

**Meeting:** Family Friendly Sub-Committee

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Title:** Safeguarding update

---

**Author:** Mary Connor

**Service:** Childrens Services

**Wards affected:** All Wards

---

## 1. Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with an update on current information in relation to children open to children's social care over Quarter 1 and 2 20/23 and provide some information about our comparison against regional indicators for Quarter 2

To provide an update on some of our key service developments over the next few months in children's social care.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that committee members:

1. Take note of the contents of the report.
2. Offer any suggestions for future reports in this area.

## 3. Information

### Performance

3.1 Quarter 1 saw an increase in the number of referrals received month on month and reached 210 in June. There was a slight reduction in referrals in

the middle part of Quarter 2 to 142 in August (which would be normal in the school summer holidays) before picking up again in September to 200. Our rate of referrals per 10,000 in Quarter 2 is below the North East average at 523.4 per 10,000 and has reduced by 3.9% on 22/23.

3.2 The total number of children in need who were open to statutory social work services has fluctuated across Quarter 1 and 2 starting from 1654 children in April with a reduction during the summer and into the end of Quarter 2 down to 1617. We continued to have one of the lowest rates of children in need per 10,000 in the region in Quarter 2 at 386.5 per 10,000 and saw a reduction of 3.9% on the same point in 22/23.

3.3 The number of children on a child protection plan has remained consistently lower than 2022/23. In Quarter 2 North Tyneside had the lowest rate of children on a child protection plan per at 40.6 10,000 in the region and there was a 20.9% reduction on the rate at the same time in 22/23. The main reasons for children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan remain emotional abuse and neglect.

3.4 We have seen a rise in our children in care number across Quarters 1 and 2, with 7.8% of these being Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Despite this we still have the second lowest rate of children in our care at 92 per 10,000 in the region in Quarter 2.

3.5 We have had a number of inspections or monitoring visits to our internal residential children's homes provisions in Quarters 1 and 2. Riverdale and Sycamore were both rated Good. Beech had a monitoring visit as a result of a previous inspection finding of Requires Improvement and was deemed to be making appropriate progress.

### Service Developments

3.6 A key area for development continues to be the recruitment and retention of staff in key service areas in social care, primarily social workers, early

help staff and residential workers. This is a regional and national challenge with all local authorities. We are working with the recruitment and communications teams to develop approaches to make us stand out from other authorities and are reviewing our current wellbeing offer to staff to ensure it continues to meet needs.

3.7 We are providing a range of management development support to managers across the service through a number of different ways recognising the important role that our first line managers, particularly, play in ensuring the quality of practice with children and families.

3.8 We continue to monitor the amount and types of homes we need for children in our care across all areas and develop these. This includes being part of the regional Fostering pilot which has been developed as part of the 'Stable Homes Built on Love'. We also continue to review and develop our own internal group living accommodation. Positively our supported accommodation provision for 16/17 year olds, Starting Point, is now registered with Ofsted.

3.9 We have led on a DfE funded piece of work 'Childrens Voices' which has involved jointly working with Northumberland, Professors Eileen Munro and Andrew Turnell to test out ways in which practitioners can use different approaches to gathering children's voices and using feedback to inform their work. It has involved national working with Coram Voice and gathering views from other local authorities to provide recommendations to the DfE around potential ways in which how local authorities gather and use feedback from children and families could be measured.

3.10 We have started to roll out 'Family Seeing' training to support practice in enabling families to develop family networks by the use of a range of tools. The first session of training took place in November with further training planned and regular support opportunities planned for staff who have attended to help embed them in practice.

#### **4. Background Information**

4.1 The senior management team in children's social care receive a range of reports providing data to monitor the number of children involved with the children's care system. This includes a monthly dashboard presented to the senior management team containing the key information highlighted above.

4.2 Regionally we provide data to enable a regional quarterly report to be produced. South Tyneside take the lead for producing this report.

4.3 Childrens social care has a number of plans and strategies which support the development work we are doing.

## **5. Appendices**

None