

Member Report

Children & Families Safeguarding Annual Report 2017-2018



Public

To:	Cabinet	Date:	18 September 2018
From:	Corporate Director for Children and Families	Decision type:	Executive
Portfolio:	Children	Forward Plan reference:	
Priority:	A brighter future for our children		
Ward(s):	All Wards		

1 What is the purpose of this report?

1.1 To inform Members of the Children & Families Safeguarding Annual Report, outlining the effectiveness of work undertaken by the Local Authority's Children and Families Service and partner organisations in respect of safeguarding children in Redcar and Cleveland during the period April 2017 to March 2018.

2 What is the background to this report?

2.1 The Corporate Plan, *Our Flourishing Future*, captures the Local Authority's commitment to supporting our children to have a 'Brighter Future.' The remit of the Children and Families Directorate, and more specifically the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service within it, is pertinent to this priority, particularly in ensuring that children and young people are safe, protected from harm and neglect; can grow up with the opportunities they deserve to enjoy good physical and mental health; and can reach adulthood having achieved their full potential.

2.2 The following report highlights some of the practice of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Service over the year April 2017 to March 2018 in line with the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan.

2.3 The legislative framework for safeguarding sits within the Children Act 1989 (as amended within Children Act 2004) and Section 47 of this Act details the duties required of local authorities to make decisions to protect children. This includes providing the local authority with the remit for compulsory intervention into family life if a child is felt to be at risk.

2.4 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on local agencies to ensure they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. Working Together 2018 sets out the requirements for inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

2.5 There is a clear expectation from Central Government that Elected Members and senior managers are routinely and regularly informed of children's social work

activity and the outcomes of this intervention. This ensures the Council, its officers and its partners are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities around safeguarding.

2.6 This report covers safeguarding performance and activity from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018.

3 The Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service

3.1 The Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service within the Directorate is made up of several teams engaged in the delivery of services to help and protect children and young people. At the time of writing, this includes the equivalent of 46 full time, frontline social workers in the 6 assessment teams (which is an increase of 8 in the last year); a fostering team supporting our in-house carers; a Looked After Children team that supports those children with long term care plans; a Leaving Care team; and a First Contact team to cover all front door arrangements from contact through to referral. In addition, there is a team of Reviewing Officers, independent of the social work teams, who are responsible for the review of all Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children reviews. Their role is to provide healthy challenge to multi-agency partners and social workers, to ensure plans are appropriately robust and able to deliver positive outcomes for children.

4 Referral

4.1 The First Contact Team deals with enquiries and referrals in respect of children and young people within Redcar and Cleveland and provides a single, clear pathway into the Children and Families service.

4.2 From the 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, there were 8345 individual contacts made to the First Contact Team. Of these contacts, 44% resulted in the provision of information and advice and 32% resulted in a referral into Early Help or targeted services. Of the total number of contacts, 16.1% (which equates to 1350 children and young people) were judged to be in need of a social work response and were therefore referred to the social work assessment teams for allocation to a qualified social worker.

4.3 The table below highlights the number of contacts and referrals received over the last 3 years:

Table 1

Year	Total No. of Contacts	No. of contacts leading to a referral for assessment	% of contacts leading to a referral for assessment
2015/16	8394	1246	15.0
2016/17	9680	1432	15.0
2017/18	8345	1350	16.0

4.4 The number of contacts requested during the year has reduced from the previous year. This is, in part, due to a change in the way contacts are now recorded; previously all requests from social workers for an in-house service from early help to support an open case, for example for a parenting programme

from the children’s centres, or for targeted youth provision, would be recorded as a new contact on the system. At the beginning of this reporting period, these requests were no longer recorded as an additional contact, thus affecting the overall number. This means that the previous years’ figures cannot be used as a baseline for comparison.

4.5 One of the observations made by Ofsted during the 2017 inspection was that our social workers within the field locality teams cover the full breadth of support offered to families, from the initial assessment at the point of referral, through to complex court proceedings where applicable. Following a review of the Children and Families Service front door arrangements, it was agreed to develop a discrete Duty and Assessment Team to be based within First Contact. By undertaking the initial duty assessments at the front door, social workers in the locality teams will be able to focus on the longer-term work with children. This is an exciting opportunity for the service which we expect to see in action from September 2018.

5 Assessment

5.1 The process of single assessment is well established within Redcar and Cleveland. The statutory guidance for this is set out within the Department for Education’s document, Working Together, and has been recently updated in the 2018 publication; this provides the framework for social workers to focus on the specific needs of children by undertaking proportionate children and families’ assessments that are robust and analytical.

5.2 The table below shows the number of children and family assessments completed within the last 3 years:

Table 2

Year	No. of Assessments
2015/16	1330
2016/17	1559
2017/18	1732

5.3 It is noteworthy that, although Table 1 indicated a reduction in the number of referrals across the year, the data in Table 2 clearly demonstrates a year-on-year increase of the actual number of social work assessments undertaken. The total number of assessments indicated in Table 2 (1732) is higher than the number of contacts leading to a referral for assessment shown in Table 1 (1350), because further assessments are undertaken on open cases when circumstances within the family change and it is deemed appropriate to do so. For instance, if it is felt that a child’s needs have escalated from ‘Child In Need’ to being at risk of significant harm (Child Protection), then a re-assessment is required to establish the increased concerns and to inform a revised plan.

5.4 As well as the overall increase in the number of assessments undertaken in the year, discussions with social workers would indicate that the level of complexity within the assessments has also increased, highlighting the growing needs of our communities and corresponding pressures in terms of capacity on the service.

5.5 In terms of the assessment factors identified at the end of an assessment, the highest percentages relate to concerns around mental health difficulties of parents at 35%; 32% identified domestic violence perpetrated by a parent as the factor; and 26% highlighted neglect as the primary concern. This demonstrates the importance of providing targeted services within our communities which effectively support families experiencing these problems.

5.6 The social work teams must produce assessments that strike the balance between 'thoroughness and depth' and 'timeliness and proportionality.' From 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, 76.1% of all assessments were completed within the performance timescale of 45 working days, against a target of 83%. A focused audit will follow to ensure that outcomes for children are not adversely affected by the late completion of assessments.

6 Re-Referrals

6.1 A re-referral is defined as a referral to Children's Social Care made within 12 months of a previous referral, which is now a closed case. Re-referral rates may be considered as a measure of the effectiveness of services provided to a family; they may occur because at the time of the original referral the need may not have been satisfactorily met, or indeed the need may have changed completely. There are times when an assessment may highlight a clear need but, because the parents choose not to work with services, their right to a private family life must be respected and the case closed. Unless concerns reach the threshold for child protection, the social worker has no statutory right to intervene without consent from parents.

6.2 From the total number of referrals made to the department, 12.8% (173 children or young people) had a referral within the previous 12 months. The national figures for 2017/18 will not be available until later in the year however, data from previous years provides evidence that we perform significantly better than the national average in this category, with rates of around 21% recorded nationally. A themed audit identified that re-referrals tended to be due to a change in family circumstances, rather than failure to meet needs in the first instance, which is positive.

7 Child Protection

7.1 Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The decision to make enquiries under Section 47 is made following a multi-agency strategy discussion. This can take the form of a multi-agency meeting or telephone discussion with all relevant professionals, including health, police, education and other bodies.

7.2 Table 3 below shows that during the period 2017-18, 1025 children met the threshold for a child protection strategy discussion: 568 at the point of referral; and 457 who were already known to a social worker where concern for the children had increased to a level at which a strategy meeting was subsequently deemed necessary. The table also compares this year's figures with those of the previous two years.

7.3 **Table 3**

Year	No. of strategy meetings held	No. of children discussed at strategy at point of referral	No. of children discussed at strategy already active	Total no. of children involved
2015/16	481	Data not available		736
2016/17	492	349	509	858
2017/18	612	568	457	1025

7.4 The threshold for a strategy discussion means that the concerns are such that they warrant a multi-agency child protection response. The figures for this year were much higher than the 858 who were discussed at a strategy meeting during the previous year, 2016-17; 349 at the point of referral.

7.5 The figures show that child protection responses have continued to increase year-on-year and reiterates the earlier point made that the issues for the children and their families were more complex, requiring a multi-agency response.

7.6 To provide assurances around team managers' decision-making, a range of audits and dip samples have been undertaken throughout the year. These established that the decision to hold a strategy meeting was appropriate and proportionate, which supports the argument that within the context of changing and increasing social problems, the issues and difficulties that children experience are becoming more complex and difficult to address.

7.7 If the decision to make enquiries under Section 47 is reached as an outcome of the multi-agency strategy discussion, then an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) may be subsequently convened where the Enquiry provides evidence that concerns are considered high risk.

7.8 The purpose of the ICPC is to bring together family members and partners who are involved with the child and family; share information; and make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. The outcome of the ICPC is to agree if a protection plan to safeguard the child from any further harm or suffering is needed.

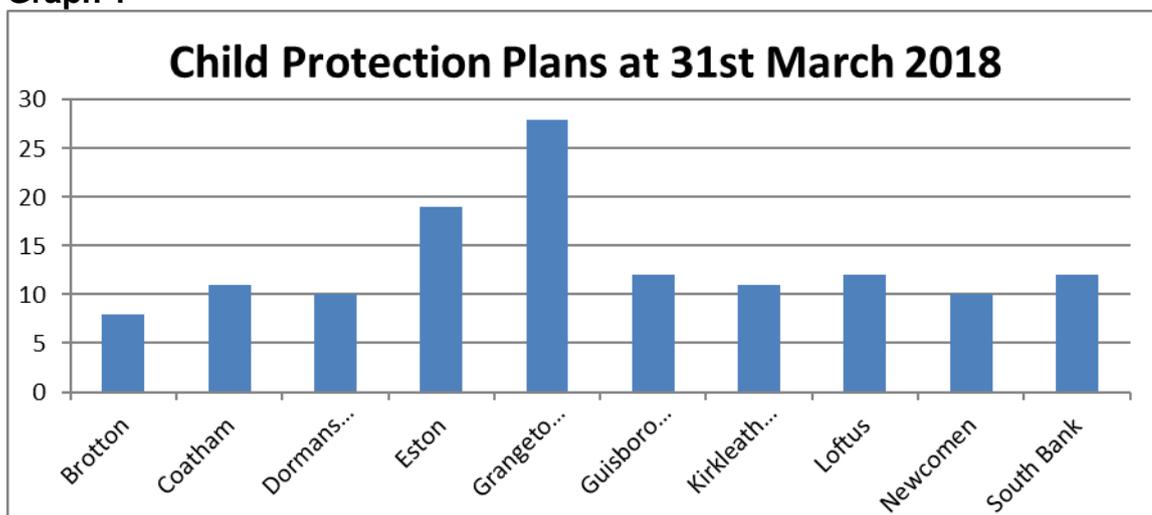
7.9 **Table 4**

Year	No. of children subject to a Child Protection plan (at 31 st March)
2015/16	147
2016/17	200
2017/18	156

7.10 The figures in Table 4 demonstrate that the number of children with a child protection plan has fluctuated over the last 3 years, with this year's data more in line with previous years and those of our regional and statistical neighbours. Although this data suggests that social work activity might have reduced over the last year, the intensity of work has not diminished due to the fact that many of these plans ended as the risks escalated and the children became subject to care proceedings. This point is illustrated in Table 6 later in the report.

7.11 The number of child protection plans recorded at the end of this reporting period can be broken down in terms of Council Wards; the following graph highlights the data from the top 10 most prevalent wards. It shows that the highest number of children subject to child protection plans were living in Grangetown, where there were 28; the second highest being Eston with 19; and the third highest wards were Guisborough, Southbank and Loftus, with 12. In summary, the Greater Eston area had the most children subject to CP plans, with 44.9%, followed by the Redcar area, with 28.2%, and then East Cleveland with 26.9%.

7.12 **Graph 1**



7.13 Child abuse falls into one or more of 4 categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. When a child is made subject to a protection plan, the plan will be made under one of these categories, depending on the specific concerns relating to the child.

7.14 Table 5 below identifies the most prevalent category of risk for children and young people subject to a protection plan in our Borough. It highlights 'neglect' as the most common category of risk, which follows national levels. Neglect can be the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs; a child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care; it can also be a one-off incident that places the child at risk of significant harm. Neglect is the category used when children are living in households where there is domestic violence, parental mental health issues or substance misuse. These are the 3 reasons which continue to be the most prevalent for the children who are referred into our social care services.

7.15 **Table 5**

Category of Abuse	No. (and %) of children subject to a CP Plan per category, per quarter.			
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Neglect	131 (65.5%)	138 (69.5%)	113 (65%)	102 (65.5%)
Physical abuse	7 (3.5%)	10 (5%)	11 (6%)	15 (9.5%)
Sexual abuse	5 (2.5%)	2 (1%)	7 (4%)	7 (4.5%)
Emotional abuse	56 (28%)	47 (24%)	44 (25%)	27 (17.5%)
Mixed categories	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)
Total	200	198	175	156

7.16 As indicated, around 65% to 70% of all children made subject to a protection plan throughout the year were deemed to be at risk due to neglect. Redcar and Cleveland Children Safeguarding Board identified Neglect as a priority and endorsed the development of an updated Neglect Strategy, which is to be revised in 2018. The Children and Families Service will lead on a number of the actions within the revised strategy to drive forward a more effective multi-agency response to this issue.

7.17 To support practitioners in working with neglect, we invested in bespoke training to strengthen the quality of assessments. The ‘Strengthening Practice’ programme was rolled out to all practitioners across the workforce in 2017/18; the Signs of Safety framework will build upon this, and will further embed the ability of social workers and partners to work with families using a strengths-based approach, supported by clear evidence.

8 Legal Framework

8.1 When a child protection plan is not deemed sufficient to protect and it is felt that a child can no longer remain at home safely, the Local Authority may need to think about issuing care proceedings. This means presenting a care plan to Court, setting out the what the Local Authority consider to be in the best interests of the child. The Court will ultimately use the evidence presented to them to decide if a legal order is required to enable the plan to be implemented.

8.2 The Family Justice Reforms, embodied in The Children & Families Act 2014, are now well established in practice in Redcar and Cleveland. These Reforms introduced an obligatory 26-week time limit to conclude care proceedings, to avoid drift and ensure timely care planning. The Children and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCAS) publish annual statistics on how well Designated Family Judge areas perform in this regard. For Redcar and Cleveland, the average length for care proceedings cases to be concluded by the court was 29 weeks; this remains below the national average.

8.3 From 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, there were 84 sets of new care proceedings issued by Redcar and Cleveland, which equates to 134 individual

children. Proceedings on 90 individual children concluded during the reporting period. At the time of writing this report, conclusions are pending on 18 sets of care proceedings which were issued within the previous year. The number of care proceedings issued has continued to rise nationally in recent years and Redcar and Cleveland is one of many local authorities reporting increased applications to the Court.

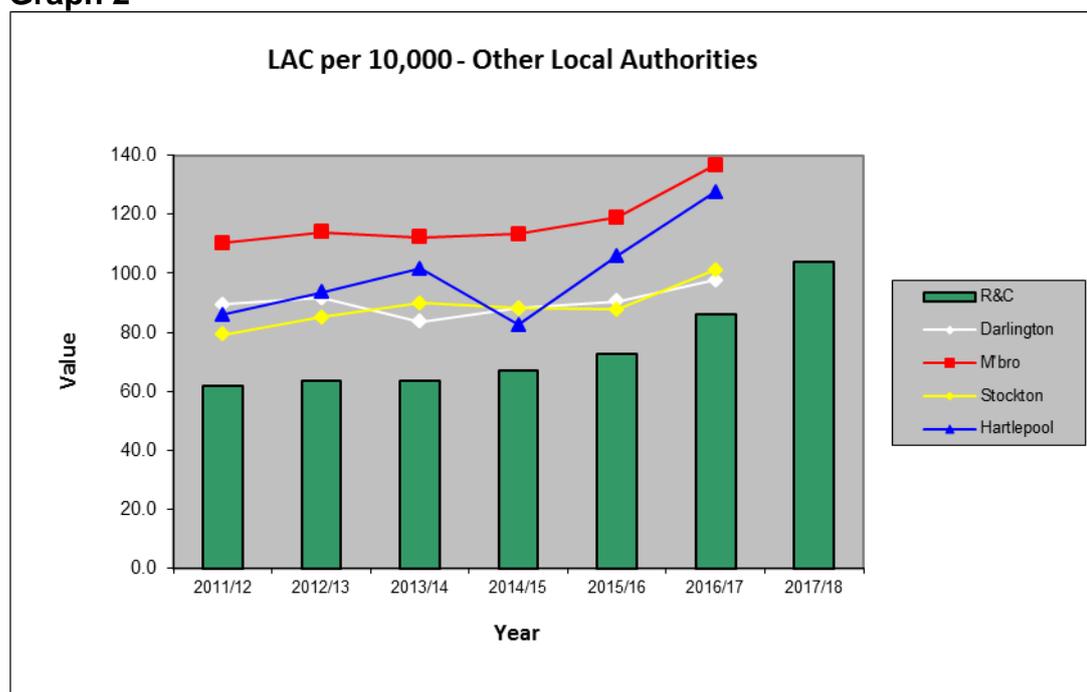
8.4 This trend brings challenge for the team in terms of the need for experienced social workers to undertake the complex court work associated with care proceedings.

9 Looked After Children

9.1 Sadly, for some children it is not possible for them to remain in the care of their birth family, resulting in them becoming Looked After by the Local Authority. At 31 March 2018, there were 284 children and young people looked after by Redcar and Cleveland. This figure is above the national average but below our comparator authorities.

9.2 Graph 2 over the page illustrates the rate of looked after children per 10,000 population in Redcar and Cleveland over the last 6 years. At the time of writing this report, the regional and national data was not available for 2017-18.

9.3 Graph 2



9.4 We have continued to experience a year-on-year rise in numbers: In March 2017, we reported an increase of 49 children from the previous year, and 52 children when comparing it with the figure from 2015-16 (See Table 6). This reflects the national picture in terms of demand, attributable to an emerging increase in the level of needs and vulnerabilities for families living in Redcar and Cleveland.

9.5

Table 6

	Total LAC	In-house foster placement	Independent Fostering Agency	Residential Setting	Other
2014/15	183	77 (42%)	66 (36%)	19 (10%)	22 (12%)
2015/16	199	83 (42%)	76 (38%)	20 (10%)	20 (10%)
2016/17	235	102 (43%)	84 (36%)	23 (10%)	27 (11%)
2017/18	284	125 (44%)	79 (28%)	36 (13%)	44 (15%)

9.6

Table 6 also reflects the number and percentage of children and young people by placement type and demonstrates that of the 284 looked after children at the end of March 2018, 204 were placed in foster care: 125 with our own in-house foster carers; and 79 with independent and voluntary providers through agencies. Thirty-six children were placed in residential care and the remaining 44 either remained at home on Care Orders; were in independent living; or were in their adoptive placement.

9.7

The priority for the year ahead is to continue to shift the balance towards the use of in-house foster carers. This is the preferred model of care for children who are unable to remain at home because, by replicating a normal family home, it tends to lead to the best outcomes for children. Recruiting carers remains a national challenge however, throughout the year, a successful programme of promotional events and activities were organised as part of a targeted recruitment campaign to raise the profile of fostering. The events provided an opportunity to engage in face-to-face interaction with people interested in fostering.

9.8

As at 31st March 2018, an additional 14 in-house foster carers were approved, in comparison to the number reported at the end of the previous year. There were 84 fostering households providing placements for children. The positive impact of the marketing campaign is also evident in the increase in the number of enquiries made around becoming a foster carer. Foster carers reported that they feel valued and are committed to remaining with the Local Authority.

10 Adoption

10.1

All local authorities have a statutory duty to maintain an adoption service within their area; regulations set out the minimum facilities that must be made available in the provision of the service. The Local Authority is not obliged to provide all the facilities itself but may make use of other suitable providers who are permitted to provide the service in question.

10.2

Up to May 2018, Redcar and Cleveland delivered adoption services through its own agency. However, in line with the Government's agenda for Adoption Reform, the five Councils in the Tees Valley agreed to combine their services

into a single Regional Adoption Agency called Adoption Tees Valley. Stockton Council is the host authority and it was agreed that the new service would be accommodated within the Borough of Stockton. This service went “live” on 1st May 2018, with an official launch date of 21st June. The ‘Hosted’ model is the first of its kind adopted by regional adoption agencies and it is anticipated that this will generate a lot of interest from other local authorities who are planning their journey to become Regional Adoption Agencies.

- 10.3 There was a 54.5% increase in the number of adoption orders granted between March 2017 and March 2018. At the point of the transfer to Adoption Tees Valley, the Local Authority was looking for suitable families for 23 children, with 20 of them being part of a sibling group. Over the past year, the focus has been on the recruitment of adopters for older children and sibling groups. As of March 31st 2018, there were five approved adopter couples who were waiting to be matched with a child or children.

11 Child Sexual Exploitation

- 11.1 The Redcar and Cleveland Safeguarding Children Board leads the governance arrangements for child exploitation services within the Borough to ensure that there are effective local procedures in place. A Tees-wide framework supports the governance structure, with 3 main tiers of accountability: The Tees Strategic VEMT Group, established to provide strategic direction around CSE activity across the Tees area; the Redcar & Cleveland VEMT Sub Group, responsible for driving the delivery of the local strategy; and the Redcar & Cleveland VEMT Practitioners’ Group (VPG), whose members are involved in the operational delivery of services and where intelligence is shared, including information on individual children and young people, to ensure there is a clear focus on protection.
- 11.2 Work at a strategic level continues to be a priority and remains ongoing to tackle the serious issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Redcar & Cleveland. The dedicated Police team that deals with this issue is well embedded and there are strong partnerships with the Local Authority and other safeguarding partners.
- 11.3 The VEMT Practitioners’ Group (VPG) continues to meet monthly, to robustly profile those children at risk of child sexual exploitation and to ensure interventions are in place to support those children and reduce risk. During the year, 2017-18, 136 young people were referred to VPG and 38 were accepted as being at risk. At 31st March 2018, 26 young people were subject to VEMT: 4 males and 22 females.
- 11.4 Young people who go missing make themselves more vulnerable to exploitation and the importance of completing a return interview is recognised. Most recently there has been work to improve the quality of the information recorded within the missing return interviews and there is work ongoing to amend and improve the missing return form. The intelligence which can be obtained from the missing return interview is paramount in identifying potential perpetrators, locations and the way in which young people are being approached. This leads to targeted disruption activity being progressed by all agencies involved in this area of safeguarding.
- 11.5 One of the strategic aims for Redcar and Cleveland remains ensuring that professionals working with children and young people can recognise the signs of

exploitation. Therefore, a number of processes have been introduced and awareness sessions have been delivered throughout the Borough:

- A rolling programme of CSE awareness raising sessions, facilitated by the Safeguarding Children Board, has been delivered throughout the year to Elected Members, children's social care staff, school staff and designated safeguarding leads in schools, youth workers, health visitors, school nurses, local authority foster carers and childminders, as well as a range of professionals from across other agencies. An agreement was also reached to include CSE training in the Elected Members' Induction training going forward.
- The Early Help Youth Service were funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver the 'Crucial Crew' programme in June 2017 to more than 1000 Year 6 pupils from 30 primary schools in the Borough. The sessions covered CSE safety messages, including grooming and internet safety.
- Also this year, the Directorate's Early Help teams worked alongside staff from Barnardo's at 'Fresher Fairs' in two local further education colleges, attracting more than 600 students across both venues. The purpose was to raise awareness of CSE by giving different scenarios of how young people can be exploited, groomed or trafficked. Information and advice relating to what CSE is, the risk factors and the warning signs were shared, alongside how to spot and report CSE if you fear a friend may be at risk or subject to exploitation.

11.6 Child sexual exploitation is a hidden crime and it is important we also focus our work on children and young people themselves, to increase their awareness and recognition of the risks. Two theatre productions were delivered to pupils from across all secondary schools in the Borough: *Chelsea's Choice*, which has been positively received in previous years; and a new production called *Kayleigh's Love Story*.

11.7 In addition, the Early Help service supported the delivery of this programme through targeted sessions to Young Carers; through focused learning modules to young people engaged in the Youth Service-led Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme; and to parents or carers accessing group parenting programmes through the Children's Centres.

12 Safeguarding Assurance

12.1 Statutory Guidance on the role and responsibility of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services was issued in April 2013. As part of this, local authorities were mandated to assure themselves that there were arrangements in place to enable them to discharge their education and children's social care functions effectively.

12.2 The assurance mechanisms were to be agreed locally but should involve self-assessment, peer challenge and review, as part of evidencing continuous sector-led improvement in the quality of services.

12.3 The quality assurance framework enables senior management to be assured that vulnerable adults and children living in the Borough are provided with

consistently good standards of service. This is achieved through a programme of observational visits across the range of social care service areas. The observed meetings include Child Protection Conferences, Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews, Early Help Meetings, Serious Concerns Protocol Meetings, Social Work Needs Assessments, Social Work Reviews and Strategy or Progress Meetings.

12.4 The Lead Member for Children, the Corporate Director for Children and Families and relevant Assistant Directors and Service Managers are all involved in observing practice and providing feedback against each individual activity. Each report provided valuable feedback and assurances that within Redcar and Cleveland there are good standards of practice. Elements of good practice are relayed back to the practitioner and any issues that require attention are allocated to a nominated person who subsequently provides assurance that appropriate actions have been taken.

12.5 Further safeguarding assurance is provided by the independently chaired, Local Safeguarding Children Board. Additional scrutiny and challenge on all safeguarding activity is provided through a formal briefing with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.

13 Regulated Activity and Service Improvement

13.1 All Local Authority Children's Services are subject to regular inspections to assure children and young people, parents, the public and the Government of the quality and standards of the service provided.

13.2 Under the previous Single Inspection Framework, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council was last inspected in January 2017 and achieved a 'requires improvement' judgement. Thirteen areas for improvement were identified and incorporated into a corresponding service improvement plan that was endorsed by Ofsted and presented to the Children and Families Scrutiny and Improvement Committee in October 2017.

13.3 In order to address the recognised areas for development, an extensive programme of service improvement activity was planned and implemented throughout the year. A series of 'Getting to Good' training workshops were delivered to all frontline social workers, specifically designed to target areas for improvement identified through a range of performance management activity, including the inspection findings, peer reviews, audits and observations.

13.4 The improvement journey was further enhanced by the service's ongoing commitment to collaborative work with North Yorkshire Children's Services, as one of the Department for Education's (DfE) Partners In Practice Councils, selected to work with other local authorities on specific areas of practice. Amongst other things, colleagues from North Yorkshire shared their learning and experiences from implementing Signs of Safety, which has since led to an agreement to adopt the approach as the model of practice within Redcar and Cleveland's Children and Families Service.

13.5 Taking account of all improvement activity throughout the year, the Children and Families Service Plan has been updated accordingly to reflect progress made, including our robust response to the 13 recommendations made by Ofsted. A review of the action plan was presented and subsequently endorsed by members

of the Children and Families Scrutiny and Improvement Committee on the 24th April 2018.

- 13.6 Ofsted revised their inspection framework in November 2017 and an annual conversation with Ofsted was introduced as part of the new “Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services.” This discussion took place in March 2018 and was, in part, informed by a self-evaluation document that set out what the Local Authority identifies as its strengths and areas for development.
- 13.7 As part of the meeting with inspectors, the Corporate Director for Children and Families and senior management team identified that they would welcome a focused visit to look at front door arrangements and help and protection services. The 2-day focused visit is a new part of the inspection regime and is a visit by 4 inspectors to a specific area in children’s services. Based on the discussion with Ofsted in March, it is anticipated that the focused visit will take place before the end of the calendar year.
- 13.8 As part of a North-East programme of sector-led improvement activity, a team of ‘peer inspectors,’ led by the Director of Children’s Services from North Tyneside, will undertake a review of safeguarding services between the 2nd and 4th September 2018, to help prepare Redcar and Cleveland for its impending Ofsted focused visit.

14 Social Work Recruitment and Retention

- 14.1 A qualified and stable work force is vital to effective safeguarding. Staff turnover has been less of a challenge this year, however the recruitment of experienced social workers has continued to be difficult for Redcar and Cleveland and its neighbouring authorities.
- 14.2 The issue of high paying recruitment agencies has been tackled at a regional level, with all local authorities in the North East implementing a capped rate for agency social workers. This started in September 2017 for any new agency member of staff and will progress to any “legacy” agency staff in July 2018; this has resulted in fewer staff being attracted to work for agencies as a more profitable alternative to permanent employment within a local authority.
- 14.3 The service has taken proactive steps to effectively compete within this challenging recruitment market and implemented a robust recruitment and retention strategy, which is reviewed regularly. Investment has continued in the Step Up to Social Work and Frontline programmes which have provided an opportunity for high achieving university students and career changers to join the profession. A further cohort of students will join the service in 2018 and the two current Frontline students will stay as permanent social workers after qualifying in August this year.
- 14.4 Early indications suggest that the review of social work functions and structures undertaken this year will improve social work retention rates, which is particularly pertinent for the more experienced workers. This is specifically due to the introduction of deputy team managers, family support workers, and enhanced business support, all of which have been described as invaluable in terms of the additionality they bring to teams.

14.5 Staffing rates across the locality social work field team at the end of the year indicated a rise of 4 full time equivalent workers, compared with the same time in the previous year. This may be partly attributed to the new staffing structure, as described above.

15 Priorities for the year ahead 2017/18

15.1 Over the next year, the Children and Families Service will continue to work with its partners to provide a robust and effective safeguarding service.

15.2 There are a number of priorities, including:

- The recruitment and retention of qualified and experienced social workers;
- Implementation of a duty and assessment team;
- The implementation of an evidenced-based model of practice: Signs of Safety;
- Improved placement sufficiency, including ongoing recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers; and
- Delivering outcomes identified in the Service Improvement Plan – A Brighter Future for Our Children.

16 Who will this benefit and how?

16.1 Children, young people and their families living in Redcar and Cleveland will directly benefit from the continued development and improved performance of the Children and Families Service and partner agencies in terms of safeguarding children.

17 Who have we consulted?

17.1 All service users are invited to complete user feedback forms to support service improvement.

17.2 A Participation Officer gathers the views of our children and young people through Viewpoint, which is an electronic interactive consultation tool.

17.3 All social care interventions, including statutory safeguarding processes, are delivered in partnership with those parents/carers, children and young people who are subject to the services of the Children and Families Directorate.

17.4 The priorities of the Children and Families Safeguarding Service are shared with members of the Safeguarding in Education Network as appropriate.

17.5 Multi-agency teams work in partnership to deliver a 'team around the family' approach to support our children, young people and their families in all social work activity.

18 How will it deliver our priorities and improve our performance?

18.1 All work of the Children and Families Directorate directly supports the Council's priority to deliver a Brighter Future for Our Children. The Corporate Plan identifies 5 overarching commitments (presented over the page) that are captured in the Directorate's Service Plan, with evidence of how the service will work to achieve the intended outcomes for all children and young people living in the Borough.

- We will ensure young people get the most out of life and access good education to develop a broad range of skills for adulthood; We will work in partnership with schools and colleges to make secondary and further education in this Borough as good as our high performing primary education;
- We will ensure children and young people are safe, protected from harm and neglect and can grow up, able to look after themselves, and achieve their full potential; We will tackle the causes of neglect and abuse;
- We will promote healthy living and will provide opportunities for all young people to enjoy good physical and mental health;
- We will encourage young people to positively contribute to the community and society, through play, citizenship, volunteering and other activities; and
- We will support young people to get good quality local jobs through the delivery of Foundation For Jobs, bringing opportunities to get more skills and work experience, and gain the confidence to succeed.

18.2 Whilst it is recognised that many of the priority areas overlap, the activity of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service within the Directorate is predominantly, but not exclusively, focused around the actions described under numbers 2 and 3 above. The service area works to an agreed business unit plan, that sets out its own priorities in line with the broader Corporate and Directorate Plans.

19 What are the risks and resource implications?

Type of Risk/ Implication	Applicable?	Details
Health and Safety	Yes	The emotional and physical health of children and young people is pertinent to their development. It is a key part of all safeguarding activity to ensure that children can access good physical and mental health, therefore this is a priority for this area of service. We deliver this by offering direct work with children, including provision of therapeutic services where necessary.
Legal	Yes	The following legislation has informed this report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Children Act 1989 • Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (revised 2015) • Children and Families Act 2014
Financial	Yes	The increased demand for children and families' services has resulted in significant budget pressures, particularly around placement costs for looked after children. In addition, increasing caseloads means that staffing

		levels are at significant risk of being too low to deal with the number and complexity of cases; this may result in a budget pressure when facing the need to increase staffing levels.
Human Resources	Yes	<p>Caseload management is crucial to ensure effective performance in social work. It is therefore vital that the full establishment of qualified social workers is maintained within teams. In order to meet the demands of this requirement, the decision was made to appoint a number of social workers over and above the agreed establishment, as well as the introduction of deputy team managers and family support workers into teams.</p> <p>HR support is also required to manage the process of career progression, following the implementation of the assistant team manager role.</p>
Equality and Diversity	Yes	<p>The areas of greatest significance with regards to those likely to benefit are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and families on lower incomes • Looked After Children • People and families who are homeless <p>The potential effect on vulnerable people is a positive one; the Children's Safeguarding Annual Report demonstrates the work undertaken by the Local Authority to ensure all children and young people are appropriately safeguarded in Redcar and Cleveland.</p> <p>The decision outlined in the report to cap rates of pay to agency social workers should be recognised as a potential issue for current workers employed through agencies, as their rate of pay will decrease in the future.</p>
Carbon Footprint	No	
Other (please specify)	Yes	Members have a duty to safeguard the children and young people living in our Borough. If the content of the Children's Safeguarding Annual Report is not endorsed, there is a risk that together we may not fulfil our statutory obligations.

19.1 Equality analyses for Cabinet decisions are published alongside the reports in the 'Cabinet and committee papers section' of our website at www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/decisionmaking and should be read in conjunction with the recommendations in the report.

20 What options have been considered?

20.1 There are no options to be considered.

21 What is the reason for the recommended option?

21.1 That Cabinet Members are kept fully informed on the Council's safeguarding performance, as part of the Children and Families Safeguarding Assurance Framework.

22 Recommendations

22.1 It is recommended that Cabinet Members endorse the content of the Children and Families Safeguarding Annual Report that outlines the performance of the Children and Families Service during the period 2017/18 and agree to receive future reports.

23 Appendices and further information

23.1 There are no appendices attached to this report

24 Background papers

24.1 No background papers other than published works were used in writing this report.

25 Contact officer

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