

## NOTICE OF MEETING

<b>Meeting</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date and Time</b>	Tuesday 8th February 2022 at 2.00pm
<b>Place</b>	Mitchell Room, Ell Court, Winchester
<b>Enquiries to</b>	members.services@hants.gov.uk

Carolyn Williamson FCPFA  
Chief Executive  
The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UJ

## FILMING AND BROADCAST NOTIFICATION

This meeting may be recorded and broadcast live on the County Council's website. The meeting may also be recorded and broadcast by the press and members of the public – please see the Filming Protocol available on the County Council's website.

## AGENDA

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore all Members with a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting should consider, having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, consider whether it is appropriate to leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

### 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.

### 4. DEPUTATIONS

To receive any deputations notified under Standing Order 12.

**5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive any announcements the Chairman may wish to make.

**6. COUNTY LINES AND LOCAL DRUGS NETWORKS (Pages 7 - 18)**

To receive a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the Department's efforts to disrupt county lines and local drug networks.

**7. ANNUAL PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER REPORT (Pages 19 - 26)**

To receive a report from the Director of Children's Services providing a briefing of the roles and responsibilities of the Children and Families Principal Social Worker and to update the panel on the current and future priorities of this role.

**8. ANNUAL INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE UPDATE (Pages 27 - 38)**

To receive a report from the Director of Children's Services providing the annual update on the Independent Reviewing Service.

**9. JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION FEEDBACK**

To receive a verbal update from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the feedback from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

**ABOUT THIS AGENDA:**

**On request, this agenda can be provided in alternative versions (such as large print, Braille or audio) and in alternative languages.**

**ABOUT THIS MEETING:**

**The press and public are welcome to attend the public sessions of the meeting. If you have any particular requirements, for example if you require wheelchair access, please contact [members.services@hants.gov.uk](mailto:members.services@hants.gov.uk) for assistance.**

County Councillors attending as appointed members of this Committee or by virtue of Standing Order 18.5; or with the concurrence of the Chairman in connection with their duties as members of the Council or as a local County Councillor qualify for travelling expenses.

# Agenda Item 3

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 12th October, 2021

Chairman:  
p Councillor Arun Mummalaneni

p Councillor Ann Briggs  
p Councillor Nick Adams-King  
a Councillor Prad Bains  
Councillor Christopher Donnelly

p Councillor Juliet Henderson  
Councillor Wayne Irish  
p Councillor Adam Jackman  
a Councillor Malcolm Wade

## 1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Prad Bains and Malcolm Wade. Councillor Tim Groves was in attendance as the Liberal Democrat Deputy Member.

## 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

Councillor Nick Adams-King declared a Personal Interest as he is Chairman of an adoption panel.

## 3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## 4. **DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations on this occasion.

## 5. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first formal meeting of the Panel in the new administration. The Chairman also extended his thanks to those who were no longer Members of the Panel.

## 6. **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE CARE PLAN AUDIT**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services on Hampshire Children's Services Care Plan Audit 2020/21 (Item 6 in the Minute Book).

Members of the Panel were led through the presentation slides and it was heard that under regulations, there had to be an Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) which undertakes an annual audit of the quality of children's care plans. The audit focussed on the following areas: The Care Plan; The Personal Education Plan (PEP); The Health Assessment (HA); Needs of the Child; The Child Looked Review; Equality and Diversity.

The methodology of the audit was explained to Members, as well as the key findings. It was noted that areas for development included ensuring that care plans were signed by both the child and parents, following the looked after review. Members also heard that health appointments such as dental and optician had been affected during the national covid lockdown, and this area would be monitored and reported through monthly performance meetings.

In summarising, Members heard that the audit highlighted that the majority of looked after children in Hampshire felt safe, loved and were happy. There were some areas for development, and the IRS had plans in place to address these.

In response to questions, Members heard that;

- That work was being undertaken with virtual 'Heads' to ensure PEP'S are put in place as soon as possible.
- That currently the Regulations stipulate that all looked after children had to have a health assessment.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the key findings and areas of development of the Independent Reviewing Service's Care Plan Audit.

## 7. **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PARTICIPATION REPORT**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview and summary of participation activity within the Children and Families branch in 2020 (Item 7 in the Minute Book).

The report was introduced and it was explained that participation activities are designed to help build and strengthen relationships within families. Officers drew attention to the different kinds of activities as set out in paragraphs 10 – 26 of the report and activities such as 'We've Got Talent' and the 'Legends of Lockdown

Podcast' were highlighted. In concluding, Members noted that the Participation Strategy was being refreshed to provide a framework and direction for 2022-2025, and children and young people would be fully consulted on this as part of the participation work. Officers also encouraged Members of the Panel to visit local Children's Homes, as well as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). These visits would need to be carefully managed, and Members were asked to register interest through the Democratic Services Officer. In response to a Member query, it was heard that there would be a blended approach to participation activities going forward, to incorporate virtual and in-person.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel is aware of and notes the participation activity that has taken place.

**8. ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an annual update on fostering (Item 8 in the Minute Book). The report was introduced and key headlines were highlighted.

It was noted that Hampshire's Fostering Service had a target to provide 187 additional fostering placements by 31 March 2023, and the marketing strategy around this was explained. Officers presented further information around the recruitment of foster carers, and it was heard that because of the Covid pandemic, there had been more focus on targeted digital marketing, as well as an increase in on-line and virtual activity. The results of the annual Foster Carer Survey were highlighted, and it was heard that with the impact of Covid and virtual foster carer support, many foster carers missed having face to face support, which had resulted in a decrease in satisfaction in this area in 2020/21.

Officers also highlighted the work of the six Hampshire fostering panels and it was heard that some panel training would continue to be held virtually to continue the blended approach to training. Members heard that in relation to statistics within the Service for 2020/21, there had been 110 fostering households that had been de-registered during this period, and details relating to these were explained. It was also noted that there had been some delays with medicals during 2020/21 due to the pandemic.

In conclusion, Members heard that the Service continued to work closely with Hampshire Fostering Network, and whilst this had been a challenging year because of the pandemic, the Service had adapted quickly to provide additional support where needed.

In response to questions, Members heard that;

- That there is a wide range of training available to foster carers, and out of hours foster carers tend to be more experienced.
- That foster training is a very invasive process, and it is crucial to ensure prospective foster carers are aware of this early on.
- That there are sometimes delays in foster carer medicals, and it can be unclear when there is a delay, where in the process this is.

- That an area of focus is the recruitment of foster carers who are able to foster children with a disability.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report are noted by the Children and Families Advisory Panel.

## 9. **MODERNISING PLACEMENTS PROGRAMME**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a report and presentation from the Director of Children's Services on the Modernising Placements Programme (MPP) (Item 9 in the Minute Book).

Members of the Panel were taken through the slides and the objectives of the MPP were explained. It was noted that the aim of the programme was to develop a continuum of care which can provide the right accommodation and support at the right time for children in care in Hampshire. Officers also highlighted the Hampshire Hives, and it was heard that these provide support and respite for foster carers in the Hive. The achievements of the Hive were detailed at presentation slide 7.

Training for foster carers had also been reviewed and this would be kept under review to ensure training packages are kept up to date. Members also heard details about the importance of Trauma Informed Working and also the Urgent Care Service.

Members thanked officers for the report and presentation, and were keen to provide support to officers by communicating the work of the Service.

In response to questions, Members heard that;

- That foster carers need to be equipped with skills through training, to be able to look after children who have come into care suffering from trauma.
- That the Hives were important in building resilience and support amongst foster carers, which in turn should help prevent placement breakdowns.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the progress of the programme.
- ii) The Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the work proposed to expand the wider understanding of shared partnerships, companies, businesses and communities of children in care and the foster carer role, and considers the contribution Councillors can make

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Chairman, Children and Families  
Advisory Panel

# Children and Families Advisory Panel 8 February 2022

## County Lines and Local Drugs Networks

Sarah Marston – Area Director

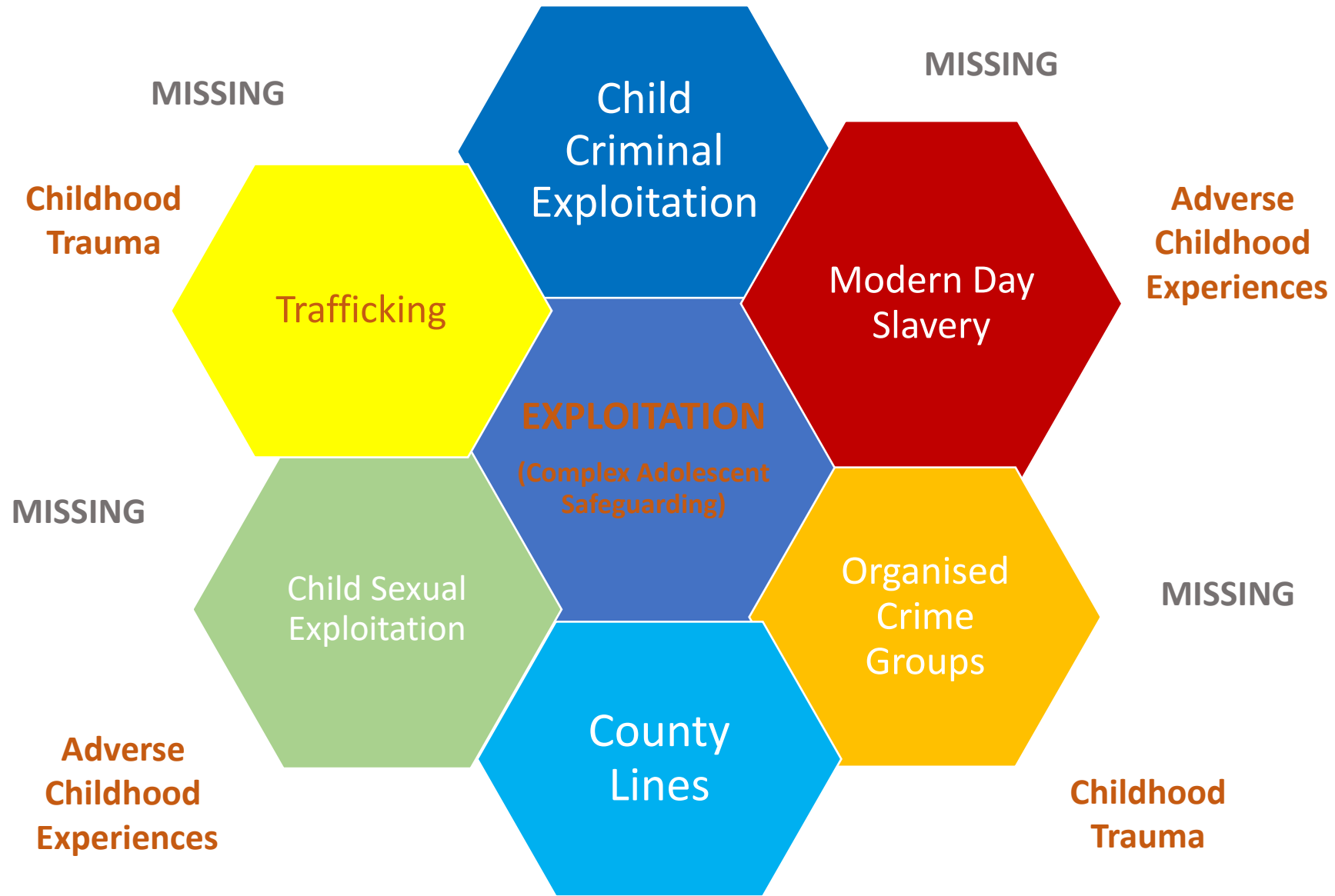
# Current Themes – Social Care

- CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation- Local ‘Peer’ Drug Networks
- County Lines - Drug related harm
- Youth Violence – Knife crime
- Cuckooing – Vulnerable Teenagers/Adults living independently
- Trafficking – Internal
- Trafficking – UASC/Separated/Refugees
- Missing Children
- Emerging & New Risks?



# Hampshire Response to Exploitation

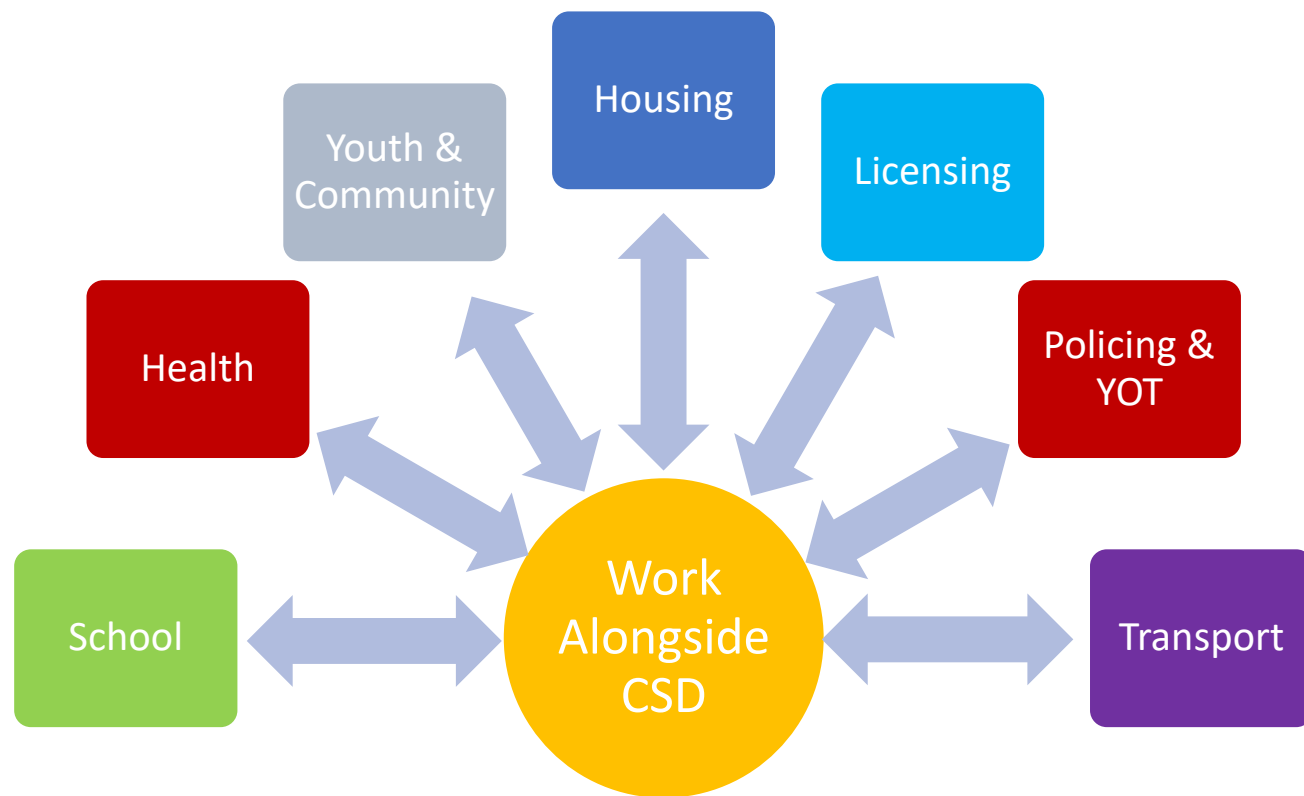
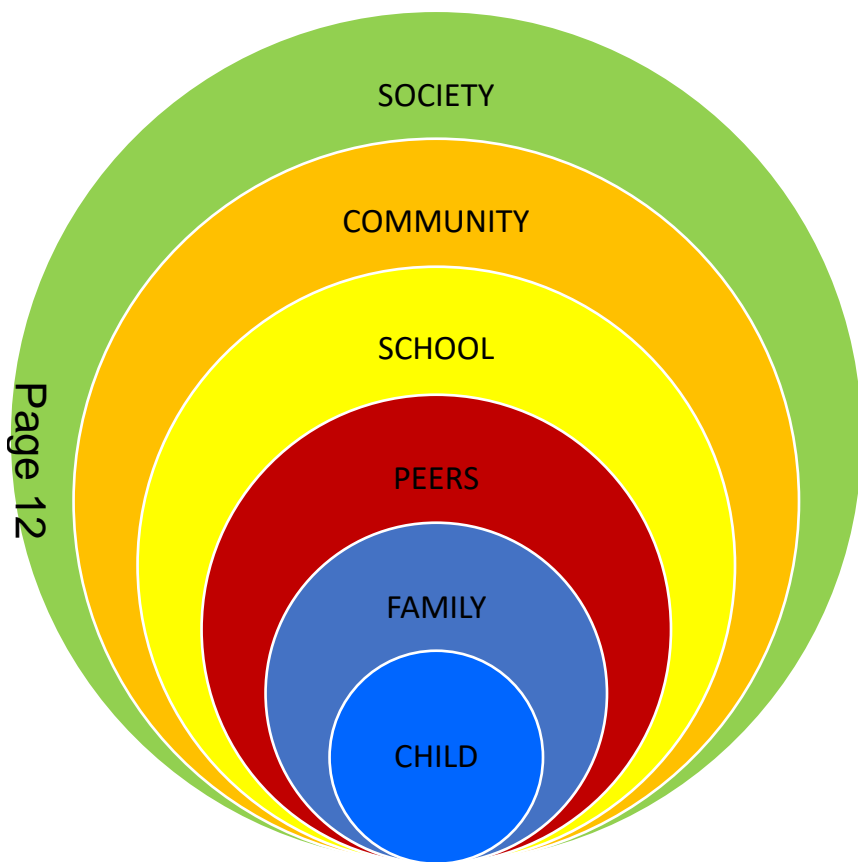
- Higher emphasis on children at risk from being Missing, Exploited or Trafficked – MET
- Strategic response headed through 4 Local Safeguarding Childrens Boards (HIPS Group)
- Willow Team / MET Police Team - Multi agency response and specialist teams
- District Operational MET Meetings - identify children at risk of MET attended by key district/community/LA agencies



# Long Term Impacts of Child Exploitation

- Distorted/unhealthy sexual boundaries
- PTSD
- Mental health problems including:
  - ~Anxiety ~ Depression ~ Self Harm ~ Suicide
- Difficulty in sustaining positive relationships
- Teen Pregnancy/ STI
- Drug and alcohol dependency - Poor physical health
- Failure to secure work
- Unstable adult relationships – separations & divorce – DV
- Next generation of issues - Poor parenting – Care System – children in care
- Criminal behaviours - YOT, YOI, Prison, MSV – Most Serious Violence, Criminal Record

# Towards Contextual Practice – Creating safe spaces?



[Contextual-Safeguarding-Briefing.pdf \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](https://csnetwork.org.uk/Contextual-Safeguarding-Briefing.pdf)

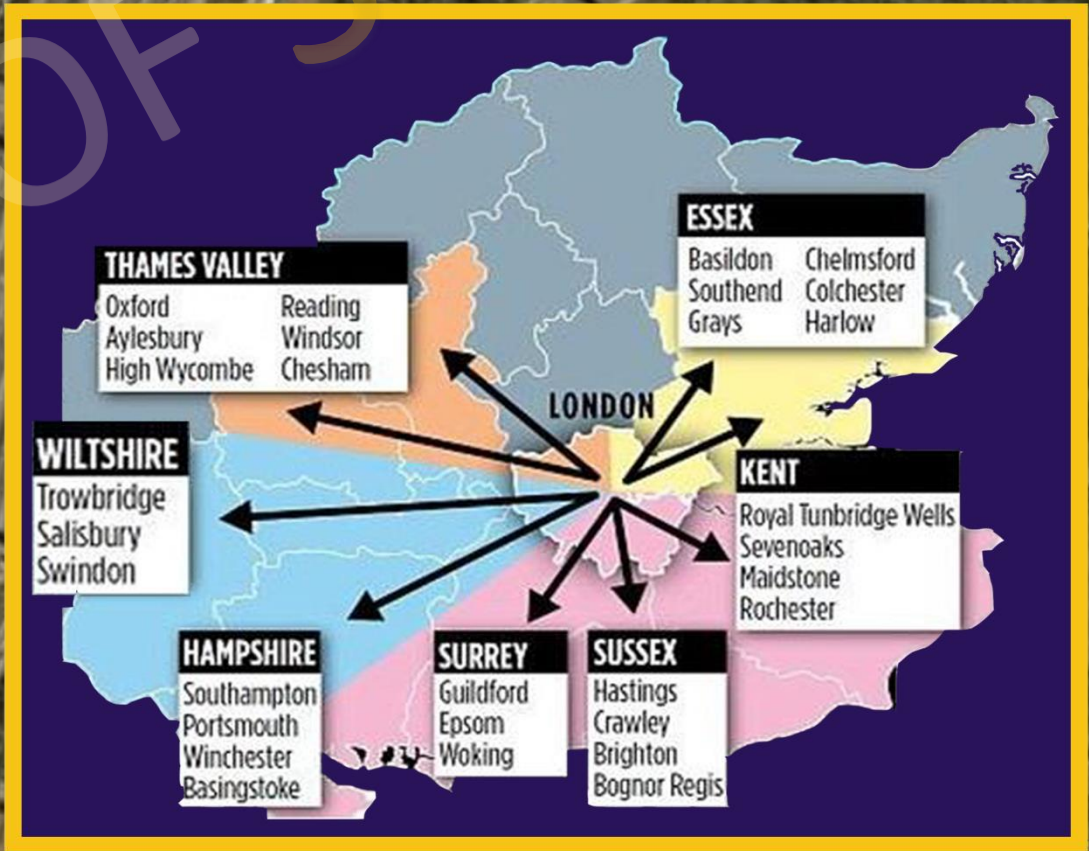
# WHAT IS COUNTY LINES?

“County lines” - In the criminal world ‘County Lines’ is referred to as; Country, Cunch, O.T, Out There, Out of Town, Upsuh and various other colloquialisms. Drug Operations/phone lines are set up in regional areas by Entities most commonly originating from major cities. Young people are being exploited as couriers, runners and taking up other functional roles.

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## Glamorised & Normalised

Social Media has a significant impact on glamourising drug running through You Tube and music videos.  
Not all County Lines use children.  
Some children are groomed to store and supply drugs.

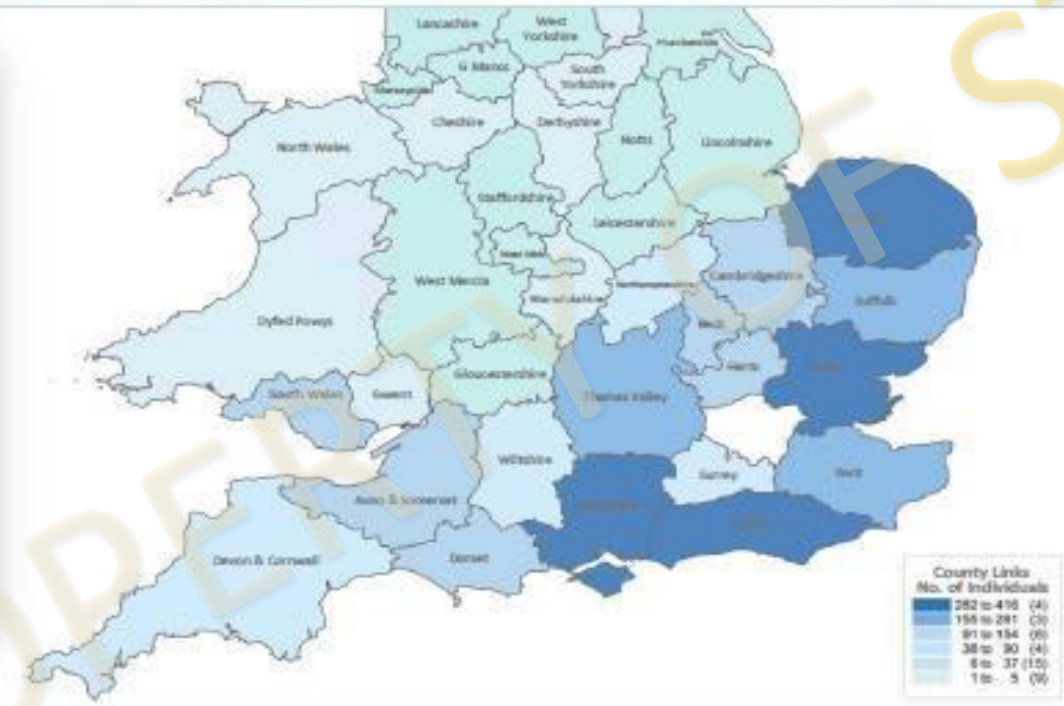
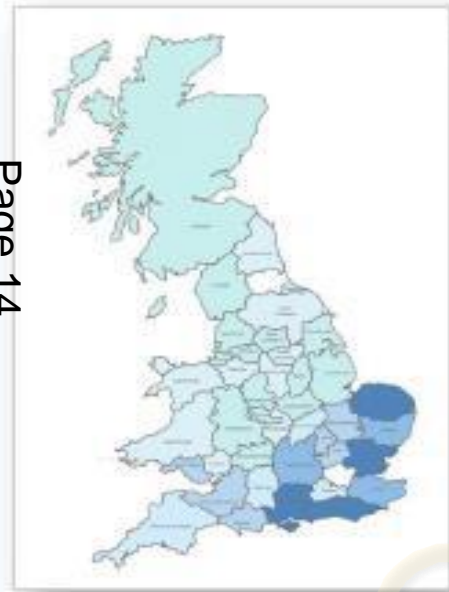


## County Lines Intelligence Picture: County Mapping



Of the total 4,013 individuals identified as having a link or suspected link to county lines, we have county name recorded for 71% of them. These links are shown mapped below by county police force area. 15% of individuals with a county link also showed links to at least one other county, and further research on R&R individuals may identify more.

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### Which are the most popular county areas?

Generally the county areas closest to London have the highest recorded links to individuals identified by R&R, in particular those on the coast. The top county however is Norfolk, despite its location over 100 miles from London.

Hampshire is ranked a close second, being closer in proximity and home to several coastal towns.

Top 10 County Forces		Individuals linked
1	Norfolk	416
2	Hampshire	369
3	Essex	336
4	Sussex	332
5	Thames Valley	251
6	Suffolk	238
7	Kent	232
8	Avon & Somerset	153
9	Dorset	134
10	Hertfordshire	106

All of the top 4 county forces sit on the UK's south or east coast

R&R individuals are linked to 41 county force areas

\*See Appendix 2 for further breakdown

## PEER DRUG NETWORKS: GANG INJUNCTIONS

Police and local authorities can apply for injunctions to prevent gang related violence and drug dealing activity

A Gang Injunction can prohibit the perpetrator from, for example:

- Being in a particular place or area (an 'exclusion zone')
- Meeting with particular persons in a particular place
- Being in control of a particular species of animal (for example a dangerous dog) in a particular place
- Wearing specified clothing in a particular place
- Using the internet to encourage violence or drug dealing activity

The conditions are extremely strict and these remain until you turn 18.



Peer Drug Networks can be family or friends recruiting children to run drugs

Peer Networks may start with an increase in Anti Social Youth Behaviours such as :

Bike thefts - Shop Lifting - ASB – Threats to Harm others- Money Laundering

# Recent Success

- CERAf – HIPS Wide Tool
- Community Partnership Information (CPI) – Training and a HIPS wide form
- Operational MET Meetings
- Specialist Provision – Willow – Missing Exploited Police Team
- Multi Agency Working – St Giles, Health, Police, Education, YOT, NGOs, OPCC- VRU
- Gang Injunction
- Missing Children – Operation Salvus
- County Lines – Operation Monument
- Philomena Protocol
- Operation Compass
- Operation Innerste – UASC & Trafficking





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## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Panel:</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date:</b>	8 February 2022
<b>Title:</b>	Annual Principal Social Worker Report
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

**Contact name: Kavitha Maxy**

**Email:** kavitha.maxy@hants.gov.uk

#### **1 Purpose of this Report**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the panel with a high-level briefing of the roles and responsibilities of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker and to update the panel on the current and future priorities of this role.

#### **2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1. The Panel is aware of and notes the role and work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker.

#### **3 Executive Summary**

- 3.1. This report seeks to provide the Children and Families Advisory Panel with an overview of the role and activities of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker in 2021.
- 3.2. Hampshire's Children and Families Principal Social Worker (PSW) role came into being in 2017. Recommendation 14 of the Munro<sup>1</sup> report of 2011 states that 'Local Authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and who is still actively involved in frontline practice and who can report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management.'

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Eileen Munro's government commissioned review of child protection (2011) in England urged ministers to back a set of reforms designed to cut bureaucracy and place more trust in professionals. Munro set out 15 recommendations in this report that included reform proposals to enable professionals to make the best judgements to help children, young people and families.

- 3.3. In Hampshire, the objectives of this role as agreed by the Children and Families Management Team are listed below:
- Continuous professional development, high quality practice placements and the creation of a learning environment in which excellent social work can flourish.
  - Quality assurance monitoring of front-line social work practice and the provision of advice, guidance and direction to ensure the implementation of best practice across the whole social work / social care workforce.
  - Become a key communication link between front-line staff and senior management, to ensure that the views and experiences of front-line staff are given due regard in operational and strategic decision-making processes.
- 3.4 The core aim of this role is to ensure strategic direction and decision making is informed by the realities of social work practice. The PSW is a key link in the feedback loop and links the real-life experience of those who deliver and manage social work with those on the receiving end of practice. This brief is fulfilled through providing leadership and driving excellent practice through the development of our practice model and the Hampshire Approach which underpins this model, including assessment, planning, decision making and direct work with children and families.
- 3.5 It is worth noting that the PSW role profile can vary depending on the local authority, where some appoint to a dedicated Principal Social Worker post, while many other local authorities have a hybrid role. In Hampshire, the functions of the Principal Social Worker are embedded in the Service Development Lead role and shared with the Assistant Head of Workforce Development, who leads on student placements including apprenticeships, training of newly qualified social workers and aspects of the role that fall under the learning and continuing professional development umbrella.
- 3.6 In 2021, the PSW continued to have an active role in shaping the branch's approach to continuous improvement and service development and specifically the Hampshire Approach. The profile of the role has been raised which results in positive and supportive interactions with staff who now proactively contact the PSW to discuss their career aspirations, wellbeing and barriers that they are facing in their work.
- 3.7 Since March 2021, the PSW has had the strategic lead for Participation which fits with the continuous improvement aspect of the role and looks to shape our organisational strategic priorities in line with what we are hearing from the people we work with and for – our children and families.
- 3.8 Staff wellbeing continues to be an important driver for the role with several discussions at branch management level and with the Deputy Director about how this should look in day to day interactions and more targeted programmes designed to address this.

- 3.9 The commitment by the organisation's senior leaders and the PSW to anti racist practice and tackling structural barriers to equality has led among other initiatives, to the development and successful roll out of the Resilience in Social Work sessions for our newly qualified social workers from ethnic minority backgrounds.

#### **4 Contextual information**

##### **The PSW role - Supporting our Staff**

- 4.1 Wellbeing – The PSW has met with several groups of staff to discuss their wellbeing during 2021. This has been both as planned sessions during peer inspections and also in response to a request from the relevant district or service manager or the PSW Buddy for that service. These sessions have been held with staff in Children's Reception Team, MASH, Fostering, Children's Adoption Team, New Forest, Eastleigh and Winchester, Basingstoke, Workforce Development, Fareham and Gosport, Swanwick Lodge (x3), Hart and Rushmoor and East Hants. There have also been wellbeing sessions with team managers on the request of their respective district managers in Fareham and Gosport and New Forest districts.
- 4.2 The PSW meets with individual staff at their request or at the request of their manager. These meetings have had a varied focus – career progression, sharing of ideas or good practice, difficulties to do with their job role and to discuss how they can support their team as a manager.
- 4.3 Developing a HCC wellbeing offer – the PSW is working with HR and Occupational Health to develop a comprehensive offer for staff in the C&F Branch that looks to address trauma experienced by staff due to the work they undertake. An options paper is being drawn up by Sandy Gregory, Senior HR to present to CFMT.
- 4.4 Social Work Survey – Following from the conclusions of the social work survey in 2019 and in line with the recommendations of the Social Work Survey Report, the PSW led the development and roll out of the Social Work Survey 2021 in April. The survey tool was developed based on the previous survey tool but with a section added on to reflect practice during the Covid 19 pandemic and the impact on staff. This report was presented to CFMT and the recommendations were agreed. The findings of the survey were shared with staff in the C&F branch reflecting a 'you said, we did' approach. [Children and Families Social Work Survey \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)
- 4.5 Exit Interviews – Managers in Workforce Development continue to carry out Exit Interviews for social workers when notified by the C& F Branch. Notification to Workforce Development when someone leaves should be as soon as possible after the resignation is received (or prior for the opportunity to have a 'retention' discussion). Workload, feeling of being valued and work/life balance appear to be key reasons for people moving on. There is a recommended focus in 2022 to improve the use of Valuing Performance

discussions as a strategy to promote retention among other initiatives in the branch, including the review of the marker supplement and the creation of the senior social worker role.

- 4.6 Sessions with Graduate Trainees at the 3 month point in the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) - The PSW and the Assistant Head of Workforce Development meet with the successive cohorts of social workers in their ASYE year to raise their awareness on the role of the PSW, to discuss strengths-based practice in Hampshire and how they can develop a successful career as a social worker in Hampshire. It is also an appropriate time to get feedback on how the first three months in practice has been (which is generally very positive). A similar session has also been held with staff on the Social Work Apprenticeship programme.
- 4.7 PSW Buddies - The PSW Buddy network is well established and is an effective communication channel between the PSW, staff in districts and CFMT. It is positive that most districts/services have identified a PSW buddy.
- 4.8 Resilience in Social Work – The PSW has led a working group which has developed a programme of support for colleagues from minority ethnic backgrounds in their first and second year of social work practice. This piece of work originated from a desire to maximise the chances of success for BAME workers when it was identified that a disproportionate number in this group were being put on performance plans or failing their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. This is similar to the national trend seen in this area and requires commitment from sector leaders on a national and local level to address structural inequalities in relation to race. Part of this commitment is shown through the work undertaken through this working group. The work will be presented to the wider children and families management team to discuss further steps.

#### [BAME GT Resilience Group Presentation DM Workshop](#)

## **5 The PSW role - Supporting outstanding practice to flourish**

- 5.1 Joining meetings of the branch management team (CFMT) – in February 2021, the PSW was invited to join CFMT meetings on a fortnightly basis to provide a frontline practice perspective and a regular sense check on staff wellbeing and morale. It has been a useful lens to apply, especially in relation to CFMT's function of 'holding the ring' and being accountable for the performance of the service and the quality of the work delivered to children and their families. The PSW has participated in discussions on service development and has been able to offer some unique insight especially in the area of staff wellbeing and their views on practicing in a pandemic. The PSW role sits within the Service Development team which serves to link the diverse aspects of social work practice and management, discussed within CFMT meetings, with continuous improvement work. The strategic leads held by the PSW for Hampshire Approach, IT and Participation also enriches any contribution made.

- 5.2 Practice and Covid – Along with other members of the wider children and families management team, the PSW has contributed to discussion regarding social work practice in Covid, the learning and development of staff and the shaping of future services for children and families. Some examples include contribution to the Independent Reviewing Service Review, the Right Place, Right Time Project and the Department for Education project on Safeguarding during Covid.
- 5.3 Hampshire Approach – There is a substantial programme of work in train to further increase the confidence and skill of staff in using the Hampshire Approach. Work led by the PSW has resulted in the launch of the Hampshire Approach Celebration Month on 6 January 2022 with learning sessions, reflective practice circles, resources for the toolkit and guest speakers being the highlights of the month.
- 5.4 Improving how we work with families from ethnic minority backgrounds – The PSW has undertaken a third round of audits in Havant and Test Valley districts to quality assure the work we undertake with BME families and ensure we are thinking of any strategic priorities in this area. There has been ongoing work with practitioners to raise awareness and knowledge and also increase confidence in interacting with families and colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 5.5 Review of the Children and Families Toolkit and link with the development of C2C Mosaic ( the incoming social care recording system) – There has been extensive work undertaken under the direction of the PSW by the Project Officer on refining and improving the toolkit. There is also a proposal in train to look at the digital platform we use to store our toolkit and bring this in line with advances in technology now available to HCC.
- 5.6 Liaison with Principal Social Worker Adult Health and Care (AHC) – Following an initial meeting with the Jess Hutchinson, PSW AHC, there is now liaison between the two departments so we can collaborate and gain mutual benefit. The topic areas identified include:
- Workforce Development and commonality of learning/development needs for CSD and AHC
  - Recruitment and Retention
  - Quality Assurance - strengthening the approach and culture within AHC
  - Participation - engaging our children/families/service users for service development.

There is a proposal to work more formally and systematically with AHC colleagues to share knowledge and practice wisdom and the draft terms of reference have been developed.

- 5.7 Skills for Care visit – Our Children’s Workforce Development successfully hosted a visit where the Children’s ASYE programme was evaluated by Skills for Care<sup>2</sup>. The focus of the visit was Covid working, inclusion and diversity with a focus on anti-racist practice and the role of the ASYE Assessor. The PSW was part of the senior managers’ panel that met with the Skills for Care team to talk about these focus areas. The visit was a resounding success and Skills for Care fed back that they did not have any areas of development to recommend to Hampshire County Council Children’s Services.
- 5.8 NQSW Panel – The PSW is part of the moderation panel that agrees the PASS/FAIL of the ASYEs on each cohort of the Graduate Trainee Programme. As part of this, an ASYE’s portfolio is reviewed in detail and feedback comments are provided to the Practice Educator, Assessor and ASYE.
- 5.9 Data related work – The PSW has been involved in data analysis related projects like the Social Care Demand Modelling project and Nuffield Project to provide social work input and think about how the intelligent use of data can enhance our service provision in Social Care.
- 5.10 Liaison with other Local Authorities, HSCP and other sector organisations – the PSW is a member of the PSW South East Regional Network which includes the Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. As part of representing Children’s Social Care in the HSCP, the PSW sits on the Workforce Development subgroup and the Child Sexual Abuse working group. The PSW also liaises with external organisations like Community Care, What Works Centre, NAAS and Social Work England to share and contribute to excellent social work practice.
- 5.11 Communication Site and Yammer Page – The PSW has a presence on the Children and Families communication site and also runs a Yammer page to maximise the reach of corporate, practice and wellbeing messaging to staff.

## **6 Finance**

- 6.1 There are no direct finance implications for this report.

## **7 Performance**

- 7.1 The report picks up on impact on performance and service delivery in previous sections.

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<sup>2</sup> Skills for Care is an independent charity that has been appointed by the Department for Education (DfE) to manage the support to child and family services with the delivery of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment programme. In addition to advising the employer on the ASYE programme they also have a quality assurance function for the programme.



## **8 Consultation and Equalities**

8.1 This has been picked up in points 15, 16, 19 and 23 in this report.

## **9 Climate Change Impact Assessment**

9.1 There is no direct impact in relation to climate change. The majority of meetings attended by the PSW since March 2020 are virtual thus minimising the need for several staff members to travel to one central location by car and consequently mitigating the environmental impact.

9.2 The carbon mitigation tool and climate change adaptation tool were not applicable because this report relates to the role and work of the PSW and is strategic/administrative in nature.

## **10 Conclusions**

10.1 The Principal Social Worker role is an embedded part of practice and service delivery in Hampshire. It is a dynamic and varied role which comes with the opportunity to shape services and influence decision making. It also comes with challenges that are faced by many PSWs in a 'hybrid' role – the need to constantly review and make critical choices about which strategic area is a priority for children, families, colleagues, managers and the organisation.

10.2 The role has gone from strength to strength and is a recognised and defined role within the branch. We are in the position of being able to strengthen and refine our services because of our strong performance and practice, with a skilled and committed workforce.

10.3 There is robust governance of the role and functions of the PSW and a clear line of accountability, under the overarching umbrella of whole system change with the Hampshire Approach and strength based working.

10.4 It is clear as the pandemic becomes part of 'normal' life, that it has had and continues to have an impact on people's ability to seek support and feel connected. It is worth recognising the adaptive leadership that has been evident in the past 23 months. It is important to keep going – to remain strength based and plan ahead, with a clear focus on people who make the organisation what it is. The inextricable link between wellbeing and retention is being explored through various initiatives.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

*NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.*

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
N/A	
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
N/A	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	8 February 2022
Title:	Annual Independent Reviewing Service Report 2020-21
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

Contact Name: Karen Cairns, Lead Independent Reviewing Officer  
Email: [karen.cairns@hants.gov.uk](mailto:karen.cairns@hants.gov.uk)

#### 1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021

#### 2. Recommendation(s)

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note this report on the work of the Independent Reviewing Service.

#### 3. Executive Summary

This annual report summarises the work of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) in line with the key areas specified in statutory guidance. It identifies areas of good practice and the positive response of the service to the Covid-19 challenges. The IRS has contributed to the transformation and continuous improvement work taking place across the department, including the embedding of the Hampshire Approach. The Transforming Social Care Programme has undertaken a Service Review to look at how improvements can be made going forward. This report acknowledges the areas for further development of the service in the future, most notably, the continued improvement of the IRS quality assurance to further evidence the impact on outcomes for children.

#### 4. Contextual information

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the annual update on the work of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) in Hampshire.
- 4.2 This annual report covers the period from 31 July 2020 to 31 July 2021.

## 5. Background, context, and key facts

- 5.1 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under s.118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- 5.2 The IRO Handbook, issued in March 2010, provides Local Authorities with statutory guidance on how IROs should discharge their duties. The guidance confirms that the primary role of an IRO is:

***To ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child (at para. 2.10).***

- 5.3 The IRO Handbook states that the IRO manager should be responsible for producing an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board. The IRO Handbook specifies six areas that an annual report should reference. They are as follows:
- Development of the IRO service including information on caseloads, continuity of employment, the profile of the team and how it reflects the identity of the children it is serving;
  - Number of reviews that are held on time, the number that are held out of time and the reasons for the ones that are out of time;
  - Extent of participation of children and their parents;
  - Outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews;
  - Procedures for resolving concerns, including the local dispute resolution process, an analysis of the issues raised in dispute and the outcomes;
  - Whether there are any resource issues risk the delivery of a quality service to all looked after children.
- 5.4 In Hampshire, the role of the IRO also includes the function of independent Chair of child protection conferences.
- 5.5 By way of context and background, at the end of July 2021, the number of full-time Children Looked After (CLA) in Hampshire was 1,669. At the end of July 2020 this figure was 1,647 which represents a 1.4% increase in 2021. During the same period, the number of children subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan decreased by 45 children from 1,108 to 1,063 at the end of July 2021. This represents a 4.1% decrease. In terms of activity for the period covered by this report, 4,768 CP conferences were chaired and 4,480 CLA reviews were undertaken between 1 July 2020 and 31 July

2021 (for full-time CLA and including Statutory Reviews and Statutory Adoption Reviews), resulting in the Independent Reviewing service holding a total of 9,248 statutory meetings during that year.

- 5.5 There are clear indications that the ongoing programme of transformation in children's social care over recent years continues to have an impact on the number of children being able to remain safely at home within their families and communities. The emphasis within this programme on reunification and permanence, and the application of strength-based family work initiatives (including multi-disciplinary specialist and intensive workers within social work teams) indicates positive outcomes regarding the number of children in care and on child protection plans. The IRS continues to focus on ensuring reunification is achieved in the safest and most timely way, including examining how the service can develop their own strength-based practice to ensure continuity of experience for young people and their families.

## **6 Development of the IRO service, including, information on caseloads, continuity of employment, the profile of the team and how it reflects the identity of the children it is serving**

- 6.1 There are currently 22.5 full time equivalent (FTE) IRO posts, line managed on an area basis (East and West) by two Lead IROs.
- 6.2 In the East, staffing has been stable with the one vacancy arising due to a staff member retirement and the position was filled following recruitment.
- 6.3 In the West there have been two IROs who have left the service and both positions have been recruited to. The previous agency IRO contract has been replaced with a 1-year temporary contract. There is one staff member who is long-term sick, and this position is currently being covered by a 0.5 temporary contract.
- 6.4 The IRS service continues to use some casually employed Child Protection Conference Chairs where and when this is required. The service employs eight experienced casual chairs who have been vital in ensuring we deliver an effective and flexible service with the ability to be agile in meeting variations in demand. This allows the service to maintain the focus of the IRO role for allocation to our Looked After Children to ensure the statutory obligation in respect of that provision is protected and met.
- 6.5 Average FTE caseload for IROs in Hampshire is 91 which includes both children looked after and child protection conferences. IRO caseloads have had some impact due to the turnaround time for the recruitment process as well as some staff sickness. CP Conference Chair responsibilities are held in addition to the IRO role in Hampshire. The statutory guidance, within the IRO Handbook (dated 2010), recommends a caseload of 50-70 looked after children for a full-time equivalent IRO.

Nationally these figures vary hugely across authorities. In Hampshire the service works hard to robustly manage the caseloads of IROs through regular monitoring (reporting monthly to the DCS) and Lead IROs are overseeing throughput of work and ensuring a drive and focus on reunification and Special Guardianship Orders to keep children within their families where appropriate.

- 6.6 A review of the service to understand demand, workload and to ensure appropriate and efficient use of resource was undertaken in 2021 as part of the Transforming Social Care Programme. A range of recommendations were identified which have contributed to further improvements in quality, performance, and impact within the Service. Most of these recommendations have been completed which have benefitted the service one example is the employment of a Data Lead post for the service. All recommendations will be completed by the 31 March 2022.
- 6.7 The majority (83.5%) of children in Care in Hampshire are White British, this being reflected by the make-up of the cohort or IROs within the IRS service. Six IROs are male and 16 are female all being White British.
- 6.8 In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in wide-ranging restrictions across the country, as with all aspects of children's social care, impacted directly on the work of the IRS in Hampshire. Local offices were closed, with staff, partners, children, and families unable to meet face-to-face for conferences or reviews. As with the rest of the branch, work continued with business as usual whilst doing things differently. In response to these challenges the IRS service worked closely with social care teams and partners to develop processes that meant CP conferences and CLA reviews could be held virtually.
- 6.9 Between July 2020 and July 2021 all Child Protection Conferences continued to be held virtually. Participation of parents and agencies has improved since working virtually and IRS in collaboration with the Isle of Wight are actively planning the use of virtual and hybrid meetings going forward due to its success and the updated technology in all buildings in due course will further enable this going forward. Another positive is that adjourned and cancelled conferences have remained low in numbers since holding conferences virtually.
- 6.10 A recent Child Protection Audit demonstrated that 98% of professionals found it beneficial to attend conferences virtually and stated that they would prefer attending this way in the future. The IRS will hold conferences in the future where parents, social workers and CP chairs attending in person with all professionals being virtual. This work is a key focus on the IRS action plan and will need to ensure that it is based on views and feedback from children/parents.
- 6.11 Children have reported that they have liked the use of MS Teams or WhatsApp. IROs have reported that they have seen some improvement in children participating in their CLA reviews although this is dependent on their ages and levels of understanding.

6.12 Currently IROs are visiting children 15 working days before a review and establishing how they want their review to be held, giving them the options to hold the meeting in person or virtually.

## **7 Number of reviews that are held on time, the number that are held out of time and the reasons for the ones that are out of time**

7.1 CLA Review timeliness for the rolling year to date at the end of July 2021 was 94.1% an increase from 71.8% in July 2020. The results between 2020 and 2021 have shown a marked improvement and an increase of 22.3%; this shows evidence of continued progress.

## **8 Extent of participation of children and their parents**

8.1 Information provided by the data team and extracted from ICS, indicates that the reported position on participation by young people aged 4 years and over in reviews is 98%. This is an increase when compared to 88.2% in 2020. Since Covid-19, IROs report children's participation has improved due to the use of MS Teams/WhatsApp, particularly in the older cohort of children

8.2 Child participation in CP conferences is the subject of a separate report to CFMT; in summary and across several key areas audited, performance was better than the September 2019 audit.

8.3 Twenty-two children over the age of 10 years attended their conference during the snapshot timeline of the participation audit; all met with the chair prior to the meeting and 21 had prior preparation with the Social Worker. However, the Participation audit report highlighted that of the 78% of the children who did not attend their conference, the majority had their wishes and feelings represented. The child's wishes, and feelings were expressly referenced in 97% of cases from social work reports. Only 3% of children submitted a document to conference whereby their feelings were recorded independently. Improvements have been sustained, but further work is needed to embed participation rather than using the representation of a child's views as the norm.

8.4 The annual Care Plan audit considers the issue of participation in CLA planning processes. This report has been presented to CFMT.

## **9 Outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews**

9.1 The annual Care Plan and review audit was carried out between 30 November 2020 and 3 January 2021

9.2 A repeat audit of agency participation in, and report contribution to, CP conferences was conducted for a two-week period starting from the 1 June to the 18 June inclusive. This year's audit was completed in three parts. Part 1 presented the information pertaining to conference invitations and attendance. Part two presented information regarding

holding conferences virtually and part 3 presented information pertaining to participation and the presentation of the child's wishes and feelings.

- 9.3 Local CP administrators in each district answered key questions for each conference held that week. Headlines from this snapshot of practice included multi- agency engagement, as part of the CP conference process, this showed an increase in attendance from the previous audit. In terms of report submission, the sharing of these reports with the conference chair and families concerned had also increase/improved.
- 9.4 School, school nursing and CAMHS service engagement improved significantly and contributed to the overall increase in attendance and conference quoracy had been significantly supported by colleagues from these services and from colleagues in health visiting and Police.
- 9.5 Since Covid-19, Child Protection chairs report participation and attendance from all agencies has been improved and this has been demonstrated within the results of the Participation Audit.
- 9.6 As part of the ongoing work in developing the Hampshire Approach, during the last year, the CP plan template has been revised in line with the strength-based model and renamed the Family Plan. The CLA review record template has been changed from August 2020 to make them more child friendly. Lead IROs are also revising their audit tool in line with the Quality Assurance Framework which will capture the impact of the IRO. IRS, in collaboration with the Isle of Wight, has developed and planning a schedule of LIRO and IRO auditing of work to capture the quality, the impact and outcomes with the new devised audit tools.
- 10 **Procedures for resolving concerns, including the local dispute resolution process and an analysis of the issues raised in dispute and the outcomes**
- 10.1 The formal Problem Resolution Process (PRP) was commenced eleven times by eight different IROs in the year July 2020 to July 2021 - all were resolved at district manager level. This is an increase when compared to previous years. IROs have stated that their relationships with team managers are positive, and issues are resolved at the informal level without the use of PRPs (Problem Resolution Process). To capture this improvement the IRS service is working with the C2C team to ensure that this data can be easier to collate in the new Mosaic system that is currently being developed. IRS are also reviewing the PRP process to capture the low-level resolution disputes so this data can be understood.
- 10.2 Triggers for escalation include non-completion of review decisions, lack of school placement, non-completion of placement at home regulations and drift on cases.
- 11 **Any resource issues putting at risk the delivery of a quality service to all looked after children**



- 11.1 Considering the work within Hampshire to promote the resilience of families and keep more children safely at home, the overarching strategy in recent years has seen a gradual reduction in the number of children being looked after and a decrease in children subject to child protection plans. However, the increase in demand on social care because of the coronavirus pandemic has reversed the trend.
- 11.2 IROs have been asked to identify children on their caseloads who should be achieving their 'right to private and family life' to confirm they are robust in ensuring the plan is realised without drift or unnecessary delay and by use of formal resolution if appropriate. Within supervision IROs are asked to highlight progress in these cases. This has led to progress being made in permanence planning.
- 11.3 The main challenge in ensuring delivery of an outstanding reviewing service remains the consistency and management of IRO caseloads, particularly considering the potential increased demand on social care because of Covid-19. A further challenge is developing the evidence of the impact of the IRS on children's records from the current IT system. However, work is underway as part of the Transforming Social Care programme to review the effectiveness of the service and how it can adapt and flex to meet the challenges going forward, utilising its resource as efficiently as possible.

## 12 **Good Practice**

- 12.1 Led by the Lead IROs, the IRS has been fully involved and contributed to the work and development of the Hampshire Approach, particularly in respect of new recording formats to be used for care planning, CLA review and CP conferences. There have been some significant benefits of working virtually for the IRS, and as the IRS service progresses through its transformation review these benefits are being considered for future ways of working within the service.
- 12.2 Lead IROs have led work with the IROs to develop a new process for holding CP conferences. The aim is to improve information sharing and parental/carer participation and to strengthen the planning process. Covid-19 has impacted on the further development of this process with a wider staff group, but it is incorporated and progressed within the work being undertaken on Family Meetings. The service has made some inroads into developing better processes to ensure midway review points between statutory CLA reviews are better recognised and acted on. CP chairs are now also undertaking a Quality Performance progress check on each CP conference, 7 weeks following an Initial Child Protection Conference and 12 weeks for Review Child Protection Conferences.
- 12.3 As well as their statutory role in challenge, IROs regularly note and informally reflect examples of good practice in relation to front-line social work and feed this back to practitioners and their managers.
- 12.4 Lead IROs continue to input into district Performance Action Groups (PAG) using an agreed data set and analysis format and attend County

- PAG to present a monthly IRO performance report. The lead IROs attend local management meetings in districts as appropriate.
- 12.5 IROs visit and offer support to social work teams to support practice and build positive professional relationships. Each IRO is linked to a team to enable this, they attend the link team meetings on a quarterly basis. This enables case progression discussions to be more effective. This work is currently being undertaken virtually.
- 13 **Update on issues identified for development in the last annual report for completion in the coming year**
- 13.1 The Care Plan Audit will be further refined and repeated ensuring that it is both quantitative and qualitative. CFMT is asked to provide a view on the timing of the next audit in the context of the My Life My Future Care Plan format having been launched. **Achieved.**
- 13.2 A format for CLA review minutes written 'to the child' has been agreed and its use will be embedded in IRO practice from 24 August 2020. **Achieved**
- 13.3 The service will engage with and contribute to Hampshire's sector led improvement work with other local authorities as appropriate and is currently involved in workstreams in two local authorities. **This work continues.**
- 13.4 The IRS will continue to remain updated with the continuous improvement work in the department, specialist inputs to service meetings, contribution to processes and developing and participation in training where possible. This will include the recent corporate and branch focus on inclusion and diversity, initially in response to Black Lives Matters. **Achieved**
- 13.5 LIROs will ensure the issues of performance in relation to timeliness and participation are monitored, addressed and improvement is made where necessary. **Achieved**
- 13.6 The IRS service will consider the use of and incorporate MS Teams for future service delivery where appropriate. **Continued**
- 13.7 The IRS service will participate in the IRS Service Review from July 2020. **Achieved (recommendations due to be implemented by end of March 2022).**
- 14 **Issues for further development over the next year**
- 14.1 IRS to contribute to 'future ways of working' strategies, to ensure that the needs of children and families are met through face to face and hybrid meeting arrangements in partnership with the Isle of Wight.
- 14.2 Care plan audit to be undertaken in May 2022.
- 14.3 IROs to ensure visits to children take place between reviews and seek their opinion about how they want their meeting to take place.

- 14.4 IRS specific Quality Assurance/audit processes to be further developed and implemented in partnership with the Isle of Wight.
- 14.5 IRS administrative team roles to be reviewed and developed to ensure there is a strength and resilience in the service as highlighted in the IRS Service Review which will be completed by end of March 2022.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The care plan audit completed this year demonstrated that for the majority of children who are looked after by Hampshire Children Services their life has improved significantly, not just in the stability of care provided but for them personally in their academic and social skills and that they feel safe, loved, and cared for and are happy.

It is very evident that IROs have seen some well written care plans for children which is demonstrated within the audit results where children's needs are clearly recorded. Going forward, we need to ensure that other key documents such as the health care plan are written in the same style of Hampshire Approach. Covid has had an impact on children and parents signing their care plans but now we are out of lockdown this should improve any future audit results when home visits can commence.

It will be beneficial for children to feel fully included in the review process so IROs will need to ensure that they take time to see and speak to children at least a week before their review rather than on the day of the review. It is particularly important that during Covid IROs reported that it was difficult to build a professional relationship with the child over MS Teams or via the phone, particularly with the newly looked after children therefore this will be considered in the IRS service plan to improve this result over the next year.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:  
Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	No
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	No
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	No

<b>Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents</b>	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

*The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:*

- *Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);*
- *Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;*
- *Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.*

*Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:*

- *The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;*
- *Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;*
- *Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.*

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

*This report provides a summary of the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 20/21 and is not proposing changes that would lead to an impact on groups with protected characteristics.*

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