

Report of: Corporate Director, People Directorate

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	17 September 2019	All
Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt

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 1100 children in need, 313 children who are looked after, of which 24 are disabled children and 41 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), 400 care leavers and 200 children with child protection plans. The majority of child protection plans are due to emotional abuse or neglect. Characteristics of parents whose children have child protection plans include domestic violence and abuse (45%), adult mental health (31%) and adult substance misuse (24%). 16 children were living in a Private Fostering arrangement at some point during the year. Islington's Youth and Community Service is currently working with 66 Youth Offending

interventions. This includes seven custodial interventions, four remand interventions and 55 community interventions.

- 3.2 In 2018-19 Islington was subject to 2 inspections. The first was a focused visit on 17th and 18th April 2018. Inspectors considered the local authority's arrangements for vulnerable adolescents in accordance with the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services framework (ILACS). Specifically, they 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 was timely and effective in helping to protect such young people from harm. The inspection concluded that:

"Within the cases considered during this visit the service provision for vulnerable adolescents in Islington is strong and robust. There is a determined focus to improve outcomes for these young people across the council. Senior political leaders, elected members and officers demonstrate a determination to improving services for vulnerable adolescents in Islington. This can be seen in the obvious investment in services, including the exploitation and missing team and the integrated gangs team. Risks to vulnerable adolescents considered during this visit were identified well and comprehensively assessed. This leads to the development of effective intervention plans that are dynamic, responding appropriately to changing levels of need or risk. Plans result in effective targeted interventions and support. Social workers show tenacity in their efforts to engage young people. Social workers reported that they are well supported and morale within the 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 effectively support young people at risk of exploitation. Substantive awareness raising and specialist training across the partnership has been undertaken by the exploitation and missing team. This has appropriately focused on child sexual exploitation, gangs, 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 recognizing and tackling such forms of exploitation".

- 3.3 The second was an Ofsted Joint Targeted Area inspection held in Islington between 3rd and 7th December 2018. This involved 16 inspectors from across Ofsted, CQC, HMIC and HMIP. In addition to an inspection of the "front door" and of Child in Need and Child Protection services generally, the inspection focused on Child Sexual Abuse within the family. The inspectors found significant strengths across the partnership, in particular in relation to our trauma informed approach and in our strategic intent and vision to improve the lives of children in Islington. There were no 'priority actions' for the partnership though there were areas for learning and development identified. The Local Authority prepared a written statement of proposed action and submitted this to Ofsted on Development of an action plan to inform this written statement was developed by the key partners in collaboration with the Safeguarding Board and is being implemented. The Safeguarding Board are monitoring all agencies action plans.

- 3.4 Our routine Annual Engagement Meeting with Ofsted was held on 19th January 2019. This annual conversation is used to jointly identify areas for further scrutiny / inspection and is informed by the annual self-evaluation which has to be sent to Ofsted in advance of the meeting. This was a very positive meeting with no areas of concern or challenge identified. It is hoped that we will have no further Ofsted inspection activity now in Children's Social Care until full inspection under the new Ofsted Framework which will be due in the middle of next year.
- 3.5 We are awaiting our Youth Offending Service and Special Educational Needs and Disability inspections. Both the Ofsted Focused Visit in April 2018 and the JTAI in December 2018 had considerable focus on the Youth Offending Service and were overall very positive.

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 People, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board and the Director of Safeguarding and Family Support Service/ Director of Youth and Communities. The meeting is held eight weekly and allows senior members to hold senior officers and the chair of the Safeguarding 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**, co-chaired by the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families and the In Care Council (Children Looked After and Care Leavers) and attended by four elected members, senior officers in the partnership. 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 Quality Assurance, Training, Missing and Exploitation, Case Review and more recently the Education Sub Group and the Early Help Sub Group. The ISCB agrees local priorities and monitors actions taken to implement them. The Case Review Sub Group across the partnership agreed to undertake 3 case reviews during the year.
- 4.5 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:
- Addressing the impact of neglect on children, including by helping them to become more resilient.
 - Addressing the consequences / harm suffered as a result of domestic violence, parental mental health and substance abuse.

- Identification of children who are vulnerable to exploitation and holding perpetrators to account.

4.6 The Annual Report of the ISCB will be presented to the Committee in February 2020.

4.7 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 has removed the requirement for Local Authorities to establish LSCBs and replaced this with new local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Under the new legislation, the three statutory safeguarding partners – Local Authority, Police and Clinical Commissioning Group – must make arrangements to work together, along with the relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area.

4.8 Pending the full implementation of new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in September 2019, the ISCB continues to carry out all of its existing statutory functions including both Serious Case Reviews and Child Death Reviews.

5. Islington's Motivational Practice Model and Partners in Practice Work

5.1 The DfE granted nearly £5m to children's social care in three 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, children who are known to the Criminal Justice System, gang affiliated or at risk of criminal exploitation 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- Partners In Practice.

5.2 The practice model is relationship based and feedback from children, families, staff, services and Ofsted has been very positive. This Practice Model has demonstrated impact on our data for example the reduction in re-referral rates to Children's Social Care. Islington is now undertaking Partners in Practice work with 4 Local Authorities, one of which has now received an inspection rating of good.

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 10,948 contacts requesting a service for children in 2018/19, a decrease from 2016/17 and 2017/18. The most common source of contacts is the police (33%), followed by schools (13%)
- The most common reasons for contacts were domestic violence (19%), parenting capacity (10%), physical abuse (7%) and child mental health (5%)
- 3,542 (32%) went on to receive an early help service and 2,509 (23%) went onto receive a social care service
- We had the 18th highest rate of assessed Children in Need in the country in 2017/18
- We had a slightly higher rate of children with child protection plans per 10,000 compared to our statistical neighbours (SN) in 2017/18 (52 per 10,000 for Islington, 47 per 10,000 for our SN)
- We have carried out a much higher rate of child protection enquiries than statistical neighbours- see paragraph 6.13
- We had a lower proportion of repeat child protection plans compared to our SN in 2017/18 (16% compared to 17%), however in 2018/19 this rose to 21%
- 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 - over 50% end within nine months;
- We apply to court for orders to protect children more than most other boroughs, we are the 10th highest nationally
- 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 (13% compared to 9.5% in 2017/18)
- 37 children in our care moved 2 or more times. Children and young people with the most complex needs (are more likely to be older when they come into our care, have an Education, Health & Care Plan, known to be physically violent or those who have experienced complex trauma in their parents' care) are likely to have the most moves.
- Less children 16+ are becoming looked after, and less 11 -15 year olds are becoming looked after than was the case 4 years ago (2015/16)
- 11% of young people are remaining with their foster carers after their 18th birthday & 25% move to semi-independent accommodation
- 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
- 69 children were placed more than 20 miles away at the end of 2018/19 (22%)
- 4 children were subject to secure orders to protect them from absconding and harm related to Child Exploitation (sexual or criminal)
- 17 children were adopted (8 in 2017-18) and 19 made the subject to a Special Guardianship Order (28 in 2017-18)

6.4 A monthly meeting is held within the Safeguarding and Family Support Service and the Youth and Communities 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
- 84% of children who receive a Triage are diverted from the Criminal Justice System
- 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). This is monitored weekly
- Offence gravity for the YOS cohort is reducing overall as is the number of all types of offences committed with the exception of a Public Order offence.
- Children who have child protection plans have a core group of professionals who have prescribed tasks in respect of their involvement with the child
- 99.1% of children who have child protection plans have their plan reviewed after three months and six monthly thereafter as per London Child Protection Procedures and where the review doesn't take place in time there are clear reasons for this
- In line with local and national figures 3% of the children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan have a disability
- 45% of children in the Criminal Justice System reoffended
- 26 children received a custodial sentence
- Children looked after are seen at four weekly, six weekly or 3 monthly intervals in accordance with their needs and placement stability
- All children looked after are independently reviewed every six months
- Practitioner caseloads vary from an average of 14 to a maximum of 22 children per worker for Children in Need, 15 per worker for Disabled Children ,10-19 children per worker for Children Looked After and 6-10 in the Youth Offending Service. 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
- All cases are subject to supervision and management oversight at least 4 weekly.

- 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 and the Youth and Communities Service. This enables the services to build a clear picture of the effectiveness of our practice with children, young people, and their families.
- 6.6 The Motivational Practice model articulates a clear vision of good practice and sets out how practice quality should be measured against it. The child's databases are 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 and the Chief Executive, Executive Member for Children and Families and the Islington Safeguarding Children Board chair spend a week on the frontline 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 Motivational 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 professional's 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 2018-19 two Practice Weeks were undertaken. The first Practice Week in Safeguarding and Family Support Service focused on Vulnerable adolescents. In total 131 activities were undertaken. The Practice Week in Youth and Communities Service was run separately and 40 activities were undertaken. The second practice week was run across both services together, the focus areas were children who were subject to Child Protection Investigations, children who were at risk of or whose placement had broken down, exploitation and Children Looked After known to the Youth Offending Service. Action plans are completed following Practice Weeks and are implemented and monitored by the Senior Management Team.

6.11 The Safeguarding and Family Support Service and the Youth and Community Service also undertakes a substantial number of themed audits in response to what the data tells us, 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:

6.12 **Analysis of Initial Child Protection Conferences that did not result in a child protection plan**

An audit of all initial child protection conferences where domestic violence and abuse (DVA) was a feature between April 2016 and March 2018 and where a decision was made not to make a child protection plan was completed. The findings were that just 15% of conferences resulted in no plan; 6% where DVA was a feature. Of those, unanimous agreement that no plan should be made occurred in 78% of cases, with only 5 where there was disagreement and one formal dissent. Looking at a period of two years after the conference, 48% remained closed, 30% remained open under CIN and 22% were re-referred. Not making a plan did not seem to have prevented a re-escalation of child protection procedures when this had been required.

6.13 **An analysis of the increase in the number of section 47 Child Protection enquiries**

An audit of 27 Section 47 enquiries was undertaken in an attempt to understand why there had been an increase. The findings were that in the majority of cases, the right decision was made to undertake a Section 47. In 7 cases (26%) auditors felt an assessment would have been more proportionate. The outcome was that multi-agency workshops were rolled out to look at consent and decision making in relation to Section 47s.

6.14 **Strategy discussion to Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)**

This audit looked at all cases where an ICPC was not held within 15 days of the Strategy Discussion. The finding was that no child was put at risk due to delay in convening the Conference, which in most cases was only a matter of a few days. While there was often evidence of management oversight and safety planning, there was no recording around why conferences were delayed. An action plan was put in place to address this

6.15 **Audit of Domestic Violence and Abuse interventions**

The aim of this audit was to explore the effectiveness of support and intervention provided to families where domestic violence and abuse is a concern. The audit looked at children subject of a Child Protection Plan where the primary issue was domestic violence and abuse and considered whether the support and intervention offered to their families was successful in addressing the concerns and reducing the likelihood of the children being exposed to further violence and abuse. The audit compared children who were placed on a Child Protection Plan for a subsequent period of time, with children who were not. This audit concluded that support and intervention offered to families where domestic violence and abuse is a feature is varied with mixed success. Children affected featured highly in re-referrals, repeat Child in Need and Child Protection plans.

6.16 **Father's participation in Child Protection Conferences**

This audit was completed to explore levels of fathers' engagement and participation in child protection conferences and identify gaps in service delivery. The findings of the 30 randomly selected cases were that when invited, fathers were just as likely to attend as mothers. In almost all cases (28), fathers' views had been sought by social workers and these were reflected in assessments and conference records.

6.17 **Repeat child protection plans**

In 2018/19, 227 children became subject of a Child Protection Plan. 47 children (from 30 sibling groups) were made subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time, which equates to 20.7% of the total number of plans being repeat plans. This is above the Islington target of 15%. Repeat plans in 2018/2019 increased from 15.6% in 2017/2018, when 43 children from 31 sibling groups experienced a repeat plan. This is a rise of only four children but along with the overall reduction in plans for 2018/2019, this accounts for the larger percentage. In all cases it was felt threshold was met for a child or sibling group to have a repeat Child Protection plan and 27.6% of cases (13 out of 47) were escalated to a legal framework. Domestic Violence and Abuse was the main reason why repeat plans were made and is also believed to be a factor contributing for children at risk of contextual harm such as serious youth violence. This understanding and analysis in combination with the research into the High Risk Vulnerable Adolescents who committed the most offences led to the implementation of the Motivational Practice Model in the Youth and Community Services as well as the Keel Project- a Multi-Agency prototype team working with Domestic Violence and Abuse cases.

6.18 **Repeat episodes of care**

The aim of this audit was to explore the decision making and factors surrounding the children and young people looked after by Islington who have had repeat episodes of care in 2017/2018. The findings suggest that the majority of children and young people who have had repeat episodes of care are young people 16 years or older who have become looked after voluntarily or have been remanded into the Local Authority's care.

6.19 **Children and young people placed more than 20 miles outside the Local Authority boundary**

Every Local Authority must place special care to ensure that children and young people placed more than 20 miles outside the Local Authority boundary are not disadvantaged in terms of the provision of services due to their distance from the home authority. In 2017/2018 there were on average 346 children and young people looked after, out of which 86 (25%) were placed more than 20 miles outside of the Local Authority boundaries. Children were found not to be at a disadvantage although it was noted that coordinating services and education provisions was more difficult and took longer than if the child was Looked After locally.

6.21 **360 degree feedback of Children Looked After (CLA) Reviews**

The aim of this audit was to quality assure the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) in Islington by receiving feedback from the attendees at a CLA review about their experience of the Review process. The feedback was mostly positive and raised no significant concerns about the quality of the IRO Service, it highlighted a number of strengths in the service. It appears from the responses received that most children/young people, parents and professionals valued the IROs skills in chairing what is a complex meeting with multitude of purposes. The IROs perseverance to engage young people and support them take part in their review was also recognised as was the relationship IROs form with the children and young people in care.

6.22 **Nationality of Islington's children and young people looked after**

The aim of this audit was to look at the nationality status of our children and young people currently looked after and determine what actions the Local Authority should take to address this. The audit identified a number of cases where the EUSS is relevant and efforts should be made by their social workers to address these children's nationality status.

6.23 **Parental engagement in Children Looked After (CLA) Reviews**

This audit explored how the Local Authority is ensuring birth parents are engaged in the CLA Review process. In the period between 1st October 2019 and 31st December 2019, there were 194 CLA reviews held. All these CLA Review records were checked to identify how birth parents had been engaged in the CLA review process. The findings of this audit highlighted that 64% of the children and young people have one or both parents engaged in their CLA review process and 15% of them have neither parent engaged with the Local Authority. Care planning for these children and young people is a difficult process without the contribution of the birth parents, especially as the young people move towards leaving care. An action plan was put in place which included further training in line with the Motivational Practice Model and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy.

6.24 **Children and young people looked after and their settled status**

This audit looked at the settled status of Islington's children and young people looked after. On 20th March 2019 there were 328 children and young people looked after by Islington. There were 26 children and young people Looked After whose nationality status is relevant to the EUSS application. All these children were eligible to settled status should the EUSS application be made. An audit of the care leavers also took place as well and identified 5 young people that needed support with EUSS application. This is monitored through the Children Looked After Review process.

6.25 **Annual Overview Reports of the Youth Offending Service**

Annual reports for the services working with young people in the year 2018-19 in the Youth and Communities Services were undertaken. The following areas were considered, Out of Court Disposals, Referral Orders, Youth Rehabilitation Orders, Remand and Custody. Specialisms attached to the Youth Offending Service such as Sexual Health, Named Nurse, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Speech and Language Therapy, Educational Psychology, Employment, Education Progression also completed Annual Reports. The reports are presented to the Youth Justice Services Management Board for scrutiny and challenge. Disproportionality was considered within each individual report.

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 a victim of Child Sexual Exploitation, 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 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 Child Sexual Exploitation 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 Child Sexual Exploitation 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 provide ongoing support to children and young people that go missing.
 - Safer London Empower Project: a co-located Young Persons Advocate that works with young women at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.

- 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 Child Sexual Exploitation and Gangs Analyst and feeds into to practice panels such as the Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panel (formally known as the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel) 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 licensing 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 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. The Youth Crime Prevention Toolkit, a tool developed to support early identification and referrals on to targeted services is embedded within schools.
- 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 dependent 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. Children and young people from other Local Authorities are also considered as part of mapping meetings, and the relevant professionals are invited to attend and contribute.

7.9 **Training and Awareness**

The Exploitation and Missing Team provide a significant amount of specialist training across Islington staff and partners. 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 2,000 professionals from a range of services have received training on Exploitation and Missing risk areas over the past year. The Exploitation and Missing Team have been able to see the impact of training and awareness raising, an example of this is in the response to safeguarding children and young people at risk of Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery (including County Lines). This training was rolled out between January and April 2019 across Safeguarding and Family Support, Youth & Community and to partners through Safeguarding Board training. The impact of this training has been seen in terms of the safeguarding response to children at risk of Trafficking and Modern Slavery, including referrals to the National Referral Mechanism and the Rescue and Response Service, where County Lines is identified as a risk.

7.10 In addition, training was delivered to Safer Schools Police officers in January 2019, in relation to Trauma Informed Practice (TIP). The Exploitation and Missing Team have also taken a lead in working with a youth provision in the Borough where contextual safeguarding was identified as a key area for focus. Part of this work included providing bespoke training and awareness raising, supporting the manager of the provision with reviewing the practice and processes in the provision and providing recommendations and advice in terms of how to reduce the contextual safeguarding risks.

7.11 The Exploitation and Missing Team are working closely with Play and Youth Commissioning Services in Islington in order to develop our partnership working with all provisions in the Borough and provide a consistent offer for training and awareness raising.

7.12 **School-based Preventative Education:**

Children and young people also receive group work and awareness raising sessions across the Exploitation and Missing focus areas. Over the last year, almost 400 children have attended targeted awareness sessions at their schools, with year-9 children accessing sessions on consent and healthy relationships delivered by Specialist Social Workers in the Exploitation and Missing Team. The feedback from these sessions has been very positive and the schools involved have requested they continue throughout the next academic year. In 2018-2019, a targeted piece of work was completed with the staff at New River College (NRC). This included a series of focused awareness raising sessions on exploitation and Serious Youth Violence. These sessions considered grooming, peer relationships, and an overview of the Borough profile. This was well received and further sessions will be taking place in 2019-2020. The Exploitation and Missing Team have completed small group training and awareness sessions with children attending NRC. This is an ongoing piece of work.

8 Missing Children

8.1 **Performance Information**

During the last year, the total number of children missing from home and from care including away from placement without authorisation is 265. This is a slight reduction from 272 in 2017-2018. This year, children aged 14 years old were most likely to go missing from home and children aged 16 and 17 years old were most likely to go missing from

care. Instances of children going missing from home are split evenly across gender, with 47% female and 53% males. Far more males than females were reported missing from care, with 70% of children reported missing being male. This is an increase from 2017-2018, where 60% were male. 28% of children reported missing from home are White British. This is an increase from 17% in 2017-2018. 15% are Black/Black British – Caribbean and 10% and Black/Black British – African. 26% of young people reported missing from care are White British. 18% are children who have mixed parentage, and 13% are Black/Black British – Caribbean, 6% are children who are Black/Black British – African.

8.2 **Children Missing from Home - Length of Missing Episode:**

In total 50% of the missing episodes involved young people going missing for less than 24 hours, and 20% involved children returning the following day. 2% of the missing episodes related to children going missing for more than one month. During these missing episodes, strategy meetings were held regularly, often chaired by the Exploitation and Missing Team, and referrals to Rescue and Response (County Lines) and the National Referral Mechanism (Human Slavery and Trafficking) were made.

8.3 **Children Missing from Care - Length of Missing Episode:**

In total 56% of the missing episodes involved young people going missing for less than 24 hours, and 20% involved children returning the following day. 1% of episodes involved young people going missing for more than one month.

Additional Vulnerabilities of Missing Children:

When cross-matched with the risk hazards marker system for CSE, Gangs and Radicalisation we are able to see how many children that go missing from home and care are assessed as being at additional risk.

- **28** children who went missing this year are assessed as a category 1, 2 or 3 risk of CSE
- **45** children who went missing this year are identified to be either a gang nominal or considered to be at risk of gangs/serious youth violence.

8.4 This data shows a significant increase from 2017-2018 in terms of the number of children who go missing from care and from home who are identified as at risk of CSE or at risk of gangs/serious youth violence

8.5 The county lines hazard went live on the social care database in October 2018. Therefore, we are able to present the data in relation to the number of children who went missing in the last quarter, between January and March 2019, The percentage of missing from home children who have a county lines hazard is 11% and missing from care children is 18%.

8.6 When analysing the data for the 10 children who went missing most frequently between April 2018 – March 2019, it was found that 8 of these children were at risk of gang affiliation and 2 were at risk of child sexual exploitation. In addition, when looking at the 10 children who went missing for the longest period of time, it was apparent that 9 of these children were at risk of gang affiliation and 1 was at risk of child sexual exploitation. The Exploitation and Missing Team have started to focus on how it can improve the uptake of Return Home Interviews with this cohort, in order to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.

8.7 Senior managers are immediately notified when a child goes missing. The Director of People Services and the Lead Member for Children and Families are briefed every Friday on children who are currently missing. This ensures oversight at the most senior level, the collection and scrutiny of these briefings is undertaken by the Exploitation and Missing Team Administrator and the Exploitation and Missing Safeguarding Manager.

8.8. **Return Home Interviews (RHI's)**

Until July 2018, oversight of the Return Home Interview (RHI) process was provided by a designated Return Safe Team, which was based within the Youth and Communities Directorate, and led by a social work manager with three designated posts attached to complete this work. A recommendation was to bring the RHI team into the Exploitation and Missing Team to enable closer collaborative working in regards to children who go missing from home and from care and to focus on developing and improving the take-up of RHI's and engagement with children and young people. Since July 2018 the RHI team has been managed within the Exploitation and Missing Team, receiving direct supervision from the Senior Social Worker in the team. The aim of this is to support the child to feel able to share their concerns and discuss the missing episode with a professional they feel comfortable with. The percentage of RHI's offered within 72 hours is 54%, and this is an improvement from 2017-2018 (35%). A local performance indicator was introduced in October 2017 to measure the offer of a RHI within 3 working days from the referral date. The percentage of RHIs being offered within this timescale is 95%. Between April 2018 and March 2019 there has been a steady increase in the number of RHI's being completed each month.

8.9 **Missing from Education**

Children fall out of the education system for a variety of reasons which include:

- a) Failing to start appropriate provision and hence never entering the system at all;
- b) Ceasing to attend, due to exclusion (e.g. illegal unofficial exclusions) or withdrawal;
- c) Failing to complete a transition between providers (e.g. being unable to find a suitable school place after moving to a new local authority).

A range of robust procedures are in place for preventing pupils from going missing from education at these key transition points. For the financial year 2018/19, there were 38 Missing Pupil Alerts received by Pupil Services

9. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

9.1 **Performance**

The number of contacts Children Services Contact Team (CSCT) received in regards to CSE has significantly reduced over the last year. The number of contacts in 2017/2018 were 115, decreasing to 65 for the year 2018/2019. The Exploitation and Missing Team have identified two areas to consider when thinking about the reasons for this reduction in referrals. Over the last 3 years extensive training and awareness has taken place across the partnership, increasing the confidence of partner agencies in identifying and working with young people at risk or experiencing CSE. CSCT has several new categories they can now use to classify referrals. CSE may not be the identifying concern that triggers the referral but when assessed, CSE may be identified as a risk. For example, a young person may disclose being sexually assaulted and during the assessment it emerges they are in an exploitative relationship and at risk of CSE.

- 9.2 In 2018/2019 61 children were assessed as at risk of CSE. The majority of children who have been identified as at risk of CSE over the year 2018/2019 are female, 53, with 8 males being identified. This gender breakdown is similar that of to last year. In regards to the age of children the most common age is 15 with ages 14 and 17 being joint second. With regards to the ethnicity of children categorised at level 1 risk, 39% were White British, 18%, Black British- Caribbean, 13% were any other White background and 8% were Black British-African. For children categorised as level 2 risk, 23% were White British and 30% were mixed parentage. The number of children categorised as level 3 risk is very small and there is no pattern or theme identified in terms of ethnicity.
- 9.3 The children identified as at risk of CSE over the last year, have either been open to the Child in Need Team, Children Looked after Team, Disabled Children's Team or Independent Futures. They have received a service as a Child in Need, a child in need of Protection or a Child Looked After. Over the past year, one child was placed in a secure provision due to the immediate risk of harm related to CSE. When a child is identified as at risk of CSE, a consultation with the Specialist Social Worker for CSE is held. Over the past year 141 CSE consultations were held by the CSE Specialist Social Worker with front-line practitioners. A specialist CSE risk assessment tool has been developed and is used within the consultation, in order to identify the level of risk to a child in relation to CSE. All cases where a child is assessed as category 2 or 3 are subject to a strategy meeting. Category 1 cases are often also subject to a strategy meeting, although this may not always be required. 61 Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy meetings were chaired independently of the Social Work Team between April 2018 – March 2019.
- 9.4 **Themes**
Throughout the year themes are identified, analysed and responded to by the partnership. The themes this year were difficult family relationships, social media and the sharing of images and locations.

10 Modern Slavery / Trafficking

- 10.1 **Modern Slavery** is the term used within the UK and is defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises the offences of Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking. **Human Trafficking** is the trade and/or movement of someone from one place to another for the purpose of enslavement and exploitation through: Forced labour, domestic servitude, organ harvesting, child related crimes such as child sexual exploitation, forced begging, illegal drug cultivation, organised theft, related benefit frauds etc and forced marriage and illegal adoption (if other constituent elements are present).
- 10.2 Islington Council and Police have identified SPOCS to lead on developing a joint response to modern Slavery/Trafficking. Named SPOCS across Children's Services Since January 2019 training in Modern Slavery and Trafficking (including county lines) has been delivered through the Exploitation and Missing Team across Safeguarding and Family Support and Youth & Communities. This training covers the safeguarding response to children at risk of or victims of Modern Slavery and Trafficking including those at risk of county lines. Incorporated within this response are referrals the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the Rescue and Response team (for county lines cases).

11 County Lines

11.1 Between April 2018 and March 2019 a total of 19 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals were made for children identified as at risk of criminal exploitation. From the 19 referrals, 14 were males and 5 were females. There has been a significant increase in the number of referrals to the NRM considering a total of 7 referrals were made between April 2017 and March 2018. This data demonstrates a significant increase in the number of children being identified as at risk of County Lines over the last year. The Exploitation and Missing Team are of the view that the training and awareness that has been provided across Safeguarding and Family Support and Youth & Communities, and the safeguarding response being embedded across the service, has contributed to earlier identification of county lines indicators. Out of the 19 children identified as at risk of county lines, the majority of children are aged 15-17 years old, 5 of the children are female, 15 are male, 28% of children are Black British-African, 12% Black British-Caribbean, 12% mixed parentage, 12% White British, 8% Turkish or Turkish Cypriot and 8% any other White background.

The Rescue and Response pan-London project is currently working on developing the Borough's profile in relation to County Lines which will provide a deeper understanding of the local picture which will influence the strategic response across the partnership.

11.2 Strategy meetings and consultations in relation to County Lines are currently included within the data for gangs and Serious Youth Violence. For a number of children identified as at risk of county lines, they are also assessed as at risk of other forms of exploitation, including gangs and Serious Youth Violence, and CSE. The MACE identified a gap in terms of the MPS response to children at risk of Criminal Exploitation (CCE) as they do not fall into the current remit of the CSE or gangs Police unit. This, alongside pan-London discussions regarding the safeguarding response to child victims of CCE has led to a positive shift in the Police response to children at risk of criminal exploitation. Currently the Safeguarding Unit respond to any referrals in relation to CCE and will attend a strategy meeting as required. Decisions are currently being made within the MPS London wide, in terms of which unit in the Police will hold CCE cases moving forward, which will allow for further proactive work to be completed, as with CSE cases.

12 Serious Youth Violence (SYV)

12.1 Over the year 2018/2019 a total of 125 children were referred to the Children Services Contact Team in relation to gangs or Serious Youth Violence. This is an increase of 39 when compared to 2017/2018. Safeguarding and Family Support and partners agree that this is likely due to the continued increase in training and awareness raising, promoting better identification, along with an overall rise in gang related criminal activity and Serious Youth Violence.

12.2 As of end of March 2019, 55 children were identified as at risk of gangs /SYV or identified by Police as a 'gang nominal'. In addition, 14 of these children have been assessed as likely to be involved in county lines. Out of these 55 children, the majority are male (44), and female (11). In regards to the age of the children, the majority of children identified as at risk of gangs/SYV are between the ages of 15 and 17 years old, with an increase in children aged 13 and 14 being identified as at risk over the year. In regards to the ethnicity of children assessed as at risk of gangs/SYV, 25% are White British, 20% are mixed parentage, 16% black British-African, 15% Black British-Caribbean and 6% other Black British.

12.3 Practice

- 12.4 As with CSE, Children's Social Care assess the level of gangs/SYV risk to a child in terms of categories 1,2 and 3. When a child is identified as at risk of gangs/SYV, a consultation with the Specialist Social Worker is held, the majority of children assessed as at risk of gangs are at a level 2 risk, where they have been assessed as at risk of a violence or a threat of violence in relation to gangs. Over the last year 51 gangs/SYV consultations were held by the Gangs and Serious Youth Violence Specialist Social Worker with front-line practitioners and 112 Intelligence coordination checks were undertaken, in collaboration with the Integrated Gangs Team. In all cases where the gangs/SYV risk is assessed as a category 2 or 3, a strategy meeting will be convened with the relevant Police Unit. Where possible gangs/SYV strategy meetings are chaired by the Exploitation and Missing Team to ensure consistency and specialist overview. However, some strategy meetings or review meetings may be chaired within the respective Social Work team. A gangs/SYV risk assessment tool has been developed and is currently being used by social work practitioners as part of a gangs and SYV specialist consultation, alongside a safety plan, tailored to the individual needs and risks for the YP. In the last year, 150 Serious Youth Violence strategy meetings were chaired independently of the Social Work Team, by the Exploitation and Missing Team. This figure has more than doubled compared to last year where there were 64 Serious Youth Violence strategy meetings. The children identified as at risk of gangs/SYV over the last year, have either been open to the Child in Need Team, Children Looked after Team or Independent Futures. They have received a service as a Child in Need, a child in need of Protection or a Child Looked After.
- 12.5 Strategy meetings are attended by the partnership, including, police, health and education and any other services involved with the family such as IGT, housing and probation etc. A multi-agency approach is agreed at the strategy meeting in order to safeguard the young person at risk of gangs/SYV. When a child has been a victim of SYV or are at risk of gangs and are in hospital, the strategy meeting is held in the hospital, so that a discharge plan can be incorporated into the safety plan for the child and their family. Where the risks to a child and their family are so significant that they are not able to remain residing at the family home due to the location being known, immediate action is required in order for the family to move out of the borough for their immediate safety. Housing will be consulted prior to the strategy meeting and a housing representative will attend to provide advice and guidance. A rapid response is then provided by Safeguarding and Family Support and Youth & Communities, housing partners and police in order to move the family as part of the safety plan.
- 12.6 Over the last year there has been an increased focus on identifying the adults in connection with grooming and criminally exploiting the children and young people in relation to gangs, CSE, CCE and County Lines. This has resulted in a number of CAWN (Child abduction warning notice) being served on identified adults who are involved in criminally exploiting and grooming children into gang related activity. This response has led to changes in the way the police are starting to respond to children involved in Possession with Intent to Supply and moped enabled criminality, including them being identified as victims of exploitation.

- 12.7 Since the scope of MACE was broadened in November 2018, the partnership has been better placed to consider the links between gangs and SYV, CSE, and CCE in terms of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership. This has also supported the partnership to consider contextual safeguarding including specific locations in the borough which require intervention in order to reduce risks and safeguard children. Community Safety is now part of the MACE and we have seen some very positive examples of partnership working as a result of this.
- 12.8 For example, a fast food venue in the borough has seen increased difficulties with vulnerable adolescents congregating in and engaging in anti-social behaviour and violence at the venue. The Exploitation and Missing Team supported Community Safety in completing an Environmental Visual Audit to identify risks in terms of the venue/location and recommendations for how to address these. Police and Children's Social Care worked together to identify individual children that may be at risk and support and intervention was agreed with the Targeted Youth Support for individual children and for a group based outreach approach to intervention.
- 12.9 In addition to the above, the Exploitation and Missing Team have taken a lead in working with a youth provision in the Borough where contextual safeguarding was identified as a key area for focus. Part of this work included providing bespoke training and awareness raising, supporting the manager of the provision with reviewing the practice and processes in the provision and providing recommendations and advice in terms of how to reduce the contextual safeguarding risks. The Exploitation and Missing Team are working closely with Play and Youth Commissioning Services in Islington in order to develop our partnership working with all provisions in the Borough and provide a consistent offer for training and awareness raising.

13 Contextual Safeguarding

- 13.1 'Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.
- 13.2 Therefore, children's social care practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.'
Carlene Firmin, University of Bedfordshire.
- 13.3 Islington Safeguarding & Family Support Service agreed to be the 'enhanced comparator' for the current Contextual Safeguarding System, which is being trialed in the London Borough of Hackney. The evaluation is being completed by the University of Sussex and as part of this Islington will receive some feedback regarding our responses to Contextual Safeguarding.

14 Financial Implications

14.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

15 Legal Implications

15.1 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.

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.

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.

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

16 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

16.1 None.

17 Resident Impact Assessment

- 17.1 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.
- 17.2 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 maximizing benefits and supporting routes into employment, education and training.

18 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

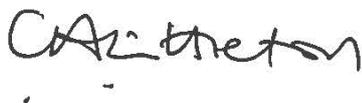
18.1 The Council rightly places a high priority on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children in Islington. This report provides assurance about the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding and looked after children's services provided through a range of performance and quality assurance measures that are in place to ensure that services to Islington's most vulnerable children are as safe as they can be.

Appendices: None

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

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