4. Safeguarding Service Profile
(2026/27)

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Purpose of Plan

This Business Plan provides an overview of the service, and sets out its key priorities, high level objectives, key deliverables, and key performance measures. It will be supported by individual team plans which contain more detail about how teams work towards meeting priorities and measuring success.

The priorities and actions set out in the Business Plan focus only on key areas of development, improvement, and transformation, and does not cover all detailed aspects of service delivery. The identified priorities will link directly into the Council's contribution towards the Community Plan and achievement of productivity and savings targets.

Progress against the service plan will be reviewed on a regular basis within directorate teams, by the Corporate Strategy Team, and in consultation with Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

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1. Service Overview

Service Description:

Safeguarding services provide a range of statutory assessment and support services to children and young people requiring social care involvement. At any one time, this equates to around 3400 children and young people.

Involvement with children's safeguarding starts at the Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHaSH), whereby contacts are made to raise a concern or perceived need about a child. The level of need equates to an average of 1500 new contacts each month. Whilst a proportion of these contacts are for early help support or diverted to other agencies for support, those that meet threshold are progressed for referral and statutory social work assessment. Social work teams are working with approximately 800 new first assessments at any one time. Children who need longer term social work involvement are supported by one of the following service areas:

- Locality based Safeguarding Teams
- Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team.
- Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children's Team (RAST)
- Children Looked After Teams
- Contextual Safeguarding Team (VEMT)
- Care Leavers' Teams.

All teams work closely with wider partners to provide statutory social work services to children through a social work assessment to determine what type of longer-term support is required to increase safety and/or meet support needs. Ongoing support is then managed through a child in need plan, child protection plan, children looked after plan, care leaver support or dedicated support plan for asylum seeking children (who are looked after or have left care).

For all children looked after, there are a range of placement services which provide quality care, including 17 registered children's homes, fostering service and supported accommodation provision for older young people.

Most of Hull's children's homes provide care for children with a plan that they remain looked after children. However, there is also a disability short break home, which provides positive time out (including overnight stays) for children and an often much-needed break for families. There has been a significant focus in recent years to ensure that Hull's children's homes offer allows as many children as possible to live safely within their city and to receive high quality care. This strategy has been successful and there are more children living in Hull's children's homes than with private providers, including a wider range of local options from solo to group living. Currently 42 children are cared for in Hull homes compared to 26 children living with agency providers.

Services supporting children with disabilities also complete Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments to ensure adaptations and equipment are provided and further short breaks and activities through the Leisure and Family Support Service (LAFSS) activities offer. One of the children's homes also provides out of hours placements.

The fostering and commissioning service identifies quality homes for children who are in the care of the local authority. The internal fostering service recruits and supports foster carers both mainstream and connected carers and supported lodgings providers who provide accommodation for children aged 16+. The placement commissioning team is responsible for commissioning placements with independent fostering agencies, independent children's homes and 16+ supported accommodation.

The Adoption Service which is part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), One Adoption, recruits and supports adopters for children who can no longer live with their birth family and need a permanent family. There had been a decrease in the number of adoption orders attained during the last year, which was 24. This reduction was partly due to the introduction of a new portal system within the court process, which led to some orders being "stuck" within the process. However, in the first six months of this year, 31 adoption orders have been made which is a significant increase.

Most safeguarding services are statutory in nature and as such, are highly regulated by Ofsted and require a range of regular performance returns that are submitted to Department for Education (DfE). Equally, the nature of need is unpredictable, and all services need to able to adapt well to fluctuating demands.

Strategic Direction / Future Plans:

Families First Partnership Programme outlines the vision for early help and safeguarding services in the future and this means that the way in which services are delivered and accessed by children and families will change significantly in the coming months and years. In summary, the current early help and social care delivery model will be replaced with an early help, family help and child protection partnership system, with an ultimate ambition around reducing stigma, escalation of need (and risk) and transition points for children and families who need support. The key elements of the changes will include:

- Creation of family help and multi-agency child protection teams
- Strengthening a family network approach and implementing 'Family Group Decision Making'– a principle of doing everything we do 'with' and not 'to'
- Strengthening Kinship Support and publication of Kinship Local Offer to ensure more children have the opportunity to live with connected people.

These changes are significant in terms of the level of partnership change work required and in a context of increased need and demand for services.

Positively, the success of our 'Grow our Own' strategy in the last five years means that social worker recruitment is in a much stronger place, with a largely permanent workforce and significantly reduced use of agency workers. Hull's annual workforce return, to DfE for 2024-2025, submitted November 2025 highlights that Hull's use of agency social workers is now below all comparator groups (Region, England & Statistical Neighbour). An increasingly stable workforce means that services are better placed to manage the changes and service reforms ahead.

Whilst recruitment is significantly stronger, social work and manager retention remains a key priority and challenge. This challenge has been compounded in the last twelve months, due to several neighbouring and regional local authorities increasing their social work and manager salaries and extending progression opportunities. Retention challenges remain in

Hull and are likely to increase despite a comprehensive retention offer being in place, including compressed working hours and appraisal-based progression from grade 8 to 9. Priorities going forward include reviewing the retention offer (including retention payment), extending progression opportunities further to include Advanced Social Worker roles and benchmarking social work and manager salaries across the region.

Placement sufficiency challenges remain significant in Hull, the region and nationally. This challenge remains a concern despite strong locally delivered foster care and children's homes offers. The challenges include both sufficiency of placements in children's homes and foster placements and the continued increased costs experienced and expected in the future, by private providers.

It is important to note that agency children's homes providers have gained the advantage as demand for all placements remains high. In addition to increasing costs, providers are also giving notice on more placements, particularly those involving children presenting challenging behavioural responses to trauma or high levels of risk. All of this means that a robust Edge of Care support offer and further strengthened local placement sufficiency are even more important than ever. Going forward, priorities include the creation of a 'Family Solutions' support offer, providing practical and family-based support outside of usual working hours.

In recent years, the council has provided significant investment into the fostering service, increasing the allowances that are paid to foster carers and marketing to assist in the recruitment and retention of the carers. Whilst this has had a positive impact with carers stating that they feel valued by the council, the competition from Independent Fostering Agencies remains high and foster carer recruitment and retention is a key service priority.

For children aged 16 years plus, there is a well-established continuum of supported accommodation both from internal services and external providers. Changes in legislation during 2024 means the provision for young people aged 16 and 17 years old who are looked after is now regulated with Ofsted. Hull's supported lodgings service is currently going through this approval process with its inspection visit due week beginning 15th December 2025. Shared Tenancy and Gateway Project which are run by our Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) are now fully registered with Ofsted. The Shared Tenancy Scheme provides furnished accommodation usually for two to three young people with floating support. This level of support responds to the needs of the young people. At present the schemes offers places for up to 70 young people and offers a fantastic first introduction into independent living. At any one time there are at least 10-12 young people living in external and costly supported accommodation who could be living within the shared tenancy scheme; In October 2024, acknowledging the success of the Shared Tenancy Scheme an invest to save business case was presented to the senior leadership team to consider extending the Shared Tenancy Scheme. This was agreed and since January 2025 the scheme has been working to provide an additional 30 places. This will provide over 100 places in total.

The Adoption Service has had a successful year so far in 2056/26 supporting 31 children to be adopted. Being part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has had the positive impact of finding local families for children. This has also led to significant savings by the Local Authority. Last year all children placed for adoption were placed with an RAA family. However, the RAA is now struggling to identify families for brothers and sisters to live together and children with complex health needs or disabilities. When this occurs, agreement is given for inter-agency funding. If an adoptive placement is identified for a child

with a voluntary agency this costs £39,245 per child. This pressure could lead to a significant financial pressure for the Local Authority if adoptive families cannot be identified through the RAA.

Services for children in Hull with SEND needs are the current focus of a partnership project to develop a 'SEND Integrated Hub' at Lil Bilocca House. Leisure and Free Time Support Service (LAFSS) activities and short break team and children with disabilities social work team have already relocated to this site along with the Occupational Therapy (OT) service. The project has reached the second phase of planning a partnership approach and co located delivery model. This stage involves close working with parents, health and education partners. Co-production (with families) of the second phase involves the development of an integrated multi-agency support service for children and families. This is something families have requested for several years.

Overall Service Priorities:

Service Priority	**Strategic Driver (Community Plan Ambition, Government, Organisational, etc)**
Early Help and Safeguarding Hub partnership priorities: Implement a 'Conversational' front door – The 'conversational consultation offer' was revised in June 2025 to increase its accessibility for partners to increase uptake of the offer. Between June and September 2025 there have been 402 consultations, 158 with professionals and 244 with parents/family. Only 19% of these have progressed to a contact, evidencing the impact of the consultation offer in reducing contacts to EHASH so that families benefit from the right service first time. Contextual safeguarding - VEMT Team core functions to be reviewed and shared with the wider workforce. In response to Baroness Lacey's report a focused approach to CSE and consideration of how a ROTH pathway could further increase safety support for children at risk of exploitation. Ensuring partners are identifying contextualised safeguarding concerns early to allow intervention and risk reduction via the front door will be a continued important element of the work of the Hull Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP).	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, reaching our potential. Government - ensure that statutory requirements and key performance indicators continue to be improved by performance data and quality assurance work. Partnership – achieving safeguarding objectives for all children and young people. Organisational - driving forward improvements to services to children and young people that are regulated by Ofsted.

Families First Partnership Programme – Create family help teams to bring together targeted early help and child in need assessments and support, to promote earlier intervention and reduced transfer points for children and families.	
Strengthen the social work workforce by increasing the recruitment of experienced social workers and enhancing retention to build experience and preserve knowledge and skills. Continue to reduce the use of agency social workers through sustained permanent recruitment and retention strategies, to maintain high standards and deliver cost efficiencies. Create Multi Agency Child Protection teams to expand co-location and joint decision making to enhance safety for children. Additionally, further build integrated service opportunities across domestic abuse, adult substance misuse, and mental health to deliver holistic support where children receive the right support at the right time.	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods. Hull's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028. DfE - Family First Partnership Programme. Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024.
The continued development of services for children with disabilities, including SEND, given the increase of identified needs and specialist service provision. This includes work to develop and resource the SEND Integrated Hub; and working to reduce the wait times for housing adaptations and OT service provisions.	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, reducing barriers and challenges to accessing services, the right health and education facilities to increase accessibility and equity for families, helping all children to reach their potential in the correct accessible environment, helping them to develop confidence and increase self-esteem. Government – to continue to develop within the Social Care reform structure and awaited SEND white paper.
Strengthen the leaving care offer for 18–25-year-olds by addressing extended duties beyond age 21. Embed kinship care and	Community Plan – creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods and supporting care experienced young adults to avoid homelessness, isolation and worklessness, and to reach their potential. Government – delivering statutory duties for care leavers up to age 25, responding to new burdens funding and national expectations on permanence, kinship

permanence pathways so more children exit care through secure family arrangements rather than care orders. Expand access to employment and paid training to help care leavers start, stay, and succeed in work via the Family Business Model.	care, apprenticeships and corporate parenting. Partnership – aligning housing, health, adults' services, education, DWP, local employers, community safety and the voluntary sector to provide a joined-up 18–25 offer for care leavers and kinship families. Organisational – strengthening our care leaver and permanence practice model and using our role as a corporate parent and major employer to remove barriers, ring-fence opportunities and support care leavers into and through apprenticeships and sustained employment.
Increase the number of foster carers recruited and ensure the service retains current foster carers. Recruitment efforts will focus on carers who can meet the needs of specific groups of children, including: • Children with disabilities or complex health needs • Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children • Brothers and sisters placed together • Older young people. Review all current fostering allowances to ensure they are competitive with local and regional markets. This will: • Support the recruitment of new foster carers • Improve retention of existing foster carers • Reflect the complexity of caring for children with additional needs and older young people. In line with the introduction of the National Kinship Strategy, work will continue to develop a comprehensive local offer for Kinship Carers. This will need to focus on: • Enabling more children to live with relatives or within their local communities • Providing clear information, financial support, and practical assistance to kinship carers	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, reaching our potential. Government – bringing together key legislation and policy to achieve safeguarding objectives for all children and families. Organisational – continuous service improvement to ensure children and families get the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

• Strengthening training and peer support networks for kinship families • Ensuring alignment with national guidance and best practice The local strategy will aim to improve permanence outcomes, reduce reliance on unrelated foster placements, and promote stability for children.	
In October 2024 SLT extended the Shared Tenancy Scheme from 70-100 places for young people. This increase is ongoing and already having dividends with the reduction in the number of young people living in expensive external provision. Stage 2 of the strategy has commenced with the development of a specialist scheme designed to support young people with more complex needs. The initial aim is to provide five dedicated placements within this arrangement.	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, reaching our potential. Government - recent regulation states that all supported accommodation for children in care and care leavers under 18yrs should be regulated. Organisational – continuous service improvement to ensure young people get the right help, at the right time, from the right people.
Development of a new Edge of care and placement finding service is being developed. These two teams will be called Family Solutions Family Finding Service. These initiatives are designed to provide practical, intensive support to children, young people, and families, ensuring that wherever it is safe, children remain living with their families. When alternative care is needed, the Family Finding Service will work to secure suitable placements at the earliest opportunity. This development responds directly to the national sufficiency challenge and addresses feedback from our recent Ofsted Focused Visit, which highlighted the need for a stronger Edge of Care offer. Recruitment for the Edge of Care team will begin shortly, with the service expected to be operational in the new year. Importantly this priority also aims to strengthen the quality of externally commissioned supported accommodation through increased quality assurance, recognising the regulated nature of provision and importance of high quality for young people.	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, reaching our potential. Government - recent regulation states that all supported accommodation for children in care and care leavers under 18yrs should be regulated. Organisational – continuous service improvement to ensure young people get the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

Further increase local children's home sufficiency, increase our complex risk management offer and reduce the number of transitions to new homes for our children by implementing the 'solo to duo' plan. Ensuring that more of our children can live in Hull in high quality homes that are deemed good or better by Ofsted, by robust performance monitoring and oversight.	Community Plan - creating safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, reaching our potential. Government – bringing together key legislation and policy to achieve safeguarding objectives for all children and families. Organisational - driving forward improvements to services to children and young people that are regulated by Ofsted

2. Service Resources and Assets

Staffing and Financial Resources (including grants)

Budget 2026/27	**£000'**		
Staff Costs	34,327	**Budget Changes**	**£000's**
Other Expenditure	44,799	26/27 Efficiency Savings	
Gross Expenditure	**79,125**		
Fees & Charges	-785	25/26 Savings undelivered	-242
Grant Income	-3,761		
Other Income	0	Removal of Grant Income Budget Line	758
Gross Income	**-4,546**		
		Investments	1,573
Net Expenditure	**74,580**	Funding of Base Pressures	