

**Children's Scrutiny Review Board**  
**4 September 2023**



Report sponsor: Andy Smith, Strategic Director  
 People Services  
 Report author: Suanne Lim, Director Early Help  
 & Children's Social Care

**ITEM 07**

**Monitoring Safeguarding Practice**

**Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide assurance that safeguarding practice is robust and responsive to the needs of children and families in Derby.
- 1.2 The report contains workforce information, risk, analysis and the implications for safeguarding for the department and Derby City. The focus of the report outlines the impact that demand is having on safeguarding arrangements and the steps being taken to mitigate any risks.

**Recommendation**

- 2.1 To note the content of the report and plans in place to address future challenges.

**Reason(s)**

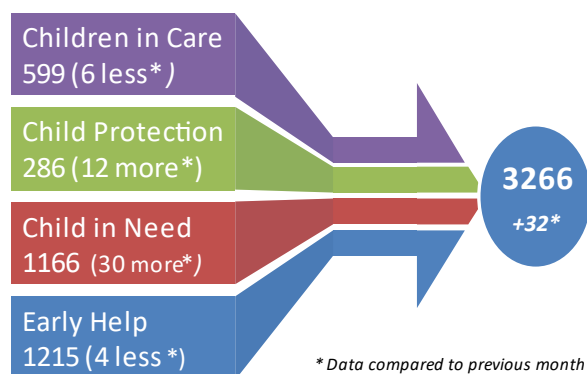
- 3.1 Maintaining a safe environment where good social work can flourish is dependent upon having sufficient, stable, competent and experienced workforce and management.

**Supporting information**

4.1 Performance

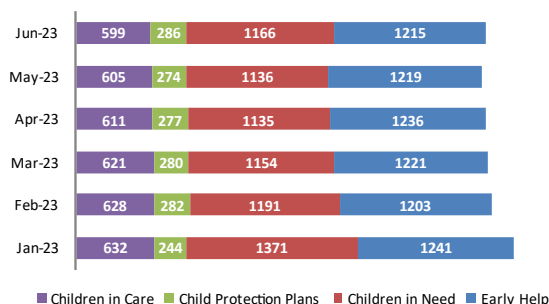
ILACs Performance Indicators	Current Month - July 2023	6 Monthly Average	Statistical Neighbours (2021-22)	East Midlands (2021-22)	National (2021-22)
% CIC Stat Visits completed on time	86.6%	88.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
% CIC Reviews completed on time	98.7%	98.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A
% CPP Stat Visits completed on time	85.9%	89.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
% CPP Reviews completed on time	95.7%	97.1%	90.8%	87.9%	89.3%
% CIN Reviews completed on time	91.3%	94.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Single Assessments completed on time (first assessments only, all teams)	88.8%	80.7%	83.4%	92.3%	84.5%
% of ICPCs completed within 15 working days of the Section 47	100.0%	90.9%	82.7%	84.2%	79.2%
% of second or subsequent child protection plans	15.0%	22.4%	23.4%	26.8%	23.3%

## Case Status – June 2023



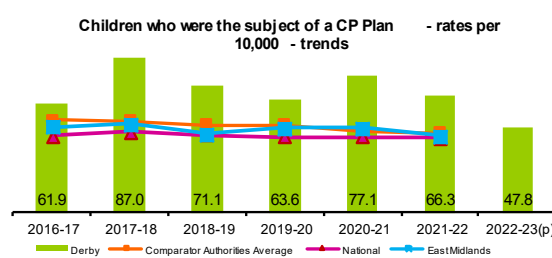
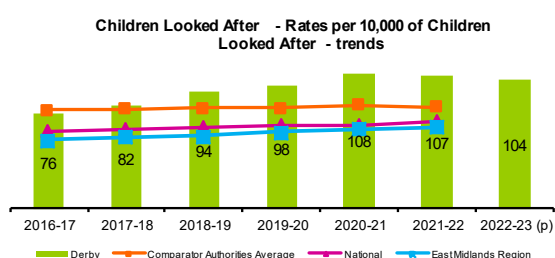
## Children's Social Care Activity Trends

### Dashboard – June 2023



Children in Care	CIC Rate per 10,000
DCC latest rate (June 2023)	100
2021-22 National rate	70
2021-22 East Midlands rate	65
2021-22 Comparator rate	82

Children with Child Protection Plans	CPP Rate per 10,000
DCC latest rate (June 2023)	48
2021-22 National rate	42
2021-22 East Midlands rate	43
2021-22 Comparator rate	45



## Referrals into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Any organisation or member of the public can notify social care where there is a safeguarding concern. In July 2023 the team received 2774 individual contacts, all of which are reviewed and a decision made in respect of what action is needed. The average number of referrals this calendar year is 643 per week (22,510 in total). In comparison to the same period last year this was an average of 577, (20,207) an increase of 11%. Children's social care is experiencing year on year increase in demand. This is resultant of a number of factors including but not limited to, the cost of living crisis raising demand in the system, post covid legacy and general reduced ability of family resilience. The impact should increases continue will have capacity and financial implications for the Council into the future.

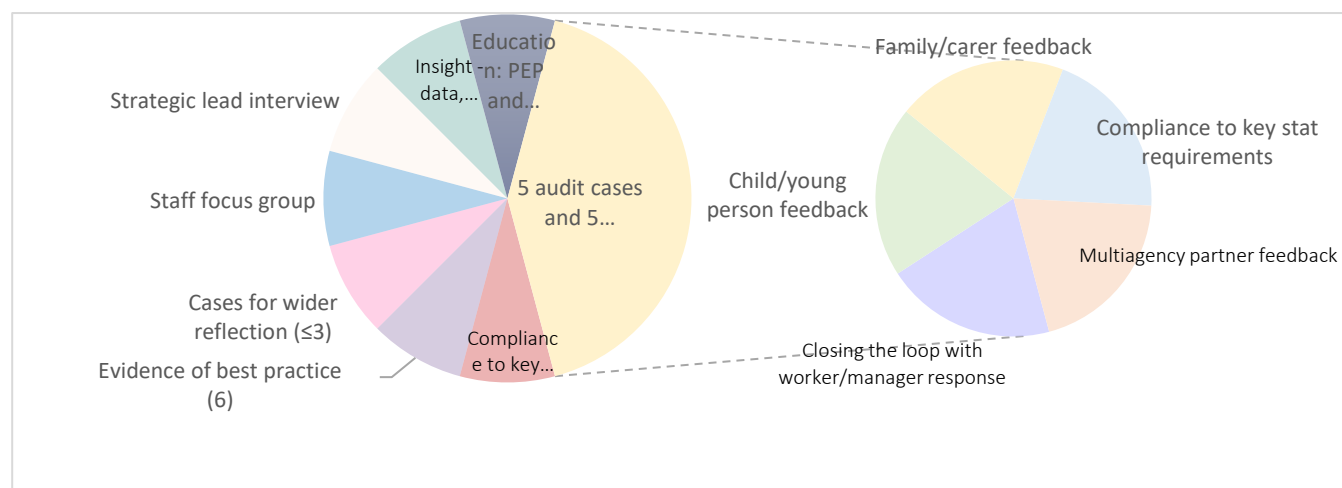
The nature of referrals year to date are as follows

- 83% Abuse and neglect (Domestic Abuse, Emotional, Neglect, Sexual, Physical, Children who abuse, Female Genital Mutilation)
- 3% Child with disability
- 3% Parental illness/ disability
- 3% Family in acute distress
- 5% Socially unacceptable behaviour
- 1% Absent parenting

Derby receives higher than average referrals into safeguarding services. We continually work with safeguarding partners to ensure families receive intervention at the lowest safe level and prevent escalation into statutory services.

## 4.2 Quality Assurance

In addition to Ofsted external inspections, the service has embedded a quality assurance ethos to ensure it knows itself well and can identify areas of concern early. The new framework below, will be launched in September 2023 and builds on a long standing framework. The activity is the result of all level management co-production within Early Help & Children's Social Care and reviewing best practice nationally which will ensure Derby remains at the forefront of practice. The framework is supported and co-ordinated by the Corporate Insight and Performance Team.



### Framework Activity

- Bi-monthly themed focus e.g., Child Protection
- Case file audits
- Observations of practice
- “Closing the loop” i.e. What difference have we made?
- Compliance with statutory duties
- Multiagency feedback
- Family/carer feedback
- Young person feedback
- Staff focus group
- Collation of best practice
- Strategic lead interview by DCS and Director of Early Help & Children's Social care
- Moderation through Head of Children's Quality Assurance/ Corporate Team
- Insight Led: Data/Workforce Learning Development/customer insight/ managers
- Report to Practice & Development Board for overview
- Report to wider workforce to ensure learning is shared and feedback is provided

### 4.3 Managing Demand

In order to manage increasing demand within children's social care, a pilot was implemented in 2022 to supplement existing social work establishment with seven children's practitioners and uplift three social work posts to senior practitioner. The purpose was to reduce existing high caseloads of social workers, increase their retention and reduce reliance therefore on agency social workers.

The sufficiency of suitably competent and experienced child-care social workers has been a national challenge within the sector over a number of years. Local authorities have been reliant on the supplementing existing social work staffing establishments with costly agency to meet compliance. In Derby prior to pilot implementation, agency numbers had increased from 10 to 18 at an additional annual cost of 457k.

The pilot aimed to re-design the role and function of social workers in line with legal requirements and where aspects of work that were found not requiring to be undertaken by a qualified member of staff, these duties were re-designated into a job role for alternatively qualified practitioners. A clear framework was developed of what was in and out of scope along with considerable confidence raising across the service that this was both safe and legal.

#### Outcomes July 2023

- Reduced agency social work from 18 to 1.5 - £370,000 saving with a forecast reduction of £1.1m pressure by April 2024.
- Reduced overall absence from 16.03 days to 9.33 days per. This has **cost** avoided £212,000 in lost working days from qualified social workers.
- Reduced average social worker caseload across teams from circa 20 to 15
- Low vacancy and turnover rates, stabilised staffing
- Rebalanced percentage of open cases - Early Help from 31% to 38% of total cases open and Child in Need from 38% to 35% of total cases open with 200 cases closed to the service not just displaced or stepped down.

Derby has led the way nationally with this initiative with a number of other authorities replicating the practice model. East Midlands Directors have commissioned regional workshops to share learning and consider wider roll out. A workshop was dedicated at the national Association of Directors of Children's Services conference in July 2023 which enabled Derby to share its journey and innovation in this area.

#### 4.4 Staffing, recruitment, and retention

The below summarises the number of social workers on maternity leave, agency workers and long-term absence.

	<b>*FTE Social Workers on maternity leave</b>	<b>FTE Agency Social Workers in post</b>	<b>FTE Social Workers on Long Term absence leave (1 month +)</b>
<b>Children's Safeguarding</b>	2	1.5	2
<b>Children In Care</b>	1.5	0	1
<b>Integrated Disabled Childrens Service</b>	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>4</b>

- Long-term sickness remains low across the board.
- Use of agency has reduced from 18 in 2021 to 1.5 in 2023.
- Derby has good retention rates of social workers and low level of vacancy.

(\*FTE – Full time equivalent)

#### Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 Not applicable

#### Other options

6.1 There are no other options for consideration.

#### Financial and value for money issues

7.1 The cost of employing children's social workers and front-line managers is £9.4m for the financial year 23-24, this includes core Council budget and other grants maximising resources. Social worker staffing expenditure forecast for 23-24 is currently £5.4m (circa 92.6 fte), the remainder is supporting other front-line roles including front-line managers

#### Legal implications

8.1 Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to provide sufficient social workers to act as key workers to children in care, children subject to child protection plans and to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and to assess children in need.

#### Climate implications

9.1 N/A

## Other significant implications

### 10.1 Equalities Impact

Social Workers provide services to the most vulnerable children in the city and endeavour to improve their life chances in terms of educational attainment, health and safety.

### 10.2 Risk Management

There is a significant risk to the Council of not being able to maintain a sufficient number of qualified and experienced social workers to meet the demands in the city. This is through children suffering unnecessarily and reputational damage from a poor inspection outcome.

### 10.3 Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- Resilient City

This report has been approved by the following people:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of sign-off</b>
<b>Legal</b>	Olu Idowu, Head of Legal & Insurance Services	22 August 2023
<b>Finance Service Director(s)</b>	Janet Bowlzer, Group Accountant	24 August 2023
<b>Report sponsor</b>	Andy Smith, Strategic Director of Peoples Services	18 August 2023
<b>Other(s)</b>		

**Background papers:**

**List of appendices:**