (20 children in 2 years).
- **Stronger and more timely pre-proceedings** supported by a Case Progression Officer and letters before action revised to be more restorative.
- **PLO increasingly timely** and positive feedback received from the judiciary.
- Focus on the quality of planning for **Unborn Babies** through a partnership panel.
- Strengthening practice in the **Children's Disability Team** following recent move into CYPFS. Review of all children's plans.
- Plans to develop our **Virtual School Offer for vulnerable learners**.
- **Quality assurance tells us that;** Independent Reviewing Officer's know their children well. Good co-ordination is seen between professionals. There is more to do to ensure all plans are SMART.



# Children in care



- The Service Director has a **strong oversight of care entry and care planning for priority groups**, including of unregistered arrangements.
- We have been experiencing an increase of sibling groups entering care and a reduction in children leaving care.
- **Workers know their children well** (89% seen on time, 81% seen alone), our participation work is strong and we have acted in response to what children and young people have said, including extending our Local Offer.
- **We celebrate young people's achievements**, 1107 nominations for our '**You can do it**' Awards.
- Reviews are held on time and **children's SEND needs** are considered as part of their care plans.
- Stable care meetings and support for carers has **sustained and improved long term placement stability** (74%) and we are doing more to increase placement choice and family placements, especially for sibling groups and children with more challenging behaviours. 91% of our children are placed close to Plymouth.
- **Additional support for Special Guardianship and kinship carers**, including from our Virtual School.
- Education and health outcomes are the focus of priority improvement work with partners reporting to Corporate Parenting Board.
- Following TM absence, a focused plan is improving supervision completion (from 43.6% in Sept to 62.1% in December)
- **Quality assurance tells us that**; Reports written to children demonstrate they are listened to and their wishes, feelings and needs are understood and met, more is planned to ensure this is achieved consistently.

# Care experienced young people



- **Quality assurance tells us that;** we know our young people well. Work is in place to ensure all young people have a high quality Pathway Plan that is ambitious for their future.
- Care experience is a **protected characteristic** in Plymouth. We are opening a **dedicated care leavers hub** in 2024.
- We engage well with our young people and have **listened to and acted on** what they have told us; e.g. training, Merrivale flats, support to UASCs.
- All care leavers have a PA and **we build strong relationships** including holding social events throughout the year.
- A joint funded Youth Intervention (Police) Officer has built **trusting relationships** with young people which is enabling her to help **keep them safe**.
- Partnership approaches are in place **to improve outcomes where they are not yet good enough**, particularly health and EET. Oversight of progress by the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 77% of year 12 and 71% of year 13 young people **are in Education Employment and Training** and our approaches are supporting them to remain engaged in positive opportunities.
- We are taking forward **Unlocking Plymouth's Potential 2023-25** through focused work with our Skills and Post 16 Team and Adult Education Provider. 100% success rate of the first 'Your Future' programme.
- Skills Launchpad Youth Hub has completed 101 interventions **supporting 28 young people into paid work** and 49 into education and training.
- **Opening Merrivale flats** has impacted positively on suitability of accommodation but more to do for all.

# Moving on from Stabilisation - developing a Strategy for 2024-27



## 11 key priorities developed and being consulted on with staff, children and young people during February;

1. A strong and Effective Early Help System
2. Targeted Help that meets need when it first emerges
- 3. Timely and Effective Social Work Practice**
- 4. Homes for Cared for Children**
5. An effective early identification and intervention offer for children with SEND
6. Timely and quality Education Health and Care Plans lead to the right children getting more help when it is needed
7. Improved outcomes for vulnerable children and schools causing concern
8. Early, responsive support and local provision which improves attendance and reduces exclusion
9. Sufficient high quality and value for money specialist SEND provision to meet local need
- 10. A stable, highly skilled and supported workforce**
- 11. A performance management and quality assurance framework that 'closes the loop' and supports improvement.**

# Engagement on three year plan



## Setting our vision and determining our priority improvement areas through February with;

- Staff across EPS and CYPFS (events being held with 300 staff)
- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Partners through Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Headteachers, Local Care Partnership, Strategic Systems Leadership Board
- Members – Scrutiny, where else?
- **March** – finalising the detailed year one implementation plans.

# Priorities for the next phase

## Phase 2: develop, sustain and embed



Move into year one of the **'One Children's Service' Improvement and Transformation Plan** finalised to reflect engagement with children, young people, parents and staff.

### Areas of focus for CYPFS;

- Further develop our **early help and targeted support** offer to ensure families get the right help at the right time.
- Put the right **capacity in the right place** to sustain manageable caseloads and drive good quality practice.
- Embed our **practice approach** and ensure impact on outcomes.
- Deliver a **targeted Academy offer** informed by evidence from quality assurance, including professional curiosity in assessments and quality of supervision and a bespoke offer for managers and leaders.
- Fully embed **practice standards – timely and quality practice expectations** across the service.
- Care planning which ensures **permanence** is achieved in a timely way.
- Improve **placement sufficiency** - the right homes for our cared for children.
- Care leavers have access to **accommodation that meets their needs**.



# Develop, sustain and embed



- We have launched a **new recruitment campaign** to recruit and retain a permanent workforce so that restorative and relationship-based practice can flourish.
- Commence our bespoke **leadership and management development** programme for Team Managers, Service Managers and Heads of Service based on '*High Expectations, High Support and High Challenge*'.
- **Continued work with our Sector Led Improvement Partner, Dorset**, focused on priority areas;
  - Local Authority Designated Officer – allegation management.
  - Out of Hours response.
  - Permanence tracking.
  - Quality Assurance.
  - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- **Fully embed quality assurance** and '**close the loop**' on learning – providing evidence of impact of QA on the quality of practice and experiences of children and families.
- **Stronger systems and data** to support practice and performance improvement across the service.