



# Slough Children First 2021/22 Annual Report

March 2022



A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be  
..... Safe, Secure and Successful



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# Aims and Objectives of the Annual Review



Slough Children First (SCF) and Slough Borough Council (SBC) have a contractual agreement between both parties. As part of this agreement SBC are required to complete an Annual Review of the services they commission from SCF. SCF are required to produce an Annual Report summarising the services delivered for the year.

The key aims and objectives of the annual report are to:

- Understand the context of Slough for the year
- Review SCFs discharge of statutory functions
- Reflect on the quality of practice and outcomes achieved for children, young people and families
- Reflect on and plan future budget and financials including any factors that may affect this
- Identify areas of focus for the following year
- Quality assurance against the agreement between the Company and SBC
- Identify any changes required to the performance of the agreement



# Slough Context

# Slough Population



Slough is a complex and diverse town with a population of approximately 149,557. Slough's population is significantly younger than England's profile with almost a third of people aged under 18 (21% nationally) and we have the largest number of children and young people aged 0 to 19 in Berkshire East (31% of the total population). Our population is expected to grow to 151,674 by 2029.



- Slough's male life expectancy and healthy life expectancy continue to be significantly worse than national and regional rates. Boys born in Slough today can expect to live to 78 with the last 20 years of life not being in good health.
- There is also a 5.3 year difference in life expectancy between boys born in the least deprived areas and most deprived areas of Slough.

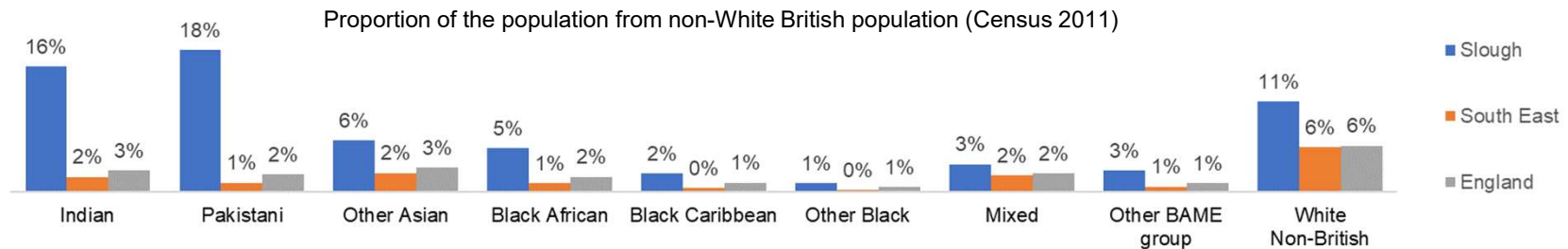


- Slough's female life expectancy is similar to national rates and also higher than males. However, healthy life expectancy is significantly worse than national and regional rates. Girls born in Slough today can expect to live to 82 with the last 23 years of life not being in good health
- There is also a 5.8 year difference in life expectancy between girls born in the least deprived areas of Slough and most deprived areas.

# Diverse Community



Slough is one of the most ethnically diverse Boroughs in England with 54% of the population coming from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background (15% in England). A further 11% of the population are from a White non-British background (5% in England). People from an Asian background make up 40% of Slough's total population and are the largest ethnic group. 39% of Slough residents born outside the UK and the EU, and 13% having been resident in the UK for less than 10 years (Slough Local Insight).



**150 languages** are spoken in Slough schools posing challenges for engagement with all of these differing communities. 67.4% of households in Slough had English as a main language, with 15.5% of households having no one who speaks English as their main language

# Employment



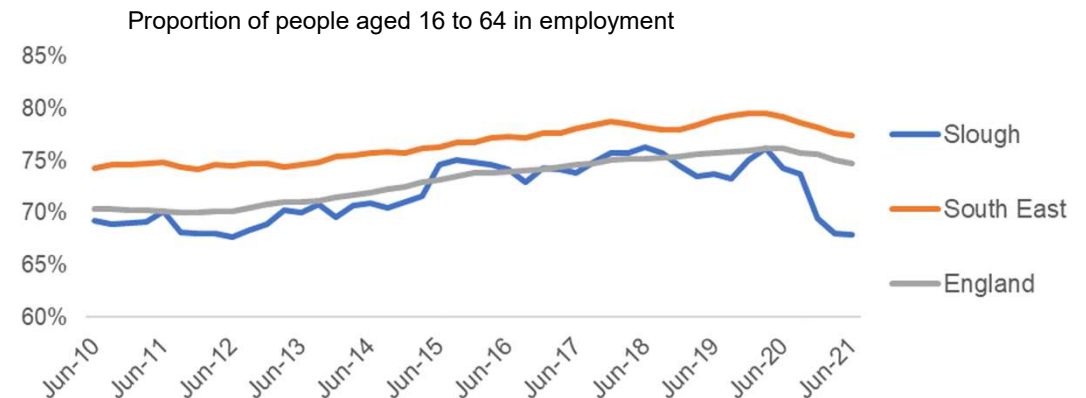
From Jul-20 to Jun-21, **68%** of Slough's working age population were in employment. The proportion of people in employment decreased during the pandemic and this drop has been more pronounced in Slough.

6.4% of Slough's working age population were estimated to be unemployed (4,600 people). 27% (26,100) of Slough's working age population were also economically inactive (not in employment or seeking work). The main reasons for being economically inactive in Slough were being a student and looking after family and/or home.



Pre-Covid, Slough had traditionally high employment and a fast growing economy but its unemployed claimant rate is higher now than it was pre-Covid.

Slough remains in the **top 10** highest unemployment rates out of 63 largest cities and towns in England.



# Slough Deprivation and Housing

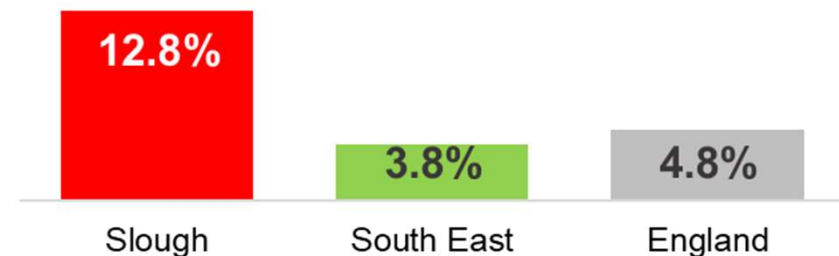


- Slough's overall deprivation ranking sits within the 5th more deprived decile in England.
- 7 out of Slough's 80 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall within the 10%-20% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. These are in areas of Britwell and Northborough, Central, Chalvey, Colnbrook with Poyle and Elliman wards.
- Evidence shows that living in cold homes is associated with poor health outcomes and an increased risk of morbidity and mortality for all age groups (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities 2022). In 2019, 5,105 households in Slough were considered to be fuel poor.
- The average household size in Slough is 2.8 people, compared to 2.4 in England.
- Over 6,500 households in Slough were estimated to be overcrowded in 2011. This means that there are fewer bedrooms than would standardly be required for the number of people in the house.
- 1,038 households in Slough were identified as eligible for support (termed prevention or relief duty) under the Homeless Reduction Act in 2019/20. This is a rate of 19.1 per 1,000 households.

Proportion of households in fuel poverty (2019)



Proportion of households that are overcrowded (2011)





# Children & Young People (under 18): Health



Approximately 43,650 children and young people (aged under 18) live in Slough ([Office for National Statistics 2022](#)). This is 29% of Slough's total population, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion in England. Although fertility rates are decreasing both nationally and locally, Slough currently has the highest total fertility rate in England ([Office for National Statistics 2021](#)).



**6.5%** of Slough mothers were smokers at the time of delivery in 2020/21.



Childhood obesity is increasing nationally. Slough's prevalence of obesity continues to be worse than national figures and is the highest rate in the South East for both age groups measured through the National Childhood Measurement Programme



**3.9%** of term babies born in Slough were a low birth weight (under 2,500g) in 2019.

Infant mortality is a key indicator of the general health of the entire population. In 2018-20, 29 babies under 1 died in Slough at a rate of 4 per 1,000 population.



**65%** of Slough babies were breastfed 6-8 weeks after birth in 2020/21.

In 2017-19, 16 children aged 1 to 17 died in Slough at a rate of 13 per 100,000 population.

# Children & Young People (under 18): Income and Education



**19.5%** of Slough's under 16s lived in relative low income families in 2019/20. This is over 7,700 children and continues to increase.



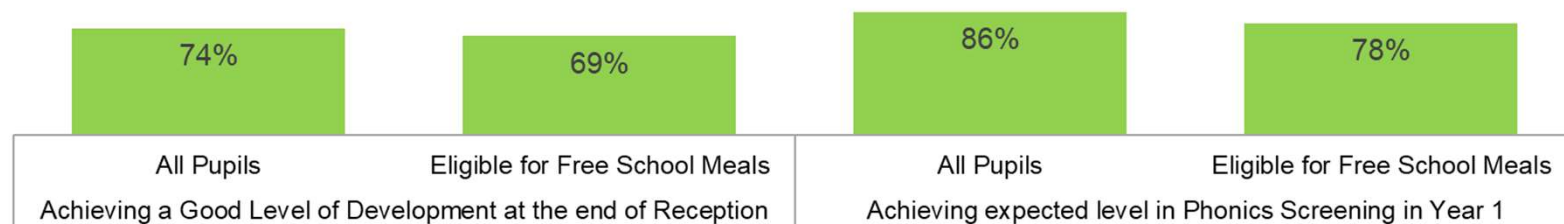
195 children in Slough were in care on 31-Mar-20. This is a rate of **45** per 10,000 population.



**13.2%** of pupils in Slough had special educational needs (SEN) in 2018, which is 3,995 pupils.

- Slough's school readiness and attainment levels are significantly better than England's and continue to increase. This is also true for children eligible for free school meals.
- KS 4 attainment in Slough's state-funded schools continue to be significantly better than England's.

School readiness in Slough (2018/19)



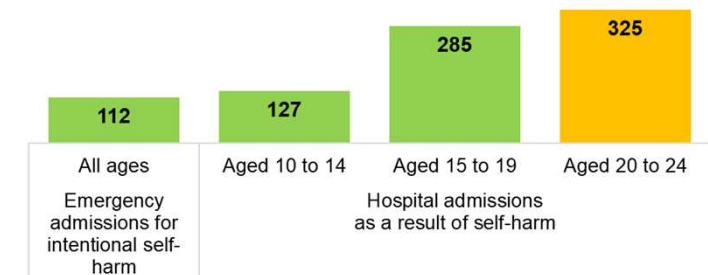
# Mental Health



- Mental health problems affect around one in four people in any given year. 19% of Slough's population aged 16 and over are estimated to have a common mental disorder, which is significantly higher than the national (17%) and regional (15%) prevalence rates.
- Nationally, 16% of children aged 5 to 16 are estimated to have a probable mental health disorder

- Hospital admissions for self-harm in children have increased in recent years with admissions for young women being much higher than admissions for young men.
- Suicide is a significant cause of death in young adults and can be an indicator of underlying rates of mental ill-health. From 2018 to 2020 there were 32 suicides recorded for Slough residents at a rate of 9 per 100,000 population.
- The suicide rate in males is higher, both nationally and locally. In 2018-20 81% of suicides in Slough were male.
- In 2018-20, Slough's premature mortality rate for people with severe mental illness (SMI) was significantly worse than England's at 123.1 per 100,000 population. The under-75 mortality rate was 376% higher than the general population in Slough for this time period, which was similar to England.

Slough Admission rates per 100,000 population (2019/20)



# Environment and Crime



Slough is classified as an urban city or town with no rural areas ([Office for National Statistics 2021](#)). Air quality indicators in Slough indicate higher levels of fine particulate matter and mortality attributable to air pollution, compared to England

Children and young people at risk of offending or within the youth justice system often have more unmet health needs than other children and **public health services have an important role to play in tackling violence** to help focus on interventions that are effective and target prevention and treatment.

**Domestic Abuse Increase:** There is a 9.7% increase in Domestic Abuse valid crimes for Slough when comparing 20/21 against 21/22.

Modelled estimates indicate that the rate of **children and young people** from Slough who living in households where **domestic violence and abuse**, parental substance misuse or parental mental health issues are affecting an adult in the household are higher than the rest of Berkshire East.



176 children and young people were in the youth justice system in Slough (2020/21). Of these 78 were statutory and 98 were voluntary



18 children and young people were were first time offenders in Slough ( March 2021).



There were 295 admissions from violent crime in Slough during the latest 3 year period (2017/18 to 2019/20). This was a rate of **64** per 100,000 population.

Out of court disposals	
Community Resolution Police Facilitated	82
Community Resolution with YOT Intervention	36
Community Resolution (Non Substantive/Voluntary)	23
Youth Conditional Caution	11
Youth Caution	5
Community Resolution - other agency facilitated	3
Youth Restorative Disposal	1
Youth Caution + Conditions	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>162</b>



# Leadership and Partnerships

# Leadership in Slough



- The Company changed its operating model in April 2021 to become a Wholly Owned Company but retained its operational independence. The Council as the sole owner has oversight and influence through the Company's governance arrangements
- New arrangements have resulted in a New Board – new chair and new Non Executive Directors with a wealth of Public sector experience.
- Slough has experienced changes in strategic leadership, with 4 short-term interim DCS/Chief Executives in post during 2021 and the extended leave of the Council Chief Executive
- Both of these roles now have stable, albeit, interim arrangements in place alongside 3 DLUHC appointed Commissioners for the Council working with the Company's DfE Commissioner.
- The departure of the Assistant Director for Quality Improvement, Performance and Practice (QIPP) and the Associate Director, Children and Families (both for career development reasons) in November 2021 gave the opportunity to further align services and functions together.
- The Performance Team joined the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service to bring our extensive suite of data and performance management information, and better use of quality assurance information closer together to provide a more focused lens on our practice
- The role of 'Head of Regulated Services' was developed and the post holder is now the Responsible Individual for the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA), the adoption service and Breakaway, Slough's Children's Home.
- Our Heads of Service leadership team, all of whom are permanent, have developed and pulled together over the last year, keeping a relentless focus on doing what is right for our children. This group brings great stability to Slough Children First,.
- Their efforts shows themselves in the progress made on our improvement journey and has been noted from the Company Board, DFE and the DfE Commissioner despite all of the issues faced.

# Strategic Aims and Priorities



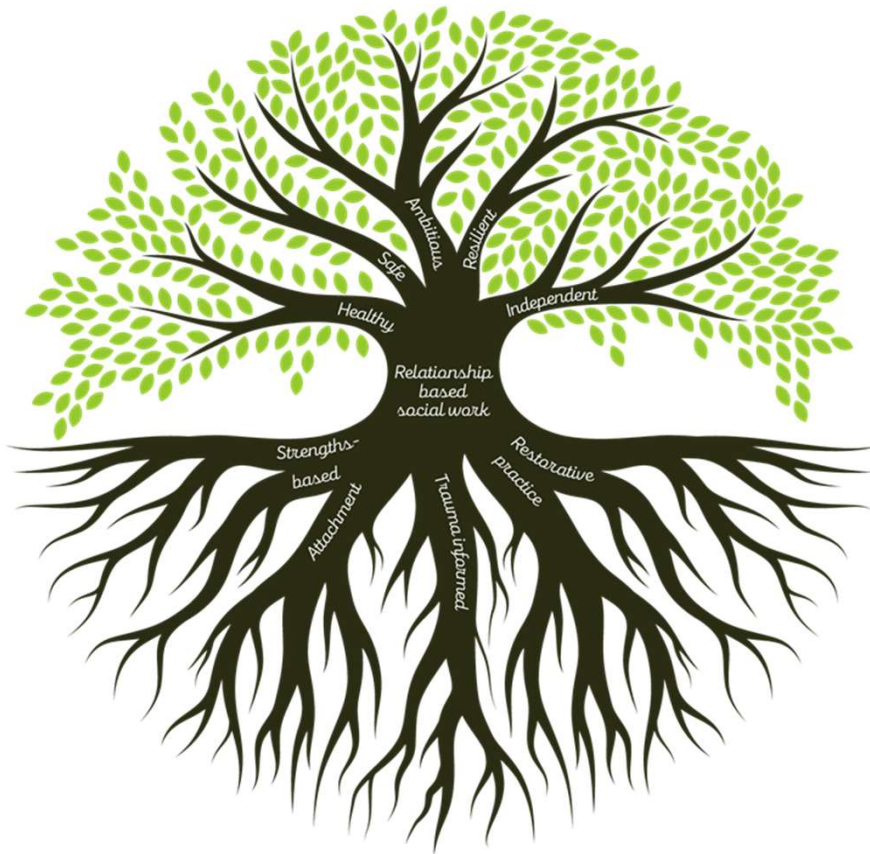
Overarching Strategic Aim is continuous improvement of services to get to Good

The company has four strategic aims, each with its own set of priorities to support the delivery of services:

Quality improvement throughout a child's journey	Stability of workforce	Being sustainable	Development of child focused partnerships
Consistently good practice throughout a child's journey ensures better outcomes for children and families	A stable and effective workforce which enables better outcomes for children and families	A secure and sustainable organisation which provides high quality and cost-effective outcomes	Key strategic partners working together to ensure the best outcomes for our most vulnerable children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Promote the voice of the child and hold the child in mind in all our work</li> <li>b) Safeguard and promote needs</li> <li>c) Quality partnership working improves outcomes for all children</li> <li>d) Improved and evidenced outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Attract, support, develop and retain quality staff and effective leaders</li> <li>b) A positive culture which provides professionally fulfilling employment</li> <li>c) Effective communication mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Strong and transparent governance</li> <li>b) Evidenced use of resources efficiently to meet children's needs</li> <li>c) Value for Money</li> <li>d) Maximising partnerships to deliver better aligned services which achieve better outcomes for children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Work with key partners to develop the continuum of services</li> <li>b) Development of community offerings through the voluntary sector to support children and families</li> <li>c) A review of tri partite panels with Health and Education to ensure the child is at the centre of the outcome with all parties working in collaboration</li> <li>d) Build strong relations with local providers to help develop sufficiency of placements for our young people.</li> <li>e) Work in strategic partnership with the council on accommodation options for our young people.</li> <li>f) Developing close links with adults to ensure robust transition planning for our children with disability to ensure a seamless and transparent transition of support offering</li> </ul>



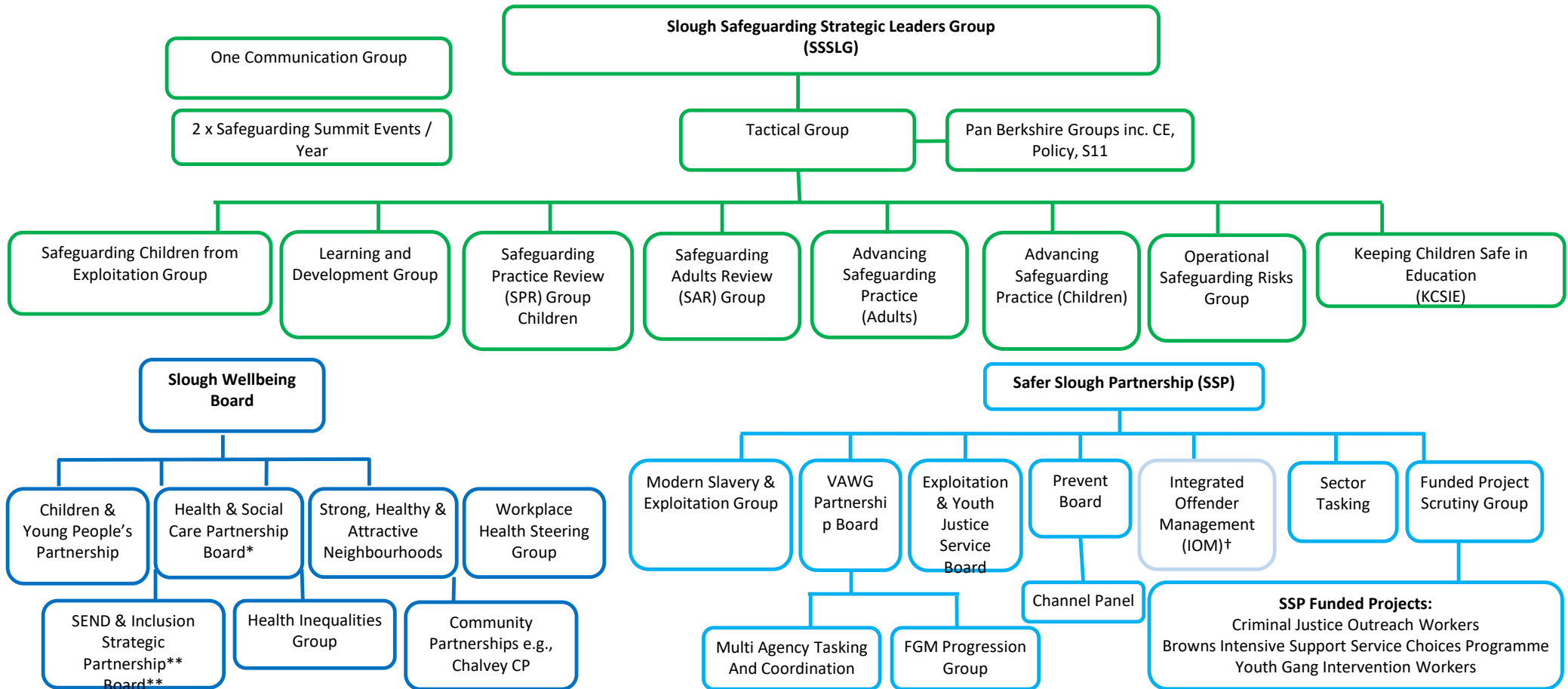
# Our New Practice Framework – The Slough Approach



- The Slough Approach has been developed to provide us with a clear focus on the way in which we aim to work with children, families and partners in Slough.
- This will ensure everyone who works in Slough understands the way in which we expect them to work with children, families and partners as this will be a more familiar model of practice.
- We changed our framework as systemic practice wasn't the right anymore for Slough and the associated costs. But we have kept our clinicians as they add considerable value to our work
- We have based our framework on a Relationship Based approach. Underpinning our Relationship Base approach are four key strands:
  - Attachment Theory
  - Restorative Practice
  - Strengths Based
  - Trauma Informed
- We recognise there are a range of tools and approaches that support social workers to work with children and families in a relationship based approach and have developed an action plan to ensure social workers learn about these.
- We are working closely with Research in Practice to access their resources and held a day in late January 2022 where staff were able to access a number of seminars on relationship based social work as part of an ongoing programme of learning and development with RiP
- We launched our new Practice Framework during Practice Learning Week w/c 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022
- We are continuing with further bite sized sessions on the four key strands and tools and we are planning to include the framework in the induction programme.



# Slough Partnership Structure



# Safeguarding Partnership Working in Slough



## What is working well

- Partners are willing to engage and partnerships are friendly.
- Multi-agency audits have commenced.
- Partners acknowledge the issues and difficulties facing both communities and other partners in Slough and want to make a difference.
- Good on the ground and operational arrangements exist with partners which benefits individual children and young people.
- Independent Equalities audit commissioned.

## What needs to improve

- Too many meetings with the same people in them sharing similar information. Meetings and Partnership Boards to be more constructive, focused on delivery and partners held to account for developments and improvements.
- Positive discussions with partners are not consistently followed enough with joint funding to improve outcomes for children and families.
- There are gaps in the current and proposed continuum of care which could be effectively filled by partners.
- Each partner has their own workforce challenges which should not be barriers to activity.
- A more expansive knowledge of communities and their assets in Slough, and the role they can play in supporting families.

## Future Developments

- Challenge the continued prioritisation of Children's Services in Slough across all partnerships.
- Use the change of chair of the strategic safeguarding arrangement to the Chief Exec/DCS to further strengthen these arrangements and hold partners to account.
- Develop the confidence and ability of partners to act as lead professionals.
- Develop stronger strategic arrangements with partners to create a greater impact for more children and young people.
- Ensure partners understand the company's transformation and the role they need to play to ensure it's sustained success.
- Map all of the different communities in Slough including the assets and services they are able to provide.

# Safeguarding Partnership Arrangement: Impact 2021/22

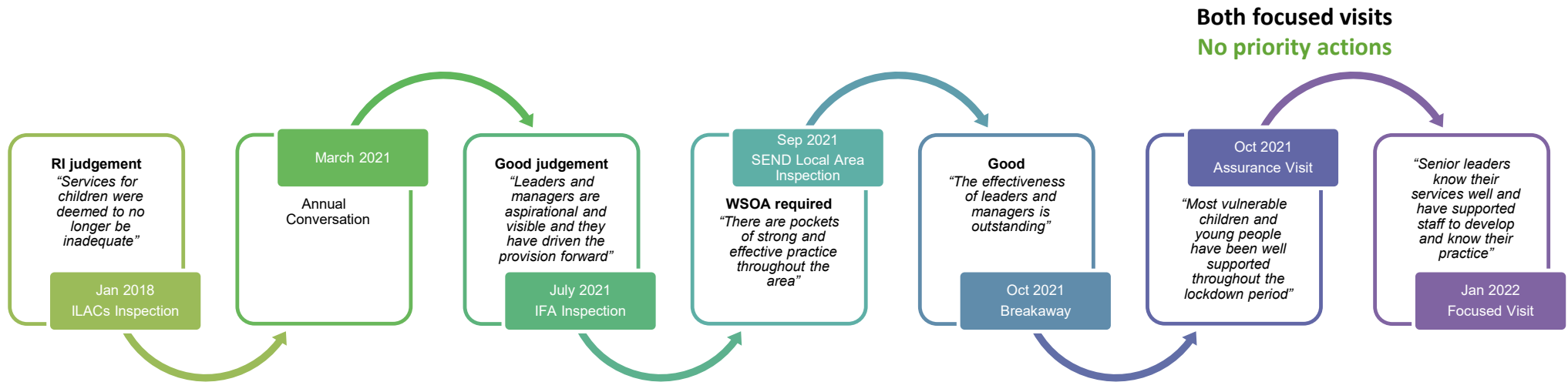


- SPR completed on twins
- Multi-agency file audits
- Retrospective audit of 2019-2021 reviews linked to knife crime
  - Focused sub group on Sexual and Criminal Exploitation
  - Review of MACE/weekly meetings
  - Development of exploitation team
- Learning from Data
  - Conversion rates from contact to Referral- threshold document
  - Increase volume and complexity- Review of EH
  - Recruitment and retention problems all professionals- Place
- An independent review of the demographics of the victim and perpetrators
- Focus on the MASH and strategy meetings- improved attendance of partners and partnership working
- Reviewed the Multi-Agency Referral Form
- Implemented the Neglect Tool Kit



# Regulatory Inspections and Legislation Changes

# Regulatory Inspections



# IFA Inspection July 2021



## No longer inadequate and judged to be “Good”

- Ofsted deemed the IFA to be good in all areas – Overall experience for children, Help and Protection and Leadership and Management
- Children thrive due to careful matching to foster carers skills sets which is supporting placement stability
- Ofsted saw examples of tenacity and the IFA having difficult conversations with Foster Carers in the best interests of children
- Positive feedback about the training offer to foster carers and praise for the training co-ordinator who goes above seen in other IFAs
- Leadership team is aspirational and visible with a good grasp of strengths and areas for improvement
- Some learning which the IFA will take through into a refreshed service plan – quality of foster carer daily logs (recommendation) and further strengthening of the Fostering Panel (Ofsted requirement)
- Some learning for SCF – quality of placements plans
- Ofsted noted the turnover of staff and the changes in social workers in SCF

# Outcome of SEND Local Areas Inspection September 2021



- SEND services were deemed to require a Written Statement of Action.
- This was not unexpected and was highlighted to Ofsted and CQC in a SEF which was recognised to be honest and accurate
- The Written Statement of Action (WSOA) is the first part in a series of steps required to address the significant areas of weakness identified in the inspection report and will require changes at a strategic, partnership, commissioning, and operational level.

## Local area inspection findings – Concerns Raised

- Leaders have not effectively implemented Children and Families Act 2014 reforms, and the Council (BSC), Slough Children First (SCF) and the CCG failed to work together to develop and effective strategy for doing so.
- Despite a desire to improve, improvement work is in its infancy.
- Too little focus on the reality faced by children and young people with SEND and their families
- Information about support is not readily available or understood, although when parents receive support, it has been praised and welcomed.
- Co-production has been weak.
- Joint commissioning is not well developed
- Social care needs of children and young people with SEND are rarely considered unless known to children's social care
- Waiting times for assessment of occupational therapy and neurodevelopmental needs are unacceptably long.
- There is no dysphagia (people who experience difficulties swallowing, eating and/or drinking) service for children over five, meaning treatment is only accessed via emergency departments.
- The area fails to deliver services in accordance with many EHC plans, including a significant number of children not receiving speech and language therapy.
- Staff turnover is high, with no coherent workforce strategy
- Completion of EHC plans within the statutory timeframe has fallen.
- Not all schools are welcoming of children and young people with SEND and arrangements for partnership working between schools have been informal and ad hoc.

# Breakaway Inspection October 2021



- Overall experience and progress of children and young people : **Good**
- Children enjoy staying at Breakaway and feel welcomed.
- Their successes are celebrated, and their individual needs are met with a range of activities
- Parents are complimentary about the care their children receive and are able to transfer some of the learning at home to improve their lives
- How well children and young people are helped and protected: **Good**
- Children are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks, dependent on their needs and understanding
- Swift and appropriate actions by staff help safeguard children when there are concerns
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers: **Outstanding**
- Children are listened to, heard, and what they have to say is acted upon.
- There is a thread of accountability and responsibility throughout the management team, with effective quality assurance processes



# Ofsted Focused Visit January 2022



## Summary of overall areas of strength identified:

- No Area Priority Actions
- Staff were positive throughout the visit about working for SCF and demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to children.
- Leaders know the service well and have supported staff to develop and improve their services
- Relationship with the Council and Strategic partnerships have improved
- Noted the early impact of Targeted Early Help moving into the company
- Successfully navigated delivery of services through pandemic
- MASH helping to keep children safe
- Range of recruitment strategies are in place

## Summary of challenges:

- Significant challenges in recruitment and retention, which hampers stability and therefore practice
- Bottlenecks in in early help and safeguarding and family support children do not receive service quickly enough
- Caseloads are too high and situation is fragile

## What Needs to Improve in this area of Social Work Practice

- Management oversight within the assessment teams to ensure that risk to all children is assessed when their circumstances change.
- Capacity in early help and safeguarding and family support to reduce the delay in children receiving help.
- The impact of quality assurance processes to improve social work practice

# Ofsted Focused Visit January 2022



## Targeted Early Help

- Decision making is appropriate with good understanding of thresholds and steps up work well
- Noted improved impact of NEET team
- Some families wait too long for allocation

## MASH

- Thresholds well understood and timely proportionate decision making with parental consent
- Evidence of strong management oversight giving clear direction for staff
- Partners evident in the front door but have resilience issues
- S47 enquiries commence promptly but still variable in quality

## Assessment Service

- Quality is improving and a strong focus on impact on children
- Most assessments include family history and presenting issues and the analysis supports appropriate decision-making, which clearly identifies what needs to change
- Knowledgeable about children and this awareness is gained through their regular visits, strong relationships and some engaging direct work

## Safeguarding and Family Support

- Capacity issues in S&FS create bottleneck in the Assessments teams
- Changing risks for a small number of children while they wait to transfer to the next team, which should have prompted an update to the assessment
- Less effective management oversight of CIN

## Domestic Abuse

- Children at risk from domestic abuse are identified and range of services
- Support families affected by domestic abuse effectively

## Contextual Safeguarding Team

- Risks to children are managed well -Holistic assessment and informed by multi-agency mapping and safety planning
- When children go missing, early screening at the front door appropriately informs decision-making

## Quality Assurance

- Performance management reporting is well established and support focus of areas to develop
- Quality assurance processes are developing, audits continue to show variability in the quality of social work practice
- More consistency and effectiveness of auditors

# Changes in Children's Social Care Legislation or Guidance



## Important national developments that impacted the planning arrangements for children's services in England and Wales:

1. The National Child Safeguarding Review Panel report (**Dec 2020**) into recent child deaths has identified national improvements required regarding information sharing, partnership working and the organisational context for the leadership and management of high-quality child protection practice. The SCF Business Plan identifies priorities in these areas, including the need for investment.
2. Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (**Apr 2020**), temporary changes to the protections given in law to vulnerable children living in care

## 2021/22 Known and Expected Changes

1. The recent national review of children's social care by Josh MacAlister (**May 2022**) sets out the way forward for the children's social care system over the next decade.
2. The final Parliamentary approvals for ICBs (**Jun 2022**) which include children as a priority group and raise the bar for the role that the health system plays in keeping children safe. Ensuring that health commissioners and providers work closely with the council and SCF is a crucial enabler to the delivery of the SCF Business Plan.
3. Known policy changes on the horizon include the White Paper on education and Green Paper on SEND, Changes in Staying Close and Put for Care Leavers, and Revision of Working Together due in 2023



# Demand and other Relevant Factors

# Social, Demographic and Other Relevant Factors



## **Increasing Costs:**

- Increase in inflation rates e.g., fuel and food poverty. The war in the Ukraine in Feb 22 has significantly contributed to inflationary increases. For children, young people, and families in Slough this has resulted in an increase in the cost of living and with an expected increase in families needing our support as they struggle to make ends meet.
- We are already seeing the impact from the cost-of-living rises, with inflationary requests from providers averaging 12% from those that have made requests.

## **Capacity and Demand:**

- Recruitment and retention of social work staff is both a local and national challenge.
- Too many vacant business support roles, and some staff in these roles neither resilient or skilled enough.
- There is increased demands coming into the system due to the impact of Covid-19, the current economic climate, and a lack of a coordinated and coherent Targeted Early Help system.
- Growth agenda for the population in Slough as a result of new builds and families placed by other local authorities requiring our services. The number of properties in Slough is projected to increase to 57,504 by 2030.
- Increased numbers in UASC and changes in the regulations and assessment requirements will place further challenges on our services.

## **Covid-19**

- Significant impact of Covid during this period
- Known and future impacts of Covid e.g., deterioration of mental health in children and young people and readiness for learning; shortage of professionals across the public sector with significant gaps in other agencies placing additional pressure of children's social care.

## **Staff Skills, Knowledge, and Capability:**

- More complex work coming through and a workforce, which is inexperienced with several critical posts vacant.
- Complexity of the problems being experienced by children, young people and families is increasing due to changes in societal factors such as poverty, domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse

## **Sufficiency:**

- Not enough placements and services to meet complex increasing needs of children not available.
- On-going concerns about our transient population with vulnerable families migrating into Slough from elsewhere in the country, some placed by OLA

## **Systems and Processes:**

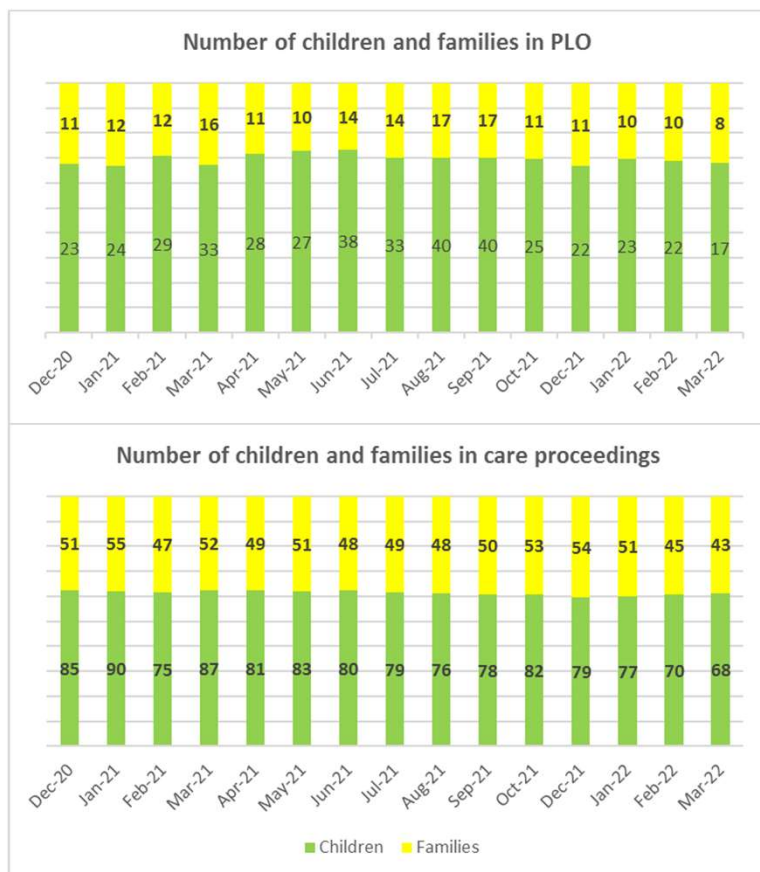
- Too much duplication in the ICS system and processes either not being followed or well understood without the appropriate floor walkers.

# Impact of Covid-19 in Slough



- Strategically we have taken the decision throughout the pandemic to keep services open. Ofsted noted in the January 2022 focused visit '*Leaders have successfully navigated the impact of the pandemic*'.
- Throughout 2021, the practice standard of seeing children face to face during visits has been maintained unless either the family or the social worker have Covid.
- The volume of open referrals rose as schools opened up to all students in early 2021, but Covid within school bubbles forced large numbers of children back at home to self-isolate leaving Slough Children First as the only organisation with sight of these children to manage risk appropriately.
- MASH have remained in the office throughout the year, and other teams have worked in the office on a rota basis with strict measures in place to keep staff safe. But adhering to Covid rules has not been without consequences, causing some anxiety for staff. It affected back office staff the most who had to remain at home throughout the whole pandemic, increasing their isolation away from colleagues and their team.
- In February 2022, Covid restrictions were slightly relaxed in Observatory House and then further relaxed in April 2022 to eliminate the need for social distancing. As a result more staff have been allowed into the office and all services have moved onto the same floor. This has had a positive impact on staff morale.
- Slough has responded to its nationally comparable high rates of Covid infection, with a comprehensive vaccine programme made available to all Slough Children First staff, including foster carers from January 2021. 268 staff (out of 333 employees) had received two doses of the vaccine. 56 staff have declined the vaccination and 9 staff are not known but thankfully in the last year there have been no further staff deaths from Covid.

# Operational pressures from PLO and Care Proceedings

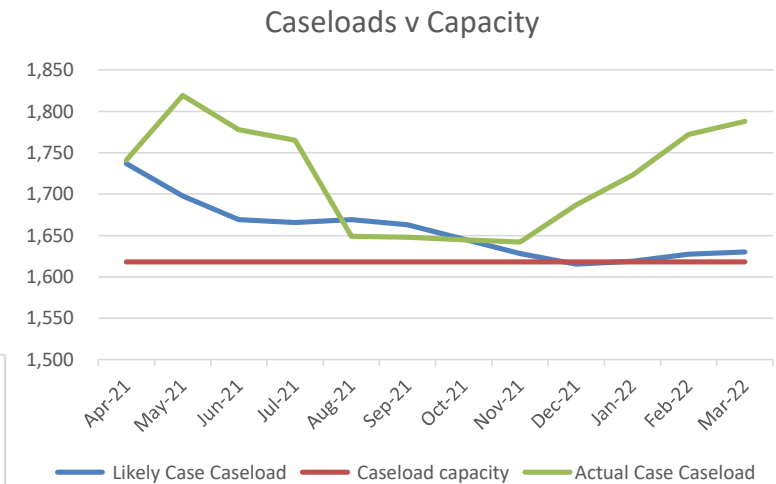
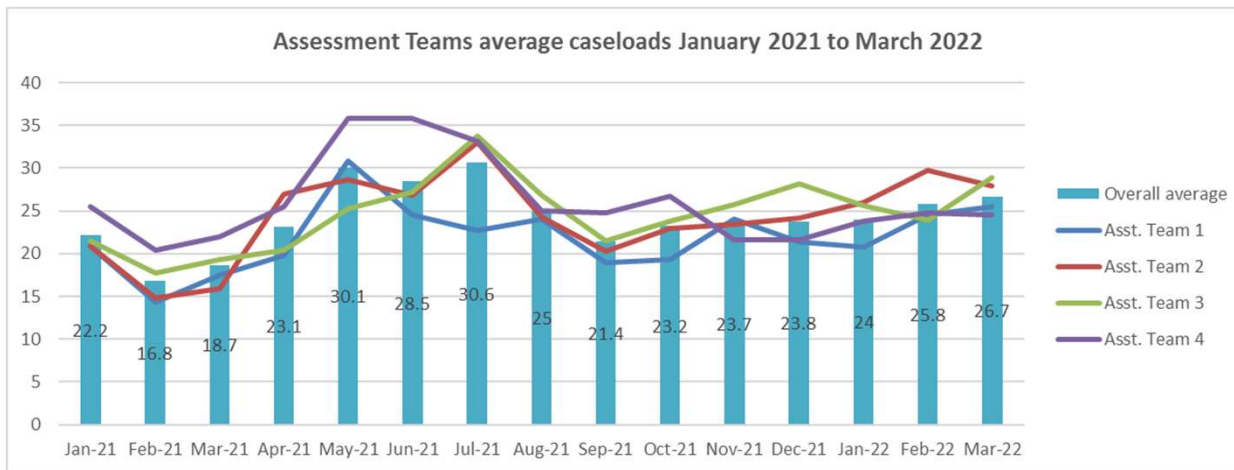


- Complexity of matters in court requiring expert opinions which takes times and adds to delays
- Delays in Reading Courts due to Covid were similar to the national picture. Though as courts return to face to face from April 2022, this is enabling some of the backlog to be cleared and Final Hearings are able to be held
- 24 children and families are exceeding the 26 week care proceeding timescale which is a consistent number across the last 12 months
- 4 children and families are currently exceeding the 16 week PLO timescale
- Care proceedings rose in January 2021 to the highest levels seen and have only recently reduced with an average of 79.3 children and 49.8 families per month in care proceedings since December 2020. The reduction is due to courts catching up.
- An average of 28.3 children and 12.3 families in PLO since December 2020 with a recent reduction as a result of de-escalating families
- New Permanency Planning Meeting (PPM) process developed in collaboration with staff underpinned by coaching and revised practice standards to strengthen the use of the permanency process in Slough which results in swifter permanence for children
- Some early impact has been seen through increased ownership of permanence for children by staff and managers.



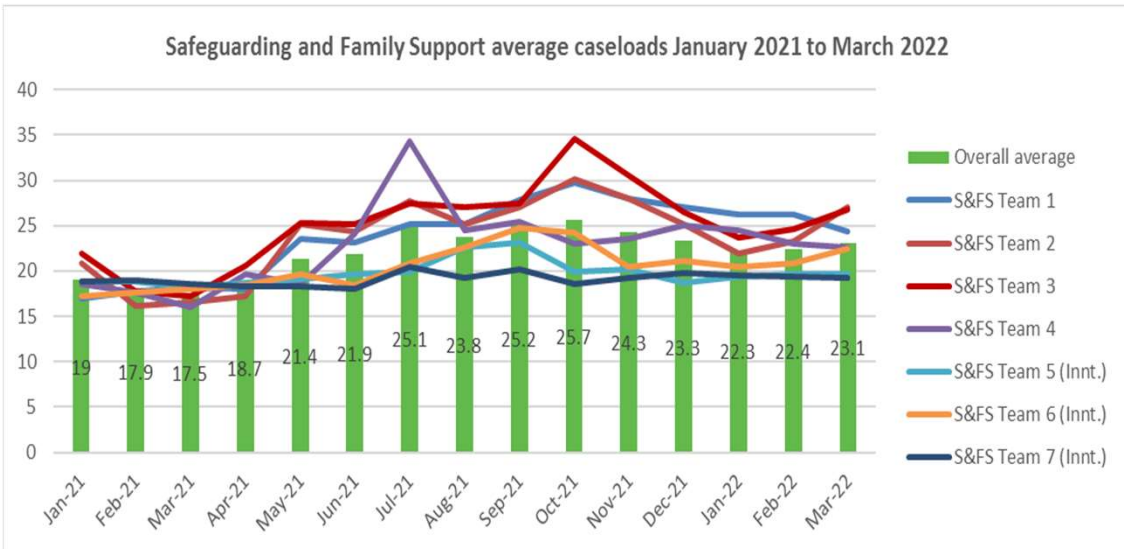
# Demand Analysis: Caseloads

- Caseloads have continued to be a pressure and exceeded capacity in 2020/21.
- As seen in the chart on the right caseloads exceed our predictions at the start of the year (May-Jun) and we saw another significant spike (outside of predictions) at the end of Nov/ beginning of Dec 2021.



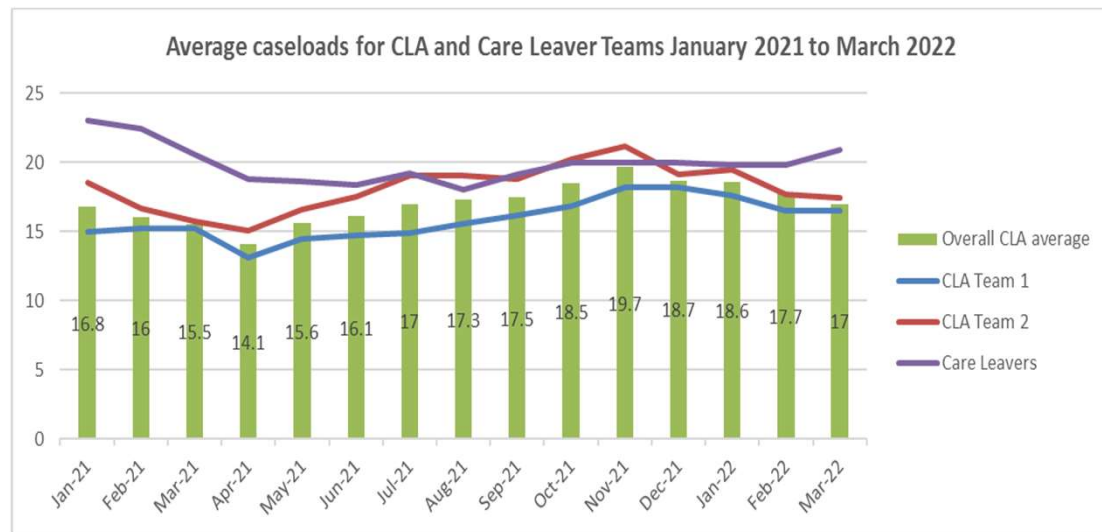
- Average caseloads in Assessment should be between 20-22 children per worker.
- Throughout 2021/22 the Assessment teams exceeded the average caseloads and were predominately in the top 10 highest caseloads each week.





- Average caseloads in SG&FS should be between 18-20 children per worker.
- The Safeguarding and Family Support teams held higher than average caseloads throughout the year, adding to pressures in the system.

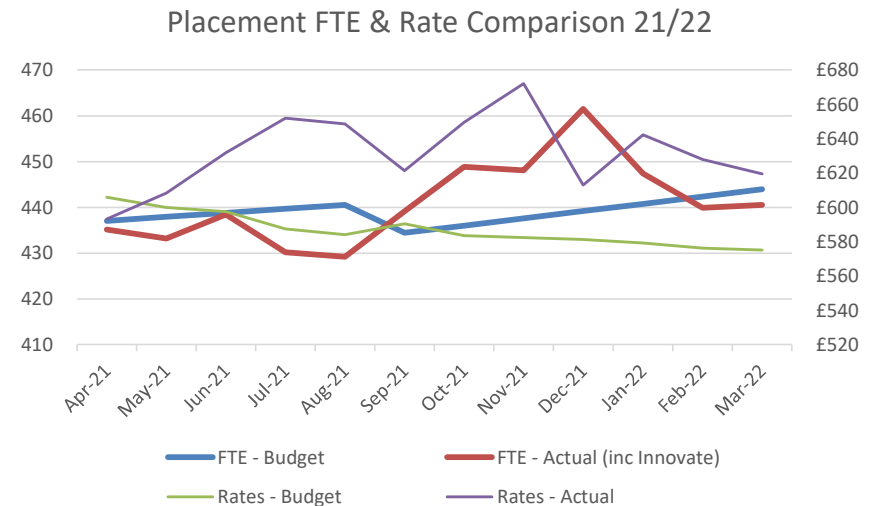
- Average caseloads in CLA should be between 16-18 children per worker.
- Average caseloads for care leavers should be between 20-25 children per worker. This does not include where they are a secondary worker for children looked after aged 16-18
- The service managed to maintain the overall average caseloads at this level through out the year but we saw a peak November, similar to caseload pressures in other areas of the service.



# Demand Analysis: Placements



- Throughout this period demand for placements significantly outstrips supply.
- Recruitment of foster carers proved challenging in this period due to Covid-19
- There was an increase in demand for mother and baby placements directed by the Courts.
- There was a very high cost placement out of Slough to protect a young person whilst a criminal trial was progressing. This was a significant cost for the period.
- Ofsted began reinspecting providers and there was an increase in the number of disrupted placements as a result.
- Delays in court processes delayed permanent placements for some children.
- The MacAlister review highlighted the costs of placement and the profits some providers were making. CMA review commenced on a national level.



# Sufficiency: Unregistered Placements



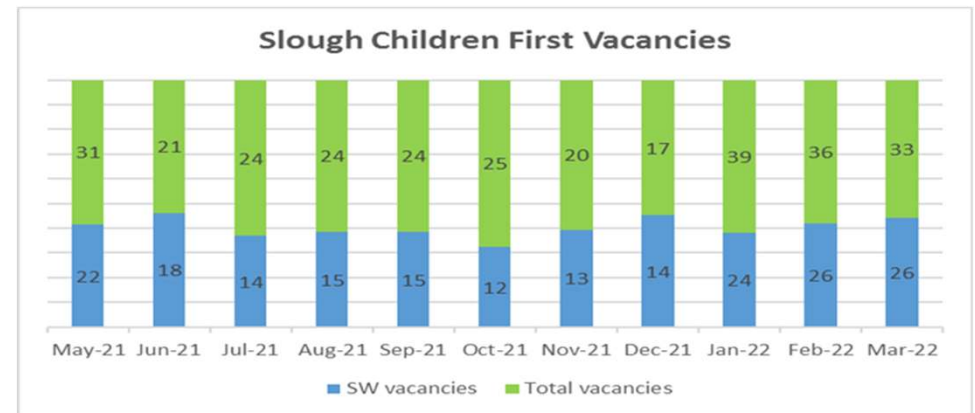
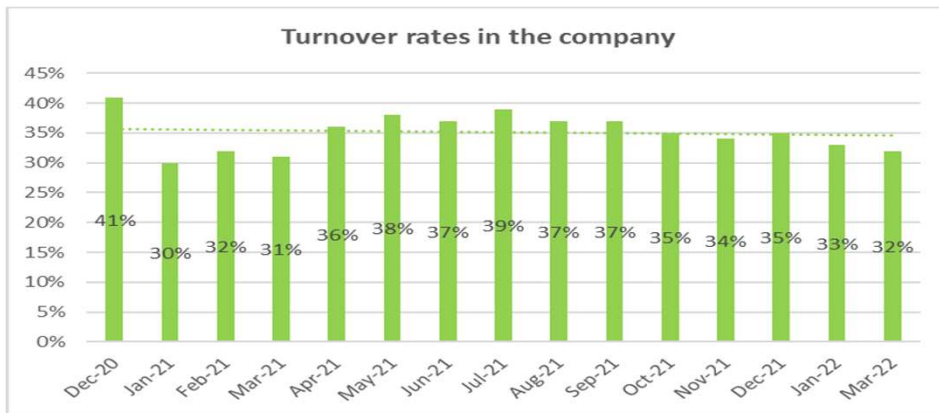
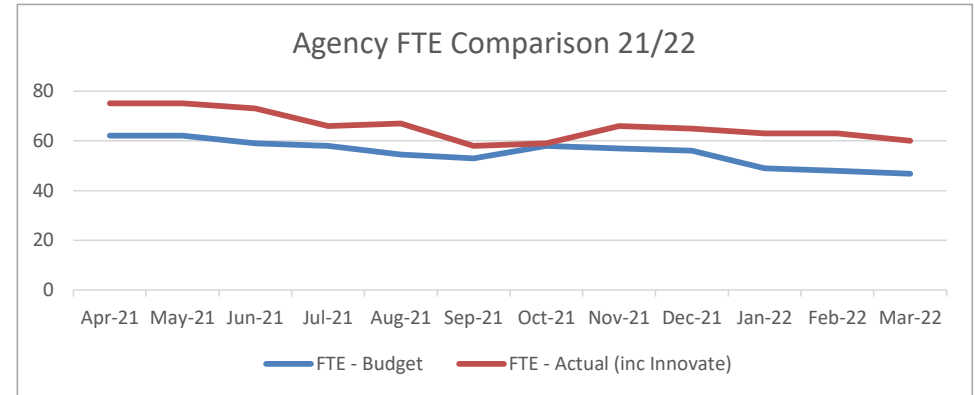
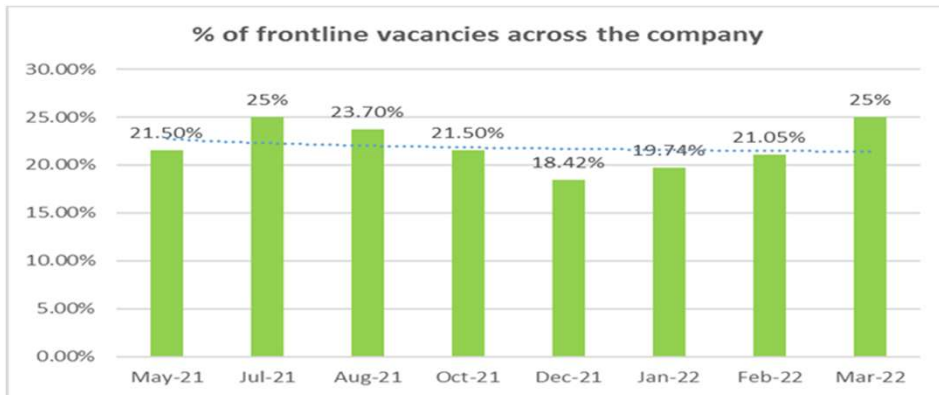
- Lack of provision for children with autism, learning disability and possibly mental health is a national challenge:
  - 14 year old with ASD/ LD/ MH: Bespoke placement setup with 3:1 staff (6 days) now in Council property with £50K plus damage. Residential school placement identified for Sept 2022
- Court directed Reg 24 placements which don't meet the minimum fostering standards support the child payments but not the fostering allowance and additional support:
  - 2 currently
- 16 year old with ASD several placement break down in local hotel with support staff for 11 days. Moved into residential placement but subsequently broke down and now moved into semi- independent.
- 14 year old concern about exploitation currently in 2:1 placement under DoLS
- 17 year old NCA involved - placed in a safe house at significant cost

# Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)



- New Lead Member for children agreed in May 2021 we would become part of the NTS
- Since April 2021 we've had 35 young people present as UASC
  - NTS – 7
  - Care 4 Calais- 10
  - Hotel- 15
  - Police-2
- 33 UASC currently being supported over 0.07%
- Majority from local asylum dispersal hotel
- Age assessments have been challenging- appointed additional member of staff
- Home Office specialist team have assisted - one of their assessments being challenged
- Currently have 3- JRs disputed age assessments
- Process for unaccompanied Ukraine asylum seekers in place-as yet none identified

# Demand Analysis: Workforce



# Demand Analysis: Workforce



Area	No of Posts		Impact on Services
	Perm	Interim	
HOS	7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All permanent - creates stability for staff</li> </ul>
IRO's and CP chairs	6	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondment of staff to two PIM roles</li> <li>1 vacant CP chair</li> </ul>
Team Managers	13	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 of the interim are Innovate (reducing to 2)</li> <li>6 Permanent managers in EH</li> <li>All Interim TMs in post more than 6 months</li> </ul>
Assistant Team Managers	7	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An interim is covering a Maternity Leave due to return in early May</li> </ul>
Service Co-ordinators	4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Backbone of the service</li> <li>2 on long term sick leave</li> </ul>

## Key Areas of Focus

- **Organisational Development:** A culture of learning from scrutiny, audits, service user and staff feedback
- **Training:** A stable and skilled workforce lead by managers who can meet the demands of services and achieve positive outcomes for children
- **Cultural Competence:** A shift in culture with a fully engaged staff group that understands the operating model they are working in and committed management team that are skilled to lead staff and establish an environment of positive behaviours
- **Recruitment and Retention:** A clear and sufficient recruitment processes which secures new staff in a timely way ensuring the right support is in place at the right time
- 79% of frontline / case holding staff are permanent
- Voluntary turnover of 20% of permanent staff in a rolling 12 month period indicating staff are feeling more valued by the Company

## ASYE's - Good pipeline of newly qualified staff with 2 cohorts a year. There are currently 11 ASYE's with 179 children and caseloads between 13 – 20 children (average of 16.3)

- This gives ASYE's the space to develop their experiences, however this is a 19% reduction in capacity to allocate a further 41 children (assuming 20 children per SW)
- This is most acute in the Safeguarding and Family Support service who have the most ASYE's (8)
- The one downside of growing our own is our experienced social workers are bearing the impact of less experienced staff with higher caseloads than we would like
- Historical ASYE retention rates are good, although attrition levels in the last couple of years has been high, so a post ASYE group has been put in place for support for social workers in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of employment.



# Demand Analysis: Workforce

## ASYE's

- Whilst posts may be filled with 'permanent' members of staff, ASYE's have capped case loads and therefore are not truly comparable to experienced SWs.
- There were 12 ASYE's with approx. 124 children and with caseloads between 8 – 19 children
- With fully qualified workers this would be 240 children (assuming all are holding 20 children). This is a reduction of 48% in capacity.
  - R&A have 2 ASYEs (holding 24 children rather than 40).
  - S&FS have 8 ASYEs (holding 100 children rather than 180)
  - CLA has 1 ASYE (holding 15 children rather than 20)

## Full capacity figures

Team	Full capacity	Vacancies	Vacancy impact	ASYE total	ASYE impact	Total Impact reduction	% reduction impact
R&A	516	7	140	24	16	156	30
S&FS	472	6	120	100	80	200	42
CLA	272	5	100	15	5	105	39

## In totality

- There are 22 interim case holding workers and 18 vacancies within the operational services, therefore 40 'vacancies' to fill to create a truly permanent workforce
- There are currently 9 perm social workers being progressed (including the international candidates)



# Performance and Progress in 2021/22



# People, Place and Our Children



**Neglect** and **emotional abuse** remain the highest categories of abuse, at 59% and 34% respectively as of March 2022, for children on a child protection plan.

There are periods of sustained demand during the year when the number of children open to us reaches over **1,800** (highest 1,849 in May 2021). The number of children open to us hasn't dropped below 1,600 in either 2021 or 2022 and was 1,769 at the end of March 2022.

High levels of **Child In Need** numbers due to the complex situations our children live in. Numbers were high at the start of 2021 (553 in February 2021) and reduced to 502 children in November 2021 but have since significantly risen to 621 in March 2022.

Statistically high numbers of **Child Protection**: 66.2 per 10,000 compared to 40.8 (SN 2020/21). August 2021 was significant with the highest number of children going onto a CP plan (44) and the lowest coming off (7). This showed a new pattern where demand didn't drop over school holidays.



Pressures on **sufficiency** of placements for children and young people with very complex needs, vulnerabilities and/ or challenging behaviours.

An increasing number of **CLA** supported by us (240 in March 2022 up from 223 in March 2021) has contributed to Slough now being comparable with Statistical Neighbours: 55 per 10,000 compared to 56.1 (SN 2020/21). August and December 2021 saw the highest number of children become looked after in the month (19 and 20)

**Covid** coupled with **cost of living rises** has caused a significant impact on Slough households. The rise in food and fuel poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, the effect on the mental health of adults and increased domestic abuse has led to families having more complex needs and increasing homelessness.

# Dependencies of Performance Measures



The SCF will work within a set of interrelated dependencies with services within SBC and the wider partnership, for example:

- **IT** – The delivery of services is crucially dependent on:
    - Sufficient devices rolled out to all relevant staff
    - Devices being properly configured for maximum efficiency
    - Robust and consistent connectivity
    - Suitable software acquisition and update
  - **Housing** – If there is a lack of responsiveness from housing, Children's Services may have to fund:
    - families in emergency accommodation
    - homeless 16/17 year olds
    - care leavers
    - asylum seekers
  - **Adult Services** – Adult services are responsible for the management and oversight of transition services for children with disabilities. Tardy planning can lead to Children's Services retaining responsibility for too long.
  - **Broader work across the partnership** on domestic abuse, substance misuse, alcohol misuse, mental health issues, crime especially violent crime, gangs and county lines all significantly impact on the demand for
- Children's Services, and people's ability to parent well. The functioning of the Children and Young People's Partnership will therefore be a key dependency.
- **Information** – need a suitable JSNA which picks up children's issues hinders good quality strategic planning and commissioning
  - **Universal services** – the move to the locality model, digital services and increasing self-service need to evidence a reduction in demand at higher levels, or at least appropriate triaging and signposting of services.
  - **Partnerships** – Partnerships need to be strengthened to ensure good quality integrated delivery for maximum efficiency, and that suitable arrangements are in place for the tri-partite funding of placements and for continuing health care funding to be accessed for relevant children.
  - We will want to track **IHAs completed within 20 working days**, but these need to be delivered by health services in other areas and are not within our control.
  - Currently there is a **national shortage of placements for children**, particularly adolescents with additional needs. We want to track the percentage of placements made more than 20 miles from Slough. We will take account of this in our consideration of sufficiency and commissioning, but this is not susceptible to quick fixes, so this measure may become part of the performance framework after year one.

# Hearing the Voice of the Child



I already have 2 mummies

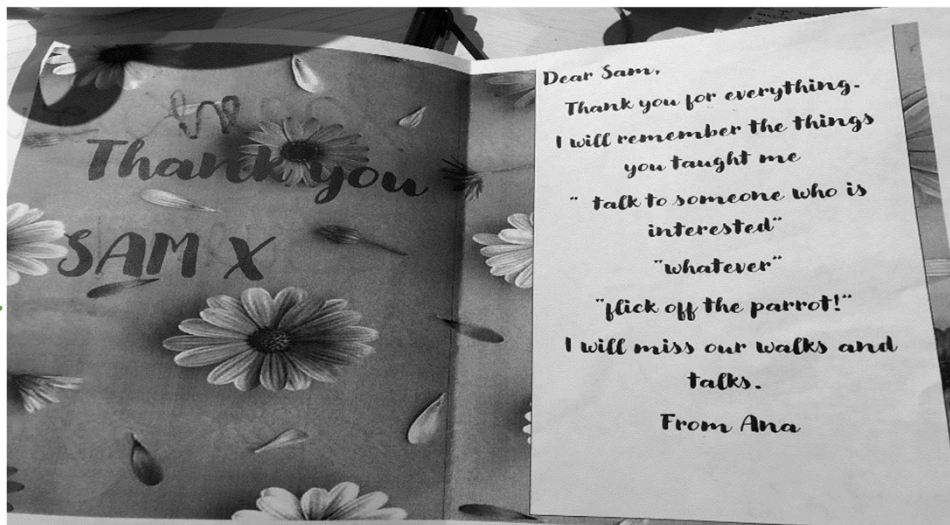
I am happier with this foster carer because they listen to me and we do fun things

I have SEND needs. I am finding the jump from Year 11 to Year 12 difficult

Now I am with my family I feel safe from x

I am struggling emotionally but I want to keep my college place going

I want to live with my brother and not separately from him

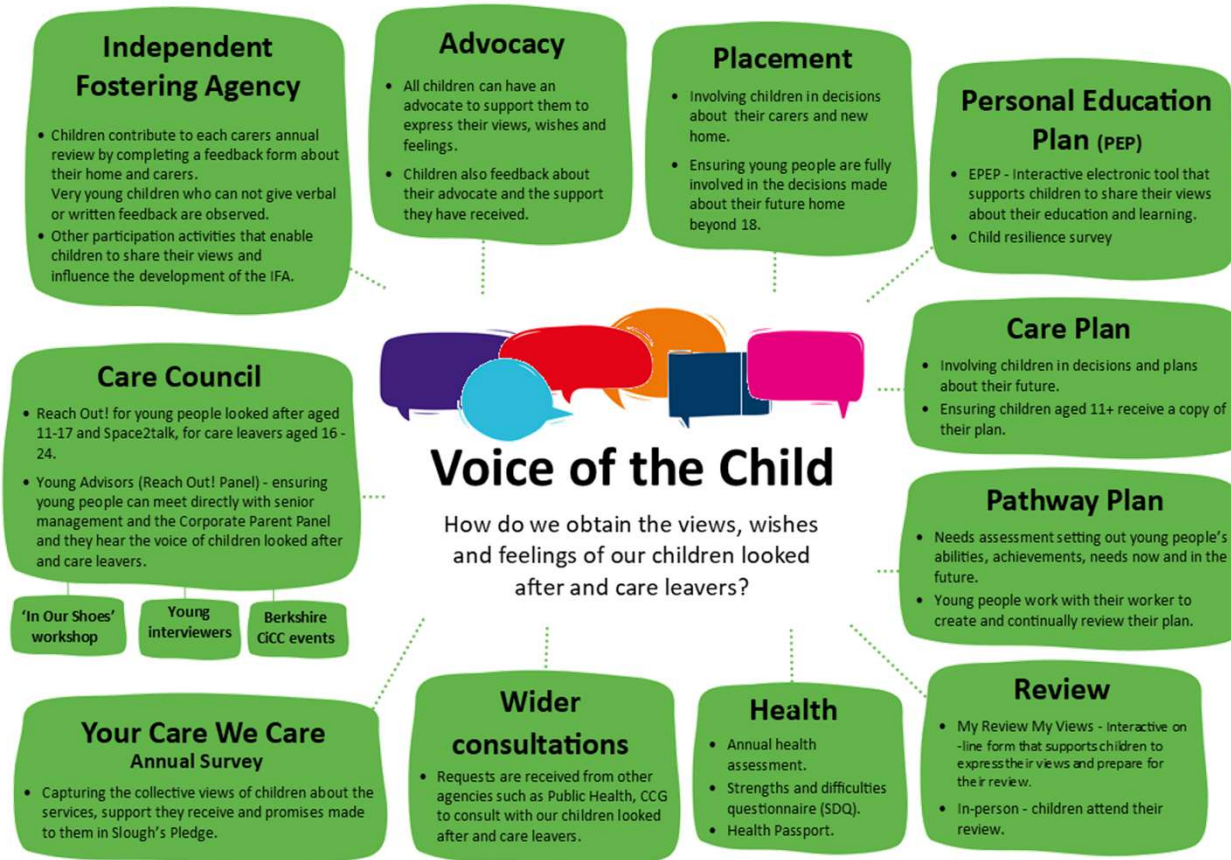


I'm worried about what will happen if my Dad comes home.

## Areas of focus

- Consistently ensure that the recording reflects the workers knowledge of the lived experience of our children
- Implementation of the revised Participation strategy
- Ensure that the voice of the child and family is used to inform commissioning

# Childs Voice



- Work undertaken to return to face to face meetings for **Reach Out**- limited uptake so return to virtual
- **Space2talk** continued support on line
- **Hot Topics** shared with Corporate Parenting Panel
- Consultation Tool used by 57 children- themes feel happy, want to be involved in their review and don't understand care plan
- **Health and Well being research**- views on the health support they receive
- **Recruitment** of senior staff
- Development of **training** for foster carers
- Your experience **service feedback** cards





# Contractual KPIs- Company Performance Framework



Performance/Efficiency Indicators	Good to be	Baseline Data				2021/22												2020-21		2020-21 Benchmarking			
		Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	High	Low	Slough	SN	SE	ENG
% of Re-Referrals	↓ Low	17.0%	25.0%	14.6%	19.7%	19.9%	25.0%	24.0%	17.5%	19.4%	25.4%	27.2%	23.2%	23.5%	13.5%	18.2%	19.2%	25.4%	12.9%	17.3%	20.6%	27.7%	22.7%
Assessments completed on time	↑ High	91.9%	85.7%	87.7%	79.2%	94.6%	90.2%	89.7%	72.3%	71.1%	67.9%	86.9%	89.3%	91.3%	84.8%	87.7%	99.6%	96.7%	67.2%	74.9%	88.9%	88.7%	87.6%
ICPC timeliness (statutory measure by child)	↑ High	81.0%	41.2%	53.3%	70.5%	27.6%	59.3%	71.4%	90.5%	77.8%	94.1%	66.7%	89.7%	75.0%	68.4%	83.3%	75.0%	100.0%	41.2%	65.3%	84.3%	82.0%	83.0%
% of Children subject to CPP with all reviews within timescale	↑ High	75.2%	74.6%	69.8%	68.7%	82.5%	84.5%	88.2%	90.5%	91.1%	92.2%	92.1%	91.6%	92.3%	89.3%	92.4%	91.5%	80.0%	64.7%	83.9%	94.0%	92.7%	93.2%
CP Visits undertaken on time	↑ High	80.0%	80.1%	86.8%	86.4%	83.5%	93.8%	87.4%	82.0%	80.9%	81.1%	88.4%	89.3%	87.7%	97.7%	91.7%	93.9%	97.6%	65.7%	87.3%	n/a	n/a	n/a
% CLA visits undertaken on time	↑ High	91.5%	94.6%	97.5%	91.4%	95.9%	92.3%	90.5%	93.2%	86.5%	83.1%	88.8%	87.9%	82.9%	89.5%	89.0%	82.9%	97.5%	90.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
% of CLA with their latest review within timescales	↑ High	100.0%	97.1%	95.6%	93.0%	96.4%	95.5%	96.4%	95.5%	92.0%	89.3%	96.8%	97.2%	96.9%	96.8%	96.8%	93.9%	97.9%	90.5%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Participation in CLA reviews	↑ High	92.9%	98.0%	87.2%	85.7%	89.7%	90.6%	89.7%	95.2%	90.0%	100.0%	88.9%	87.2%	91.2%	84.6%	88.5%	95.0%	100.0%	85.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CLA placed over 20 miles away	↓ Low	33.0%	31.6%	32.5%	30.0%	30.1%	30.9%	33.7%	33.8%	31.9%	32.4%	35.3%	34.1%	32.9%	33.0%	33.7%	34.8%	35.5%	28.6%	31.0%	21.7%	28.0%	21.0%
Placement Stability - short term	↓ Low	12.3%	11.7%	11.3%	8.5%	7.7%	7.7%	7.3%	6.5%	5.6%	4.2%	6.1%	5.3%	6.7%	7.0%	6.7%	5.4%	15.7%	6.4%	10.0%	8.3%	11.0%	9.0%
Placement Stability - long term	↑ High	80.8%	83.0%	82.4%	86.0%	83.1%	83.6%	83.6%	81.5%	74.2%	76.1%	74.2%	74.2%	72.1%	71.2%	69.2%	66.7%	88.5%	70.9%	85.0%	69.7%	68.0%	70.0%
Care Leavers EET	↑ High	48.2%	46.8%	50.0%	47.5%	50.0%	55.1%	58.1%	60.0%	58.4%	58.2%	56.2%	52.9%	53.5%	50.7%	51.4%	53.5%	59.5%	44.4%	49.0%	51.7%	51.0%	52.0%
Care Leavers with a pathway plan (18+)	↑ High	93.7%	92.5%	95.0%	91.7%	96.5%	95.7%	93.2%	84.4%	89.7%	89.7%	89.4%	87.1%	88.5%	82.3%	81.6%	83.3%	95.5%	80.8%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Supervision	↑ High	47.5%	74.3%	78.9%	78.9%	90.8%	77.3%	82.4%	77.6%	80.3%	73.6%	71.3%	86.8%	78.6%	79.2%	83.4%	76.9%	95.7%	32.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

# What's Worked Well



## The following areas highlight where Slough Children First has improved over the last 12 months

- Targeted Early Help decisions are appropriate and well considered
- MASH operating in real time with effective application of thresholds for interventions
- Improved quality of assessments with strong focus on the impact on children
- Exploitation Team completing holistic assessments informed by increasing multi-agency mapping, supporting children to remain in the family home and keeping them safer
- Range of services for domestic abuse and an internally developed programme starting RESPECT accreditation
- Improved management oversight and more regular supervision providing a better grip, and supporting leaders to have a good understanding of service
- Performance management reporting is well-established and driving improvements
- All children Looked After 16+ have an allocated Personal Advisor
- Virtual School has extended its remit to include all children with an allocated social worker with positive impact on children re-engaging in education
- Staff morale is high, there has been increase in permanent staff and good pipeline of AYSE and overseas trained social workers
- Practice improvement mentors have supported staff to develop more consistent practice, and offered opportunities for peer support and learning
- Focus on sufficiency of emergency placements, short breaks and local provision
- The impact of clinicians work on individual children
- Good Ofsted outcomes for IFA and Children's respite unit

# Our Improvement and Transformation Programme



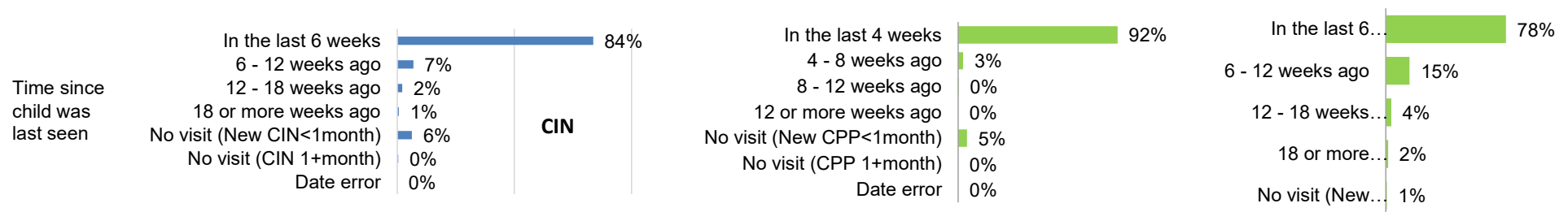
- Revised improvement plan in April 2021 focused on quality and aligned to the company's business plan to deliver its strategic aims through 5 priority areas. (see [Appendix 1](#) for copy of plan)
- Successes seen in the improvement plan have been enabled by extra capacity provided through DfE funding to deliver our transformation programme.
- DfE transformation programme has enabled 4 key workstreams to be set up in 2021. Each are showing impact and in turn positively impacting on changes to performance and the culture in the company.
  - **Stability of workforce** – turnover is reducing from previous highs and an increased number of permanent frontline staff (55.6% March 2022)
  - **Quality of practice** – More consistency in quality of practice – 6% increase in the number of children's files graded as good and 15.5% less files graded as inadequate compared to 2020/2021
  - **Contextual Safeguarding** – improved response recognised by Ofsted
  - **Sufficiency** – stronger and increased local offer, especially for 16+ young people
- This is providing the scaffolding in Slough upon which to create and maintain good services in a small unitary organisation, without large resources and with similar inner London challenges.
- The improvement plan is being delivered against a backdrop of sustained increases in demand, staff turnover, impacts of Covid and s114 which brings a variety of pressures. These collectively have at times tested Slough Children First's resilience to maintain good compliance in services.
- But we are focused on a continued cultural shift which builds on the successes we have seen already and is underpinned by consistency of leadership.



# Improvements made via our Improvement Programme



## Maintained statutory face to face visiting frequency with staff protected by PPE



### Workforce

- The percentage of permanent frontline staff has increased from 38.2% in April 2021 to 54% in December 2021
- All company permanent staff stable at 78%
- Achieved through an increase in the number of permanent applications resulting in appointments - 22 permanent and fixed term contract new starters between Nov 2021 and Jan 2022, and 8 offers for Feb – March 2022

### Participation and Engagement

- Return to face to face participation and engagement activity where it has been safe to do so
- Research underway to understand which social media platforms young people prefer to use to improve participation and communication activity
- Introduction of 'Your Experience Cards' to gather feedback from all service users

### Permanency and sufficiency in placements

- Permanency planning is now embedded and owned by managers
- Improved pathways for 16-25 accommodation and support is enabling more young people to be supported within Slough.
- 79% of Care Leavers aged 16+ are in suitable accommodation (December 2021) with 90% of Care Leavers aged 18 – 21 years old in suitable accommodation (87.3% SN & 88% Eng.)

### Culture and change

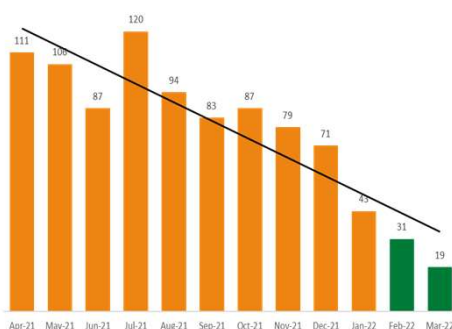
- Staff well-being supported via clinical support as well as sleep and anxiety workshops
- Staff generous in their fundraising for children's Christmas presents and CLA celebration event scheduled for May 2022

# Service Improvement: Early Help

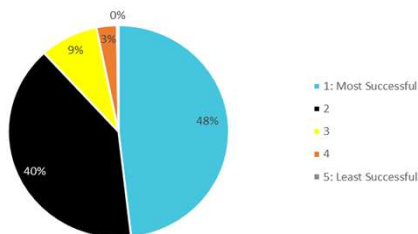


Ofsted focused visit January 2022 – “Early help decisions are appropriate and well considered. There is a good understanding of thresholds for this service”

EH Assessment timeliness



Outcomes for families following a period of Early Help Intervention



## Better

- Targeted Early Help, NEET and Targeted Youth Services have landed well in the company strengthening services for children and young people. (see next slide for further details)
- Duty manager co-located in the MASH to provide a single point of contact for targeted early help which is working well
- Early Help staff closely plan with the assessment team on step downs and this has added value to making step downs more effective.
- More robust process in place for step ups and step downs as noted by Ofsted in Jan 22 “*Effective systems are used to ensure children access the appropriate social work support when their needs increase or change is not achieved*”.
- The average length of time from allocation to completed assessments has consistently reduced in the past 9 months. The 30 day timescale has been met in the last two months (see graph)
- Management oversight and supervision standards are now aligned with SCF timescales and monitored more frequently, assisting with improved performance **to 75%**
- Pie chart shows 88% of families (689 families and 1368 children) were recorded as having the highest levels of success at point of Early Help case closure, with only 3% having a low rating.
- Audit processes are now aligned with those of the Company with an Early Help audit tool developed

## Areas of focus for further improvement

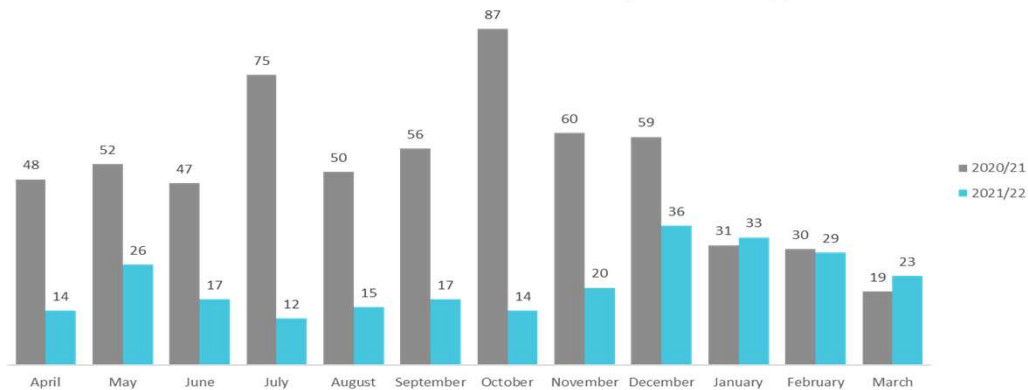
- Reconfigure the team to ensure adequate capacity in the Early Help team as noted in the Jan focused visit (*what needs to improve*) to support the timely transfer of families and increase the number of Early Help staff physically located within the Front Door
- As part of the company’s work to transform its operating model, develop a targeted Early Help service and an Edge of Care service with partners
- To support the development of the revised operating model, review and amend thresholds between levels 2 and 3 to maximise the effectiveness of the targeted Early Help
- Improve the impact of management oversight on practice and the progress of children’s plans
- Influence the development of Family Hubs to support the development of a continuum of targeted services in Slough
- Develop a set of specific KPIs and align data reporting as per other services within the company
- Further develop quality assurance activity and close the loop on learning
- Develop EH workers through a professional qualification to enable a consistent standard of evidence based professional practice for those otherwise qualified staff
- Development of an Early Help Toolkit for practitioners

# Impact seen already from Targeted Early Help after aligning with the company



- **Changes in Targeted Youth Services and Engage in 2021 have impacted on service delivery**
- Services transferred to the company in April 2021 as part of changes to a Wholly Owned Company. They were led by an SBC Associate Director who left in July 2021.
- In November 2021 they transferred to the Director of Operations alongside Early Help which gave them a renewed focus
- This concentrated thresholds and gave an outwards focus on wherever the child and young person was living.
- These changes have resulted in an increase in activity from November 2021 onwards and better outcomes for children and young people

Increase in the number of referrals into Targeted Youth Support



Referrals dropped significantly through 2021 (50% reduction in referrals since December 2020), though this has started to increase back to a rate comparable with the start of 2021.

## Improving outcomes for young people Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET)

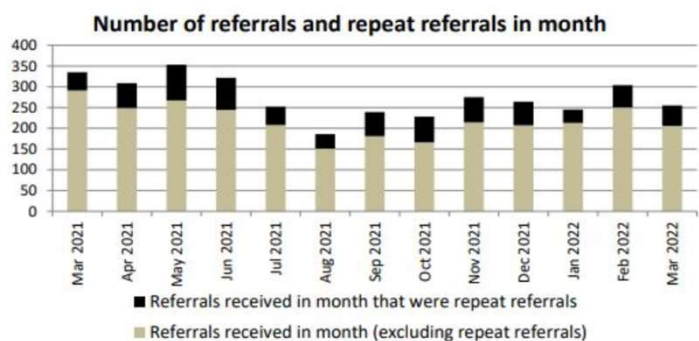
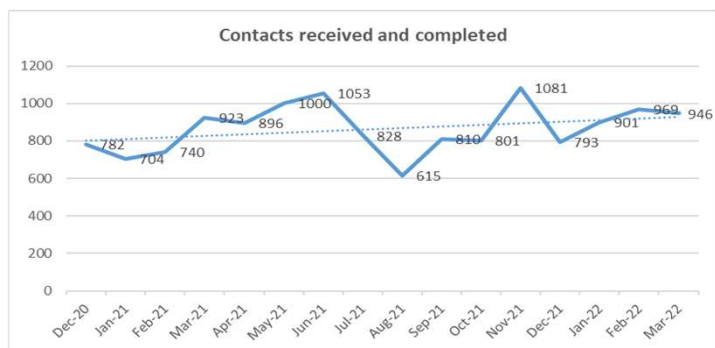
- NEET workers became part of our successful Virtual School in December 2021 as they moved into the company.
- Focus since then on ensuring the destination of all young people is known
- Improvements in NEET and also “not knowns”. This work has brought Slough 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 150 LAs.

	Slough Mar 2022	South East	England
NEET	2.4%	2.4%	2.7%
Not Known	0.6%	2.6%	1.8%
NEET & Not Known	3.0%	5.0%	4.5%

# Service Improvement: MASH



Ofsted focused visit – January 2022 confirmed work to continually strengthen the MASH have been successful “Systems within the MASH are effective at ensuring concerns about children are effectively progressed. Decisions within the MASH are timely, proportionate and take account of relevant multi-agency information.”



## Better

- Three Partnership workshops held in February 2022 to strengthen multi agency decision making
- Low number of MASH referrals which are only applied when appropriate remains a strength.
- Consistently able to make the majority of decisions in 1 day. 99.4% of contacts where a decision was made in 1 day (99% March 21).
- 21.4% of referrals that were re-referrals (within 12m) ytd: against a target of 22% (17.3% 20/21, SN 20.6%, SE 27.7% & ENG 22.7%)
- Management oversight is making a difference to children Ofsted focused visit stated “*Strong management oversight in the MASH helps to progress prompt decision making for children*”
- Compliant strategy discussions remained a focus for the service and Ofsted saw the outcome of this work. “*Partners work well together and strategy discussions in the MASH are mostly well attended*”.
- Strong but stable agency leadership is enabling a consistency of decision making.
- Dedicated health visitor recruited to MASH
- Daily missing meeting (DMM) with police discusses safeguarding issues from the last 24 hours
- Home Office rep in the MASH for 10 hours per week for timely immigration advice and support for families
- Education safeguarding lead aligned to the Front Door to ensure effective communication and action and to support DSL network

## Areas of Focus for further improvement

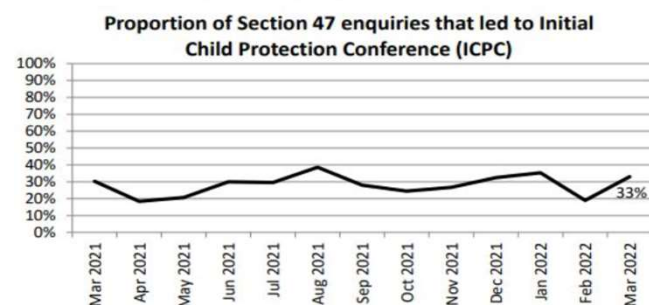
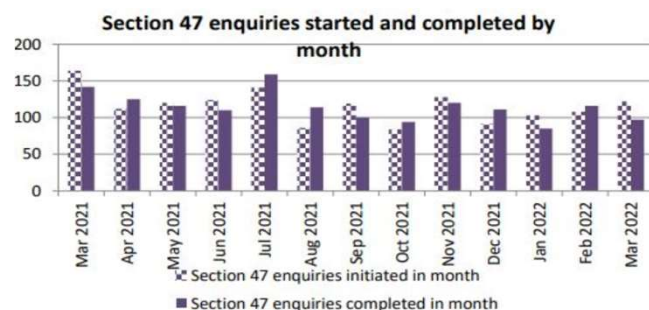
- Low conversion rate and still too few contacts with evidence of other agency intervention. A reliance remains on social care by partners accounting for the high number of referrals
- Health have remained virtual
- Partners struggle to attend multi-agency meetings as a result of their own capacity and recruitment issues, though virtual meetings enable better attendance.
- This is impacting on the DV triage pathway which is not working as it should and further work is required
- Three Partnership workshops held in February 2022 to strengthen multi agency decision making
- Prevent pathway reviewed launched February 2022
- Reducing demand as we are seeing new ‘normals’ in terms of regular peaks throughout the year and demand higher when it had previously been ‘quiet’
- Increased volume of contacts (see graph) starting with the lifting of lockdown in early 2021.
- 39% sustained increase in the number of referrals starting from August 2021 (186) to February 2022 (303). This has slightly reduced in March 2022. Average 269 referrals per month since April 2021
- Conversions rate of contact to referral remains high (28.8% ytd March 22) with multiple and increased complexity across all children
- Starting to see increase in homelessness in families including those not previously known to services and increases in teenage pregnancy. Further analysis of data required to identify and understand any trends

# Actions to address areas for further improvement in the MASH



- Embed the new threshold document developed by the safeguarding partnership and more user friendly MARF with partners across Slough
- Embed the understanding of the new offer from Targeted Early Help in MASH to help divert demand away from statutory teams
- Further embed quality assurance activity in the MASH to align with the rest of the company and incorporate multi agency audits of the MASH into the quality assurance programme
- Dip sample changing trends in demand to better understand what is behind changes e.g. hypothesis spike in re-referrals contain larger sibling groups and increases in teenage pregnancy.
- Use the Front Door Monitoring Group and Partnership workshops to reinforce the need for partners to be consistently present, and to drive further improvements in multi-agency decision making to ensure consistent compliance with WT18
- Further develop the interface of the Front Door with multi-agency meetings, e.g. MAPPA, MARAC and Access Panel to support multi- agency risk management
- To continue to ensure children's views and feelings are understood and influence their plans

# Service Improvement: Assessment



## The Shine Project (Domestic Abuse programme)

- A bespoke 5 and 10 week family focused domestic abuse program for perpetrators and victims has been developed.
- The learning from the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort was used to make further improvements in advance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort.
- 87.5% of couples (14 out of 16) have successfully completed the course, and there was a 100% completion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort which benefited from the earlier learning.

## Better

- Assessment timeliness finished the year very strong at 99.6% in March 2022. This has consistently been maintained in the high 80's and low 90%'s to give an average of 85.5% over the year apart from August and September when there were staffing challenges (71.4% and 67.6% respectively) (SN 88.9%, SE 88.7% & ENG 87.6%).
- An increasing number of permanent social workers in the Assessment Team (including overseas social workers to maximise their learning experience) alongside long standing agency staff who are committed to Slough. This creates stability and supports consistency of practice
- Have maintained good quality work by the Assessment Teams who provide direct work and interventions whilst undertaking assessments. Ofsted noted in the focused visit *"The quality of assessments is improving"*
- Consistency in management team is supporting a continued focus on management oversight (99.4% - 28<sup>th</sup> March 22)
- *"Workers in the assessment teams are knowledgeable about children and this is gained through their regular visits, strong relationships and some engaging direct work"*. Ofsted focused visit
- Staff have a stronger understanding of Southwark/Lambeth judgements to assess and support 16 - 17 year old homeless young people
- The Clinician effectively supports social workers to prevent children coming into care and builds family resilience
- Assessment Team staff attend in Psycho-social meetings with Wexham Hospital to ensure children are not retained

## Areas of focus for further improvement

- Fluctuations each month in section 47 enquiries leading to initial CP conference (see graph). 29.4% ytd in March 22 but reached 39% in August 2021 and 35% in Jan 2022 which is comparable to SN 35.6%, SE 32.3% & ENG 36.5%
- The average caseload for the Referral and Assessment service in March 2022 is 26.7 children per worker (not ASYE's or any manager). The average service caseload since April 2021 is 25.5 children (should be 25 children) with a high of 30.6 children in July 2021.
- Although average caseloads reduced after July 2021, they have been rising again from December 2021. Social workers in the Assessment Teams had some of the highest individual caseloads in January to March, with the highest at 43 children on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- This rise was partly due to demand, the protected caseloads of ASYE's and overseas social workers and capacity in other services to transfer children.
- The affect on the timeliness of transferring children as a result of capacity issues in Early help and S&FS was noted by Ofsted in the focused visit, but children continue to be visited and social workers continue work whilst waiting to transfer

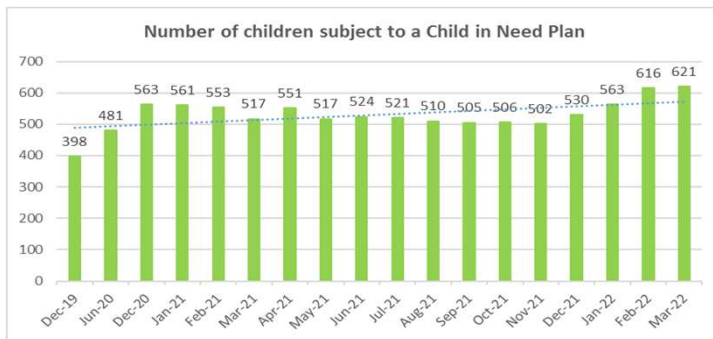
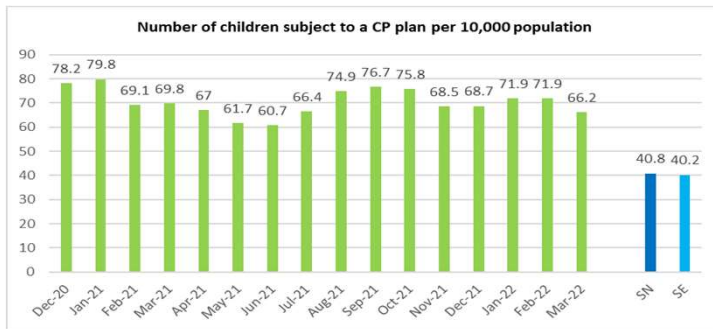


# Actions to address areas for further improvement in the Assessment Teams



- Maintain a dual focus on compliance and quality expectations using the thrice weekly performance information to scrutinise performance, identify issues and necessary actions, as well as the use of increased quality assurance activity including dip sampling to check on quality and understand trends in practice
- Embed Front Door practice guidance and practice standards to ensure consistent practice
- Assessment completion timescales to be reviewed so they are in line with the needs of the child and family
- Continue to reiterate our expectations of the standards of a good assessment, providing training, tools and coaching to frontline staff on what makes a good assessment
- Complete a strategic review on whether short CIN interventions should remain in the front door to limit transfer points for children and ensure timely interventions
- Maintain a focus on the thresholds for instigating S47 enquiries through further dip sampling
- Work towards early permanence for children from the point of referral with effective pre-birth assessments (using the new pre-birth tool) and include well-coordinated and timely discharge planning meetings
- Review and further improve the twice weekly Transfer Meetings within current capacity issues in receiving teams to ensure their effectiveness in a smooth transitions for children to other services
- Piloted Family Network Meetings to be fully implemented to support families in identifying and understanding their needs and they play a key role in the decision made about them and the actions to be undertaken.

# Service Improvement: Safeguarding and Family Support



## Better

- 7.1% of children subject to CIN (S17) plans for over 12 months: (44 children not including long term CWD) March 2022
- Low figures maintained up to Feb 22 for % of CP plans ended after 2+ years. Was 14.6% in March as a result of a sibling group of 5: Average of 2.7% since April 2021 (SN 5.4% & SE 4.2%)
- Good average figures for Children subject to a CP plan for 2 or more years: 0.7% for Feb 22 and an average of 0.6% since April 2021 (Better than SN 3.1% & SE 2.0%)
- 93.9% ytd Children on a CP plan visited in the last 2 weeks which maintains strong performance since January 2022 (97.7%) but visiting was below our 92% target for most of 2021.
- 88.8% of CIN visits within timescales
- 100% of RCPCs held within timescale in March 22 and 97.4% for the year. This is despite significant tests in the latter part of 2021 from increased numbers of children on a CP plan and staffing challenges for CP chairs
- Supervision timeliness has been improved over the last few months and is measured weekly: 81.5%. Management Oversight is high at 96% for the service (Both 28<sup>th</sup> March 22 Compliance Report).
- The Head of Service has been focussed on the quality of management oversight through weekly meetings with the Team Managers but there is recognition there have been a very challenging year with significant management and staffing turnover in the service
- Children subject to PLO plans are subject to more regular review of their plans. Where there is delay this is now more purposeful
- Following a pilot, there is now an agreed template for pre-birth risk assessments for use in pre-proceedings.

## Area of Focus for Further Improvement

- **Maintaining a focus on compliance whilst focusing on quality**
  - 79.3% of children subject to a CP Plan visited and seen alone
  - Number of children on repeat plans within 2 years has increased from the end of 2021 in line with the increase in number of CP plans (average of 15.8% since Oct 2021). This is largely due to large sibling groups. 13.5% for the 2021/2022 year against a 10% target
  - Monthly fluctuations in % of ICPCs held within statutory timescales also due to large sibling groups. 75.5% March 22 compared to 83.3% Feb 22. 74.2% ytd is below SN 84.3%, SE 82.0% & Eng 83%.
  - CIN review timeliness remains an issue at 80.2%. The main issues behind this are timeliness of the initial review and timely recording of reviews on ICS.
- **Demand**
  - At 66.6 per 10,000 population, the number of children subject to CP plans has reduced from a high of 79.8 in Jan 21. This rate is still high when compared to SN 40.8 & SE 40.2 (see graph)
  - In Aug 21 the highest number of children became subject to a CP plan in 1 month (44) with the lowest number coming off a plan also in the same month (7)
  - Nov 21 and March 2022 were the 2 highest months for children coming off a CP plan (48), though 27 and 23 became subject to a plan respectively in the same months
  - Overall number of children on a CIN plan has risen again from its lowest this year of 502 in Nov 21 to 626 children (March 22).
  - There has been a 22% increase in CIN children numbers from early in the pandemic (481 in June 2020) to 626 now.



# Actions to address areas for further improvement in Safeguarding and Family Support



## Children in Need

- Continue to improve CIN practice, including evidence informed interventions, and ensure there is a clear pathway to ensure plans are progressing in a timelier manner and avoid drift and delay (Ofsted action)
- Review of all Children In Need plans to identify those who would benefit from a timed step down to new Targeted Early Help teams
- Regularly review case closures to ensure safe decision making
- Strengthen the timeliness and quality of CIN reviews by ensuring there is stronger agency involvement and contingency planning
- Ensure timely and quality recording of CIN reviews on ICS to support practice

## Children subject to the child protections process

- Continue to improve CP practice within the service ensuring timely visits, quality recording on children's files and effective management of risk (Ofsted action)
- Ongoing review all children on a CP plan 9 months plus with each to have clear actions recorded on their file to be undertaken
- Continue to work to reduce the number of children subject to a CP plan (currently 289 children)
- Introduce and embed the Edge of Care service to reduce the number of 10 – 18 years old on a CP plan (currently 123 children)

## Children subject to PLO and Care Proceedings

- Embed the new approach to permanence planning for children at different stages of their journey
- Ensure the timely reviews of PLO plans and distribution of plans and minutes to families and professionals.
- Genograms to be multi-generational and consider both the child's maternal and paternal

network.

- Implement the Community Based Assessment Team to reduce the reliance on external capacity for completing complex assessments and frontload these to support timelier decision making by courts

## For all children in the service

- Focus on those recently stepped up from Early Help and the exercise of thresholds
- Continued focus on timely and quality visits to children to drive children's plans
- Improve direct work with children through the regular and consistent use of direct work tools which promote the voice of the child
- Further develop and embed processes for hearing from and acting on the voice of parents from children and families to drive CIN and CP plans
- Pre-birth assessments completed and shared with families at least four weeks prior to the birth of an unborn child
- Family Network Meetings (FNM) to be embedded as a model of intervening with families and used to support children and families throughout the child's journey.
- Children subject to plans have a SMART outcome focussed plan which meets their individual needs and improve contingency planning
- There is still more to do despite management oversight being more present on cases (96% in the service 28th March 2022) to improve its quality and how this drives children's plans
- Further improve the quality and consistency of supervision (81.5% present 28th March 2022)

## Staffing

- Improve staff stability and permanency to improve the effectiveness and progression of plans and reduce the number of social workers families have to work with.
- Reduce caseloads through a permanent, graduated and sustainable solution to the three additional Innovate Teams

# Service Improvement: Corporate Parenting



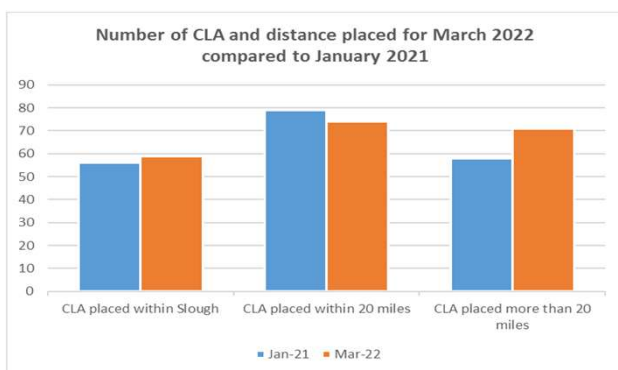
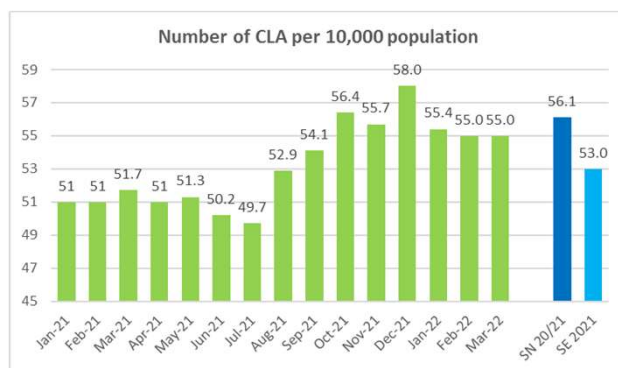
## Corporate Parenting Panel

- Comprises elected members from Slough Borough Council, officers from Slough Children First, partners including education, health and housing as well as young people
- Each elected member on the panel has a lead on one of the strategic outcomes for children
- Refresh of the corporate parenting panel to move to thematic sessions and enable deep dives of good practice and areas for further development. Officer reports are now used as background information to ensure informed discussions rather than being the focus of the meeting
- Trialling how best to hear the voice of young people in Corporate Parenting Panel as some ways of doing this work better than others as part of a refocus in the company to strengthen hearing the voice of the child
- Engagement with the LGA to complete a peer review of the Corporate Parenting Panel in late 2022 to further strengthen it

## Elected member engagement

- New elected member for children's services in place since May 2021 who is passionate about improving the lives of children and young people
- Training of current and new elected members to strengthen their role as corporate parents and improve the feedback loop
- CLA and Care Leaver celebration being re-instigated in May 2022 at the request of the lead member. She undertook a sponsored walk in late 2021 to raise £800 from fellow elected members
- We are developing further links with local companies in Slough to enable them to meet their social responsibilities and support the celebration event.
- Revised Corporate Parenting strategy has been signed by elected members
- Care Leaver comfort packs and Children Looked After first night back packs have been created and are available where this support is necessary for children and young people

# Service Improvement: CLA and Support Services



## Better

- Although placement stability (for children in the same placement for 2 years or more) finished at 66.7% ytd (due to a number of 16 yr olds leaving care), it outperformed SN (69.7%) and SE (68%) for most of the year meaning children were settled in a placement meeting their needs (average of 75.8% each month and a high of 83.6% in May)
- Children with 3 or more placements in the last year continues to perform well at 5.4% against a target of 10%. This is better than SN (8.3%) & SE (11.0%)
- Improvements in the planning of placements in conjunction with the Brokerage Team is supporting placement stability and sufficiency.
- Disruption and stability meetings are now embedded in practice to reduce the number of emergency placements
- 95% of CLA participated some way in their CLA review in March 22 with a ytd figure of 88.8%
- 84.6% of CLA in the CLA service have an up to date assessment following a focus in this area (28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Compliance Report)
- Good response to risks for CLA as a service with timely strategy meetings
- The processes for unregulated placements is now embedded in practice and the service has an aim for zero young people under 18 years old to be in unregulated placements.
- Personal Advisors are allocated to CLA when they are 16 yrs old. Joint SW and PA visits are an area of focus for the company.
- Improvement in SDQ completion in timescale (within last 12 months) from 51.5% in April 21 to 67.6% in March 22.
- Permanent Team Managers across the service enable a focus on quality and support the stability of staff.
- Educational outcomes for CLA continue to be outstanding (see Virtual School slide)

## Areas of Focus for Further Improvement

- Children placed more than 20 miles away hasn't reduced at 34.8% 21/22 compared to 31% for 20/21 (25% target). This is as a result of an increase in the number of CLA and the number of UASC. (currently 31 against a quota of 31)
- Increasing number of age assessments for UAYP. The skill mix of staff has made this challenging and so we recruited an additional SW to complete. This is also resulting in increased costs for legal advice in a challenging and changing environment
- Visit timeliness is 85.3% overall for CLA in March 2022 and 81.3% for the CLA teams (28<sup>th</sup> March 2022)
- CLA seen alone (aged 3 yrs +) is higher at 80.6% ytd than 75.7% for 20/21, but is still below our target of 90%
- Children with up to date health and dental checks performance has improved from 62.8% (20/21) to 78.2% ytd. Despite this improvement, this is still below our 90% target.
- Children with up-to-date health checks is 88.5% ytd with performance tested in the last few months.
- Children with up-to-date dental checks has improved from a low base of 34% in March 21 to 67.9% ytd as children access dentists
- Children IHAs within timescale (1m) 40.5% ytd and fluctuate each month. Delays primarily OOB CLA where local escalation processes do not address barriers
- The timeliness of referrals for IHAs also fluctuates each month and is 56% for the year against a target of 90%. 56% is higher than 41.9% for 20/21
- Average number of days to complete an IHA has risen slightly to 23.7 days from 22.9 days in March 2021
- 18.3% (ytd) of CLA leave care due to adoption or SGO which is slightly lower than SN (20.3%) and SE (18.6%), but it should be noted they have also both declined from the previous year.

# Actions to address areas for further improvement in CLA Teams

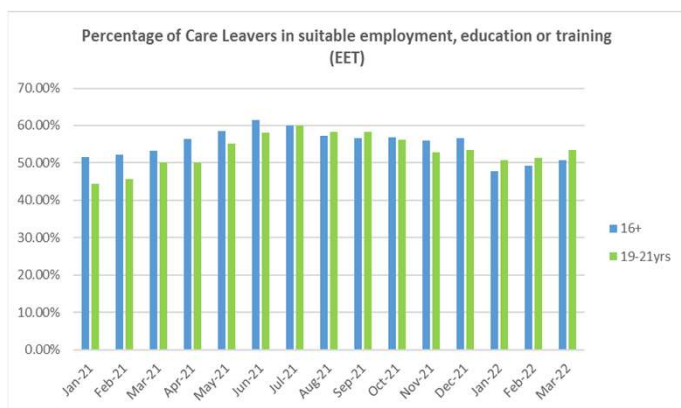


- Focused on both compliance and quality in a number of areas, with compliance remaining as a result of staff turnover
- Attention across the service on up to date and appropriate planning for children looked after
  - Review the requirement to update placement plans every 6 months to ensure they are focused on improving children's outcomes
  - Improve the timeliness and quality of SMART Care Plans, ensuring review minutes are available in a timely way to support planning
  - Improve the quality of pathway plans for young people aged 16 – 18 years old as they are currently not good enough
  - Embed a stronger process of social workers explaining the individual child's care plan
  - Ensure all children in the CLA service have an update to date C&F assessment (84.6% 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022) addressing via supervision of both the social worker and manager where this is out of timescale

Address the quality and accuracy of case summaries (83.6%) and chronologies (78.2%) on children's files which enable a good and quick understanding of the child's current circumstances

- Ensure managers have a grip on children's files through dip sampling of management oversight and supervision, and taking action to address issues identified
- Ensure the recording of CLA visits reflect the voice of the child and their lived experiences
- Develop effective direct work which is linked to the children's assessment and plan, with impactful outcomes recorded on the child's file.
- There is increased evidence of the voice of the child being seen on children's files but this needs to be further strengthened so their voice influences their planning
- The Life Story Worker to support life story work for the wider CLA cohort
- Embed the new approach to permanence planning for children at different stages of their journey
- Develop the UASC policy for Slough to continue to improve procedures for accommodating and supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Embed the new Contact Centre service feedback process which started in December 2021 to get better feedback from service users, and use this information consistently and effectively to further improve the experience of children and families using the service.

# Service Improvement: Care Leavers



**Better**

Strong performance for Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (19-21y/o): 90.1%; SN 87.3% & SE 85.0%.

- % of care leavers in education, employment or training (aged 19-21): 53.5% (49.1% March 21), comparable to SN 51.7% & SE 51.0%
- Some direct work with young people with complex needs has reduced the numbers who are NEET
- All managers in the service are now permanent
- Care leavers audits are now embedded in the quality assurance programme
- Revised the Pathway plan format to be more tailored and this has been embedded into practice. Next steps to add into ICS
- Care Leavers group (Space to Talk) continued during 2021 virtually and this group is commencing back to meeting face to face. Recent Hot Topics have focused on housing and the relevant lead member is following up on actions raised
- Increased number of Care Leavers been given independent, tenancy accommodation via the Council

**Areas of Focus for Further Improvement**

- Despite a difficult few months with recruitment and non-registration of 2 staff, resilience is being rebuilt
- Keeping in touch with 69% and 79% with 17-18 year olds and 19-21 year olds respectively, a slight reduction on last year
- Space 2 Talk to be developed further and extend to include hard to reach groups. The groups has discussed the idea of a podcast to reach more of their peers
- Care leavers with current pathway plans (18+) is 81.6%. Performance dipped below our 85% target in January 2022 following a strong period of meeting the target for most of 2021. Finished at 83.3% in March 2022
- Care Leavers with a current pathway plan (16+) is 51.8% ytd and to be further improved to reach our target of 85%
- Care Leavers offer to be reviewed to ensure we have a robust offer in light of s114 constraints
- 5 young people are Staying Put with fostering households
- Review how we work with Care Leavers aged 21 + as we have been going beyond our statutory duties during Covid to match regulations but still provide support to YP in line with their needs.
- Link with partners to develop a strong Post 16 offer to support young people
- Transfer our good on the ground links with housing to develop stronger strategic relationships to improve the housing offer for Care Leavers

# Service Improvement: Children with Disabilities



## Better

- Ofsted provided good feedback in the SEND local areas inspection stating *"Support for the needs of children and young people who are known to children's social care is identified clearly in their EHC plans. Records show that child protection plans and EHC plans, for example, are in harmony with one other"*
- Ofsted also noted *"Care leavers and children and young people who are looked after are routinely involved in designing and reviewing their own EHC plans and packages of support"*.
- CWD criteria reviewed to support clearer processes and protocols in place for work with other services
- CWD Panel is now embedded into practice with the impact of equitable resource distribution to support children to remain at home and layered management oversight
- Transitions for children who meet criteria for Adult Social Care works very well and children are tracked from 16 yrs old to plan for their transfer to ASC.
- Meeting the needs of children and families to enable children to remain at home
- Staff in the team are creative in their approaches to meeting the needs of children and families
- CAMHs spot purchase support now available
- Improved links with Breakaway, our Children's home to take referrals of two children
- Positive behaviour support is now routinely accessed

## Areas of Focus for Further Improvement

- **End of year performance affected by annual leave**
- Management oversight and supervision dipped in March 2022 to 49% and 83% respectively having previously been 96.6% and 100% on 28th Feb 2022 and similar in previous months. This consistency is supported by the stability of the Team Manager and Assistant Team Manager, both of whom are permanent
- Good performance for visiting children also dipped slightly on 28th March 2022 to 89.1%. This had been consistently higher previously (96.6% on 28th February 2022 Compliance report)
- After a period of long term stability, 2 social workers left for personal reasons and 1 social worker went on maternity which was a significant change for a small team. This was alongside the departure of an occupational therapist
- 2 experienced agency social workers have been recruited and 1 social worker vacancy remains
- All CWD children have an up to date assessment to enable packages to be reviewed upon assessment
- Continued challenge with tri-partite funding arrangements which has been escalated strategically
- CWD panel to be inclusive of health
- Further scrutiny to be undertaken on why we are an outlier for packages of support balanced with the number of children in care and the Local Offer
- Work to increase Health and tri-partite funding for placements has been bolstered by extra capacity to help achieve this
- Research and develop a charge rate to undertake OT assessments when children and young people are discharged from hospital
- Development of Short Breaks and link to Local Offer
- Transition into adulthood for CLA (especially OOB) who are not CWD who require support from adult services are not getting the right support.
- CWD team to contribute as a key partner to the implementation of the WSOA



# Service Improvement: Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)



The IFA was judged inadequate in April 2019. Following 4 monitoring visits in 2019 and 2020, a judgement inspection in July 2021 found the IFA to be Good. The IFA is currently supporting 49 fostering households with 49 children and an additional 5 young people in Staying Put arrangements (comparison of 45 fostering housings with 48 children and 2 Staying Put arrangements compared to same time last year)

## Better

- Stable and experienced managers and social work team enabled a continued focus on outcomes for children, supporting the good judgement
- In early 2022, the Registered Manager became the Responsible Individual and a Practice Manager became Registered Manager providing further continuity. An experienced interim Practice Manager is also in post
- Skilled foster carers with good retention rates (only 5 resignations in 2021 and all with valid reasons)
- Since April 2021, there have been 4 fostering households approved, with 4 more due to panel before the end of April 2022.
- Charms, an electronic case file management system has been implemented which gives a stronger and more comprehensive overview of foster carers
- An increase in the volume of quality assurance activity is identifying gaps in files which can be rectified to ensure their accuracy
- Significant reduction in level of complaints and allegations from children and foster carers over the last 12 months due to collaborative working between supervising social workers and fostering households
- Significant support and guidance continues to be provided to foster carers with an increase in face to face participation and engagement activities as Covid rules have allowed.

## Areas of Focus for Further Improvement

- Improve the Fostering Panel which was stable with a long standing Panel Chair and Advisor until January 2021 when the Panel Advisor left. There have been several changes to the Panel Advisor since and the panel was subject to a requirement in the Ofsted inspection.
- Embedding process and systems in Charms as a new system and ensuring accurate and quality recording within
- Key documents including care plans, placement plans, safer care plans to be routinely shared with foster carers and children
- Improve Foster Carer logs through training for carers and use of Charms which enables logs to be written directly onto the system and then audited for quality
- Continue to increase the number of fostering households by 8 per year
- 65 placements have been made between April 2021 and February 2022 . This includes 26 internal and external respite placements. *We are unable to compare against 2020/2021 due to the change to Charms.*
- Further support and training is to be offered to foster carers to enable them to take placements

# Service Improvement: Adoption



Slough's VAA joined Coram 'Ambition for Adoption' Regional Adoption Agency in April 2021 so it can match children to a wider pool of adopters quicker and meet the diverse needs of children in Slough.

The adoption service is awaiting an inspection following its last inspection as a voluntary adoption agency in November 2018. The overall judgement was 'Good' in 2018 and the adoption service remains a good service.

## Better

- From April 2021 to March 2022, 16 children have been adopted - 4 with Coram and 12 with other agencies including several children with complex needs and "hard to place" children
- This includes a sibling group of 3 and 2 sibling groups of 2 and a 7 year old child (also deemed harder to place) who moved into their adoptive placement in April 2022 - a significant achievement.
- 2 further children have identified adopters, both of whom are their current foster carers and assessments have started
- 32 children in 25 families have received post adoption support
- A trained Theraplay social worker has supported 3 families with positive feedback from professionals and families
- The post adoption service was able to hold a picnic in the summer 2021 which was received positively by families for the chance to get support and advice from the service and other families.
- No disruptions for Slough children have been experienced this year so far
- Continued good education support for adopters from the Virtual School

## Areas of Focus for Further Improvement

- Over the 12 months up to December 2021, the Company averaged 634 days against the DfE target of 426. Out of the 16 adoptions made so far, 8 were deemed harder to place and so took longer
- Continue the focus on early permanence for children in Slough through the following activities:
  - Training for frontline staff and managers,
  - Permanency planning meetings,
  - Consistent attendance by the Adoption service Manager at LPMs
  - Working with Coram's Early Permanence Manager
  - Early Permanence champions in Slough
- Provide Coram with a good understanding of the needs of older children and those harder to adopt so they can widen the pool of adopters for these children.
- Work with Coram on a long term strategy to recruit more applicants from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (33% of adopters were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds)
- Continue work to ensure fostering for adoption is considered for each child who we are family finding for, where appropriate
- Use the training needs survey to plan a coordinated approach to workforce development for adopters with RAA partner agencies.



# Service Improvement: Virtual School



A strong, effective and proactive Virtual School which has been strengthened with the addition of a Deputy Headteacher to extend arrangements to support all vulnerable children with a social worker. This project is called 'Safer in a Slough School'.

## Better

- Employment of a Slough Care Leaver as an apprentice focusing on ePEPs
- Experienced Virtual School team who have distributed leadership across a number of areas
- Joint training of social workers and teachers on the Virtual School's new responsibilities is enabling good outcomes for children. *See next slide for further details*
- Services to 16+ young people have been strengthened as a result of a 16+ Learning Advocate having earlier conversations with young people about careers and education opportunities. This is resulting in positive outcomes for Sep 2021
- 37.5% (6/16 young people) are staying in college for their Yr 14
- 6% (1/16) start employment
- 19% (3/16) start university
- 37.5% (6/16) are NEET - 2 have EHCPs. Efforts are being made to find them traineeships or other Education, employment or training options
- 100% of under 16 ePEPs and also 16+ ePEPs have been completed within timescales
- Children continue to do very well in school in exams
- 7/10 of the Y6 pupils had an EHCP and made good progress against individual targets
- Yr 11 GSCE results were the best ever for the 15 pupils, including 5 with an EHCP. They scored 43 against 21.4 for CLA national (2020) and all have post GSCE destinations
  - 97.5% of CLA (155 out of 159 children) attend good and outstanding schools. 4 children attend a 'requires improvement' school and their needs are met.
- 23 young people confirmed at university this year (19 last year), studying a range of courses including criminology, education and nursing. There is also 1 graduation this year

## Areas of Focus for Further Improvement

- The retirement of the long standing and well respected Virtual School headteacher brings both great opportunities and risks
- Our focus will be to ensure the Virtual School maintains its high standards whilst we review its delivery model and develop it even further
- Develop a coherent graduated response approach in conjunction with Haybrook College to support our most vulnerable learners with proportionate intervention.
- Continue to focus on reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and reduce the number of unknown to as low as possible – currently 2.4% for unknown
- No child is missing education who is known to social care in particular those on school rolls but not attending.
- Find and implement effective ways to measure and analyse educational attainment and progress of CIN/CP children.

# Safer in a Slough School - Our Approach



- Appointed an Assistant Head from within the Virtual School who has since become the interim Virtual School headteacher
- Built on our successful pilot for children on Edge of Care
- Engaged schools early in our new responsibilities and showed them how this will benefit them.

## **What everyone can benefit from:**

- We are developing a **Webpage** offering a 'one stop shop' with FAQs continually reviewed in line with practice and guidance as well as **Signposting** to partner agencies
- Tailored Training Opportunities for Social Workers, Designated Teachers, Designated Safeguarding leads and other professionals involved with our young people, either face to face or virtually delivering DfE and local practice in respect of the expectation of the education provision of a child with a Social Worker
- We will be sharing of **Local Data and National Trends** for scrutiny to DfE and other partners to help inform further practice across the team around the child

## **How we can help you as a professional:**

- Our **Advice Line** and online support is available during office hours providing advice, information, guidance and support
- **Education Information Surgeries** for Education Providers and Social Workers supported by Virtual School, where appropriate facilitating guest attendance by other professionals such as Attendance and Educational Psychology for Specific Targeted opportunities
- The opportunity to bring children of concern to the **CME / EHE** Group
- Development of **Peer Support** opportunities to share best practice.
- Collaboration to offer **Attachment Awareness Training** for schools
- **'Safer in Slough Schools' recognition** for those education provisions who show best practice and engage positively around the child with a Social Worker

## **Impact on children:**

- Attendance, engagement and attainment improving: For example:
  - A family at the point of prosecution is now working on a graduated re-integration for their child back to school supported by an overseas trained social worker who has also received support on further their understanding of education in the UK.
  - Two young people who had been out of education for some time are now back in education and have started to view colleges for the next stage of their education, potentially preventing 2 young people from being NEET at the end of the school year
- Social workers are more confident in challenging the education system to ensure their children access the right education and have a better education of education – For example
  - YP at secondary school was finding attendance a challenge whilst changing their identity. SW was supported by VSDepHT to negotiate a Pastoral Support Package with the school, allowing the young person time to reintegrate successfully back to school alongside on a long term plan to support their transition.

# Sufficiency Achievements



- Focus on providing and commissioning , quality assured, local provision which meets needs and improves children's outcomes
- Increase in in-house foster placements
- Tender for, (implementation by August 2022,) of accommodation and support for young people aged 16-25 to provide 40 beds within Slough and step down arrangements and support to promote tenancy stability
- Procurement of block residential of 4 beds for 11-18 year olds in Slough
- Accreditation of semi-independent providers within 10 miles to improve access and choice. There has been a growth from 10 providers providing 22 beds in February 2021 to 18 providers providing 55 beds in December 2021.
- Joint work undertaken with Slough Borough Council on a contract register which gives SCF access to their providers, for example taxis, to reduce costs.
- AMZ project enabled 3 young people to move back to Slough from distance placements, access education and maintain family contact
- Effective project with the Care Leavers team focused on care leavers aged 18+ who can't go into their own flat on a fully independent basis has brought all but 1 young person back to the local area
- Significant work with local providers to put in place arrangements for out of hour's placements for young people aged 16-18 years.

# Serious Incidents April 2021- March 2022



Date	Incident	Issues	Actions taken
July 2021	6-month-old baby was on holiday with his mother and grandmother and was found dead in the bed in which they had all slept, after consuming alcohol and smoking.	Neglect Sudden Infant Death/ Safe sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid Review has taken place partners agreed that the case meets the criteria for a Safeguarding Practice Review</li> <li>As the case was only recently referred to Slough and Slough Children First were not in contact with the family RBWM have agreed to lead the SPR.</li> <li>Information about safe sleeping and SUDI have been shared during the Practice Learning Week.</li> </ul>
15/08/21	2 Young People was stabbed in an incident which took place on 15/08/2021. 1x Young person was a looked after child.	Knife crime Exploitation Trauma and loss (death of a significant adult)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid Review meeting has taken place and the agreement was this did not meet the criteria for a SPR.</li> <li>Noted that a significant amount of analysis on knife crime and exploitation had been completed following the death of a young person in 2019 so many elements have been explored.</li> <li>Safeguarding Partnership raised a query regarding the decision and risk analysis in bringing young person back to Slough from a stable, therapeutic placement elsewhere.</li> </ul>
15/08/21	Young person was stabbed in an incident on 15/08/2021. This took place on the same day as the other two incidents but in a different part of Slough	Knife Crime Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above</li> </ul>
16/02/22	Child Looked After became ill and died – underlying health conditions complicated by Covid – No safeguarding concerns.	Natural Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Rapid Review, National Panel agreed with this recommendation</li> </ul>

# Areas of Focus for Further Improvement



- Focus on the consistency of good quality practice to ensure effective child centred interventions
- Recruitment and retention are our biggest challenges, particularly in Safeguarding and Family Support
- Embed our organisational development strategy to assist in the attraction, recruitment, development and retention of experienced, quality staff
- Development of a new Operating Model articulated in our Business Plan include a robust Targeted Early Help Service and a complete continuum of care including the implementation of an effective edge of care strategy
- Develop the role of partners in Slough to help manage some of the demand for statutory services including the role of lead professionals
- Review our CIN interventions to ensure they are timely and evidence informed
- Strengthen our approach to hear the voice of the child in our recording
- Further develop our participation strategy to include CIN, those subject to CP plans, and families wider networks
- Further embed our quality assurance framework to ensure we close the loop and involve front line practitioners and managers more effectively
- Review our exploitation strategy and delivery model, to ensure we maximise the impact on children across the whole child's journey

# Conclusion

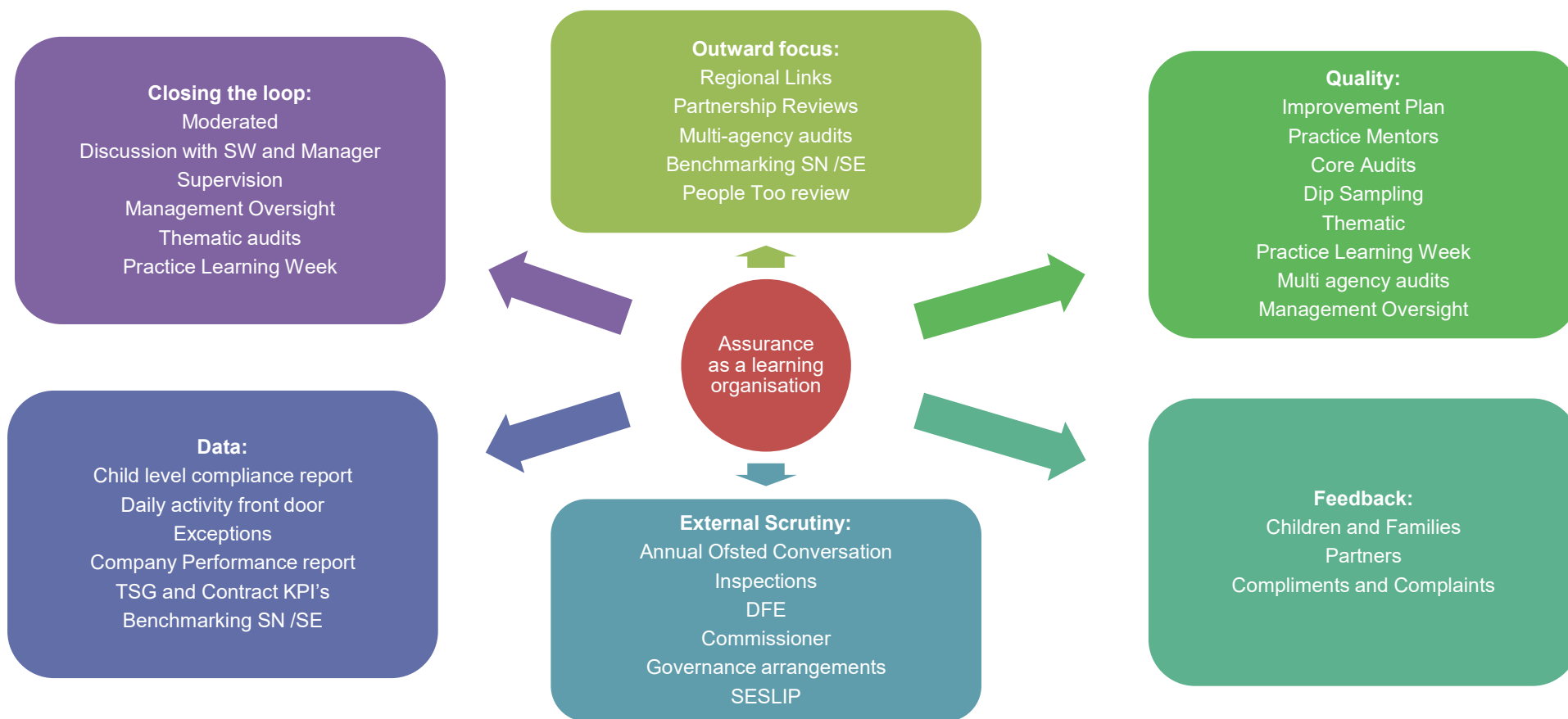


- Services over the last year which have transferred to the Company or have landed well and been developed, which bodes well for future innovation as the Company develops its 7 year Business Plan.
- Services provided to vulnerable children, young people and families in Slough have been tested by increases in demand, staffing issues and Covid and its resulting impacts.
- As a result there remains some variability across areas of practice, in particular the fragility of S&FS confirmed by the most recent Ofsted focused visit.
- Our biggest challenge continues to be the stability of our workforce, despite recent and sustained improvements in the permanent to agency staffing ratio and an early but significant trend of reducing turnover rates.
- We have an amazing workforce seen by Ofsted who stated "Staff like working for Slough Children First, morale is good and they are committed and enthusiastic" and we know our staff are the key to achieving our ambitions.
- We want to be judged as 'good' in the next few years.
- Our plans include the development of a new operating model with an increased focus on early intervention and prevention, a focus on developing and retaining high quality, permanent staff and being an outward facing, learning organisation with children at the heart of all we do.
- This we believe will enable us to turn our strategic priorities and aspirations into reality.



# Quality Assurance

# Quality Assurance mechanisms in Slough





# Quality Assurance: Post Pandemic Support for Staff

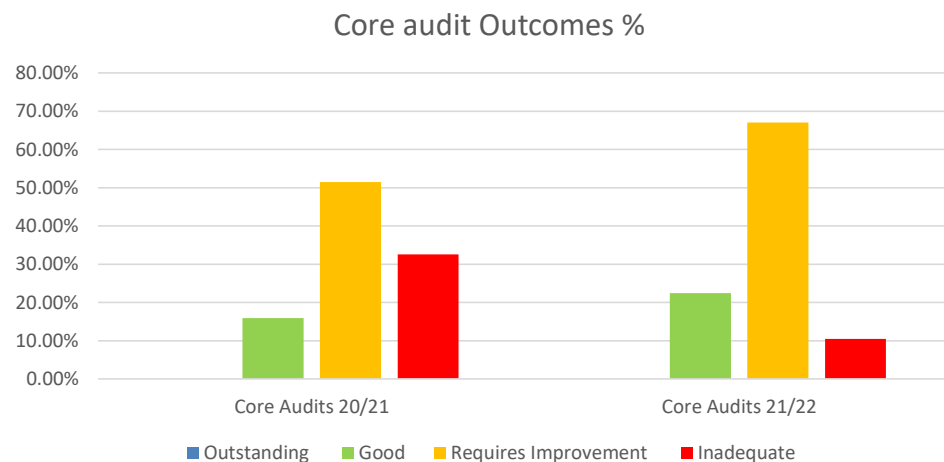


- **4 Core Workshops:** Run on a repeating cycle, created in response to identified areas of improvement and learning from practice audits: Assessment/ Direct Work/ Language in social work practice/ The Child's Journey
  - **Targeted Workshops:** Close the loop S47s, Plans, Care Plans, Pathway Plans (100 attendees)
  - **Specialist Workshops:** With the Virtual School on: Pre-Birth Assessment (SPR), 'Understanding Fostering for Adoption', 'How to write a good Child Permanence Report', 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker',
  - **Coaching:** Individual, including intensive coaching from September to December 2021 for the overseas SW recruits to ensure that they land well and are orientated
  - **Facilitated Peer Supervision for First Line Managers:** Creating a shared learning culture/cohesion
  - **Practice Initiatives:** Permanency Planning Meetings and Family Network Meetings.
- Practice**
- 'Big Three' –getting the basics right - **Chronologies-Case Summaries-Genograms; Plan-Do-Review.**
  - Reducing Parental Conflict and Working with Men
  - Understanding Regulation 24
  - Family Network Meetings
- Coaching**
- First Line Managers – targeted monthly facilitated peer supervision groups.
  - Team-Based coaching in SFS – intensive audit work and coaching offered
  - Overseas recruits to ensure they land well
- Closing the loop**
- Learning from audits – focus on Pre-Birth Assessment -also delivered to Assessment Team and into CLA Whole Service Meeting
  - Understanding and embedding the Practice Framework
  - Practice Learning Week

# 2021/22 Audit Outcomes



- Improvements in the quality of children’s files, with the company meeting its target of 85% of files RI or better with 90% (110 out of 123) of core audits undertaken in 2021/2022.
- Management oversight overall in timescale finished the year slightly down at 89.5% (March 2022 TSG) but with an average of 92.9% since Jan 2021.
- Where management oversight is directly reported on as part of audits, it was judged either good or requires improvement in the majority of cases, with just 10.5% of the core audits in deeming management oversight inadequate in supporting safe and reflective practice.



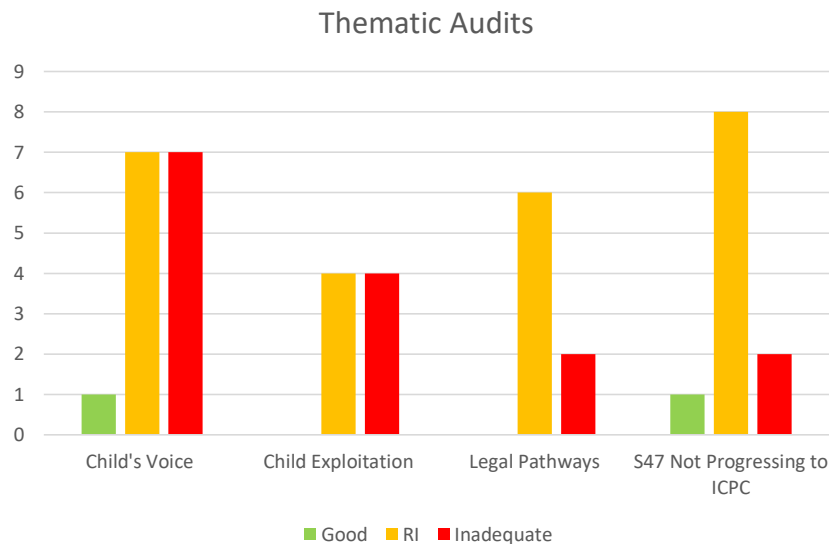
- 123 core audits completed in 2021/22 compared to 101 in 20/21.
- 6.6% increase in audits graded good 22.5% in 21/22 compared to 15.9% in 20/21
- 15% increase in audits graded as RI 67% in 21/22 compared to 52% in 20/21
- 22% decrease in audits graded as inadequate 10.5% in 21/22 compared to 32.6% in 20/21.
- Of the 49 CP audits 89.8% were graded as RI or good 10.2% CP audits inadequate
- Of the 44 CIN audits 88.6% were graded as RI or good 11.4% inadequate
- Of the 25 CLA audits 88% were graded as RI or good 12% were graded as inadequate.
- Of the 6 Care Leaver audits 100% were graded as RI or good.

**The majority of practice remains in RI overall.**

# Thematic Audits



- A range of thematic audits have taken place throughout the year which have focused more on specific issues where we felt we need to understand practice better in order to focus on what may need to improve.
- These audits were completed by the Improvement Team over a number of months and findings were used to inform part of the activity supporting the ongoing Improvement Plan supported by DfE funding.



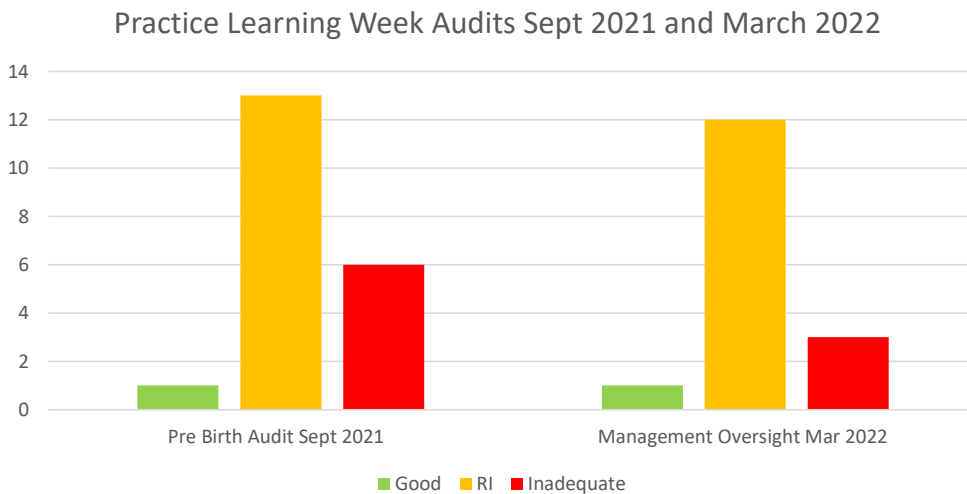
## Key Findings:

- The thematic audits provided an opportunity to deep dive into specific areas of interest.
- The Improvement Team were able to quickly address inadequate audits with social workers and managers where necessary.
- In two of the thematic audits practice between RI and inadequate was quite evenly split.
- In two of the thematic audits practice was more in line with the core audit outcomes with the majority of practice RI.
- The Improvement Team have been able to implement programmes around a large proportion of the key findings of the themed audits and this remains ongoing.

# Practice Learning Week



- In the past year we have held two Practice Learning Weeks one in September 2021 and one in March 2022.
- Whilst each of these events have enabled a sharing of a large bank of research, information, learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews and direct work tools they have also enabled senior leaders to complete additional audits linked to a particular theme or issue.
- In September 2021 the audits were focused on pre birth and baby assessments, linked to a Safeguarding Practice Review.
- In March 2022 the audits were focused on the quality of supervision and management oversight.



## Key Findings

- The pre birth audits identified a higher number of inadequate audits, as this was at the start of our focus on pre birth assessments as an area for improvement it was expected that we would identify areas for development.
- The majority of practice in both areas of audit activity was RI which correlates broadly with other audit outcomes.



# Financial Outturn and Risks

# Financial Outturn for 2021/2022

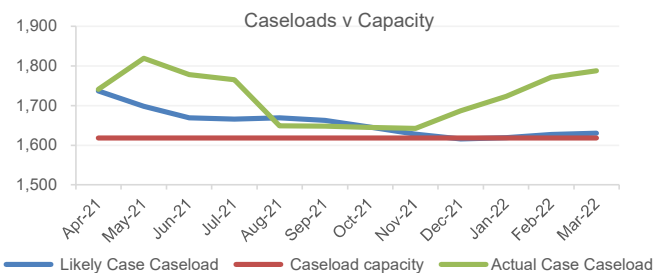


- SCF reported an outturn position of (£1,332k) loss for the full year against a balanced budget.
- The outturn loss was a result of a number of key factors through the year:
  - Covid 19 impacts on demands
  - Growing complexity of cases
  - Reliance on interim staff
  - Growth in UASCs
- The 2021/22 budget set in September 2020, 6 months into the Covid Pandemic, an event not seen in our lifetime nor one anyone could predict. A time when the country had come out of lockdown and Schools were re-opening. The budget assumed we had seen the worst with an expectation for caseloads to fall. With a further lockdown at Christmas, caseloads remained high throughout the year. The impact of Covid had a significant impact on the cost base;
  - Staffing costs overall were adverse, requiring the retention of Innovate teams to meet demands and higher than planned agency staff numbers as turnover remained high due to too high a caseload per worker
  - Increasing complexity of cases, with rising exploitation of the vulnerable, exacerbated through the pandemic with rising mental health issues, the impact being seen in growth in legal proceedings.
  - Legal proceedings were also impacted through closure of courts and delays in proceedings, adding additional legal hours and increasing legal spend.
  - Covid led to continued support for care leavers requiring support and accommodation with no alternate housing options available.
  - The cost pressures were partially offset by additional Covid grant funding.
- The budget worked on the premise of a zero pay rate rise for 2021/22 as set out for all public sector workers. This was not the case, with staff awarded a 1.75% pay increase in March 2022 for the year.
- SCF saw a significant rise in the number of UASCs in the system, rising from 9 at the end of March 2021 to 26 by March 2022 (full time equivalents). This had a significant impact on placement costs in year, partially offset by home office funding.
- SCF were largely successful in delivering on its savings plans, achieving the overall savings targets, over achieving on targeted placement rates and Health contributions against savings plans, offset by under achieving projected reductions in care leavers, delayed with Covid as highlighted above. SCF also managed staffing vacancies to deliver additional underspends to offset the pressures, along with attracting additional income streams to offset the pressures.

# Financial Outturn for 2021/2022



	Full Year		
	Actuals	Budget	Variance
	£k	£k	£k
SBC Core Income	31,534	31,534	0
DFE Income	2,701	2,454	247
Transformation - DFE	1,459	1,481	(23)
Other Income	3,223	1,891	1,332
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>38,917</b>	<b>37,360</b>	<b>1,557</b>
Pay	(11,513)	(12,457)	944
Agency	(5,688)	(3,934)	(1,754)
Placement Allowances	(14,600)	(13,434)	(1,165)
Other Child Support Costs	(3,276)	(2,532)	(744)
Legal Fees	(2,171)	(1,406)	(765)
Other Overheads	(2,256)	(2,114)	(142)
Transformation costs	(1,459)	(1,481)	23
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>(40,964)</b>	<b>(37,360)</b>	<b>(3,604)</b>
<b>Net Surplus/(Loss)</b>	<b>(2,046)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,046)</b>
Additional Charges to the Council for Covid	714		714
<b>Net Surplus/(Loss)</b>	<b>(1,332)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,332)</b>



## Key Variances.

- **DFE income £247k favourable** - £100k new grant for extension of virtual school duties, £137k final agreed running cost grant to meet costs.
- **Other Income £1,332k favourable** - £491k Home office funding of increase in UASCs, £152k health funding contributions to packages, overachievement on budgeted savings targets, £262k Public Health contribution to CSC costs for early help, £110 Troubled Families funding of costs for running the programme and contribution to early help staffing, £115k DA duty grant, new income stream to cover costs of working with families, £72k Covid winter grant to help provide additional support to those families most vulnerable through Covid, £60k COMF funding to support the coordination of support into families through Covid, VAT rebate £42k
- **Pay & Agency (£810k) adverse** - (£1,796k) extension and increased rates for Innovate teams to meet the continuing higher than planned demands on service, (£412k) additional costs of grant activity funded above, including extension of virtual school duties, running cost grant, DA duties and troubled families. (£210k) pay inflation paid which was not budgeted for, partially offset by vacancies £1,608.
- **Placements (£1,165k) adverse** - (£505k) increase in UASCs as highlighted, (£540k) increase in residential & (£196k) fostering rates, partially driven by the increased complexity of needs presenting, also reflecting the additional support needed for young people in care through Covid. The increased rates were partially offset by reduced demand for remand services in year against budgeted projections.
- **Other support costs (£744k) adverse** - (£371k) care leavers, extended support through Covid with no alternate housing arrangements available, (£182k) additional support to children and families through additional grant funding highlighted above, including extension of duties for virtual school, Covid winter grant and COMF funding. (£191k) additional S17 spend to support young people through Covid.
- **Legal Fees (£765k) adverse** - sustained higher than planned proceedings with increased complexity of need and rising demands alongside delays from court closures as a result of covid, resulting in the added pressure.

# Central Government Funding



Funding Stream	2021/22 Funding Amount	2022/23 Funding Amount	Status
Pupil Premium Plus			
Remand Grant			Reduced in 2021/22
Youth Justice Board Grant			
Strengthening Families			
Department for Education			



# Corporate Risk Register

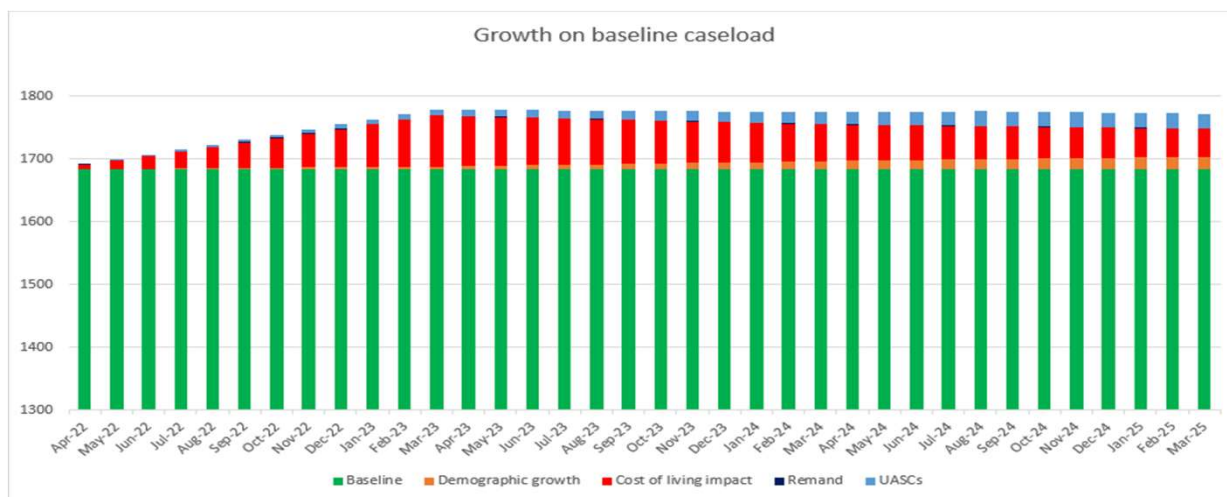


- The Company Corporate Risk Register captures the urgent and high-level risks across the company, which are reviewed regularly by ELT, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Company Board.
- The highest ranking risks managed in 2021/22 were:
  - Sustainability within budget
  - Stable skilled and permanent workforce
  - Stable and skilled executive leadership
  - Covid-19
  - Compliance against Regulations and Quality Assurance
  - Transition to wholly owned company
  - IT equipment and services not sufficient for requirements
  - Update of business continuity plan
  - Getting to good - Practice quality and improvement
  - Introduction of IR35
  - Whistleblowing's



# What's Next

# Expected Demand: Next 2 years



Average caseload profile		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Targeted early help	Baseline	985.0	985.0	985.0
	Demographic growth	1.5	6.3	12.0
	Cost of living growth	28.7	45.0	33.1
	<b>Total targeted caseloads</b>	<b>1,015.2</b>	<b>1,036.2</b>	<b>1,030.1</b>
Statutory services	Baseline	1,783.9	1,683.9	1,683.9
	Growth in UASCs	5.0	14.6	22.6
	Demographic growth	2.4	9.1	17.0
	Cost of living growth	44.0	68.9	50.8
	Growth in CL	12.2	0.3	29.8
<b>Total statutory caseloads</b>	<b>1,835.3</b>	<b>1,776.5</b>	<b>1,774.3</b>	

- There is an expectation for the pressures on cost of living growth to increase in the next two years but will start to ease over time. However, this still remains a risk with ever increasing projections.
- Demographic growth will continue to increase year on year.
- We expect to see a greater increase in UASCs over the next two years.
- Although we expect an initial decrease in care leavers this is likely to increase in the next two years.
- Overall we expect demand for statutory services to increase in the next two years due to various social and economic factors, and this is a pattern being seen nationally across the country.

# Strategic Priorities and Outcomes for Next Year 2022/23



## Getting to Good

- Consistently good practice throughout a child's journey
- Improved and evidenced outcomes
- Scale and scope of children's services
- Embedding the new practice model
- Voice of the child influences services across the continuum of care
- Reduced caseloads for staff across the services

## Workforce Stability and Development

- Leadership stability
- Staff engagement and buy-in
- Increased retention
- Career development for all roles
- Balanced skills mix with right people for right job
- Staff wellbeing
- Culture and environment
- Right tools and systems to support the workforce

## Child Focused Partnerships

- Relationship with SBC
- Partnerships across the child's journey
- Work with key partners to develop the continuum of services
- Joint learning and development across partnerships
- Working with partners to develop capacity and support in Slough

## Value for Money

- A secure and sustainable organisation
- High quality and cost-effective outcomes
- Transformation capacity and capability in SCF
- Strong and transparent governance
- Supporting SCF and SBC savings

# 2022/23 Focus



- Continuous improvement of practice with children and their families in our trajectory to Good
- Development of the SCF 7 year Business Plan
  - 3 Invest to Save projects in place:
    - Continuum of care (Prevention and Early Help)
    - Edge of Care
    - Workforce- recruitment and retention
- Implementation of new Practice Framework across SCF staff and partners
- Review of threshold document through the Local Safeguarding Partnership
- Further development of strategic partnership arrangements
- Regulatory inspections expected: HMIP YOT inspection, Breakaway and Ofsted ILACs inspection

# Document Control



## Changes

Version	Status	Date	Changes Made	Changes By
0.1	Draft	18/08/22	Initial Draft	Priya Bhudia, Project Manager
0.2	Draft	19/08/22	Updated context and performance sections	Carol Douch, Director of Operations
0.3	Draft	19/08/22	Updated performance, finance and risk sections	Priya Bhudia, Project Manager Alex Pilgerstorfer, Finance Business Partner Carol Douch, Director of Operations
0.4	Draft	19/08/22	Updated context, regulated services, performance and risks sections	Priya Bhudia, Project Manager Carol Douch, Director of Operations

## Approvals

Version	Status	Name and Role	Signature	Date
1.0	Final	Andrew Fraser, Chief Executive (SCF) and Executive Director: Children's (SBC)		