

# London Borough of Hillingdon

## Children and Young People Services overview - October 2017

### Introduction

This paper provides a "state of the nation" update for Policy Overview Committee for Children and Young People Services within Hillingdon. It details the impact of a wide range of improvement activity undertaken over the past 3 years, indicating the progress made in all key areas of responsibility and demonstrating management focus where further work is still to be done.

It is anticipated the service will be subject to an Ofsted inspection under the new framework, in early 2018, so that we can prepare effectively senior officers are in January attending Ofsted briefings which launch the new framework and evaluation model. As part to the new inspection model each authority has to complete an annual Self Evaluation of their Children's Services which will form the basis of Ofsted engagement meetings. The content of this report will be used to shape the first Self Evaluation and in future years the finalised Self Evaluation will be submitted to POC by way of an annual update on progress.

### Leadership and Vision

While the heartbeat of effective outcomes for statutory work is strong social work practice, the service gains strength from this being managed in the council's wider context: through a strong universal offer and the effective work across areas which provide for children and families being supported, to prevent statutory intervention and to support effective step down.

Following the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) in 2013 the political and corporate leadership of the council has been decisive about wanting to achieve a step change in the outcomes for children and young people in the borough. To this end, in the autumn of 2014 a new structure across all social services areas was agreed and the associated changes in senior management were made. From that point onwards the consolidation of the management structures has been completed, with all roles in the top three tiers filled with permanent employees. The move to a single leadership across children and young people and adult services has resulted in much stronger management teams learning from each other's disciplines and encouraging more innovative approaches to achieving improved outcomes, particularly in relation to transitions.

The extant leadership approach demonstrates at every level the creation of environments for practice to express itself and flourish: the DCS manages the political and corporate environments for the Deputy Director of Children's Services, the AD for Early Intervention and their operational managers throughout the organisation to operate effectively.

The period from the changes in 2014 illustrate the learning environment and relentless drive for improving outcomes, with changes having been made to various aspects of our pathways and

most particularly the desire to improve early support through wrapping services around children and families earlier to prevent escalation and de-escalate cases.

As well as structural change the political administration has significantly backed social care services and has made a strong financial investment in the initial improvements required in children and young people services which is now consolidated as a new base position of a sufficient costed structure to meet demand.

We have created three new Service Manager posts within social care to increase capacity at senior level and support a commitment of improving practice and outcomes and succession planning. Two appointments were made internally. At team manager level, all but two (2) team managers are permanent.

As of April 2017 we have introduced larger, more resilient social work teams supported by advanced practitioners who are seen as practice educators. We have been successful in 'growing our own' and appointed to both advanced practitioners and team managers roles internally. This is a good news story for us, however this comes with associated challenges. The promotion of social workers has reduced the number of experienced front line staff and those new into promoted posts require support to enable them to develop into their new roles.

We had positive responses to our recruitment campaigns and retention of permanent staff is good, social workers tell us Hillingdon is a good place to work. We know morale is high as social workers want to stay with Hillingdon and have applied for career progression. We have converted locum posts to permanent posts at all levels including senior managers. We have also been successful in recruiting 19 social workers from South Africa and 3 from Canada. These recruits require a greater level of support to enable successful transition. Our health check carried out in December 2016 shows high levels of engagement. The recent surge in demand brings with it challenges to maintain high morale at times where caseloads and complexities fluctuate and remain variable across the service area.

We adopt a high trust model which includes agile and remote working. We have and continue to invest in our technology to support more effective ways of working. This reflects our investment in our workforce, our most valuable resource in order to sustain a healthy workforce equipped to manage the competing demands of a busy and challenging social care environment. Social care teams are all located on the same floor with MASH planned to join by the end of 2017.

We are committed to a one service ethos which facilitates seamless and timely transitions for children and young people. To continuously improve the effectiveness of joint working the one service approach is reflected in regular all manager meetings across children's social care and early intervention and prevention services.

Our intervention is focused on evidence based practice models, having introduced a Domestic Abuse Practice Approach, relaunching Signs of Safety and NSPCC evidence informed framework to support reunification of children with their families. Current further investment includes the adoption of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2).

In September 2017 a case file audit tool was incorporated into the electronic case file system ensuring that audits are linked to children's case records. The new process incorporates feedback from all relevant staff within a defined timeline and concludes with the manager and social worker finalising the paperwork together providing a real opportunity for reflective conversations that support learning and improvement.. We will evaluate the impact of this new process on practice over the next 6 months.

We have processes in place to scrutinise decision making, childrens plans, care packages and placement moves. Hillingdon Access to Resource Panel (HARP) takes place weekly. The panel provides an opportunity for joint risk management, quality assurance of plans, decision making, resource management and a point in time scrutiny of 'live' social work practice and social workers presentation. We have recently reviewed the terms of reference and a staff survey is planned for early December to capture the staff experience and any associated learning.

There are monthly Performance Surgeries chaired by the Deputy Director of Children's Services. These are attended by Heads of Service, Service Managers. The meetings are informed by quantitative and qualitative performance reports from each service. There is also in place a system overview meeting with lead performance and finance officers and the DCS, in which the Deputy Director and Heads of Service support and examination of how the pathway is functioning and how workflow improvements can be made.

The Safeguarding team co-ordinates case file, themed and multi-agency file audits, and produces overview reports to help inform the development of practice.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data shared at performance meetings, the findings of case file, themed and multi-agency audits, feedback from service users from complaints, compliments, the work of the Participation Team and Team Diagnostics, informs our view of the quality of practice and the outcomes for children in Hillingdon.

As a port authority we invest heavily in working relationships with colleagues in UKBF, which has strengthened our practice and approach to responding to the needs of the unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) as they enter the main gateway to the UK. We liaise closely with other Local Authorities when negotiating transfer of minors following our first intervention. This provides an opportunity for us to take a lead and share our expertise in matters linked to international jurisdiction

JTI on CWD and SEND: From 28 November 2016 to 2 December 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of Hillingdon to judge the effectiveness of our implementation of the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection process found that we are dedicated to developing strong joint working practices that result in improved outcomes for all groups of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and that we had a coherent plan to improve services further in response to local need is in place. The inspection also found that leaders in Hillingdon prioritise the safeguarding of children and young people and that without exception, children and young people who were spoken to during the inspection process said they are kept safe by

adults who support them. The process also identified that academic outcomes for children and young people in the local area are positive and that they achieve well because their needs are well catered for in schools, colleges and early years providers with a high proportion moving on successfully to employment or further education.

## **Workforce**

We are partners of the West London Social Work Teaching Partnership (WLSWTP). We link with a number of Universities for post qualifying courses and programmes. This year we have to date 8 social workers embarking on their practice education award and we further support students through offering shadowing opportunities, attending the University's readiness to practice panels and mentoring schemes.

Thirty one (31) children's social care managers have completed a Management and Leadership programme, designed specifically for social care managers and endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management. This programme consisted of 4 workshops (Orientation, Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Organisations) and 5 master classes that covered Hillingdon's processes around Recruitment & Selection, Absence Management, Performance Management, Finance and Supervision. The teaching on the modules was a mix of didactic teaching, group discussion, experiential learning, the use of psychometric tools and coaching sessions. The Modules were delivered primarily by an associate trainer of LHH Penna with support from the Council's L&D team. The Masterclasses were delivered by subject experienced professionals within Hillingdon. In order to pass the programme delegates were required to provide a portfolio of learning, identifying how they had improved their practice, what the impact on their team and service users had been as a result. As a learning organisation we will continue to support their development and the impact on their leadership of practice.

We have also invested in a Level 4 QCF qualification programme for our key-workers to support their professional knowledge, skills and experience in providing high quality family support to our families. Learning outcomes of the programme have been directly translated into practice, which in turn has enabled families in need of support to develop the resilience to overcome emergent as well as complex problems.

We have 3 newly qualified social workers in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment fully supported by both Learning and Development and operational children's social care staff. Whilst we are committed to growing our own we have limited the numbers of NQSWs to ensure they get the right support and opportunities. This also enables us to balance the needs of overseas recruits and their transition to UK practice

## **Children who need help and protection**

We have Early Intervention and Prevention Services as an integral part of the children's social care delivery model and established these principles across the partnership through our Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy endorsed by our Local Safeguarding Children Board. We have Introduced and embedded Early Help Assessment (EHA), Lead Professional and Team around the Family (TAF) processes so that families who need early help are identified and

supported by the most appropriate agency or individual at the first opportunity. The model includes the provision of key-worker support in the event that an appropriate lead professional cannot be identified to support the family and also facilitates the brokerage of access to targeted family support programmes as part of the team around the family planning process.

In addition, we have further developed our 'Local Offer' website with a view to providing families, including those with children with additional needs and disabilities with information which enables them to identify the services they need to support them including access to the local early learning and childcare offer.

We have remodelled both our health visiting and school nursing service and our children's centre programme in order to create an integrated locality based model for the provision of early help to families. The model services five localities with provision mapped against levels of need in each given locality. The provision is led by 5 hub centres with 11 satellite centres located throughout the borough. These services work collaboratively with the re-commissioned health visiting and school nursing services which now form an integrated Healthy Child Service.

We prioritise and focus on the needs of young people who offend and who are at risk of offending. Our Youth Offending Service Management Board has overseen the maintenance of effective performance in relation to reducing first time entrants, re-offending and custody rates. Our first-time entrant levels are below London, family group and national levels and our re-offending and custody rates are below London and group rates.

We continue to develop our approach and practice with partners with examples including our Restorative Justice practice which was shared at the Youth Justice Boards' Effective Practice Forum and colleagues from other London Boroughs have since approached the YOS for more information and advice and the development and implementation of the AXIS project, designed to provide LBH and its partners with a comprehensive picture of young people's involvement or risk of involvement in the cross cutting themes of Serious Youth Violence (SYV), Drug supply and distribution, sexual exploitation (both victims and perpetrators) and other forms of exploitation, within the Borough.

- **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub MASH Referral and Assessment (RAS)**

Triage and MASH evidence strong partnership engagement e.g.: Strong Police Team, Education, Housing, Health and Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) are now well established and collocated. Our front door services have been further strengthened by moving our Referral and Assessment (RAS) in-house from previous commissioned managed service arrangements, strengthening consistency of leadership and decision making.

On average, the MASH receives approximately 1900 contacts per month. A RAG system has been embedded to ensure a tailored and timely response to requests for assistance.

The implementation of a five week duty cycle in April 2017 was designed to enable experienced skilled and knowledgeable practitioners to spend more time with families. We will keep this arrangement under review both in relation to the number of assessments completed and the quality in the context of increased demand.

As a port authority we run alongside the Home Office a twenty four hour Heathrow rota. This enables us to intervene and safeguard children and their families at their point of entry into the UK. This supports us to respond promptly to requests made by SO15.

- **Family Support, Protection and Intervention (FS,P&I)**

On 30th September 2017 330 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan and 924 children subject of a child in need plan.

Our aim is to support families to overcome difficulties at the first opportunity through the application of early support processes including the previously mentioned early help assessment and team around the family processes. We also work with our partners to ensure that families are able to access the right service at the right time and that transfers between services 'step up step down' are seamless. To support this we are currently revisiting our referral and access to services pathway. This is a collaborative piece of work led by the AD for Early Intervention, Prevention and SEND. Families are supported to step down and away from the need for statutory support through collaborative work between social work teams and early intervention and prevention teams. This work includes enabling all vulnerable families to access the previously mentioned children's centre programme and the early learning and childcare offer in Hillingdon, by having their needs met through access to specialist targeted programmes.

The throughput and stock of work within the service is currently being reviewed by the new HOS following a review of the children subject to child in need plans which highlighted inconsistencies in the application of thresholds and timely progression of plans. As of November we have identified a dedicated IRO resource to review CIN cases which have been opened for longer than 6 months.

The CP plans which come to an end at the first review conference is also a focus area for the safeguarding team and the operational service areas. Bespoke training for the CP chairs is planned to strengthen the quality and consistency of CP plans coupled with additional training for the newly appointed team managers within RAS.

There is a well established Pre Proceedings Process which is accessed via HARP. The process includes clear identification of thresholds and intervention required within robust timescales. The HARP process also supports good management of transitions for children across service areas.

Targeted Early Intervention and Prevention Services have a menu of options available to support young people to remain safely in the community. For the last 6 months a representative from the Targeted Services have joined HARP to enhance the identification of tier 2 resources to meet identified needs.

The Key Working Team within children's social undertake direct rehabilitation intervention with children and parents where this has been assessed as in the child or young person's best interest.

At the time of the last inspection Hillingdon operated an all ages social work service for children with disability and adults. This was separated in August 2016. Social work services for children with disabilities are now delivered by a Children with Disabilities ( CWD) Team based within the Family Support, Prevention and Intervention Service. The team responds to referrals for children and young people aged 0 - 18. This team has a caseload of 189 children of which 9 are LAC and a further 9 the subject of a child protection plan.

The CWD team provides assessment and support to children and their families from initial assessment to transition to adulthood. Occupational Therapy services remain managed within adult services. Monthly transition planning meetings to support the transition of young people to adult services take place.

A review of the social care CWD specialist service is currently underway with focus on early transition planning, further exploration of personalised budgets, a new approach to short breaks and thresholds for intervention.

A wider suite of services in support of children with disabilities and their families are located within Early Intervention, Prevention and Special Education Needs (SEN) and Disabilities Services. The Inclusion Services, work with educational settings (early years, schools and colleges etc) to promote inclusive practice and provide support and guidance to meet children's needs. Early Support Services, which include Early Support Key-working provide a range of services based in the home that work in partnership with parent/carers in order to build strength and resilience for disabled children and families.

These services work alongside our SEN Services: managing the statutory assessment process of special educational needs for children and young people from 0-25. The SEN Team is responsible for ensuring that the Local Authority fulfils its statutory responsibilities listed within the Education Act 1996 and Children and Families Act 2014 and the Code of Practice. The team have the case management responsibility for children and young people who are undergoing an education, health and care needs assessment or have a an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Our Joint Area SEND inspection endorsed our collaborative approach to meeting the needs of children under five with SEND as evidenced by education, health and social care teams during the inspection process. The inspection found that the teams worked effectively with a cohesive culture of collaborative working. This culture is evident across the wider workforce.

- **Family Group Conference Service (FGC)**

Our FGC Service, contracted from DayBreak, provides an independent resource which enables families to contribute to identifying solutions to their own problems. Their work is consistent with our strengths-based approach, promoting a culture in which family resilience is improved and dependence on social work interventions reduced. There is good use of the service and this is promoted via HARP, supervision and Legal Planning Processes. Additional units outside the contract have been commissioned to respond to the increase in demand. Our Special

Guardianship (SG) team attends family group conferencing to assist with the early identification and assessment of family members when permanency cannot be achieved with parents.

## **Risk and Vulnerability**

We have a partnership approach to identifying and attending to risk and vulnerability in relation to children and young people and have strategies in place to both identify risk as well as facilitate collaborative action in response.

To support this approach we have recently introduced the previously mentioned Axis Project, an innovative approach to gathering, collating, and interrogating 'soft' intelligence and data in order to identify young people in Hillingdon at risk of being exposed to serious youth violence, child sexual exploitation, drug dealing and going missing from home/care. This information is being used to inform the targeting, coordination and delivery of local authority and partner resources to attend to identified risks. These resources include a variety of targeted programmes for young people ranging from targeted programmes delivered by the Youth Offending Service to achieve desistance in criminal activity to a wider programme offer including Detached and Mobile Youth Services which targeted identified areas of risk in collaboration with the Police and Community Safety to personal and social development programmes targeted at girls and young women and boys and young men at risk and targeted theatre education programmes in schools.

Our Violence and Vulnerability Panel meets regularly to review intelligence in relation to young people at risk of or involved in group and organised crime including serious youth violence and drug distribution and coordinate actions in response. Work is currently being progressed to review and strengthen related processes for the identification of children and young people at risk such as the MASE Panel with a view to having one integrated process for identifying and responding to Violence and Vulnerability related issues.

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

The CSE Strategy and Action Plan was launched in June 2015. An interim 2 year CSE prevention post was created in the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service to support the implementation of the strategy and action plan to enable it to become embedded in our everyday core business. A newly appointed Service Manager has the oversight and the operational risk and vulnerability lead.

There is a designated Detective Sergeant and Constable located within the MASH which has enabled a prompt response to CSE level 1 concerns. Operational working together between partner agencies has improved significantly. Border Force, Asylum Team and ECPAT attend the LSCB trafficking sub-group.

CSE training has been provided throughout the last two years to all agencies and awareness training delivered across local settings and businesses. A Hillingdon Information Sharing Protocol has been developed from Working Together and Pan London guidance. Hillingdon has created a CSE resource pack which is sent out to professionals. A comprehensive Victim Support Policy which contains pre and post-trial support for victims has been developed



A CSE process document has been developed and is given to all workers in their induction and through ongoing CSE training. CSE Risk Assessment and CSE toolkit is embedded in practice and reporting is addressed at the quarterly CSE sub-group of the LSCB.

The local DCI jointly Chairs all MASE meetings with the Head of Service for Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance as well as Police colleagues from the MASH, MISPER unit and Central CSE unit, health and education colleagues, CYPS (CSC, Early Help and Prevention, YOS) and third sector providers. A Children/Young people's profile template supports social workers to update the MASE panel.

Hillingdon have undergone two CSE peer reviews. The most recent review used the Ofsted JTAI framework for CSE. A 'Missing Tracker' is operational with information pulled from LCS. Cross checking of LCS data with Police data has highlighted some anomalies and our focus is to improve our data quality on LCS.

## Missing Children

A recent practice development is that missing children and young people are also presented to the MASE panel.

An annual Audit is carried out with each maintained school and offered to each Academy which scrutinises registers seeking further former pupils removed from roll.

Following the latest CME guidance in September 2016, Hillingdon has briefed all Hillingdon Head Teachers, including independent school Head Teachers as to their duties and obligations. A discreet CME mailbox has been created for ease of access for external parties to notify of CME. Each school in Hillingdon is obliged to return monthly data on pupils removed from roll, pupils on part time timetables, pupils attending 90% or less and pupils absent for 20 consecutive sessions. Hillingdon leads on a West London CME officer network to ensure effective communication with local LAs. A process from Admissions to CME function is designed and embedded when pupils do not arrive at their offered schools at transition points or when they refuse their allocated school even after the appeals process has been exhausted. Related CME training provided to professionals through the LSCB and Learning and Development offer to schools.

There is sharing of intelligence between relevant Senior Managers including the Children's Social Work and Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Service to cross check against the Missing Register. The child's details are uploaded to national data system (S2S) so colleagues in England can exchange information with Hillingdon if the CME arrives in their area.

A data sharing protocol is in place with the Border Agency to enable the identification of children missing education who may have left the country.

Independent return home interviews commissioned from NYAS are offered to all children who are looked after or subject to a CP or CIN plan returning home following their missing episode.

This contract has been in place for 4 years and is currently undergoing review. The purpose of review is to ensure that the service meets the current *contractual* expectations around take up, quality and timeliness of interviews.

- **Operation Safespace**

We are being proactive in our approach to children at risk of CSE and Children Missing. Operation Safespace ( which comes under the umbrella of Operation Makesafe), is a joint partnership between the Met Police and Children's Social Care aimed to identify and protect young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Uxbridge Town Centre.

Agreed joint intentions are

- To provide an effective response to resident, business and partner concerns about the crime & Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) issues caused by young people in Uxbridge Town Centre
- To prevent and deter crime & ASB in Uxbridge Town Centre
- Identify and deal effectively with those found committing crime & ASB
- Gather Intelligence following information that young people are committing crime & ASB, and may also be at risk of safeguarding and/or CSE risks.
- To take immediate steps as appropriate to safeguard young people found at risk, and ensure all contact is otherwise recorded and captured in line with MPS SOPs
- Engage with businesses and residents to provide reassurance about the police response, and increase intelligence to police through engagement.
- To improve the understanding and awareness of officer, staff and partners of safeguarding risks and how to deal with them.

There were three joint Safespace operations over two days during September/October 17. Feedback from these demonstrate:

- Excellent use was made of the CCTV room. The Police and the social care lead were able to identify young people and Police officers were directed to engage with them and disrupt any activities that caused concern.
- The teams gathered valuable information from the young people seen in the street.
- 'Stop and searches' procedures were conducted on a number of young males, where there was concerns linked to drug distribution however no arrests were made.
- All young people seen on the streets were identified and their parents/ carers were contacted and arrangements were made to return them to their homes or placement with appropriate follow up social work intervention.

- **Prevent**

Governance and Oversight

Ensuring delivery against the Prevent Duty sits under the auspices of the Chief Executive and is embedded within the Corporate Risk register.

Prevent activity is reported into the Local Strategic partnership, Safer Hillingdon Partnership, Strong and Active Communities Partnership and both the local children's and adults safeguarding boards.

Regular reviews are undertaken by members through the mechanism of internal and external services scrutiny committees.

### Working in Partnership

The local Prevent Partnership group works together to develop and implement the local Prevent plan for Hillingdon. This group has a broad membership from both within Council departments and other local statutory services. The group meets quarterly and reports into the Strong and Active Communities Partnership and regular updates are provided to the Safer Hillingdon Board and the LSP Executive.

Hillingdon Prevent lead attends the London Prevent Co-ordinators network on a monthly basis. This allows us to engage regularly with the Home Office and OSCT/MPS at a regional level in order to influence policy and practice. The network coordinates a London-wide response to incidents, as part of London resilience protocols.

Hillingdon has been involved in working with the London Prevent Board to develop a Local Authority self assessment tool to identify progress against the Prevent duty and as a way of identifying gaps and local needs. This tool will be rolled out nationally.

Brunel University are a long standing partner of Hillingdon. We are in liaison with the University in relation to a proposed piece of academic research into the role social workers play in Prevent and safeguarding. This is an area where there has been little research undertaken to date, and we hope that this will enable learning and inform local and national practice.

### Risk Assessment

There is ongoing information exchange between the Council and Police and regular meetings are held where information, intelligence and local concerns are discussed, and any actions required at a local level are agreed.

This intelligence informs our local assessment of risk and a proportionate response. The risk assessment helps us to understand any potential community tensions and concerns which may occur in the borough and where to target our focus and resources in order to manage them.

### Staff Training

All staff are required to have an understanding of Prevent and how to make safeguarding referrals for those who are identified as vulnerable to radicalisation. Plans to deliver training to carers and external providers is in place

The local authority Prevent lead delivers training to council staff and to other partner agencies in the borough. 3400 staff across the borough have received this training to date. Agencies are also signposted to other e-learning and online resources as well as receiving support and advice on managing safeguarding concerns.

Ongoing training and advice is provided by the Prevent lead to social care staff and other partner agencies.

The Prevent Lead and Deputy Director for Children's Services meet on a monthly basis to identify trends and gaps and potential areas of risk.

## **Safeguarding and Management of Prevent referrals**

### Process and assessment

Within MASH there is an identified single point of contact (SPOC) for radicalisation. Referrals/ contacts relating to radicalisation are shared with the Boroughs Prevent Lead and Police from SO15 for assessment.

The Channel panel in Hillingdon is well established. The panel is chaired by Hillingdon's Prevent lead and has representation from health, mental health, children's services, early intervention, LADO, police, housing, Youth Offending, probation, schools/education.

Being a port authority we manage any referrals relating to the safeguarding of children that come through the airport including those relating to counterterrorism. We have introduced a protocol with the counter terrorism police at Heathrow airport, to ensure timely sharing of information in order to best assess needs. This protocol is currently being tested with the intention to be adopted as a model for 'port authorities' nationally.

### Prevent Referral trends

In the last 6 months we have seen a significant increase in referrals, this reflects the national trend. The numbers of referrals requiring no further action have remained between 45/50%. Whilst referrals are mainly related to influence of groups such as ISIS (Daesh) in Hillingdon we are also receiving those related to the extreme far right.

A recent trend has seen a number of young people on the autistic spectrum being referred. The response needs to be matched to the specific needs of this group of young people.

Schools and education establishments in the borough are the main source of referrals received in relation to radicalisation.

The Prevent lead provides training for school staff and attends the school safeguarding leads hub meetings on a regular basis to ensure schools are supported and equipped in relation to

the Prevent Duty. Feedback from schools locally has been very positive and they very much value this support.

We work with local partners through the Strong and Active communities partnership to build resilience. Engagement with the community is a key aspect of the Prevent work.

Local schools, the college and Brunel University are pro-active partners in delivering against the aims of Prevent and the wider duty in relation to promoting British values.

We are running a 2 year MOPAC funded programme in collaboration with schools, the college, University and community aimed at tackling hate crime and extremism. The aim is to equip young people and members of community groups to challenge hate crime and extremism, keep themselves safe from negative influence, develop critical thinking skills, increase understanding of others and build positive relationships.

- **Other Hidden Harms**

The FGM strategy and action plan is contained within the council's Domestic Abuse Strategy. Through the multi-agency forums agencies continue to share good practice and raise awareness.

The LSCB provides training to all frontline staff across partner agencies. This includes mandatory e-learning course for all children's social workers. Children's Social Care has produced a FGM resource pack for frontline practitioners that is available to all children and young people's services staff, partner agencies and schools.

Hillingdon has a named GP to refer cases of FGM who is a member of the Hillingdon Sexual Violence and Public Health Sub-group. Community Group representation on the Sexual Violence and Public Health sub-group.

There is a well established relationship between UKBA and Children's Social Care in preventing and deterring FGM through Operation Limelight and awareness and identification of Forced Marriage

UKBA and Children's Social Care deliver training to airline staff to identify possible signs of FGM and have processes in place to report concerns.

The Domestic Abuse Education Officer includes FGM in the Domestic Abuse training delivered to Colleges and Secondary schools.

A themed training session 'Understanding the Trauma and Psychological Impact of harmful Practices (honour based violence, forced marriage, FGM) is delivered through the LSCB. The Hillingdon Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Service Policy and Procedures include Forced Marriage.

The referral process into Children's Social Care is made into the MASH and normal safeguarding procedures are followed.

Four Forced Marriage Prevention Orders have been granted 2014-2016.

## **Children looked after and achieving permanency**

At the end of September 2017, Hillingdon was the corporate parent for 294 children and 397 care leavers. 29% of those looked after as of 30th September 2017 came via the airport, both asylum seeking and unaccompanied.

As a consequence of more than 0.07% of the local children's population being UASC we work closely with the Home Office to identify suitable placements for looked after children under the dispersal scheme for UASC. The sharing of knowledge and good practice, developed in Hillingdon, has helped shape the processes used by the Home Office and other London boroughs.

Our LAC population remains unique. Most of our children are aged fourteen (14) plus and more than 40% of this cohort are asylum seeking children. For those that are not being dispersed Hillingdon will remain their corporate parent, assisting them up until the age of 25 under the new Act.

We are committed to evidence based trauma informed practice. Our in-house specialist Multi-Agency Psychological Service (MAPS) delivers bespoke services to looked after children and their carers including therapeutic input and guidance to ensure their mental health needs are met. They also review all children and young people scoring high in their SDQ assessments. They routinely attend placement stability meetings and their role supports our work to improve children and young people's lived experience in their placement.

Over 90% of our Looked After Children have up to date health assessments.

Our multi-agency NEET working group and NEET Panel (virtual school, IRO, Providers and social workers/PAs) work closely to improve educational attendance and outcomes of our Looked After Children.

This academic year we have 62 care leavers who are in universities (68% of care leavers are EET and 28% NEET).

The NEET audit completed in summer 2017 evidenced active engagement with children and young people exploring various options including colleges, pre-employment training and apprenticeships. 6 of the 22 identified young people have since returned to education and training. Although it is still early days, the NEET panel appears to be achieving good results in enabling young people to return to education and training.

The revamped Legal Planning Meetings (LPM) including review LPMs are chaired by a Head of Service. A case progression officer is tracking progress to ensure no drift occurs. Midways reviews are effective to ensure early permanency and managed transitions. All requests for LPMs, S20 accommodation and Placement moves are presented at Hillingdon Access to

Resources Panel (HARP) which ensures consistent thresholds are applied as well as early Permanency Planning.

We have two dedicated court teams. This, supported by a case progression officer and a tight PLO process has made significant improvements in timeliness and the quality of assessments for children subject to court and pre-proceedings. At present there are 41 children subject to court proceedings and our projected timeframes for completing proceedings is within the required 26 weeks. There are 36 children subject to pre proceedings PLO and the average is 9.2 weeks (well within 12 weeks as set by the PLO). The pre proceedings cases are subject to 6 and 12 weekly LPM to review the progress and avoid drift.

Feedback from judiciary and court liaison meetings indicate strong performance in relation to our timescales and the quality of the work for those children subject to care proceedings

All children under the age of 14 looked after under s20 for more than 6 weeks have legal planning meetings (LPM) to avoid delay and drift and enable early permanency planning.

There is a strong grip of all children accommodated under s20. At present there are 17 children subject to S20 agreements under the age of 14. The breakdown is as follows (as of 23 October 2017):

- 1 is a court endorsed section 20 with a view to rehabilitate an adoption breakdown
- 1 is a relinquished child and has recently been matched with prospective adopters.
- 3 children are placed in approved reg 24 placements and LA is supporting the family in their application for SGO
- 1 is an asylum seeking child in a foster placement and a SGO assessment of a family member in Birmingham is being progressed
- 1 is a child relinquished at birth by their mother, father opposes mother's decision and care proceedings are now being issued in this case.
- 8 children are subject to S20 at pre proceeding stage and all of these have been LAC under 3 months 3 of these have become Looked After since 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2017
- 2 children are receiving short term breaks under CWD respite care provision.

All new looked after children are referred for a permanency planning meeting (PPM) by week 5 of the care episode so that parallel planning can begin.

All children who are subject to care proceeding are currently in the PPM process and all looked after children are cross referenced with the referrals for PPMs to ensure these children are referred in a timely way. Children under 14 have their matches presented at the Fostering and Adoption Panel and children over 14 to HARP.

A task and finish across service group is about to be launched chaired by the Head of Service for Children Resources, which will continue the transformation work supporting achieving early permanency for all looked after children, including reunification with birth families and secure the best alternative care arrangement for children who have a plan to remain living away from home ensuring that the child lived experience is understood and apparent in direct work with children and informs planning.

There is a consistent approach to responding to escalations from IROs who routinely raise issues on behalf of children and young people. This is evidence by early resolution with minimal numbers being escalated to the Deputy Director.

Feedback from our children and young people gathered individually as part of looked after children reviews alongside feedback from Children in Care Council and NYAS advocacy service.

- **Connected persons**

Our early engagement with families and a robust approach to temporarily regulating family and friends carers supports early permanence and keeping children within their extended network whenever possible, It is anticipated that we will have 20 SG placements by the end of the year. The kinship team and the social care teams are working together to ensure the matching of the needs of the child and the carers.

- **Adoption**

There have been significant improvements in the number of days taken to secure a child in their adoptive placement. The permanency Team Manager and Head of Service for children resources monitor the progress of all children post an adoption decision until the adoption order is granted, to ensure that the necessary stages to secure a child's permanency are being addressed underpinned by quality practice and a focus on timeliness.

Hillingdon remains an active member of the West London Adoption and Permanence Consortium with a current focus on taking forward on a consortium basis as well as an individual authority the regionalisation agenda.

We have recently experienced three adoption breakdowns We held independently chaired disruption meetings to collectively review our practice. The learning will inform the work in the early performance working group. We have also made immediate changes to the selection and matching process for children with an adoption care plan including HOS scrutiny of the child's proposed match. Each match has a mandatory consultation with MAPS

We also have a number of children accommodated by Hillingdon following adoption breakdowns. These were adoptions made in other parts of the country and subsequently families have moved to our area. The impact of adoption breakdown on the children involved has resulted in many demonstrating behaviour and emotional challenges that require therapeutic and residential placements.

We are on track to having 21 Adoptions by the end of 2017. At the start of 2016 Hillingdon had 20 approved adoptive families waiting for a child. A decision was made to cease adopter recruitment until this number was reduced. Currently there are only 3 families waiting a match. The recruitment of adopters is under consideration



## Foster care recruitment

Recruitment remains a challenge for us. An annual recruitment plan using a range of marketing methods to attract people, including foster carers wishing to transfer from other agencies to come to Hillingdon as potential foster carers is in place. Close partnership working with the press and communication team support the 'Be the One' campaign.

A programme of 'skills to foster preparation training' is in place with new developments to strengthen the Hillingdon offer including a new 'Getting Ready to Foster' day and induction for newly approved carers to support their first post approval year.

Foster carers are involved in the recruitment of new carers, through working with staff at face to face marketing events, contribution to preparation training and sharing their experiences through various media channels.

Hillingdon foster carers are also offered a generous referral fee in support of the value and impact of word of mouth referrals.

Meeting our sufficiency duty remains a challenge in terms of approving new fostering households. This is despite a focused approach where the operational plan is kept under ongoing review through fortnightly recruitment meetings. It is important to note that the largest UK independent fostering agency is located close to Hillingdon Civic Centre and this generates direct close competition for the scarce local resources of suitable people to foster looked after children.

- **Hillingdon registered Foster carers**

We currently have 95 approved fostering households. 50% In-house and 50% IFA. This figure has remained stable for the last year with Hillingdon foster carers working at full capacity.

We have been successful in using solo IFA placements as a step down from residential provision.

Foster carers have access to a monthly support group. There are plans in place to extend this to evening groups as of 2018.

Learning and development for foster carers is a key priority. A new panel adviser role, with a lead on improving carers learning and development has successfully been recruited to.

Foster care reviews are held on time with 100 % of reviews held within timescale. A dedicated fostering reviewing officer located in the Quality Assurance Service chairs the review meeting. Feedback from carers and children at these reviews inform our training plans.

As of this year all Hillingdon foster carers review reports are presented to the Fostering and Adoption Panel every three years to provide the independent scrutiny of internal fostering resources and to provide Hillingdon foster carers with the opportunity to receive feedback about their valuable work in caring for Hillingdon's looked after children. This is a new development

and work is underway between the panel chair, advisor and the fostering service to make this a positive experience for foster carers.

Work to review the collection of stakeholder feedback is underway in consultation with the Children in Care Council and foster cares.

- **Placements**

Placements for children with complex needs e.g. youth violence CSE remain in short supply. There is a national demand for these resources. Hillingdon has some residential care provision which enables us to be creative in how we manage risk at times where there is not a suitable placement available at the point of need.

Placements are brokered through the placement team who have good relationships with a wide range of providers to meet the diverse needs of the Hillingdon LAC population. A dynamic Purchasing System is currently being worked on for IFA and residential care provision via West London Alliance.

A clear matching procedure is in place and relevant ADM approval for placements in excess of 20 miles or outside of a neighbouring borough.

Suitable accommodation for our UASC population is sourced and provided through a mixed economy of Hillingdon's two residential care homes, a semi independent unit for males 16-18 years old ( Olympic House) and foster care placements.

## **Hillingdon owned residential care homes for children and young people**

The Local Authority has 3 registered children's homes:

**Charville Lane** - 13 beds, predominantly for children up to the age of 18 who are seeking asylum.

**Merrifields House** - 9 beds, 4 beds for local children with emotional and behavioural difficulties who require a period of assessment prior to placement and 5 beds for respite for children with disabilities. The two units are separate in the building but have a combined staff team and registered manager.

**Hillingdon Children's Resource Centre** - Mulberry Parade - 6 short term placement beds for local and asylum young people, with an emphasis of supporting them to either return to home, placement and or education.

The Council has two Operational Lead Managers to oversee quality and performance in the registered care homes, they conduct regular audits of the services to ensure progress and improvement is achieved in all areas.

Ofsted ratings for the homes are; Merrifields - Outstanding, HCRC - Good and Charville - Good. We are working towards 'Outstanding' in all areas.

Independent regulation 44 visits are carried out and the services complete reg. 45 reports in line with regulations.

A new building has been found and is being refurbished for registration at the end of the year to replace the HCRC service. Refurbishment of the Charville Lane building has been taking place with CCTV being fitted shortly. The quality of the accommodation is being improved across all services.

Training programmes across all services have been updated and current areas of challenge addressed. These include;

- Restorative Justice guidelines, training and practice implemented
- Prevent and Channel training and ongoing workshops in house
- FGM and CSE focus on educating young people
- Substance misuse and awareness training for staff on spotting signs of Class A drug use, recreational drug use and legal highs. Links to SORTED developed.

Partnership working with MAPS, CAMHS and PBS to ensure the mental health and behavioural needs of young people are being met has been greatly improved this year. All managers and some staff have 'Team Teach' and ProAct Scip training in behavioural approaches, this combined with the adoption of the Restorative Justice policy has supported us to manage the challenges presented by some young people in residential settings.

Good expertise and knowledge of ASD in the services supports an increasing number of young people with autism presenting challenging needs/behaviour who require short term interventions.

We have used our children's homes flexibly in order to create provision for some of the challenging young people that other providers would not accommodate successful outcomes.

Care leavers are supported in a range of external semi independent provision which is spot purchased and managed through a block contract, which includes shared houses rented from the private sector. Hillingdon are committed to increasing the number of our young people in 'Staying Put' arrangements. This currently stands at thirteen (13).

A monitoring system is in place to ensure that monitoring visits to semi independent properties is carried out at least annually.

We have experienced multiple placements moves for some vulnerable children. A placement stability working group is being established, chaired by the HOS for children's resources with a view to support children in placement and embed across the service the placement stability procedure and deliver a significant culture change.

Provider forums have been introduced with the first scheduled December 2017. This is an opportunity to keep providers abreast of local developments, e.g. CSE, missing, receive feedback from providers and promote collaborative working.

- **Post Adoption Centre UK**

This commissioned service works flexibly according to our needs. Six free counselling sessions are offered to all Hillingdon adopters and special guardians as we promote early identification and support. 14 families (10 adoptions 4 SG) have accessed this year Adoption Support Fund following support needs assessments and worked proactively to help families make use of this resource.

- **Private Fostering (PF)**

We are working towards raising public and professional awareness of PF. There are 9 children living in private fostering arrangements. Monthly monitoring meetings take place to oversee all cases and ensure that joint working between private fostering staff and the children's social workers is robust. This is chaired by a Head of Service and attended by a lead Operational Service Manager.

New publicity material has been designed to support the awareness of the issue of PF and a communications plan is in place to be launched once the final approval of new material is finalised by elected members.

The LSCB oversees the awareness raising across the partnership of the responsibilities for notification.

## **Virtual School**

We have invested in the Virtual School in order to improve educational outcomes for our looked after children. As a result of this investment, the Virtual School comprises of 11 team members, VS Head, Senior VS Practitioner, 6 Lead Practitioners and 3 VS Officers. All looked after children from Nursery - 18 have an allocated VS caseworker.

The Virtual School tracks attainment and progress for all our looked after children, whether placed in or out of borough through the termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) process. The VSH employ 'Welfare Call' to collect information on the attendance, punctuality and exclusions of all looked after children, as well as end of KS1, 2 and 4 results. This information is used to track the day-to-day attendance of children and young people about whom there are concerns and to provide overall virtual school data to inform practice and improvement. This work is supported by monthly reporting of KPI's and half termly focus group meetings chaired by VS Key Stage lead Practitioners to discuss attainment, progress, interventions and strategies for improvement.

We have continued to improve outcomes at KS4 with 20% achieving the old headline measure of 5 good A\*-C GCSE including English and maths last academic year, compared to 18.2% in 2015/16. National figure from 2015/16 was 13.6%.

We also recorded 28% for the new headline measure of achieving level 4 -9 in English (language or literature) and maths, with an average attainment of 28.53. The national statistic for this in 2015/16 was 22.8.

The attainment of the cohort in relation to those who obtained age related expectation or above in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar and maths at the end of KS 2 was 43%, 57%, 29% and 43% respectively exceeding or meeting our targets of 29%, 14%, 14% and 43%.

43% of the cohort achieved expected attainment in reading, writing and maths, compared to the national stats for 2015/16 of 25%.

From September 2016, the Virtual School assumed responsibility for the completion of PEPs, which includes both initial PEPs and reviews, these are recorded on an electronic platform (EPEP). This is supported by a robust quality assurance process has resulted in significant improvements to completion rates and quality, with 100% convened and written in timescale and in excess of 93% RAG rated green and therefore of high quality.

To ensure that funding is appropriately utilised on targeted interventions to meet the needs of looked after children as outlined in their PEP, the VSH developed and implemented a new PP+ protocol with commissioning plan which places greater responsibility on schools and education provisions to make effective use of the PP+ funding allocated to looked after children.

Considerable progress has been made to narrow the attainment gap and improve educational outcomes for Children Looked After under the care of Hillingdon, we still recognise that there are areas that require further improvement. Attendance and Exclusions are two areas with current local statistics falling short of national figures. Average attendance of statutory school age CLA last academic year was 93.52%, with % persistent absentees raising concern. Similarly, we have seen an increase in the % of fixed term exclusions and the number of school days lost as a result.

For both attendance and exclusions work has already commenced to address the issues and further work is planned as outlined in the VS self assessment framework.

- **Corporate Parenting Board**

The Corporate Parenting Board oversees the delivery of corporate parenting responsibilities to looked after children, young people and care leavers. The Board is chaired by an Elected Member nominated by the Leader of The Council and is supported by working groups. These are also chaired by elected members across the council, covering the following key areas: Education, Health & Well Being, Leaving Care & Transitions, Participation & Social Development, Safeguarding.

Corporate parenting subgroups chaired by elected members provide regular scrutiny and feedback on our practice and performance highlighting the strengths and areas for development, e.g. An up to date joint guidance has been developed with health to strengthen our collective practice in managing health needs of our looked after children and care leavers.

The work of the board is informed by the Children in Care council with their participation in and influence on the board being key to understanding the experience of being a looked after child in Hillingdon.

The Children in Care Council has representation across the age ranges, 'Talkers' aged 7-11 years, 'Stepping Up' aged 12-15 years and 'Stepping out' aged 16 and over. The groups meet on a monthly basis and undertake a range of activities which contribute to planning and delivery of services for looked after children on a local and national level. Young people represent children in care on recruitment panels and in fostering and adoption panel meetings. To promote child led practice it is planned that in the near future the board will be co chaired by a young person.

The Children in Care Council organise two annual events for Care Leavers and Looked After Children. This Year's Care Leavers event is taking place in October 2017 its theme '*Education, Training and Employment - chasing your dreams.*' The event is being held in Care Leavers week with the support of Brunel University, who are hosting the event. The event is aimed at raising young people's aspirations, give them inspiration and motivation in respect of their education, training and employment.

The KICA is an annual event held to celebrate the achievements of Hillingdon's Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Each year we ask professionals who are involved with our children (social workers, teachers, foster carers to nominate children and young people who deserve recognition for something they have achieved. This year 198 children and young people are nominated and invited to attend the event. The event is taking place on 18th November 2017 and sponsored by Sofitel. Children and young people help to organise and present the awards ceremony and they choose a theme, this year's theme is "*Our streets, a celebration of our community*".

## **Plans to maintain and improve practice**

We are in the process of developing a refreshed '**Family Pathway' Plan** which clearly sets out the commitment and priorities for families in Hillingdon to secure the best possible outcomes.

**Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy** is in place to drive continuous improvement in our work across the partnership to address our collective ambition to prevent the human and financial cost of poor outcomes for children, young people and families.

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy** has been refreshed, informed by the outcomes of our Targeted Area SEND Inspection so that we may build on the areas of strength identified and address areas for development.

**Youth Justice Strategic Plan** serves as the partnership vehicle to deliver against the collective ambition and responsibility to prevent youth offending.

Our business as usual improvements;

- Ensuring our practice keeps the child, their wishes and feelings as our focus and working to understand their lived experience.

- Ensuring we effectively plan interventions to make a noticeable difference and improve their life chances and outcomes
- Focus on recruitment, retention and upskilling of social workers and our wider children's workforce
- Practice observations of our social workers and other professionals within children's services to inform and drive quality of practice
- Focus on consistent application of thresholds throughout the service, all the way from early help in the community to the front door to leaving care
- Up-skill social workers and children's workforce to and equip them with the right tools for the assessment and management of neglect (we are looking at commissioning Graded Care Profile 2 training to support our multi agency approach to assessment and intervention for children experiencing neglect) A focus on building and maintaining strength based working relationships with all service users
- Foster carer recruitment
- Strengthen IROs practice to ensure a focus on permanency planning
- Focus on delivering a consistent approach to anti discriminatory practice as we strive to meet the diverse racial, religious, cultural, gender, class and sexuality needs of Hillingdon's children, their families and care providers
- Effective commissioning of services, on a local and regional basis to deliver quality and best value

Key Priorities embedded within our Children's Service plan:

- Management of caseload volume and reduce variation across the service; with focus on thresholds and progression of plans
- Improved management of transitions, focusing on consistent step up/step down transitions across social care and early help through the consistent application of the lead professional role, use of the early help assessment and team around the family processes
- Minimise the number of changes of social worker for all children and families
- Ongoing development of the quality and effectiveness of CIN CP and Care leaver pathway plans
- The effectiveness and robustness of the CP chairs
- Stability of placements for looked after children, getting it right first time around
- Strengthen our practice on missing children, to include revamped independent advocacy offer.
- Develop team manager's' ability to have courageous conversations when managing performance
- Strengthen supervision of practice to ensure it is consistently evidenced through contemporaneous supervision notes and LSC case supervision records
- Strengthen compliance with LCS recording requirements to support and evidence progress of plans and outcomes for children, whilst strengthening data quality.
- Increase service user consultation and engagement into shaping practice and commissioning activity

