

## Children's Services Strategy 2017-20

1. This strategy sets out a single strategy for Children's Services for April 2017 – March 2020.
2. It brings together a range of programmes and plans into one place, to act as a single focus for improvement and change. It draws on:
  - a. The Council Plan, and the priorities identified for children and young people
  - b. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees;
  - c. The work of the Children and Young People's Partnership tackling those issues where the contribution of partners is essential in improving outcomes
  - d. Medium Term Financial Plan – being clear about the budget context, the need for savings and where they will come from, as well as the reviews of services which have been identified.
  - e. The development of business priorities in Children's Services – especially focusing on the 'how' we do things in the context of a Financial Sustainability Plan.
3. It sets out:
  - a. The context for Children's Services
  - b. The key areas where we want to make a difference and which drive our actions;
  - c. What we propose to do about them, organized around six key priorities;
  - d. How we will work – statement of our commitments about how we will deliver
  - e. How we will know we are making a difference – our approach to continuous improvement
4. This strategy is a Council document, and is designed to be used to inform officers and members about the strategy for Children's Services, and to give our partners a clear sense of our approach, our priorities and our ways of working.

## The Council Plan: policy priorities

Children's Services priorities sit within the context of the policy priorities and culture statement. Of particular relevance for Children's Services are the priorities in the Council Plan around the targeting of resources. The work of Children's Services is dependent on the quality of the work undertaken by those working directly with children, young people and families.

The Council has to take decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as reduced budget allocation, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction.

The following four policy principles support our decision making:

➤ **Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention**

- people who are subject to or at risk of harm
- people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- people who are financially excluded
- people whose circumstances make them vulnerable

- meeting the skills gap
- improving access to job opportunities
- tackling fuel poverty
- improving education and training opportunities
- improving access to affordable housing
- financial and digital inclusion

➤ **Creating economic prosperity**

➤ **Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention**

- tackling health inequalities

➤ **Developing strong and healthy communities**

- providing mainstream services that are available where needed
- providing preventive services that are available where needed

## Council Plan : Our culture

We deliver services by drawing on our organisational culture – the values and behaviours and resilience we will need to demonstrate in facing significant financial and capacity challenges. Our organisational culture statement:

“We are an organisation where all staff are trusted, supported and valued to make a positive contribution at work.

Where we never lose sight of the fact that we're here to serve the people of the borough.

This is a place where:

- Everyone's views and opinions are encouraged, heard and properly considered

- We share responsibility for our own learning and development and are encouraged and supported to do so by others
- We work hard and feel comfortable to suggest new ideas, ways of working and to take managed risks
- We all feel a strong sense of belonging to the whole Council and our skills, knowledge and experience are used to benefit the organisation as a whole”

## Our vision

### ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

...is of an economically prosperous borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills.

BIG PLANS FOR  
AN OUTSTANDING BOROUGH

### COMMUNITY SAFETY

...is to make the borough a place where levels of crime and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

BIG PLANS FOR  
KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

...is for a place where people are supported to be healthy.

BIG PLANS FOR  
THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

### ADULTS

...is that people can get the right level and type of support at the right time to help, prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.

BIG PLANS FOR  
THE CARE WE PROVIDE

### OUR COUNCIL

...is of a Council that prides itself on being open, honest and fair. On leading by example. On having big plans and the determination to see them through. We're facing difficult financial challenges and we can't do all we used to do so we're facing some tough decisions. Throughout this we'll stay focused on delivering genuine value for money, on setting the highest standards of public service, on communicating clearly and regularly with the community we serve and on being challenging, innovative and well organized.

AMBITIOUS, EFFECTIVE AND PROUD TO SERVE

### ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

...is to make the borough a better place to live and a more attractive place to do business with clean streets, carefully tended parks and open spaces, affordable and desirable housing.

BIG PLANS FOR  
OUR PLACES AND OPEN SPACES

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

.....is of a great place to grow up, where children and young people are protected from harm and supported to be the best they can be in life.

BIG PLANS FOR THE  
YOUNG PEOPLE OF OUR BOROUGH

### STRONG COMMUNITIES

...is for communities that are diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant.

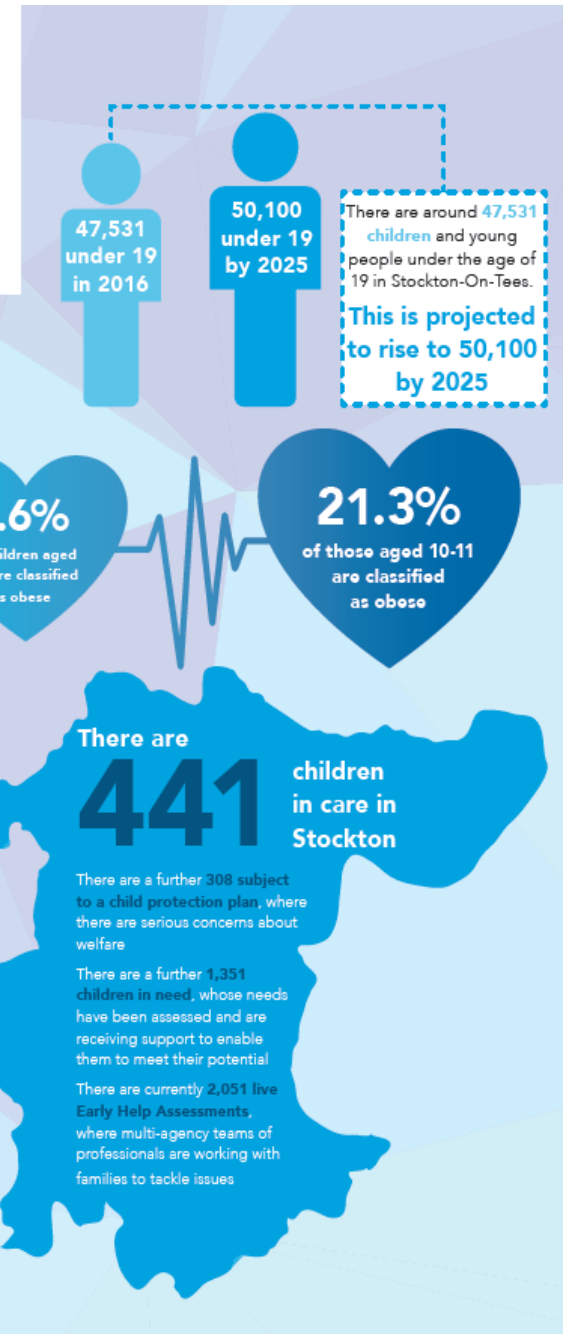
BIG PLANS FOR  
HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES PROSPER

### ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

...is of a borough where our heritage, festivals, cultural activities and leisure facilities help us attract visitors and investment, and where sport and active leisure opportunities help people sustain healthier lifestyles.

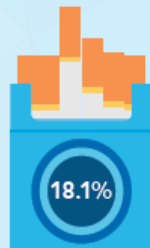
BIG PLANS FOR  
GREAT EXPERIENCES

# Children and Young People in Stockton-on-Tees

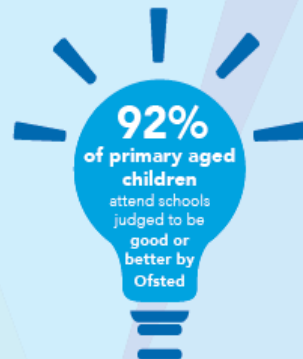
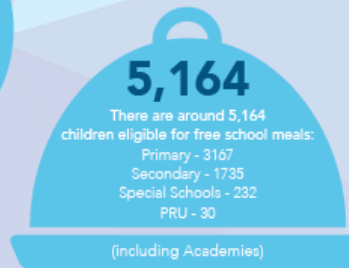
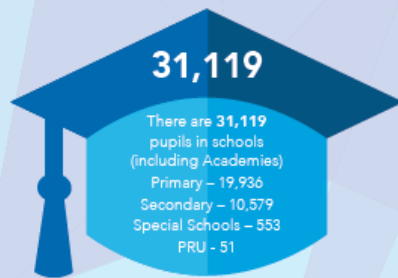
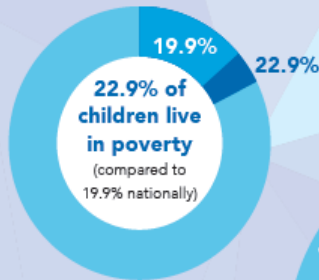


Children and young people under 19 make up about **24.4%** of the total population, slightly higher than the national average.

24.4%



**18.1% of pregnant Mums smoke,** compared to the national average of 10.6%



## What we need to focus on and why

This strategy sets out our priorities, and how we will address them. We cannot achieve everything ourselves, and we work in partnership across the Directorate, across the Council and with partners. This strategy sets a clear set of priorities, and ways of working. It is based both on those actions we can take ourselves, but also where we need to be systems leaders, shaping and influencing partnerships, and the work of other agencies.

We have looked at the issues and challenges in three main ways, to create the intelligence to drive this strategy:

1. Data, evidence and analysis: how we perform
  - a. There are a wide variety of sources of data and information on performance which enable us to review how well we are performing. The basis of this is the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the range of supplementary needs assessments on specific issues which provide further detail. In 2016, a new Tees-wide performance framework was established for the analysis of a common data set relevant to the work of Child's services and its partners.
  - b. We collect a detailed set of information internally which is used to analyse performance at a team and service level.
2. Quality
  - a. External inspection and validation, including the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework in May / June 2016
  - b. Audits, including the outcomes of Multi Agency Audits which involve partners and which are helpful in identifying some of the more fundamental challenges we face on issues such as information sharing; assertive working with families; professional challenge.

3. Feedback
  - a. Compliments, comments and complaints about our services
  - b. Other feedback from those who have received our services and partners who work with us
  - c. Feedback from employees

Using all of this intelligence, we have identified the key challenges and areas of focus for us to address in our strategy. These form the basis of our priority actions, and our must do's. We are not solely responsible for addressing these issues – we work across the Council and with partners on many of these issues, but our role in Children's Services is both to deliver directly where we must, and to convene, assist and support others where necessary.

1. **Early years development** - we have more to do to ensure that young children get the best start in life and are school ready. We have improved performance in this area but remain below national averages. We want to do more to join up early years assessments, to ensure that parents of young children get the very best information, advice, support and provision to ensure their children get the best start in life.
2. **Rates of childhood obesity as a key determinant of future health** - there is very good evidence that high rates of childhood obesity have a significant impact on outcomes. Not only can this be related to poorer physical health outcomes, but it can also be related to poorer mental health and wellbeing, as well as being a predictor of issues in later life.
3. **Emotional health and wellbeing** – this is a major issue for our young people, and we know we have problems around their ability to access support. Self-harm rates are too high and our schools report increasing levels of anxiety, low mood and depression as well as more complex mental health issues. We also know that the emotional

health and wellbeing of children is a major concern for our parents and schools. Our rates of admissions to hospital remain higher than across Tees as a whole.

4. **Educational progress and outcomes for all children and young people** - whilst performance overall at primary phase is good, there are gaps, and we know that we have more to do, working in partnership with secondary schools, to ensure that children achieve
5. **Gaps in progress and attainment for the vulnerable: disadvantaged children and young people, those with SEND and children in care** - closing the gaps in progress and attainment is a major policy focus for the Council. Whilst this is complex picture, we know that we have some major challenges in outcomes for children and young people with SEN
6. **Young people remain in high quality education, employment or training and have clear pathways to work** - we know that our rates of young people being Not in Education, Employment or training (NEETs) are reducing, but we can do more. Our analysis is that contrary to perceptions, the key issues in Stockton are more around the issues of young people with level 2 and above, who finish training and then are unable to secure employment
7. **The incidence and impact of neglect, through a focus on the major causes: domestic abuse, parental mental health and drugs and alcohol** - these areas continue to be the most significant reasons why children are referred to the Children's Hub, or why we undertake social care assessments. We know that many such issues do not meet a social care threshold, but our ability to work proactively with families to prevent issues escalating is not currently sufficient, and in some cases there are multiple referrals into services which are not always supported by solution focused, intensive case management to reduce risks.
8. **Children who go missing or are vulnerable, exploited, missing or trafficked** - children who go missing are amongst some of the most vulnerable. Stockton has particularly high rates of children going

missing, especially in relation to looked after children, and repeat episodes. All children who go missing are offered return interviews to understand the reasons why they go missing, but we are not always using this intelligence to prevent repeat episodes or to be proactive.

9. **Keeping children safe and reducing our high rates of social care intervention** - we continue to have higher than national and regional rates of children in need, children on child protection plans and children in care. These rates have increased in 2016/17, along with other Tees authorities. We need to be considering different approaches which reduce the demands on social care, including early help.
10. **Helping young people to stay out of the criminal justice system, and reducing reoffending when they do** - we have been successful in ensuring that young people are prevented from entering the youth justice system, through a partnership approach and focus on working restoratively. This approach will continue.
11. **The number of children and young people who need to be taken into care** - our rates of children in care have increased significantly in 2016/17. Whilst these trends are mirrored across Tees and nationally, we believe we have more work to do to focus on how we can help support families to avoid children into care.
12. **Care and support for children in care and care leavers** - our Ofsted inspection indicated that whilst there is much good work with children in care, we have more to do to ensure that our practice is consistent, and is leading to improved outcomes - not all children are thriving as much as we want, and we need to improve the quality of our planning.
13. **Contributing to the Medium Term Financial Plan by reducing total spend and delivering on savings** - although Stockton as a whole performs well on around value for money, we do face increasing demand pressure and budgets are stretched across the system.

## What are we going to do?

### Our priorities

We have based our key priorities on these priority issues. We have identified five key thematic priorities around which we will organise our activity and our work programmes, and which form the basis of our discussions with partners on priorities. These are the key priorities identified in the Council Plan, and therefore provide a consistent thread through all our activity.

Priority	Action
<b>1. Giving children the best start in life (Issues 1,2,3)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Redesigning the role and focus of children's centres into multi-agency family hubs as part of a 0-19 approach which includes a focus on health and wellbeing, including healthy weight</li> <li>2) The rollout of 30 hours of free early years education for eligible parents as part of a wider sufficiency strategy</li> <li>3) More integrated assessment and support in the early years</li> <li>4) Continuing to ensure that early years provision of a high quality, supports child development and narrows gaps in achievement particularly for those who are disadvantage</li> </ol>
<b>2. Focusing on schools and learning outcomes (Issues 3,4,5,6)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5) Ensure sufficient school places in good or better schools</li> <li>6) Work to ensure all schools/academies in Stockton are good or better through a model for supporting school improvement which focus on school led provision, and a refocused role for the Council, in the context of the Tees Valley Combined Authority</li> <li>7) Reshaping our services and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities through new hubs a renewed focus on SEND support in schools and joint commissioning</li> <li>8) Implement a new model for educational psychology</li> <li>9) Clear options, choices, pathways and support for young people into employment, training or education post 16</li> <li>10) Develop options for alternative provision and curriculum delivery for 14-19 year olds as risk of disengagement and becoming NEET</li> </ol>
<b>3. Delivering effective early help – supporting families (issues 2,3,7,8,9,10)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11) Developing a new outreach befriending service and investing in Safe Families for Children to provide support to families</li> <li>12) Reshaping family support into a new Family Solutions Service and offer</li> <li>13) A flexible model of working with young people and families who need more intensive support</li> <li>14) Continuing to develop a 'secondary prevention' approach to reduce risk in target communities</li> <li>15) Streamlining systems and processes for early help, working with the Children's hub</li> <li>16) Continue to prioritise Graded care Profile 2, early help assessment and effective practice as part of a restorative approach</li> <li>17) Implement the review of services and support for young people</li> </ol>
<b>4. Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18) Rollout of Signs of safety approaches to create better support plans, with greater family engagement</li> <li>19) Implement restorative approaches, including expanding the use of family group conferencing</li> <li>20) Introducing and edge of care model to work intensively with young people and families to avoid children having to come into care</li> </ol>



<p><b>children, backed by outstanding social work practice (Issues 8,9,10,11)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21) Ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to reduce the risks associated with children who go missing or are subject to VEMT or PREVENT</li> <li>22) Refreshing our approach to social work training and skills, and the quality of supervision</li> <li>23) Tackling key thematic priorities, with an emphasis on domestic abuse, neglect and repeat removals</li> <li>24) Working to transform support for young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs</li> <li>25) Redesigning our support for children with complex needs and disabilities</li> <li>26) Review the operation of the Children's Hub</li> <li>27) Implement a major change programme for social care focusing on capacity, practice, systems, partnership working and models for delivery (S WORK)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and leaving our care (Issues 11,12)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28) Delivering the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and our pledge to young people, working as part of the multi-agency partnership (MALAP)</li> <li>29) Developing an enhanced Care leavers offer to support independence</li> <li>30) Creative ways of engaging and working with children in care, working with the Let's Take Action Group</li> <li>31) Improve systems and pathways for sufficiency planning to ensure quality placements for children</li> <li>32) Develop and test new approaches to increase capacity in fostering</li> <li>33) Develop a Tees Adoption Agency</li> <li>34) Implement a refreshed approach to corporate parenting</li> <li>35) Ensure effective education support through the virtual school</li> <li>36) Improve health outcomes, based on regular assessment</li> <li>37) Ensure children in care are listened to, involved and engaged in all aspects of planning and delivery</li> </ul>

## How are we going to do it?

But we know it is not enough just to identify key priority thematic areas. Making a difference to outcomes will also require is to work differently, taking as our starting point the values of the Council. Children's Services cannot work in isolation. We cannot continue to operate in the same way as in recent years, as we are not making a difference to the numbers of children, young people and families who we work with, or who ultimately have to be assessed and supported by statutory social care services. We are intervening too much, to too little effect.

We are therefore placing a greater emphasis on HOW we work, to redefine our business model.

Our overall approach is that we will work **collaboratively, efficiently and effectively** to achieve our priority themes and to deliver against key issue 13. This means we will be focusing on the following:

<p><b>1. Listening to the voice of the child, and those we work with</b></p>	<p>1) More than ever it is vital that we understand the voice of children in our work, and that our interventions are based around listening and responding to the voice of the child.                  2) This includes the use of:                  a. Peer researchers                  b. Young inspectors                  c. The role of the Let's Take action Groups and the Youth Assembly                  d. The Growing Up Stockton project                  e. Use of technology and new ways of working such as #answeralex and MOMO</p>
<p><b>2. Working restoratively with families, reducing the need for our intervention</b></p>	<p>3) We will place a bigger focus on working restoratively. This not only includes the roll out of Signs of Safety as a tool, but will also include a specific reshaping of our approach to working restoratively backed by suitable training and skills development, and the greater use of Family Group Conferencing as part of the approach. This forms part of our wider demand reduction strategy which also include the focus on edge of care (responding to the Ofsted SIF)</p>
<p><b>3. Ensuring a focus on quality of practice</b></p>	<p>4) Responding to the Ofsted recommendations that our quality of planning, and the oversight of delivery through supervision is not effective enough we will develop and embed a new focus on quality of practice, through a social work academy as a response to the requirements of the Children and Social Work Act and the national accreditation process</p>
<p><b>4. Challenging our own role, being innovative and being an effective partner</b></p>	<p>5) We are reviewing our role and remit in a number of areas such as in education – being clear about our role, our options for delivery and therefore the role of Children's services.                  6) We will respond to the Children and Social Work Bill and the new partnership safeguarding arrangements which will need to be in place                  7) Developing new forms of service delivery                  8) Co-design and co-commissioning models such as joint commissioning approaches for SEND</p>

<p><b>5. Using intelligence and evidence to make a bigger impact</b></p>	<p>9) Working collaboratively to evaluate need – using data to understand and target resources            10) Using evidence of what works – giving us the best chance of making difference            11) Using data and intelligence to target resources and services more effectively, and working more consistently on secondary prevention            12) Focusing on tackling the causes of demand, rather than managing the symptoms – such as domestic abuse, drug and alcohol misuses and parental ill health</p>
<p><b>6. Being efficient and productive – smarter working and financial sustainability</b></p>	<p>13) We are in the early stages of redesigning the way we work to be effective. We are working to deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A financial sustainability plan to deliver MTFP savings over the next 3 years</li> <li>b. A new social care system, co-designed with capita;</li> <li>c. The rollout of mobile technology for all social care staff;</li> <li>d. The application of LEAN thinking to existing processes to remove inefficiency</li> <li>e. The use of improvement and redesign tools to develop new thinking</li> <li>f. Streamlining decision making, and devolving as close to the front line</li> <li>g. Ensuring maximum contact time, with reduced back office time across all services</li> </ul>

## Specific priority actions in 2017/18

We will identify a set number of specific action areas which we will use to steer our work programme each year. These are the areas we will focus on

- In the way we set up delivery and implementation arrangements, and prioritise our own resources
- In the priorities we will pursue through work with partners through the Children and Young People's Partnership, Children and Young People HWB Commissioning Group and in our wider work with partners
- To apply our key priorities for HOW we work

In 2017/18 we will focus on:

- 1. Redesigning our approach to early years, children's centres, health visiting and school nursing as part of our early help approach**
- 2. Reviewing our pathways and outcomes for early help**
- 3. Redefining our role in supporting educational achievement**
- 4. Implement the review of SEND**
- 5. Introducing a new edge of care approach**
- 6. Tackling domestic abuse through a new strategy**
- 7. Improving our response to supporting children and people who are subject to VEMT (Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing, Trafficked)**
- 8. Implementing the S-WORK project as a whole systems change programme for children's social care**
- 9. Develop a new approach to support children and young people emotional health and wellbeing needs**

## How will we measure success?

We have redesigned our approach to performance for 2017/18, based on a new Continuous Improvement Framework. This provides a consistent basis on which to demonstrate impact.

At a strategic level, we will record, monitor and report on a set of strategic outcomes. This will form the basis of six monthly reporting to Cabinet and the Children and Young People Select Committee.

1. Safely reducing the number of children who need to be looked after
2. Reduce the number of children who need child protection plans
3. Improving school readiness – through rising EYFS scores
4. Attainment at Key Stage 2 (annual measure only)
5. Attainment at Key stage 4 (annual measure only)
6. Percentage in good or better schools
7. Reduce the number / rates of NEETS and Not Known
8. Improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND
9. Improving education outcomes for looked after children
10. Improving emotional wellbeing
11. Healthy weight
12. Reducing first time and repeat offending

We will continue to collect more detailed information and trend data on a wider range of indicators, including the key factors driving demand (such as domestic abuse and neglect) and how well we identify these; the timeliness of our responses and the impact of our interventions as well as our progress in achieving a balanced budget.

### Quality assurance

1. Case file audit programme – our quarterly analysis of the quality of social care case files acts as a specific focus for improvement and oversight.
2. Multi-Agency Audit – the LSCB coordinates a programme of multi-agency reviews. MAA reviews are also undertaken for the VEMT programme and for looked after children.
3. Practice and thematic reviews – working with and through the LSCB we will undertake a programme of thematic practice reviews in 2017/18, using the CC Inform tool as the basis
4. Team performance and engagement reviews – we have established an annual team performance review process. We will build on this in 2017/18 as part of the CIF, to enable more regular monitoring of performance, and to provide managers with greater insight to be able to track performance of team members.
5. External and internal challenge and scrutiny – we will undertake a peer review in Autumn 2017, led by a regional authority.
6. Front line visits – elected members on the Children and Young People Select Committee visit our services on a quarterly basis
7. Complaints, compliments and comments

### Feedback and insight

1. Care leavers surveys
2. Children and young people surveys and opinions
3. Partners feedback

Our Continuous Improvement Framework also includes a clear set of management data which we will report on quarterly to Cabinet, and forms the basis of monthly exception reporting and quarterly monitoring at Children's Services Leadership Team.