

# CSF – Departmental Update

Presented to

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel

April 2021

# Director's Update

## Senior Management Team Updates

- Director appointment
- Interim arrangements
- Recruitment for Permanent Assistant Directors

## Other Department Updates (including Education and Early Help)

- The Youth Justice Service has received its notification for the HMIP inspection. We are working within the service to prepare all the relevant documents and evidence to showcase the work we have undertaken. The HMIP inspection will commence 17th May 2021 for 5 days.
- A formal HR consultation regarding the proposal to re-structure the CSC&YI division commenced on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The consultation phase is due to close on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. All staff feedback received will be considered with a view to decide on a way forward and mobilise to a new structure with vacant roles filled by September 2021
- Transformation and recovery programme - report to come to next OSP meeting
- Schools return updates
- Holiday and Food Programmes
- Early Help Strategy
- Updates from last OSP re Lavender Nursery/MMEP

# Children's Social Care & Youth Inclusion Update

## Demand for services

- The number of contacts and referrals received during the year is broadly the same as 2019/20.
- The last six months have seen a sustained period where the number of assessments completed each month is comparable with the short-term peaks of one or two months in previous years. Managers and practitioners report increased complexity of needs and issues arising.
- We are working with more children in the system. In March 2020, we worked with 397 children. This increased by 26% to 542 in March 2021.
- The number of children on plans has increased and is at higher levels than last year. However, we have seen a decrease in the number of children in our care.

Page 17

Some possible hypothesis for the changes in demand include:

- The increase in families worked with is at a lower level of need in the context of most universal and some targeted services not being available during the pandemic.
- A higher proportion than usual of children in our care turning 18. In October 2020, a total of 9 children turned 18.
- During the pandemic we have worked with less unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- In the Autumn 2020 care proceedings re-commenced after a period of stand-still. Merton has secured a number of permanence arrangements for children.

## Management Actions:

- Continued focus on recruitment of additional social workers using the agreed short-term funding
- Temporary additional management capacity to support staff and oversee additional case work
- Maximisation of capacity within the Social Workers in Schools project
- Review of increased numbers of children with a child protection plan to clarify the factors underpinning this increase and opportunities to safely reduce the number of children with plans
- Review of alternative supports and interventions for children and families with lower levels of need
- Consideration of a Business Case for extension of the temporary funding arrangements for additional social workers

This page is intentionally left blank