

# Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	10 October 2024
Title of Report:	Children, Young People and Families Service Improvement Plan 2024-25 Q1 Progress and Impact Report – May to July 2024
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
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Your Reference:	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the progress of the plan to improve the quality, timeliness and outcomes of our children's social care services. This plan was developed following the ILACS and to take forward relevant priorities in Achieving Excellence, our strategic plan for Children's Services 2024-27. The strategic plan was agreed at the last Board. Progress has also been provided to Ofsted in our Annual Conversation with them which took place in July.

## Recommendations and Reasons

1. It is recommended that the progress, key challenges and priorities for the next quarter are noted.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

1. None

## Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Keeping children, adults and communities in Plymouth safe.

## Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Children's Social Care spend on placements for children in care and on agency social work staff due to the challenges recruiting permanent staff create significant financial pressures on the Council.

## Financial Risks

Children's Social Care spend on placements for children in care and on agency social work staff due to the challenges recruiting permanent staff create significant financial pressures on the Council.

## Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

**Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:**

\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

The paper addresses risks to the organisation from keeping children in Plymouth safe and ensuring effective support to families to ensure outcomes for children and young people are good.

**Appendices**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

**Background papers:**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Sign off:**

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 23/09/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Laing approved via email											
Date approved: 02/10/2024											

## **Introduction**

This report provides an update on the progress of the plan to improve the quality, timeliness and outcomes of our children's social care services. This plan was developed following the ILACS and to take forward relevant priorities in Achieving Excellence, our strategic plan for Children's Services 2024-27. The strategic plan was agreed at the last Board. Progress has also been provided to Ofsted in our Annual Conversation with them which took place in July.

The relevant priorities from Achieving Excellence being delivered through this plan are;

**Priority 2. Targeted help for priority vulnerable groups**

**Priority 3. Timely and effective social work practice**

**Priority 4. The right homes for cared for children at the right time**

**Priority 6. Preparing all children and young people well for adulthood and ambitious employment.**

**Priority 7. A stable, highly skilled, well supported and high performing workforce.**

**Priority 8. An effective learning framework,**

**Priority 9. Strong partnerships and partnership governance arrangements**

**Priority 10. Enablers which support staff to do their jobs.**

## **1. Progress on priority areas identified in the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)**

### **Out of Hours Service**

1. We have acted to strengthen the Out of Hours response following Ofsted finding that the response to children out of hours was not always effective. The impact of staff turnover has been addressed with the use of Agency social workers and a permanent recruitment process has been underway throughout the year to fully stabilize the team. We have not as yet had any suitable candidates apply and are running the service on additional hours for permanent daytime staff and agency staff. Recruitment to the permanent posts remains a priority.
2. A programme of workforce development has been completed with the existing team to increase confidence in out of hours practice expectations, including strategy meetings, missing children, and adult safeguarding issues. Quality assurance is in place to evaluate practice improvements including from our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) during August with findings due to report to the September Board.
3. Alongside stabilizing and improving the quality of the existing service, a full review of the service has been completed to inform consideration of whether alternative service delivery models would support improved practices out of hours. A plan is now in place to develop an Emergency Duty model.

### **Children's Disability Service**

4. In response to the Ofsted findings, an additional 26 children are now receiving support from the Children's Disability team as a result of an improved response to children receiving short breaks. This includes 20 children currently being assessed, 103 children in need, 8 children on child protection plans and 29 children in care.
5. Performance in key areas has improved during the year and as of the end July;
  - 88% of three-month summaries are up to date on the child's records.

- 100% of visits to children on CPPs and 93% of children in care are completed on time and 86% of visits to CIN are on time.
  - 64.8% of supervisions have been held on time. This is a focus for further improvement.
  - 93% of children have an up-to-date care plan, 100% of children with CPPs have an up-to-date protection plan and 70% of CIN plans are up to date. It is a current focus in the team to ensure all plans are up to date and are of good quality.
6. A monthly meeting is now in place to review all children whose liberty is being restricted, chaired by the Service Manager. A monthly multi-agency Transitions Meeting, led jointly by Children's Social Care and Adult's Social Care, has also been introduced and currently tracks all children and young people who are likely to need continuing health care or adult social care support post 18. This enables earlier care planning for children with the most complex needs and provides support and reassurance to young people and their families at the earliest opportunity.

### **LADO response.**

7. In response to the need to strengthen our LADO response given the concerns confirmed by Ofsted, a new interim LADO took up post in February 2024 and good progress has been made to strengthen practice in priority areas including strengthening professional curiosity, reviewing actions from Consultations, Referrals and Managing Allegation Meetings, and improving the storage of information. Given concerns about earlier decision making, a second interim LADO was appointed to review the LADO activity during September - February 2024 and to progress any concerns identified, and this work is now complete. A new more reliable information storage system was introduced, and all records have been moved into this.
8. A centralised tracker is in place to support the oversight of actions from LADO meetings and their progress going forward, a programme of monthly quality assurance activity is in place to ensure the correct threshold is applied and that appropriate advice and decisions are made, and our SLIP is currently completing diagnostic activity to provide assurance of the current arrangements and improvements made with good progress being reported to the June PCIB. The LADO is delivering LADO workshops for the Partnership to build confidence in the LADO process.
9. The SLIP report to PCIB in June reported that all improvements needed had progressed with improved systems of recording and decision making, improved information to partners and full engagement of all key partners identified. "The review has not identified any cases of concern about the existing LADO's understanding and application of the management of allegations criteria. Feedback forms are being sent to referrer's and of the sample seen the experience has been positive and timely." Positive practice was identified relating to praising young people directly for their courage making allegations. Areas where more work is in place includes educating partners about the LADO role and suggestions to further strengthen the quality of minutes.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

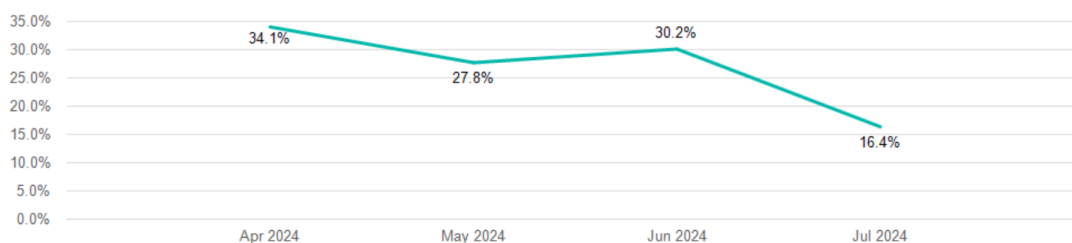
10. We have experienced an increase in UASC accepted into Plymouth through the National Transfer Scheme (15 currently) and would expect this to increase further as our numbers are low compared to the national formula. To improve the experience for and practice with UASC two social workers within the Permanence Service now take the lead in working with UASC. In addition, two Family Support Workers (FSWs) have been recruited dedicated to this work and eight staff have undertaken the recommended age assessment training. Following a visit to Bristol to learn from their practice with UASC we are developing a range of culturally appropriate resources for young people to support them when they first arrive. Partners have improved their offer to UASC as set out in our refocused Corporate Parenting Operational Management Plan, this includes an improved offer from the Virtual School and increasing support to help young people access appropriate community organisations and move on support. We are currently receiving support from our SLIP to evaluate our improvements in this area and quality assurance is planned to report to the September PCIB.

11. In response to feedback from young people around the number of changes in social worker, the impact on building trusting relationships and to improve our practice, the agreed transfer process is now that UASC young people arriving in Plymouth transfer directly to the Permanence Service upon referral.

## 2. Progress with extending access to Targeted Help for vulnerable children and young people and operating an effective Front Door leading to families receiving the right help at the right time.

12. We have reshaped our Targeted Help offer to continue to increase the interventions in place with families across the Council's Targeted Help Services. The three Targeted Help teams are now closely aligned to the Front Door accepting work directly from the MASH and step outs from Initial Response Teams ensure children and families receive evidence-based interventions that will support improved outcomes and reduce the need for statutory social work and reduce re-referrals. This realignment has already contributed to a reduction in the number of families being progressed for statutory assessment (305 referrals in April to 238 in July) and we expect this approach to support a continued reduction in our re-referral rates as more children and families receive the right support.

Monthly trend (since beginning of year)



### Re-referral rates

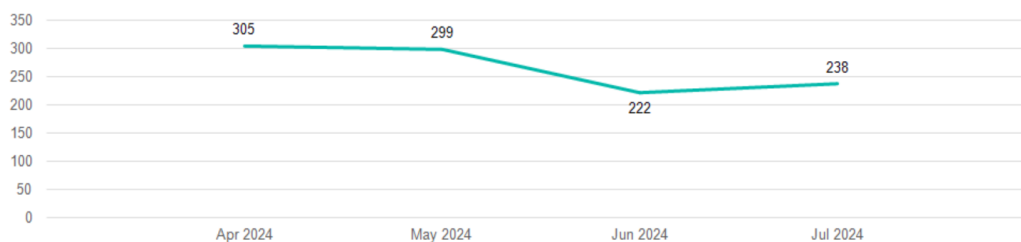
13. We are embedding the Outcomes Star to evaluate the impact of targeted support. Where there is a youth work need the Targeted Help teams can refer to the School Link team to access a youth worker.
14. We have strengthened relationships with partners and pathways between early help, targeted support and statutory services by basing teams in the MASH and providing the Early Help Line from within the MASH.
15. Our Edge of Care offer continues to be effective. In the first six months of the year (1<sup>st</sup> January – 30 June), 102 children came into the care of the Local Authority. Seven (6%) of these children were supported by the Edge of Care Team. Five of these children presented as homeless (16-17 years old) and were accommodated under s20 – one has now returned to his family network. The other two are under 16 and were referred due to a breakdown in relationships. One has successfully been reunited and the other is being supported to return to her family within the next three months.
16. Ten audits were completed in the service in July and 10% were found to be 'outstanding', 40% 'good' and 50% 'requiring improvement'. This evidenced that practitioners worked really hard to build relationships with families and have a good understanding of risk to ensure that this is managed effectively, including by working openly with families. The service is working well with partners and is creating an approach, focused on achieving the end goal for the family rather than the process.
17. Planned next steps include ensuring Family Networks Meetings are held routinely, ensuring fathers are always included and ensuring the voice of non-verbal children is evidenced well. We are also offering assessment and evidence-based parenting interventions to families open within the statutory service and an offer to improve the reunification of children with care as a permanence plan to return to their birth families when things change.
18. We are extending the use of family led decision making approaches including family network meetings and Family Group Conferencing (FGC) so that more families are offered a family led support plan

when they first need help. Detailed practice guidance for Family Network Meetings is in place and briefings are being held for all teams, delivered by our Family and Community Solutions Team who deliver our FGC offer, to ensure that family capacity is fully utilised in all cases, particularly where there is a risk of the child coming into care.

### Front Door

19. We have sustained improvements in the delivery of a timely response by the Front Door, the appropriate application of consent and thresholds and are further developing the Front Door as a single point of entry to both targeted and specialist services to ensure families receive the right help at the right time. We continue to see a reduction in referrals as a result of the impact of early and targeted help.

Monthly trend (since beginning of year)



### Referrals by month

20. As a result, the volume of assessments completed by the service has also reduced. The timeliness of assessments is still not yet where we want it to be, at the end of July 63.9% had been completed within 45 days in year. This has had strong focus over the summer under the direction of a new Service Manager and on 31<sup>st</sup> July 91% of open assessments were in time (30 were over 45 days) which will lead to improving performance in coming months. 87% of children are seen within our 10 day timescale.
21. Strategic and Operational MASH Boards continue to ensure strong partnership engagement and oversight of practice and in the analysis of and response to patterns of demand and performance and quality assurance that drives improvement priorities. This includes a programme of partnership dip sampling of priority areas including consent and strategy meetings which is finding appropriate decision making.
3. **Timely and effective social work practice when it is needed which keeps children and young people safe and improves wider outcomes.**

### All children benefit from a timely and comprehensive assessment

22. At the start of the year the Academy commenced the delivery of a refreshed 'Assessment Fundamentals' programme to all social workers and team managers across the service, prioritised to our Initial Response Teams, to reset expectations on what good practice looks like. As of end July 78 staff had attended and 34 more were booked on further courses through the autumn and all will attend this year.
23. Service meetings across service areas have been reviewing the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership (PSCP) toolkits on neglect, child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and adolescent safety to embed these new toolkits and guidance.
24. Quality assurance has identified some improvements to the quality of assessments completed. However, in May only 33% were 'good', 61% 'required improvement' and one assessment was found to be inadequate. Some assessments are completed in a timely way, summarise children's

histories well and consider the impact of children's lived experiences upon their needs. Where assessments are written to young people, we have a better understanding of their views.

25. However, assessments that were not yet good are not always informed by the Risk Vulnerability Matrix tool, analytical or comprehensive. Some assessments, particularly within the Initial Response Service are delayed so that children's needs and the plan of support is not identified in a timely way. Assessments do not always consider the impact of support upon a child's lived experiences, what difference this has made and what is the likelihood of sustained change.
26. Quality assurance activity identified that child sexual abuse practice is not yet consistently strong and as a result the Initial Response and Children's Social Work services are implementing a focused approach to build confidence in our team managers and social workers and strengthen risk assessments and safety planning including ensuring the toolkit developed by the PSCP is well embedded.
27. Managers have been ensuring assessments are routinely shared with families and children and this will be reviewed by IROs in reviews and as part of our Practice Week in November.

### **All children and young people benefit from high quality planning**

28. It is a strength that 95% of children in care have an up to date plan, but there is more to do to ensure all children we are working with have a high-quality plan that ensures the work that is needed progresses and brings about the changes that are needed in a timely way. In May, audit work found 22% of plans to be 'good', 72% 'required improvement' and one was found to be 'inadequate' which was addressed immediately. Plans are not yet consistently SMART, bespoke to individual children's needs and focused on supporting professionals to bring about the changes needed.
29. To improve consistency in the quality of planning for children, from September the Academy will be commencing a redesigned Planning training offer for all social workers and managers and the expectation is that 100% will attend this this year.
30. We have had a particular focus on planning for children in need, and as a result of implementing tracking meetings by Service Managers there has been a reduction in the number of children in need open more than 12 months to 12% (110 children). In addition, following the implementation of the new Pathway Planning format developed with young people and development sessions held in all teams on practice standards for Pathway Plans, it is a priority to ensure all young people have an up to date and ambitious Pathway Plan that has been developed with them. As of the end of July 60% of all eligible young people had an up to date Pathway Plan and we are on track for 100% of care leavers under 18 and 95% of care leavers over 18 having an up to date Pathway Plan by December. Audit work is planned in October to review the quality of updated plans.
31. Over the summer we have been working with our SLIP to improve the impact of our Independent Reviewing Service on the quality of planning with a positive joint development session held with Dorset colleagues and quality assurance work planned to report to the September PCIB.

### **All children and young people benefit from purposeful direct work**

32. There are a range of direct work approaches and tools for children and young people of different ages and developmental stages being utilised across the service. The Academy has started work to bring these together and develop a resource bank. Ensuring direct work and life story work is completed and recorded on Eclipse remains a focus and will be included in work on permanence planned with our SLIP in the Autumn with our own quality assurance planned in December.

### **Strengthened relationship based practice**

33. Caseloads across the service have been sustained within target levels and the reduction experienced in the Initial Response Service will impact on other service areas over coming months.

Service Area	Caseload Average March	Range March	Caseload average July	Range July
Initial Response Service	30.6	5-46	18.2	2-27
Children's Social Work Service	17.9	1-28	17.6	2-27
Children's Disability Service	24	7-30	22.9	12-33
Permanence Service	17.4	11-22	16.5	6-22
Care Leavers	29.5	6-35	23.3	5-30
Fostering Service	17.5	3-38	18	6-35
Safeguarding Service (Independent Chairs)	76.6	54-91	77.8	55-91

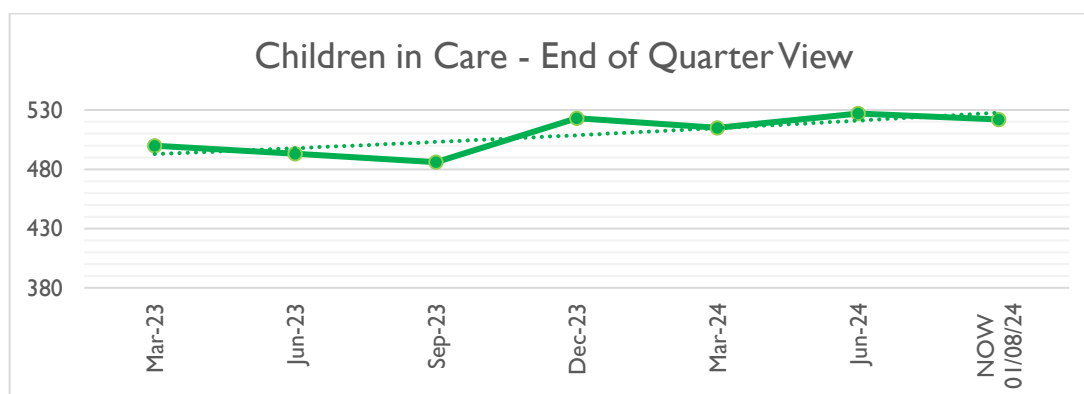
### Caseloads

34. Team Managers ensure children transfer between service areas in a timely way and we have made a number of changes to reduce the moves for families (e.g. for UASC and where pre-birth assessments are needed).
35. Audit work is identifying evidence of relationship-based practice. In May, audits identified 71% of families were well involved in the assessment and work undertaken, 12% were 'outstanding', and 20% 'required improvement'. Visits to and assessments of cared for children were noted as well written to children and young people clearly evidencing their wishes and feelings and evidencing that we know our cared for children well.
36. Despite efforts to recruit permanent social workers, we continue to experience turnover of social workers impacting on relationships with children and families.

## 4. Good experiences and progress for all children in care

### Earlier permanence planning

37. The number of children in care continued to rise through last year but has stayed more stable in recent months. This includes 36 children who are part of large sibling groups who came into our care between January and May as a result of serious neglect and family complexities including parental substance misuse and mental health.





38. Since January, 112 children have come into care and whilst 10 have already returned home and a further, 10 children have been identified as being likely to remain in our care, 47 children currently have a plan to be returned home once the required changes are achieved within the family.
39. The increase in numbers of children coming into care has been compounded by a delay in final hearing dates for children subject to legal care proceedings. The national target for care proceedings is 26 weeks but we currently have 78 children who are over 50 weeks. We are working closely with the local judiciary to get final hearing dates scheduled so that decisions (including adoption decisions) can be made for these children.
40. Since the ILACs, we have strengthened our internal tracking to ensure children in long term fostering are matched with their carers more quickly and are currently working with our SLIP to ensure all children benefit from appropriate and early permanence planning. This includes all children who are Placed with Parents and to identify where Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and reunification should be explored. Some young people at home under Placement with Parents Regulations were identified where discharge proceedings had been delayed and as a result legal planning meetings were held in respect of those children and plans to progress put in place. Two of these children had their Care Orders discharged in September and December 2023. A joint learning event for our staff on permanence and stability is being planned with Dorset in October and dip sampling of the IRO oversight of permanence is being completed to report to the Sept Board.

### **Education and health outcomes for children in care**

41. We are working closely with Health partners to ensure the physical, emotional and mental health needs of our children in care are well met. In March, as a result of an accelerated improvement plan agreed by health and social care with oversight from the Corporate Parenting Group, 83.3% of Initial Health Assessments were completed within 20 working days of the child coming into care. However, in July only 1 initial health assessment was completed on time and we are currently working closely with our Health colleagues to consistently achieve better performance.
42. The Virtual School (VS) has a focused plan in place to improve the educational outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people. Three additional staff have been recruited as 4-16 Education Advocates to allow caseloads to reduce from nearly 200 to around 80. The PEP Officer has implemented a quality assurance system for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and training is being delivered to schools, social workers and carers to ensure that children in care have enhanced educational support from their carers and corporate parent.
43. In the Spring term of 2024, PEPs increased in quality from 57% to 75% being identified as 'good'. We are further improving the consistency in the quality of PEPs including the PEP QA procedures being updated to better reflect the use of strengths-based language and ensuring they are written directly to children and young people, inclusion of genuinely SMART targets that are reviewed and represent efficient use of the pupil premium. Training is being undertaken with Designated Teachers where PEPs are not yet good. This will lead to an expected increase in the percentage of PEPs found to be 'outstanding' in the autumn term 2024.
44. We are tracking the attendance of children in care on a monthly basis and there is a specific focus on severe, persistent absence and the use of part-time timetables. In addition, the group of approximately eight (at any one time) children without an educational place remain the focus of regular planning in order to secure provision that meets need. We remain concerned about the children under 16 who have no school place, either because they have had multiple and rapid moves of care placement or because there is a lack of suitable SEND placements locally or nationally. We are addressing this in our placement and SEND sufficiency work.

### **5. Ambition for care leavers and good outcomes**

45. Our Corporate Parenting arrangements have set out improved ambition and approaches for care leavers to be in education, employment and training. The Virtual School Funded Skills Launchpad

have appointed an Outreach Officer to work with entrenched NEET since 1<sup>st</sup> April '24. To date the post-holder has engaged 9 students and met individually with all 18. The post-16 PEP format was revised in March '24 to include Post 16 planning from Y10 and impact is expected in the autumn term when an assessment of pupils' remaining in EET is made.

46. The combined EET (IN Education Employment or Training) figure is currently 60%, which is 9% lower than regional average, although our rate of keeping track of care leavers is better than regional. There are currently 18 children in care who are entrenched NEET with long standing and complex needs as barriers to engagement including 2 having a criminal record and 16 with an EHCP. Two Children in Care are young mothers and are currently focusing on being a good parent to their children. Post 16 Caseworkers and 11-18 Consultant are working collaboratively with partners and the Post 16 Team to plan individually for pupils through inclusion of career/post 16 planning in PEPs from Y10. Post 16 caseworkers and 11-18 consultant are focused on improving attendance and engagement monitoring to feed from July '24, focusing on NEET to EET changes, attendance in education, employment or training provision, engagement in tutoring.
47. Through partnership tracking of individual children, we have increased the proportion of 18+ care leavers who are now seeking education, employment and training and young people in Y12 and 13 in EET has increased by 3.7% since May 2024.
48. The Skills Launchpad Youth Hub has completed 101 interventions with care experienced young people which has supported 28 young people into paid work, 49 young people into training or education and completed 84 pre-employment interventions. Funding has been secured to appoint a youth hub worker and a youth outreach worker who will provide personalised support and early intervention to ensure smooth transitions and maintain EET for care experienced and young people with SEND. A Youth Work Apprentice position was recruited to in the Care Leavers Team in May 2023, working across the Care Leavers and Participation Teams.
49. We are now guaranteeing all young people an interview and work experience and have launched the Livewell employability pathway for all identified care leavers who are NEET.
50. In response to Ofsted findings about access to suitable accommodation the process for automatic access to Band B of Devon Home Choice has been implemented for all care leavers and care leavers are being prioritized in new housing developments. In addition, we are developing a local offer and welfare pack for young people leaving custody and quality assurance of this area is planned in October.

### **Support and preparation for adulthood**

51. 88% of young people with SEND are in education, training or employment. The Service Director Education, Participation and Skills has strengthened leadership of the improvements to preparing for adulthood by establishing a multi-agency working group to scope, plan, deliver and communicate the vision and changes required in this area. A transitions framework and preparing for adulthood guidance is in place to coordinate transitions from early years to post-16. Whilst there is evidence of some excellent work occurring within the local area, such as the Youth Hub Contract supporting young people into employment, Family Hub work within Early Years Transitions and the work of the Changing Futures three-year programme, this is not consistent. Local service and user journey mapping is being undertaken to identify the performance and outcomes metrics that exist across the system.
52. Transitions into adult mental health services, adult social care and universal health services for Care Leavers has been a priority focus for the Corporate Parenting Operational Managers Group over the last 6 months. Transitions Pathways have been implemented and guidance circulated to ensure earlier alerts and improved transitions. Young people have reviewed these pathways and will provide some practice guidance to staff alongside the launch of the Local Offer. Improving transitions for all children in care will include training of carers in supporting young people to

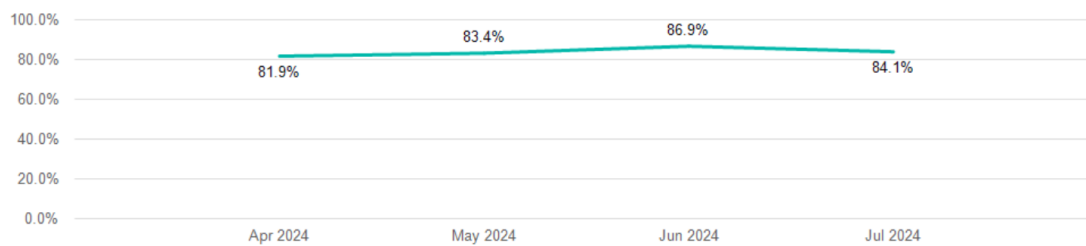
prepare for independence and developing and embedding transitions pathways that are accessible for young people and the staff supporting them.

## 6. Leadership and management

53. We launched a new recruitment webpage in January with new materials including videos of our DCS, senior managers and frontline staff talking about Plymouth as a great place to live and work. We are also utilising LinkedIn to support recruitment of management posts. Despite this, we continue to find it extremely challenging to recruit experienced social workers and have appointed four permanent qualified social workers, three Team Managers and two Independent Reviewing Officers so far this calendar year. The rate of permanent social work staff leaving Plymouth is currently low and the exit interview process has been strengthened to ensure we learn from all leavers.
54. At the end of June, there was a 25% vacancy rate for staff in permanent roles (53 social worker vacancies within 209 social worker posts, this is above the national vacancy rate in 2023). Particular issues can be seen in the following teams:
- MASH, OOH & Initial Response Service, 49 SW posts & 21 SW vacancies (42.86%)
- 18 of the vacancies (85.7%) are currently filled by Agency workers.
  - 6 of the vacancies (28.57%) are management roles.
- Children's Social Work, 77 SW posts & 21 SW vacancies (27.27%)
- 18 of the SW vacancies (85.7%) are currently filled by Agency workers.
  - 3 of the SW vacancies (14.3%) are management roles.
- Permanence, 50 SW posts & 10 SW vacancies (20%)
- 6 of the SW vacancies (60%) are currently filled by Agency workers.
  - 1 of the SW vacancies is a management role (Agency) covering long-term sickness.
55. Twelve social workers are NQSWs completing their ASYE in September when a further 8 ASYEs will join the service, and 12 SWs were recruited internationally within the past year. Our recent successes in SW recruitment have largely been of those with limited or no post qualifying experience which has impacted on capacity in the system to case hold families with more complex needs.
56. In addition to a new recruitment campaign, work to improve stability in the workforce through improved retention has included introducing a refreshed learning and development offer from the Academy, a review of our career progression framework and strengthening our approach to induction. Social Workers with four years post qualifying experience will now have the opportunity to progress to Advanced Practitioner (AP) and our Principal Social Worker will support our APs to achieve the expectations of their role.
57. Between April and July we delivered a well-attended bespoke management and leadership development programme for all of our managers and aspiring managers covering core skills and knowledge to develop a high performing workforce. A longer-term Service Manager and Head of Service development programme involving coaching, action learning and group learning sessions, will commence in September and be delivered over the following 12-18 months to develop manager's skills across operational and strategic management and to support the development of a high performing workforce in line with our 'High Expectation, High Support, High Challenge' culture.
58. We are continuing our Leaders for Excellence management development offer for all Team Managers and above in Education and social care with a programme for the autumn including financial management, use of data to drive improvement, supervision skills, change management and managing diversity.

59. Our supervision performance improved through the year but remains variable across the service and this continues to be a priority in service performance meetings and quality assurance.

#### Monthly trend (since beginning of year)



### Completion of supervision - all Children, Young People and Families Service

60. **A recent audit of supervision practice found that;** whilst supervision was taking place regularly for most children the quality of recording and the evidence of reflective discussion was more limited. Recordings were often very brief and do not always give a clear overview of the child's current circumstances or contain SMART actions to prevent drift and delay. This is a current priority for all service areas and focused improvement plans are in place in priority areas including leaving care teams. This has been a focus at our 'Leaders for Excellence' sessions in order to develop more confident approaches to ensure managers have effective 'line of sight' of progress of practice in their area and a supervision 'masterclass' is being planned, as part of our leadership and management development programme, to develop managers confidence and consistency in approach in a proportionate approach to supervision practice and recording, alongside planned coaching and increased management observation of supervision.
61. Stabilising our senior leadership and management team continues to be a priority with active recruitment underway to key posts.

### 7. Plans for the next quarter

#### 62. Priorities include;

- Maintaining momentum on our practitioner development programme (assessment, planning and direct work).
- Moving into phase 2 of our leadership and management development programme for service managers and heads of service to develop their skills and confidence in leading service improvement and a high performing workforce.
- Our Leaders for Excellence programme sustaining TM development, including continued focus on supervision and management oversight.
- Embedding our Front Door development and refocused Targeted Help offer to ensure families get the right help at the right time.
- Evidencing the impact on Family Network Meetings.
- Implementing the preferred option to reshape our out of hours offer and recruiting the staff needed.
- Responding to findings from quality assurance, in particular to strengthen CSA practice.
- Evaluating the quality and impact of Pathway Plans.
- Continuing a strong focus on social work recruitment and retention.