

**Report of: Corporate Director of Children, Employment and Skills**

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	26 June 2018	All

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## **SUBJECT: Child Protection Annual Report**

### **1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Committee on the progress being made in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Islington's most vulnerable children.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Committee scrutinise the headline performance outcomes;
- 2.2 That the Committee scrutinise the governance arrangements for safeguarding children;
- 2.3 That the Committee scrutinise the findings of quality assurance activities.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The welfare of Islington's vulnerable children is rightly one of the Council's highest priorities. Islington Safeguarding and Family Support Service (SFSS) is currently working with 1196 children in need, 337 children who are looked after, of which 16 are disabled children and 41 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). We have 374 care leavers and 217 children with child protection plans. The majority of child protection plans are because of emotional abuse or neglect. Characteristics of parents whose children have child protection plans include domestic violence and abuse (36%), adult mental health problems (27%) and adult substance misuse (25%).
- 3.2 In the year 2017-18, Islington was subject to an "Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board". Leadership, Management and Governance was graded Outstanding, children in need of help and protection, children looked after, adoption performance and services for care leavers were all graded good, as was the Safeguarding Board. Ofsted's executive summary highlighted that: "Children's services in Islington benefit from highly ambitious, capable and confident

operational and political leadership. The population of Islington is richly diverse. Some localities have high levels of social deprivation, and many families in need of support have highly complex needs. The borough has a number of challenges in relation to gang culture, knife crime and substance misuse. Nevertheless, almost all vulnerable children who come into contact with children's services receive good support from resilient and well-managed staff. Building on the safeguarding and children looked after inspection of 2012, services continue to be good, underpinned by outstanding leadership, management and governance”.

#### **4. Governance Arrangements**

- 4.1 The governance and scrutiny of the arrangements for safeguarding children take place through this Committee and the following inter-agency fora:
- 4.2 **Safeguarding Accountability Meetings** chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Children and Families, Corporate Director of Children Employment and Skills, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board and the Director of Safeguarding and Family Support Service. The meeting is held eight weekly and allows senior members to hold senior officers and the chair of the Board to account, to scrutinise performance related to vulnerable children, to be appraised of any concerns about the safety and welfare of children and to drive improvement.
- 4.3 **Corporate Parenting Board**, chaired by the Executive Member for Children and Families and attended by four elected members, senior officers and representatives of the In Care Council. The Board meets eight weekly and scrutinises performance and strategic planning related to children in care and care leavers, sets direction and drives improvement.
- 4.4 **Islington Safeguarding Children Board (ISCB)** is chaired by an independent chair, the Board meets eight weekly. This is a statutory body responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of inter-agency safeguarding and the co-operation of partners. The Board has sub-committees which drive and co-ordinate quality assurance, training, Missing and Exploitation, Serious Case Reviews and the Child Death Overview Panel which reviews all the cases of children who die through natural causes, accidents or through abuse/ neglect to evaluate whether improvements to practice would reduce future tragedies.
- 4.5 ISCB agrees local priorities and monitors actions taken to implement them. The Board completed one serious case review during the year.
- 4.6 The Independent Chair of the ISCB reported in his annual report of 2016-17 that “The Board partners have worked hard to ensure that front-line practice is as good as it can be to keep children in Islington safe from harm and abuse. The Board was delighted that following the recent Ofsted review of the effectiveness of the LSCB it was found to be Good”
- 4.7 The ISCB annual report evaluates the effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection in Islington and has set the following priorities, to improve the collective effectiveness of agencies in:
  - 1) Addressing the impact of neglect on children, including by helping them to become more resilient.
  - 2) Addressing the consequences / harm suffered as a result of domestic violence, parental mental health and substance abuse.
  - 3) Identification of children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and holding perpetrators to account.
- 4.8 The Annual Report of the ISCB will be presented to the Committee in March 2019.

## 5. Islington's Motivational Practice Model and Sector Led Improvement

5.1 The DfE granted nearly £5m to children's social care in two Phases to transform services to improve outcomes for children and their families. Phase 1 involved building a practice model- "Motivational Social Work" and Phase 2 altered the Practice Model to enhance it and include Trauma Informed Practice. It also involved expanding the reach to include children who receive an early help service and Looked After Children- "Motivational Practice Model". Phase 3 now involves working with other Local Authorities to improve their practice and outcomes for their children- sector led improvement. The practice model is relationship based and feedback from children, families, staff, services and Ofsted has been very positive. This Practice Model is starting to demonstrate impact on our data for example re-referral rates.

## 6. Performance Management and Quality Assurance

6.1. In order to ensure that Islington's most vulnerable children are safe and that our services continuously improve, a range of quality assurance measures are employed to continually test the quality of our service provision and to learn lessons about how to improve.

6.2 Through performance management we are able to use key performance indicators as a 'proxy' measure for quality of service and to support service improvement. Caution needs to be exercised in relying on performance indicators in isolation as it is possible to have good performance but poor quality of service; although conversely it is unlikely that there could be good quality of service and poor performance. Therefore, to ensure that there is a comprehensive understanding of the quality of service both quantitative and qualitative information must be reviewed.

6.3 The data tells us that

- We received 11, 819 contacts requesting a service for children, a marked increase from 2015-16 and a slight decrease from 2016-17. The most common source of contacts is the police (36%), followed by schools (11%);
- The most common reasons for contacts were domestic violence, parenting capacity, physical abuse and parental mental health;
- 3,753 (32%) went on to receive an early help service and 2,761 (23%) went onto receive a social care service;
- We had the 25<sup>th</sup> highest rate of assessed Children in Need in the country in 2016/17;
- We had a slightly higher number of children per 10,000 with child protection plans compared to our statistical neighbours (SN) in 2016/17 (50 per 10,000 for Islington, 45 per 10,000 for our SN);
- We have carried out far more child protection enquiries than statistical neighbours- see paragraph 6.28;
- We had a lower proportion of repeat child protection plans compared to our SN (12% compared to 16%);
- Children do not have child protection plans for lengthy periods of time, this means that the harm they suffered is resolved as quickly as it can be;
- We apply to court for orders to protect children more often than most other boroughs;
- The number of children subject to court orders has risen;
- Islington has more children looked after per 10,000 than SN;
- The proportion of Looked After children who had to move more than three times during a year is slightly higher than our SN (12% compared to 10.4%);
- Stability of placements for Looked After children is challenging particularly during adolescence;
- More children 16+ are becoming looked after, and more 11 -15 year olds are becoming looked after than was the case 4 years ago;
- More young people are remaining with their foster carers after their 18th birthday;
- Placements for children looked after are becoming much more difficult to find, there is a national shortage of foster homes and significant challenges of supply within the children's homes sector; 32% of Islington children are placed more than 20 miles away;

- 4 children were subject to secure orders to protect them from absconding and harm related to Child Sexual Exploitation and gangs;
- 8 children were adopted and 37 made the subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

6.4 A monthly meeting is held within the Safeguarding and Family Support Service that holds all Senior Managers to account on the key performance data and the quality of the intervention to families. From monitoring key performance indicators we are able to identify that:

- One in 10 children who receive early help go on to receive a social care service;
- Children who have child protection plans have a core group of professionals who have prescribed tasks in respect of their involvement with the child;
- Children who have child protection plans have their plan reviewed after three months and six monthly thereafter;
- Children have an allocated social worker within 48 hours of being referred to the service and following assessment have a plan that sets out the actions required to improve their outcomes; children newly allocated to a social worker are seen within 10 days (sooner if needed);
- Children looked after are seen at four weekly, six weekly or 3 monthly intervals in accordance with their needs and placement stability;
- A proportionate number of disabled children are subject to child protection procedures;
- All children looked after are independently reviewed every six months;
- Social Work caseloads vary from 9 - 26 children per worker for Children in Need, 20 for Disabled Children and 10-19 children per worker for Children Looked After. This variance is due to staff turnover and the need for newly qualified staff to have protected caseloads. A caseload of 15 children maximum is the accepted standard.

6.5 To assure the quality of our safeguarding services we routinely review qualitative information alongside performance data through our Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). There are a wide range of activities which constitute the Quality Assurance Framework for Islington Council's Safeguarding and Family Support Service. This enables the service to build a clear picture of the effectiveness of our social work practice with children, young people, and their families.

6.6 The Motivational Social Work practice model articulates a clear vision of good social work practice and sets out how practice quality should be measured against it. The child's database is a system that allows us to collect and analyse a wide range of simple data, which over time allows us to track changes in demand and service delivery.

6.7 Good quality assurance ensures that we are doing the right things to a high standard. It helps us notice and attend to new challenges, build on and replicate our successes, and plan for future needs.

6.8 Twice a year, all senior managers spend a week on the front line observing practice and talking to social workers about the children, families, and carers they work with. The aims of practice week are:

1. Ensure Senior Managers understand what it is like for front line practitioners, walking in their shoes and gaining a deeper understanding of current frontline practice.
2. Improve visibility of Senior Managers and role modelling the use of the MSW practice model.
3. Assist in consistency of understanding and practice throughout the organisation.
4. Gather a deeper understanding of practice in relation to a particular theme – most recently children living with domestic violence and abuse, and children at risk of child sexual exploitation and gang involvement.

6.9 Activities include:

- Attending team meetings and group supervision;
- Attending home visits and professionals meetings, shadowing social workers;
- Observing supervision;
- Gathering feedback directly from families and children;
- Auditing case files along with social workers.

- 6.10 In the year 2017-18 two Practice Weeks were undertaken. In September 2017, a total of 149 activities were undertaken. It was decided following a serious injury suffered by a 3-month old child subject to a Child Protection Plan that all pre-birth children and children under the age of 6 months old known to the department would be audited. The findings from the week concluded that within the Child in Need service there was a noticeable difference from this practice week and the last one regarding the practice model implementation and this had a marked positive impact on the way practitioners were working with children and families. The quality of reflection and thinking undertaken by most staff was observed far more than the child's case file evidenced. Most workers knew their children and were passionate about the work they were doing. Supervision was not always recorded reflectively and a higher percentage of staff than last time reported that supervision wasn't in line with the required frequency and providing reflection and direction.
- 6.11 In March 2018 and total of 137 activities were undertaken. It was decided that the focus would be on Vulnerable Adolescents (those who were experiencing sexual exploitation or gang exploitation or who were going missing). The findings from the week concluded that Senior managers reported a swift and proportionate response to incoming referrals coming through Children's Services Contact Team. Practitioners were seen to be reacting quickly where required, such as visits to see children in schools. Managers were observed to have sufficient oversight. The audits demonstrated that assessments were updated when new concerns arose. Direct work included practitioners using hypothetical scenarios with families as a tool which would help them reflect on risk and safety planning. Child Protection Procedures were initiated for young people thought to be at risk of significant harm due to being missing, sexual exploitation and or gang affiliation. Senior managers were of the view that whilst it was proportionate to have strategy discussions in such situations, it was not always clear that a section 47 enquiry was required. Senior managers noted that Missing Strategy meetings could be more dynamic in developing creative solutions after a young person went missing such as using a wider multi-agency network. There was evidence that practitioners and managers were focused on sustained change to children and families in terms of reducing risk to adolescents within Islington rather than a preoccupation to move the young person out of borough unless wholly necessary. Senior Managers observed that Team Managers and Deputy Team Managers were giving good direction in supervision and having reflective discussions on cases, however these were not always fully recorded and decisions were not always evident on the child's file. Practitioners reported that reflective supervision was of good quality and noted this was a real change for the better with the MSW model having assisted in this. The use of the Specialist Social Workers (CSE, HSB, Gangs and Missing) for consultation and the chairing of complex strategy meetings was reported to be valued by social workers and managers. Parents were often unaware of their children's actions especially around for example carrying knives. Safety plans were noted as being of good quality however better recording was needed in terms of the reasons for the plan. Senior manager's observations of meetings and audits noted that practitioners were engaging well with partner agencies and links with Safer London and St Giles were in place. There was an increased confidence in practitioners of working with gang affected young people, however some practitioners needed further work regarding thresholds and enhancing joint work with YOS. Senior Managers reported seeing an increase between social workers and young people's relationships and there were discussions being held around what can be done in order to stop or reduce reoffending. Senior Managers also noted that Social Workers had trusting relationships with their young people. It was noted that the system put in place by Senior Managers within social care and Senior officers in the British Transport Police was effective in practice with children being located.
- 6.12 The Safeguarding and Family Support Service also undertakes a substantial number of themed audits in response to what the data highlighted, feedback from children and families, feedback from staff and partners and following the introduction of legislation or guidance. The following gives examples of findings that have been used to improve practice:
- 6.13 Overview audit of cases in a Child in Need team which had low numbers of Child Protection cases
- 6.14 62 cases were audited. The predominant theme that arose was that where the threshold for a Child Protection Investigation was met, one didn't take place. Hypotheses could be said to have formed too quickly without taking into account what other information was needed to form different theories and explore whether the child was or was likely to be at future risk. There was a lack of evidence of team

manager oversight or recording of discussions that may have taken place. This team's Child Protection numbers are now in line with all the other Child in Need teams.

6.15 Children under 8 years old Looked After voluntarily (Section 20)

6.16 A review of the cases of children under the age of 8 who were accommodated under Section 20 was undertaken to ensure that these children were being appropriately planned for with regards to permanence. There were 14 such children 12 out of 14 children were placed with family members, 1 was in mother and baby residential care and one was in a foster placement. All these cases were reviewed by IROs as per legislation. The audit raised no concerns of permanency planning as all the cases were in care proceedings and the decision about Section 20 accommodation was made by a Judge.

6.17 Thresholds

6.18 There were points within the child's journey that questioned thresholds, for example: High numbers of No Further Action taken post assessment, increase in the number of re-referrals. The above data raised the question of whether teams were closing cases prematurely following an assessment and that this could account for the increase in re-referrals. The variables in referral rates to teams are related in part to need within the geographical areas covered by each team. The referral rates can change month to month but it is clear that some areas do have higher referral rates over the year. There were a few cases where the auditor highlighted that the re-referral could have been predicted and therefore the case should not have been closed initially. The re-referral data was found to be in line with other LAs.

6.19 Overview audit of cases in Child in Need team which had high re- referral rates

6.20 98 cases were audited. The vast majority of children (90%) were judged to be safe and any risks managed within child protection procedures. The other positive outcome was that in only one case was it judged inappropriate to plan closure. This suggests that in the majority of cases, Managers and Social Workers are making safe decisions about children allocated within the team.

6.21 The Outcomes of a sample of children who became Looked After

6.22 The majority of children who became Looked After in the period explored were adolescents- 85% and of those children, 11 were over the age of 17 years old- 71%. 2 children became Looked After through Care Proceedings which mean 90% of children in this sample became Looked After under Section 20. 65% of the children who became Looked After were male. In terms of per child the cost ranged from £4,798.30 (grandmother caring for her grandchild who is a baby) to £22,000 (remand placement and 17-year-old with several placement breakdowns). The total cost of looking after these 20 children over the 6-month period is £199,442. If you remove the children who were only Looked After for a short period of time the average cost of a placement equates to £11,055 and the median was approximately £7,400.

6.23 Most children who come into care stayed in care for the period covered (6 months) or for the duration of their childhood -90%. 85% of children were assessed as being safe or having the risk of harm to them reduced due to being in care and in the remainder cases the children were remanded or returned home. Generally, children who became Looked After settled in their placement (not necessarily the first one), had improved school attendance (some dramatically) and emotional health, although it was harder to predict or comment on what their adult life may look like. Overall care, even for most of the older children in this cohort makes improvements to children's outcomes. For the older cohort, 17 years old, 6 out of 11 were assessed as having improvements made to their educational outcomes so far and 6 out of 11 to their emotional development so far. Therefore, becoming Looked After safeguarded, these children and improved their outcomes and life chances in the majority of cases.

- 6.24 Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) not held within statutory timescale of 15 working days
- 6.25 42 children were audited. 57.5% of children were found to have their conference outside of the statutory timescale. The range was found to be from 13 to 22 days in most cases. In all but one case, the delay did not result in children being placed at increased risk of harm. In the one case, the practice was addressed through a Safeguarding Alert being raised by the Child Protection Chair, after which the Team Manager took appropriate action to safeguard the child. There was no single reason which stood out as contributing to the delays. The most common reason was the Summer school holidays and the delay in convening the conference was to ensure that all professionals could attend and give their contribution.
- 6.26 Looked after young people who have Youth Offending Service (YOS) involvement
- 6.27 20 children were audited which represented all of the children Looked After and known to the YOS. Most of the young people looked after and known to YOS are males between the age of 16 and 17. Half of them were cared for under an Interim Care Order or/and a Care order; 30% were remanded into the Local Authority's care and 20% were looked after under s20, most of them had one episode of care, however 20% had repeated episodes of care. Almost half of them (45%) lived in semi-independent provisions, 30% were in custody, 20% were in foster placements (half of them with connected persons); one was placed with their parent. When looking at their age at the start of their last episode of care, there were 13 young people who were of secondary school age (11 - 16) and 7 were age 16+. In 16 out of 20 cases the young people had a history of offending before coming into the Local Authority's care. Feedback from the Independent Reviewing Service demonstrated that when the Orders are managed by Islington YOS, there was a stronger likelihood of joint up working and planning, quality relationships between the young people and their YOS worker and valuable input into the CLA review planning.
- 6.28 Increase in the number of section 47 Child Protection enquiries undertaken in years 16/17 and 17/18 compared with other Local Authorities
- 6.29 It was found that there had been an increase in Section 47 enquiries across the service. This had more than doubled from a monthly average of 45.6 in 2015/16 to a monthly average of 109.8 in 2017/18. The audit found that as a result of undertaking S47 enquiries no children were thought to have been placed at increased risk or families thought to have disengaged because of the enquiry being undertaken as opposed to an assessment only. The increase and high numbers were concluded to be due to; an appropriate increase in vulnerable adolescents becoming subject to child protection procedures, the automatic inclusion of all siblings when concerns arose about one child in a family [ where this might not always be necessary] and some risk aversity arising following some challenge about thresholds in one particular team. Plans are in hand to address these issues and bring numbers more in line with the rest of our performance data.
- 6.30 A Serious Case Review was undertaken in the year for a young person who died, and a number of Case Reviews were also completed for children where events in their lives led to the service wanting to review the case to learn and implement changes in practice. Learning mainly centred around the complexities of children living with domestic violence and abuse as well as issues of parental consent for social work intervention with their children.

## **7. Contextual Safeguarding**

- 7.1 Continued analysis undertaken over the last two years consistently highlights that Islington's profiles of children and young people at risk, or victim of CSE, harmful sexual behaviours, trafficking and modern slavery, gangs, and serious youth violence are intrinsically linked through vulnerability, peer groups and offending networks. The cohort of children and young people vulnerable to exploitation overlaps significantly with children and young people that go missing from home and care. In response to our profile, we have focused on developing a less siloed, and more flexible model of assessment, intervention and governance; ensuring that children and young people across the spectrum of risk receive timely and targeted interventions, and that those children at acute risk receive a consistent safeguarding response.

- 7.2 Alongside our analysis and mapping of current risks related to exploitation and missing, we have undertaken a number of large projects. These include embedding trauma informed and motivational practice in Social Work. Trauma Informed Practice based training has been rolled out across the Safeguarding and Family Support and Youth and Community services. Social Workers for looked after children are receiving Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) based training to support the assessment, intervention and care plans they develop when working with vulnerable children and young people. Islington's shift toward a more fluid approach to Exploitation and Missing risk supports a trauma informed practice model; focusing more on the experience, vulnerabilities, strengths and needs of the individual child, rather than on the specific type of risk label and subsequent intervention pathway.
- 7.3 The response to Exploitation and Missing is currently led by:
- **The Exploitation and Missing Team:** managed by the Exploitation and Missing Safeguarding Manager. The team consists of a Specialist Social Worker for Gangs and Serious Youth Violence, a Specialist Social Worker for CSE and Harmful Sexual Behaviour and a Senior Administrator. The team work to develop the safeguarding response to children and young people through providing consultations, developing safety and intervention plans, chairing strategy meetings, developing and delivering training and awareness programmes, and linking in with multi-agency partners to create practice pathways and develop joint working.
  - **The Integrated Gangs Team (IGT):** a multi-agency team co-located with the Police Gangs Unit, consisting of specialist intervention workers, St Giles Trust, Victim Support, The Abianda Project and Clinical input. The IGT work with children and young people up to age 25 years that are at risk of, or involved in, gangs and serious youth violence. This includes the Abianda Project that work to support and empower young women affected by gang violence.
  - **A CSE and Gangs Analyst:** who works across services and data systems to develop exploitation network and risk profiles.
  - **The Return Safe Team:** undertake Return Home Interviews and they provide ongoing support to children and young people that go missing.
  - **SaferLondon Empower Project:** a co-located Young Persons Advocate that works with young women at risk of CSE.
- 7.4 The above teams also work closely with the local Police teams and the Community Safety Unit.
- 7.5 We have a clear and consistent format to the sharing of information to support safeguarding children and young people, and recognise that this is crucial to developing an understanding of peer networks and exploitation profiles. Information is shared at a practitioner level across the partnership through the co-location of staff, safeguarding meetings, consultations, Integrated Gang Team tasking meetings and community safety briefings etc. and fed back into safeguarding meetings to inform the response to children and families. This information is collated by the CSE and Gangs Analyst and feeds into to practice panels (i.e. the MASE and BRONZE) and the Exploitation and Missing subgroup. This also includes the council's response to contextual safeguarding focus areas such as creating safe spaces for young people through work with departments such as licencing and estate management.
- 7.6 Our offer to children is aligned with a tiered approach. Preventative education is delivered in both primary and secondary schools by a range of partners such as our Safer Schools Police who have an extensive Schools Engagement Programme, and our Targeted Youth Service and the St Giles Trust who deliver a range of preventative assemblies and sessions. These include knife crime, joint enterprise, keeping safe, hate crime, Stop & Search, gangs, personal safety and social media. Victim Support work is delivered in schools through the IGT Victim Support Worker. Additional Knife Crime and Gangs Awareness work is particularly targeted at schools where there are concerns about youth



crime and Anti-Social Behaviour. A range of services are participating in the Youth Violence Project in partnership with Healthy Schools to support schools in developing a youth violence strategy and the roll out of the Youth Crime Prevention Toolkit, a tool developed to support early identification and referrals on to targeted services.

- 7.7 Children who are in need of a targeted service receive this through the early help offer. Our Targeted Youth Support team provide a range of interventions through a number of outreach programmes individually and group based, to prevent escalation of contextual safeguarding. Through the parenting programme offer, parents of vulnerable adolescents receive advice and guidance on areas such as boundary setting, the adolescent stage and managing the balance between the push for freedom and the need still for protection. Our Families First teams work closely with young people and parents to educate them on risks, prevent missing episodes, manage social media safely as well as to ensure that parents are well informed about what to do if their child goes missing.
- 7.8 When a child is identified as at risk, a safeguarding strategy meeting is held. Strategy meetings are held across exploitation and missing risk areas, and dependant on the situation and risk may focus on a single child or a number of children. If a peer group, network or location of risk is identified by practitioners, through safeguarding meetings or practice panels, a mapping meeting will be organised. A mapping meeting is held with partners to pull together agency information, develop a better understanding of the network or location, and to develop an action plan to disrupt exploitation and improve the safeguarding of children and families. Actions from mapping meetings have included the organisation of community based parent's groups, the increase of Anti-Social Behaviour Officers in a local estate park, developing the safeguarding response for local McDonald's restaurants, and the instigation of CCTV cameras outside a residential unit. Children and young people from other LA's are also considered as part of mapping meetings, and the relevant professionals are invited to attend and contribute.
- 7.9 Practitioners and managers across the Safeguarding and Family Support Service and the Youth and Community Service demonstrate excellent awareness of Exploitation and Missing risks as a result of the extensive training offer delivered by specialist facilitators.
- 7.10 A good level of awareness is shared across the partnership, who also have access to specialist training through the council. The Exploitation and Missing team alone deliver over 10 different training packages to practitioners across the partnership with the flexibility to adapt training to audience need. Approximately 1,800 professionals from a range of services have received training on Exploitation and Missing risk areas over the past year. Audiences include whole school staff groups, all Central North Police Officers and training for Special Guardians. In the last year, we have been able to see the impact of our training and awareness raising on the response to safeguarding children and young people; an example of visible impact is evident in the training delivered to the British Transport Police, after which a practice pathway was set up and a number of children missing and at risk of exploitation have been identified by them at an earlier stage. This is now being used London-wide.
- 7.11 Children and young people also receive targeted group work and awareness raising sessions across the Exploitation and Missing focus areas. Over the last year, 319 children have attended targeted awareness sessions at their schools, and 520 year-9 children have received two sessions on consent and healthy relationships delivered by Specialist Social Workers.

## **8. Child Sexual Exploitation**

- 8.1 Referral rates for contacts to the Childrens Services Contact Team (CSCT) increased year on year (2011-2015) from 3 to 68, to 96, to 124. In 2015/16 we saw a decrease in referrals to 95, but there has since been an increase to 98 in 2016/17 and there have been 112 in 2017/18. Islington Council and its partners are of the view that this is due to the effectiveness of CSE awareness raising and training within targeted and universal services as well as targeting offenders reducing numbers of victims.
- 8.2 Referrals are made from a variety of agencies and the threshold for category 1, 2 and 3 cases is well understood by CSCT. When a child is identified as at risk of CSE, a consultation with the Specialist

Social Worker for CSE and HSB is held. Over the last year (2017/18) 143 consultations were undertaken with the Specialist Social Worker, in which risk would have been assessed using a specialist CSE risk assessment tool and recommendations given as to safety and intervention plans, and/or the need to convene a professionals or strategy meeting.

- 8.3 All cases where the CSE risk is assessed at category 2 or 3 are subject to a strategy meeting. Category 1 risk cases are often also subject to a strategy meeting, although this may not always be necessary – in which case safety and intervention plans are put in place and the risk monitored.
- 8.4 Where possible, CSE strategy meetings are chaired by the Exploitation and Missing team to ensure consistency and specialist overview. In the last year, 67 CSE strategy meetings were chaired independently by the Exploitation and Missing team.
- 8.5 As of 4 April 2018, we currently have 19 children assessed as at risk of CSE; with 16 children assessed as at category 1 risk, two children identified as at category 2 risk and one child identified as at category 3 risk.
- 8.6 The majority of children (17) identified at risk of CSE are female, however, over the year as a whole we have seen an increase of boys being identified. When considering the age breakdown of the young people it is identified that the two most common ages are 17 and 14 which is a pattern that can be seen throughout the last year.
- 8.7 Where children cannot be kept safe by Child in Need or Child Protection Plans within their own community, then the LA receives them into care usually under an Interim Care Order to place them where they can be kept safe. In 2017/18, one child was placed in secure provision directly due to immediate risks related to CSE – this is a reduction from the previous year. Children Looked After are subject to scrutiny not only from the IRO but due to the CSE risks they are scrutinised by Senior Managers and the Exploitation and Missing Team.
- 8.8 As per recommendations set out in the MPS Pan-London CSE Operating Protocol, and in recognition of individual cases receiving a high quality of scrutiny and response through the safeguarding process, Islington has moved to a strategic multi-agency sexual exploitation panel (MASE) format. The MASE is co-chaired by the Head of Safeguarding and the Detective Inspector of the CSE and Missing Police units, and attended by partners across the multi-agency. Held every six weeks, the MASE is informed by a briefing report from CSE and Gangs Analyst, containing practice information from strategy meetings, themes and analysis. The MASE follows a Victim, Offender, Location and Theme (VOLT) agenda which has supported an increase in the input and involvement from multi-agency partners in the MASE process. Updates from the MASE are fed into the Exploitation and Missing subgroup.
- 9. Gangs and Serious Youth Violence (including criminal exploitation through County Lines)**
- 9.1 Since the previous inspection in 2017, we have continued to improve our offer to children and families affected by gang and serious youth violence. The Safeguarding and Family Support and Youth and Community directorates work closely to monitor and respond to children identified as at risk. This is evidenced by an increase in multi-agency mapping meetings and in the joint delivery of training relating to gangs and serious youth violence. To enhance this further, a Joint Supervision Policy has been created and implemented.
- 9.2 Over the last year, there has been an increased national focus on children and young people at risk of exploitation through involvement in county lines. Islington's response to has been highlighted as progressive, particularly by the MPS, who have used Islington's model of response as an example of good practice.
- 9.3 Islington has seen an increase in referrals to the Childrens Services Contact Team (CSCT) related to gangs and serious youth violence related safeguarding risks. Islington Council and partners agree that this is likely due to increased training and awareness raising promoting better identification, along with an overall rise in gang related criminal activity. We have now created a unique gangs and SYV contact code so that moving forward we will be able to evidence the referrals directly linked to gangs and SYV

risk. Since the contact code was added to the system in early 2017 we have received 86 referrals for gangs and serious youth violence related risks – with a regular increase on a monthly basis. CSCT is able to access the Police gangs matrix and staff have been trained by the Specialist Social Worker for Gangs and SYV to understand how it should be used and how information should be shared.

- 9.4 As with CSE, we assess the level of gangs and serious youth violence risk to a child in terms of categories 1, 2 and 3. When a child is identified as at risk of gangs and SYV, a consultation with the Specialist Social Worker is held. Over the last year (17/18) 80 consultations were undertaken with the Specialist Social Worker with many more cases being referred to the Integrated Gangs Team for further information to be gathered to inform the risk assessment. As part of the consultation, the level of risk is agreed along with recommendations given as to safety and intervention planning and/or the need to convene a professional or strategy meeting.
- 9.5 In all cases where the gangs and SYV risk is assessed at category 2 or 3 a strategy meeting will be convened with the relevant Police Unit. Where possible, Gangs and SYV strategy meetings are chaired by the Exploitation and Missing team to ensure consistency and specialist overview. In the last year, 64 gangs and SYV strategy meetings were chaired independently by the Exploitation and Missing team.
- 9.6 As of 4 April 2018 we have 54 children identified as at risk of and/or involved in gangs and serious youth violence. 13 are identified by police as a 'gang nominal', with the other 41 children being identified as at risk of gangs/SYV. 12 of these children and young people have been identified as at risk of, or involved in county lines.
- 9.6 The majority of children identified at risk of Gangs and SYV are male (46), eight females have been identified as at risk. The majority of children at risk of Gangs and SYV are between the ages of 15 and 17 years old.
- 9.7 Where children cannot be kept safe by Child in Need or Child Protection Plans within their own community, then the LA receives them into care usually under an Interim Care Order to place them where they can be kept safe. In 2017/18, seven children became Looked After due to being at risk of/ or further risk of Gangs and SYV. Three children were placed in secure provision directly due to immediate risks related to Gangs and SYV.

## **10. Missing from Home, Education and Care**

- 10.1 The Local Authority works closely with key partners to provide an effective response to children that go missing from home and care.
- 10.2 Prevention of children going missing is a key factor and through research, data analysis, annual reports the push and pull factors are well understood. Patterns indicate our children considered to be at risk of exploitation (CSE, gangs and serious youth violence, trafficking and modern slavery) are considerably more likely to go missing from both home and from care. A small number of children go missing from care or away from their placement without authorisation due to placement issues or for contact with family and friends.
- 10.3 For children considered to be at risk of exploitation who we know are more likely to also go missing, we routinely discuss missing risks in strategy and professional's meetings, along with undertaking interventions through CIN, CP and CLA plans to try and prevent the child from going missing in the future.
- 10.4 Protection from harm whilst children are missing starts with a multi-agency response using Strategy meetings or Missing from Care/Home meetings to ensure there is a robust safety plan in place. If a young person remains missing for a sustained period of time, review meetings take place regularly which monitor any new information and review support and interventions. For complex missing cases or where there is an overlap with exploitation based risk, the strategy meeting is chaired by the Exploitation and Missing Team. Over the past year (17/18) 35 missing strategy meetings were chaired independently by the specialist team.

- 10.5 The vast majority of our young people remain in contact with at least one professional in their support network whilst they are missing.
- 10.6 We have developed our missing person notifications and alerts system to support the child being found as quickly as possible. At a missing strategy meeting for both children missing from care or home, it is agreed: whether other local authorities, Detached Youth Workers, the British Transport Police and hospitals should be alerted, and whether the police should use missingperson.org. Abduction Notices, Recovery and Collection Orders are also considered as part of the safeguarding meeting action plan, in order to successfully locate our most vulnerable missing young people.
- 10.7 Meetings took place between senior police officers and senior managers in the LA to ensure that the response to every missing child was timely, persistent and ensured their safety at the earliest opportunity. The Police assisted the LA in ensuring that the response by other police forces in relation to out of borough CLA was as good as the response to Islington's children. Negotiations take place with the police and classification of risk is often challenged to ensure a more robust response. The ISCB escalation policy is utilised if need be.
- 10.8 The Police track the most frequent Missing Children. Every child with a CSE CRIS report gets an immediate response by police. An MPS Data Analyst/Missing Co-ordinator ensures that children identified as missing are recorded as such, as well as analysing trends and patterns.
- 10.9 The Directors and the Lead Member are regularly informed of missing children through weekly briefings, whereby they are able to scrutinise the response from the LA and its partners. Corporate Parenting Board scrutinise Missing from Care data at every meeting.
- 10.10 The ISCB are provided with data on missing children, including Return Home Interviews (RHI) through Core Business reports and annual reports on Missing from Home and Care.
- 10.11 The Service Managers and Head of Service for Children Looked After and Children in Need have oversight of all children who are missing.

## **11. Missing from Education**

- 11.1 Our named Lead Officer for Children Missing Education (CME) maintains an overview in 'real-time' of actions taken to secure children's return to education, monitoring the number of days missed and ensuring appropriate escalation to prevent case-drift. Good communication with our CSE, Missing and Trafficking Project Officer ensures that high risk, vulnerable children are identified at the earliest opportunity. Processes and outcomes are scrutinised on a bi-monthly basis by the Missing and Child and Adolescent Exploitation Subgroup of the ISCB, and annually by the full board.
- 11.2 For the academic year 2016/17, of the 345 children missing education, 86% were returned to school within 20 school days. For the current academic year to date (as at 23/03/18), this figure has risen to 93%.
- 11.3 Our notification and monitoring processes for preventing children from 'slipping through the net' are well-established, with robust procedures in place on school entry and exit. Every Islington resident is tracked throughout the admissions process, from application stage to take up of the school place, including at independent schools, at both the normal points of entry (Primary and Secondary Transfer) and non-standard transition points (in-year). An annual 'No-show' activity takes place at the start of each academic year to ensure children starting school for the first time, and those moving on to secondary school, successfully complete the transition. For the current academic year 2017/18, 56 children were reported as 'no-shows' – all were found at a named destination. Any 'no shows' arising at non-standard transition points are investigated through our 'Missing Pupil' procedures as outlined below.
- 11.4 There are equally robust procedures in place for off-rolling. As part of this process, schools are required to confirm the pupil's attendance with the destination school before removal from the school roll is

authorised by the LA. For the academic year 2016/17, 1,565 pupils were authorised for removal from an Islington school roll, marking six consecutive terms of 100% compliance across our schools.

11.5 A strong notification and monitoring process for tracking homeless families ensures no child misses education as a result of being placed in temporary accommodation. Children's school placement continues to be monitored until families are moved into permanent housing. For the academic year 2016/17, of the 96 temporary accommodation notifications received, five were missing education at the point of notification. All children were returned to school within 20 school days. For the current academic year to date (as at 26/03/18), of the 258 temporary accommodation notifications received, 32 were missing education at the point of notification. Of these, 22 were returned to school within 20 school days. The remaining 10 children are currently awaiting placement by their Home LA due to being housed out of borough.

## **12. Missing from Home**

12.1 During 2017/18 (up to mid-March 2018), 179 children went missing from home which equates to 306 missing episodes. This demonstrates that children are going missing from home less frequently, and evidences the positive impact of service interventions and safeguarding measures to prevent children going missing from home.

12.2 71% of children went missing on only one occasion with just under half of the remaining percentage of children going missing on two occasions. 28 children were reported as more persistently missing with three or more missing episodes. 53% of children missing from home return within a 24-hour period and 79% return within two days.

12.3 The highest numbers of children who were reported missing were white British boys and girls, Black-Caribbean boys and girls and Black any other background boys. Together they total 66 of 176 children. White British Boys are the highest single group of young people who were reported missing with a total of 17 reported as missing. 15-16-year-old boys were the most frequent group of children missing from home. Girls aged 13-14 were the second most frequent group.

12.4 All missing children are cross referenced to see if there are links to CSE or gang affiliation, or serious youth crime. Of the children missing from home seven children were also assessed to be at risk of CSE and 17 children were assessed to be at risk of gangs and serious youth violence. We are able to see from our analysis of children missing from home most frequently and of the longest duration, a high percentage are also considered to be at risk of exploitation.

## **13. Missing from Care**

13.1 Between April 2017 and mid-March 2018, a total of 95 children went missing from care. 40% were girls and 60% boys. Within this time period, there were a total of 472 individual unique incidents where a child went missing from care. This demonstrates that although a similar amount of children and young people are going missing from care as the previous year, they are going missing from care significantly less frequently; evidencing the positive impact of interventions and safeguarding measures to prevent looked after children from going missing.

13.2 Twelve children accounted for 237 missing from care episodes. The majority had been in care for over a year and have multiple risk factors. These children featured CSE and concerns linked to gang association or were UASC. The Exploitation and Missing team independently chairs Strategy meetings for children missing from care where needed.

13.3 Of the total children missing from care around 17% are also assessed to be at risk of CSE. Around 17% of children missing from care are considered to be at risk of gangs and serious youth violence. As with children missing from home, children at additional risk are more frequently going missing from care and are missing for longer durations.

- 13.4 The Exploitation and Missing Team work to support the CLA service to coordinate their safeguarding response to children that go missing from care with the local authority and the missing police unit where the child is placed.
- 13.5 Other local authority children who missing from Islington are also scrutinised, with communication, information sharing and challenge given to the allocated local authority, provided by our Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team.
- 14. Return Home Interviews**
- 14.1 All children receive a Safe and Well check from local police and Misper police will visit regular missing children.
- 14.2 Islington have a dedicated team to undertake Return Home Interviews for children that go missing from care and home. The Return Safe Team is placed within our Youth and Community Directorate, and consists of three dedicated outreach workers with oversight from a Social Work Manager. The team have worked closely with the Exploitation and Missing Team to develop the response to missing and have improved the Return Home Interview offer provided to children and young people. RHIs are approached on an individual basis for the individual child, and it is considered who has the best relationship with the child is best placed to undertake the RHI. The Return Safe Team complete quarterly and annual reports that feed into the Missing and Child Exploitation subgroup of the ISCB.
- 14.3 Where possible, every child that goes missing from home or missing from care is offered a Return Home Interview. Our analysis tells us that Return Home Interviews are just as likely to be successfully completed with children missing from care as children missing from home. Younger children are more likely to accept a Return Home Interview than older adolescents. In general, boys are just as likely to accept a Return to Home Interview as girls.
- 14.4 Analysis of the return interviews indicate that many children do not identify themselves as 'missing' and that mostly children report staying out later than their parents wish with friends, or that they have had family arguments or are unhappy with school, placements or due to personal stress. We believe that the pull factors in CSE and gang association are also strong features.
- 14.5 In April 2018 Ofsted conducted a focused visit on vulnerable adolescents in accordance with the "Inspection of Local Authority's Children Services Framework". This was the first inspection of its kind. Specifically, inspectors considered the identification and management of risk and vulnerability for adolescents in need of support and protection. Inspectors looked at the quality of planning to meet these young people's needs and whether practice is timely and effective in helping to protect such young people from harm. Inspectors considered a range of evidence that included case discussions with social workers and their managers. They also observed a strategy meeting, the multi-agency sexual exploitation panel (MASE), and spoke with a number of professionals from partner agencies. The findings were extremely positive and Ofsted concluded that:
- 14.6 "The service provision for vulnerable adolescents in Islington is strong and robust [with] a determined focus to improve outcomes for these young people across the council. Risks to vulnerable adolescents considered were identified well and comprehensively assessed. Risks are not seen in isolation and the interlinkages between risks are well understood... This leads to the development of effective intervention plans that are dynamic and that respond appropriately to changing levels of need or risk... Social workers show tenacity in their efforts to engage young people... Social workers reported that they are well supported, and morale within the local authority is high... Partnership working is strong within the council as well as with partner agencies and the voluntary sector. Sound governance arrangements promote good communication that enables successful coordination of work to support young people at risk of exploitation effectively. Substantive awareness raising and specialist training across the partnership have been undertaken by the exploitation and missing team. This has appropriately focused on the issues and risks around child sexual exploitation, gangs, incidents of going missing, knife crime, trafficking and modern slavery. The impact of this activity has led to an increased confidence for those working with this vulnerable group in recognising and tackling such forms of exploitation".

## **15. Implications**

### **15.1 Financial Implications:**

15.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **15.3 Legal Implications:**

15.4 The Children Act 1989 as amended, and the Children Act 2004, place a number of statutory duties on Local Authorities, including overarching responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. The Children Act 2004 introduced the requirement to set up Local Safeguarding Children Boards. The Act also places partner agencies (including the police and health services) under a duty to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. A range of other agencies are also required to cooperate with Local Authorities to promote the wellbeing of children in the local authority area.

15.5 The Children and Social Work Act 2017, (CSWA 2017), sets out how agencies must work together by placing new duties on the police, clinical commissioning groups and the Local Authority to make arrangements to work together and with other partners locally to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in need within their area.

15.6 The Council must have regard to the Statutory Guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, which is currently in the process of being amended to take into account the provisions of the CSWA 2017.

15.7 The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (as amended) place further duties on Councils with regard to looked after children.

### **15.8 Environmental Implications:**

None.

### **15.9 Resident Impact Assessment:**

15.10 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

15.11 A very high proportion of vulnerable children known to children's social care live in workless households. All social care interventions aim to address the needs of the whole family which include maximising benefits and supporting routes into employment, education and training.

## **16. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

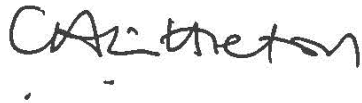
16.1 The Council rightly places a high priority on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children in Islington. This report provides assurance about the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding and looked after children's services provided through a range of performance and quality assurance measures that are in place to ensure that services to Islington's most vulnerable children are as safe as they can be. This is in spite of increasing demand throughout the system assessments, children in need, children in need of protection and those children Looked After.

**Appendices:** None

**Background papers:** None

Final report clearance:

**Signed by:**



Carmel Littleton  
Corporate Director of Children, Employment and Skills

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Report Author: Laura Eden, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance  
Tel: 020 7527 8066  
Email: [Laura.Eden@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.Eden@islington.gov.uk)

Financial Implications Author: Tim Partington, Head of Finance  
Tel: 020 7527 1851  
Email: [Tim.Partington@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Tim.Partington@islington.gov.uk)

Legal Implications Author: Uma Mehta  
Tel: 020 7527 3127  
Email: [Uma.Metha@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Uma.Metha@islington.gov.uk)