

# Children and Learning Service Introduction

June 2023



[southampton.gov.uk](https://southampton.gov.uk)



Children  
& Learning  
Making a difference



SOUTHAMPTON  
CITY COUNCIL

# The context: some of our key issues

**Directorate Numbers:**  
Headcount : 685 (579 FTE)  
Budget: £57.3m General Fund

- **Neglect**

In 2020/2021 Southampton ranked 2nd highest among comparators for cruelty to children and young people

- **Domestic Abuse**

In 2020/2021 54.3% of HRDA referrals had children in the household. There were 2,779 children where domestic abuse was identified during an assessment

- **Poverty**

In 2021/22 22% of children in Southampton were living in relative low-income families

- **Youth crime and knife crime**

In 2019 / 2020 between 40 – 50% of violent crime in Southampton is by children and young people, with a high use of knives



# An improving service: Destination 2022

- § **Phase 1** September 20 - March 21: Analysis, strategic direction, values and road map. COVID
- § **Phase 2** April 21 - Feb 22: Preparation and consultation, Deputy Director in post, growth bid and budget reconciliation, senior leadership team recruited, partnership work, launch of workforce academy and practice framework, implementation of Care Director, major recruitment campaign
- § **Phase 3** March - April 22: Launch and implementation of D22 structure (with locality-facing teams), Child Friendly City
- § **Phase 4** September 22 Consolidation and embedding of referral/transfer pathways, contextual safeguarding, fine tuning performance reporting, audit and quality loop, increased capacity SLT



# Headline achievements

- § Social Workers 90% permanent. Leadership and Management team 95% permanent. Successful recruitment of NQSWs, managers and senior SWs
- § Safeguarding service strengthened and stabilised, practice improving
- § Ofsted visit 2022 - work to do but significant change in culture 'not the same place'
- § Caseloads falling - Average caseloads around 18. The number of 20+ caseloads are markedly fewer than before we launched D22. Caseloads are still too high for some social workers
- § Demand falling in most areas
- § Performance information and reports are accessible and intelligent. Increased confidence across the service in data accuracy
- § Stronger performance culture, still some variability. Assurance clinics well established with excellent attendance and buy in. Compliance and performance steadily improving
- § Audit framework re-launched, stronger compliance. % of good practice increasing
- § Stronger partnerships, underpinned by Strategic Partnership Board



# Our key challenges

- Significantly challenging financial context
- 25% of our social workers have less than two years' experience
- Although in some areas demand is falling (child protection plans, CLA), referrals remain high and overall number of children in the system is not reducing
- Family Safeguarding Model and residential projects have not progressed as quickly as we would have wanted
- Services for looked after children and care leavers are behind safeguarding in our improvement journey
- Serious youth crime
- Consistency of practice needs to improve





# Next phase: Children's Social Care

## Building for Brilliance: Building For Sustainability 2023

- § Ensure that children get the **right support at the right time**, meeting need early, reducing demand and spend on statutory services
  - § Develop **strong, vibrant localities** where families can receive the help they need, and practitioners can share their knowledge and expertise
  - § Support children to **remain within, or return to, their birth families**, seeking out and reuniting family members, reducing care costs and freeing up placements for other children
- Promote **permanence and placement stability**, creating strong forever families and reducing increasingly costly alternatives
  - Build a **permanent, stable, energised workforce**, increasing consistency for children and reducing agency spend
  - Embed our **practice framework and practice standards** across the whole service, doing the basics brilliantly and being ambitious in our practice expectations



# Education and Early Years

- The majority of maintained schools in Southampton continue to have Ofsted grades of Good or better. However, results at all Key Stages are below National Averages although the School Improvement Team are working with the lowest performing schools to bring about improvement
- Behaviour, exclusions, mental and emotional welfare are an increasing concern. The Inclusion and Education Psychology team are fully engaged with statutory and purchased work to support schools with these issues
- Overall student numbers are declining across Southampton which is impacting on the Primary phase but will begin to affect Secondary schools in the coming years. This decrease in pupil revenue, along with increased energy costs, unfunded salary increases and other inflationary expenses have put serious financial pressures on schools



# Education and Early Years

- The Education Service continues to bring in additional income through schools purchasing their time. The largest earners are the Music Service, EP's, and EWO's. All other services provided are either statutory or grant funded from central government
- The government continues to push for all maintained schools to become academies. There is clear evidence that government funding is being directed towards academy trusts. The concern is that if the quality of support and provision from the LA declines, currently maintained schools will opt to become academies which could have a serious financial impact on the Council





# SEND

- Ofsted SEND Inspection due any day...
- £45m capital programme approved to deliver 278 more special school places
- Specialist SEND Early Years Provision commissioned – Dingley's Promise
- SEND Voluntary Sector engagement and SEND Young People's Participation proposals approved and underway
- Refresh of the Ordinarily Available Provision and Inclusion Charter documents
- £1m Delivering Better Value grant approved to:
  - Roll out the Autism in Schools Programme to all schools
  - Provide specialist SEMH support to schools
  - Provide additional neurodiversity training for families to clear our current backlog
  - Provide an Inclusion Audit function for schools

