

Safeguarding Activity Trends Report

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, Cath McEvoy

Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Wayne Daley

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) **Identify any issues for further scrutiny.**

3. LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN

This report is relevant to the 'Living' and 'Learning' sections in the Corporate Plan.

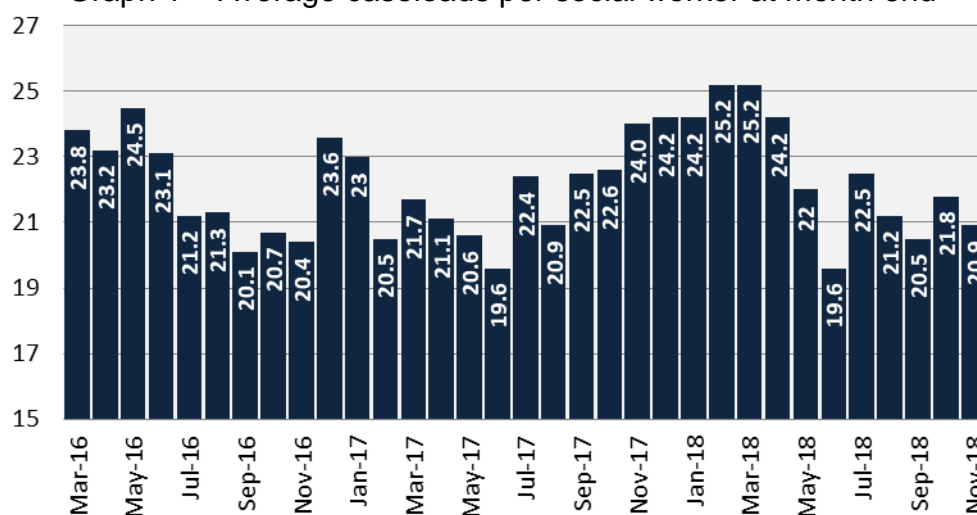
4. KEY ISSUES

CASELOADS ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Systems are in place to closely monitor the Integrated Children's System (ICS) with regard to unallocated cases, and social care locality team caseloads. As part of this process, a list of all open cases was extracted on 26th November 2018.
- 4.2 Using the information from the caseload extract, there were 2,519 cases open to Children's Services on this date (compared to 2,516 in the last report). Of those open cases, 68% (1,705) were being held open on a child in need basis, 15% (373) were cases involving children looked after by the County Council (1 of which was also subject to a Child Protection Plan), and 18% (442) were cases of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP). All cases needing social work intervention are allocated to a named social worker.

- 4.3 All child protection cases are allocated to suitably skilled, experienced and qualified social workers and the capacity in the teams is closely monitored with managers demonstrating good oversight of cases. Systems are in place to ensure that appropriate professionals from the full range of agencies are involved in planning and review meetings.
- 4.4 Team workloads are also regularly evaluated and information systems are in place so that figures can be regularly reviewed. At the time of writing, there were 20.9 cases per full-time equivalent social worker, which is a slightly better rate compared to the previous report (22 in May 2018). There are 5 social workers with caseloads of 30 or more (compared to 10 in May 2018).
- 4.5 In order to allocate new cases appropriately, individual social worker workloads are regularly evaluated. The workload weighting matrix factors in case complexity, numbers of families, ongoing assessments and car mileage. Currently, 73% of social workers have a caseload weighting score that was within the desired region for their level of experience and role. Each team's matrix is discussed at monthly performance clinics with the relevant senior managers and high caseload weightings are appropriately challenged.

Graph 1 – Average caseloads per social worker at month end



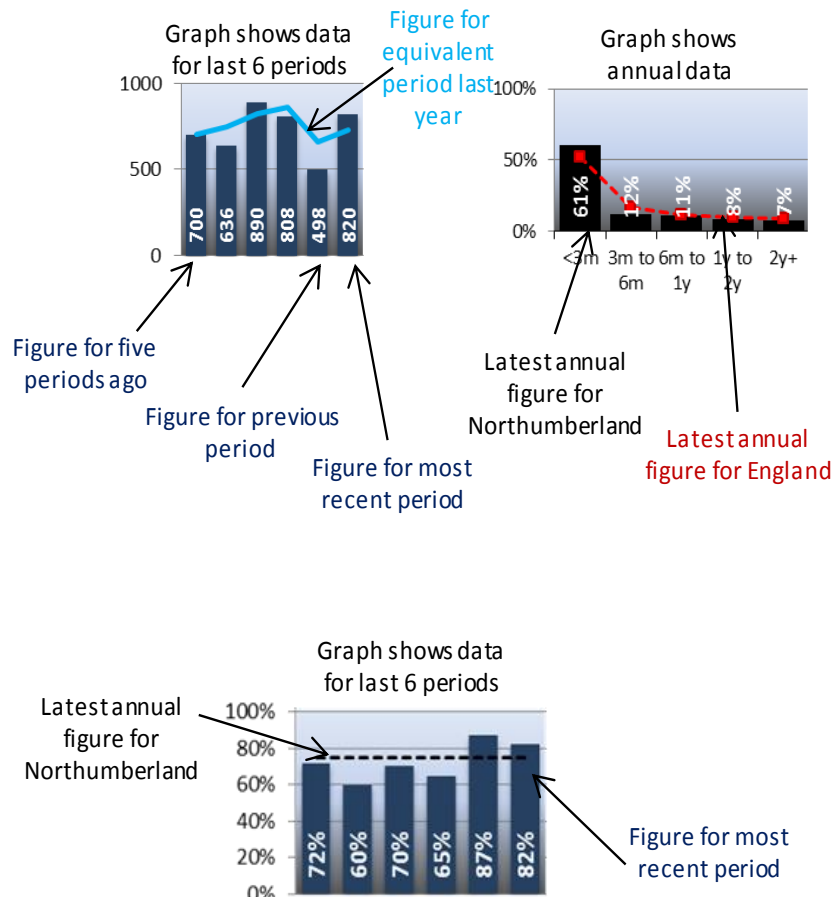
- 4.6 As at 26th November 2018, there were 9.8 full-time equivalent agency workers employed (a similar level to May 2018). In order to recruit, retain and develop a stable workforce of social workers, there is a targeted recruitment campaign underway to attract newly qualified and experienced staff to Northumberland, and a social work academy has been launched and currently has nine social workers in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). As well as this, a Continuous and Professional Development (CPD) pathway is being developed for aspiring senior practitioners and managers.
- 4.7 Work with children in need is supported both by practical guidance and a policy framework. Assessments of children in need routinely record information, conclusions and decisions, and the majority are completed within the nationally-prescribed timescale and in November 2018 (so far), 100% of referrals had a decision made on them by a team manager within 1 working day.

4.8 Systems are in place to ensure that where staff are absent from work, their work trays (within ICS) can be picked up, checked and actioned, with the system generating alerts for workers to pick up tasks where necessary.

5. RECENT TRENDS WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

5.1 STANDARD DATASET

Guide to the graphs:



5.2 EARLY HELP

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) states that “early intervention involves identifying children and families that may be at risk of running into difficulties and providing timely and effective support”. The terms ‘early intervention’ and ‘early help’ are often used interchangeably, and describe a range of services, programmes or interventions to help children and families resolve problems before they become more difficult to reverse or require more interventionist support (such as social work).

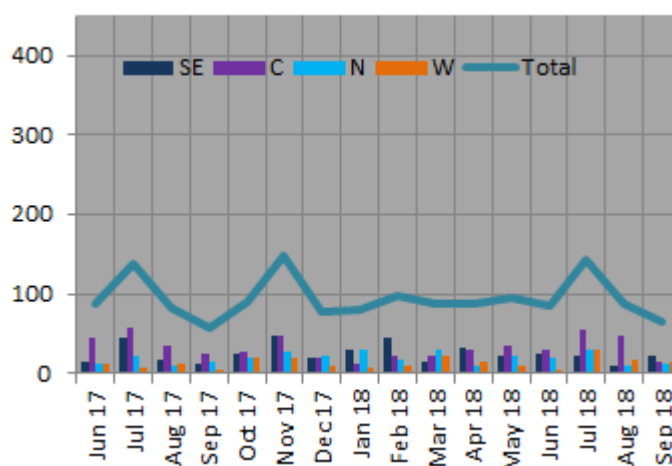
The number of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) undertaken each month in Northumberland is outlined in Graph 2. The most recent EHA registration figures are for the 12 months leading up to the end of September 2018. Across this period, there were a total of 1,152 EHAs initiated – which when equated to the

under eighteen population gives a figure of 195 per 10,000 – higher than the latest national rate reported by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) of 191 per 10,000.

The number of EHA’s done across the county has remained fairly consistent, when compared to the previous year. Numbers in the Central and South East areas have slightly fallen whilst those in the North and West have increased. Extensive work has been carried out to improve the quality of data within the Early Help Module (performance management system), and this will allow data to be reported at agency level in future, and in turn be able to target those agencies where referrals may have dipped.

Referrals made into the early help hubs have significantly increased across all areas of the county as the service has become more established. The expectation is that this will continue to rise as the new ‘front door’ processes are introduced.

Graph 2 – number of EHAs undertaken per month



5.3 RECENT TRENDS WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

It is generally accepted that an initial contact is one received by children’s services about a child where there is a request for general advice, information or a service¹. It may, or may not be accepted as a referral. A referral (as defined by Department for Education) is ‘a request for services to be provided by local authority children’s social care and is either in respect of a child not previously known to the local authority, or one where the case was previously open but is now closed’.

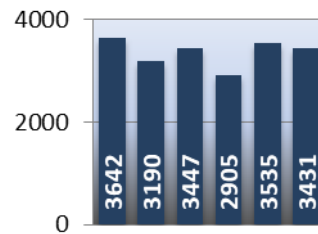
The number of initial contacts received in Northumberland looked to be decreasing, but has increased over the past two quarters; with 3,431 contacts received in the quarter ending October 2018 (compared to 3,535 in the previous quarter). 901 of these were accepted as a referral within the social care teams in the most recent quarter - a 26% conversion rate (the latest national rate is 28%).

Over the past twelve months there have been a total of 3,890 referrals accepted by Northumberland’s social care teams, which when equated to the most recent

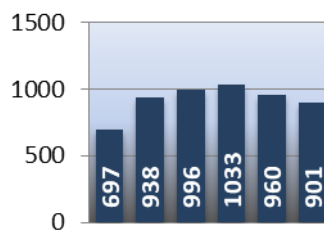
¹ ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5 Report, p20

child population figures gives a rate of 659 per 10,000 – higher than the latest (2017/18) national rate (of 553), and regional rate (of 602). This figure represents a 20% increase compared to last year (549). Graphs 3a and 3b show the number of contacts and referrals received by Children’s Services in each of the past six quarters.

Graph 3a – Contacts per quarter



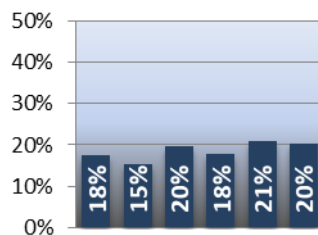
Graph 3b – Referrals per quarter



Around one third (32%) of referrals received in the last year were from the police, with 22% received from health agencies, 15% from services within Early Years and Schools and 14% from LA services.

A re-referral is defined as a second referral on a closed case within 12 months of a previous referral. In Northumberland, 20% of referrals received in the quarter ending October 2018 were counted as re-referrals, with this representing a similar figure to the previous quarter (21%). This figure is in line with the national figure (21%), and above the regional average (18%).

Graph 4 – Re-referrals within 12 months



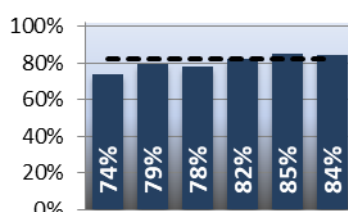
In the most recent quarter the proportion of re-referrals within 3 months of the previous referral was 4% (note this figure includes the percentage re-referred within 1 month). This figure is the same as the previous quarter.

The children and family (C & F) assessment was implemented in March 2014 replacing initial and core assessments, with managers making a judgement about whether it should be completed within 10, 25 or 45 working days of the referral to

children's services. Graph 5 (below) shows the proportion of assessments completed by the deadline set by the team manager.

Performance has now become better than the service target of 80%, with 84% being completed in timescale (compared to 85% in the previous quarter). Whilst this isn't measured nationally, Northumberland completes a higher proportion of assessments in 45 working days (90%) compared to other local authorities in England and the North East (83% and 82% respectively). The improvement in performance has been due to senior and team managers embedding their expectations with regards to when assessments are submitted, as well as the level of quality that is expected within the assessment. Whilst some assessments are still completed outside of the timescales, the overall number has reduced. At the time of writing, 7 assessments were overdue.

Graph 5 - % assessments completed in timescale



5.4 Child Protection

A Section 47 (S47) enquiry refers to enquiries conducted under the provisions of Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

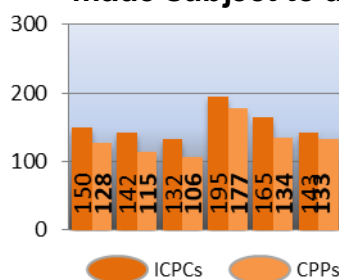
In the year ending October 2018, there were 1,308 S47 enquiries completed, equating to 222 per 10,000; higher than the latest national average of 167. This rate represents an increase compared to last year where the S47 rate was 183 per 10,000.

In the most recent quarter, 51% of all S47s led to an initial child protection conference (ICPC) – which is above the latest annual figure of 48%, and also above the latest national average (2017/18) of 40%. The most recent quarterly figure is in line with the figure from the previous quarter (50%).

Over the previous year, 635 children were the subject of an ICPC, equating to 108 per 10,000 - above the national average (2017/18) of 67. Of these, 550 children were then made subject to a Child Protection Plan – equating to 93 per 10,000 – again, above the national rate of 58 and the regional rate of 88. This equates to 87% of children made subject to an ICPC went on to start a CPP; and the same as the national average.

In the most recent quarter ending October 2018, there were 143 children subject to an initial child protection conference (see graph 6) which represents a decrease from the previous quarter; with 133 being made subject to a child protection plan (CPP) – a 93% conversion rate.

Graph 6 – number of children subject to ICPCs and numbers subsequently made subject to a CPP

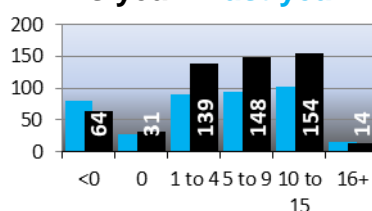


In the publication “Working Together to Safeguard Children”², it recommends that social work managers convene ICPCs within 15 working days of the most recent strategy discussion that triggered the Section 47 enquiry. In the year ending October 2018, 86% of ICPCs were held within this standard – better than the previous year’s figure (of 84%), the national average (2017/18) of 77%, and the regional average (of 83%).

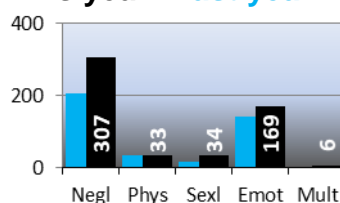
Graph 7a shows the age groups of children starting CPPs in the year ending October 2018 (compared to year ending October 2017). 64 cases (12% of all CPPs started in the year) were unborn babies, with 31 (6%) being babies. 139 children (25%) were aged between 1 and 4 years old, with 148 (27%) being aged between 5 and 9. A further 154 children (28%) starting CPPs were aged between 10 and 15 years old, with 14 (3%) aged 16 or over.

Graph 7b shows the breakdown of the category of abuse for all CPPs started in the year ending October 2018. 307 children (56% of CPPs) were allocated the category of ‘neglect’ (compared to 47% nationally), with 33 cases (6%) labelled as physical abuse (8% nationally), 34 (6%) being due to sexual abuse (4% nationally), 169 children (31%) considered emotional abuse (35% nationally) and 6 (1%) being labelled with multiple abuse types (5% nationally).

Graph 7a – number of CPPs started in the year by age group
This year v last year



Graph 7b – number of CPPs started in the year by category of abuse
This year v last year

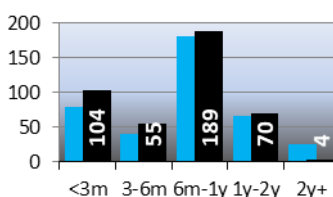


² Working Together to Safeguard Children, March 2015, page 38

Of the 550 CPPs that started across the year ending October 2018, 97 children (18%) had previously had a CPP (compared to 20% nationally), with 38 children (7%) having had a CPP started within two years of a previous CPP ending.

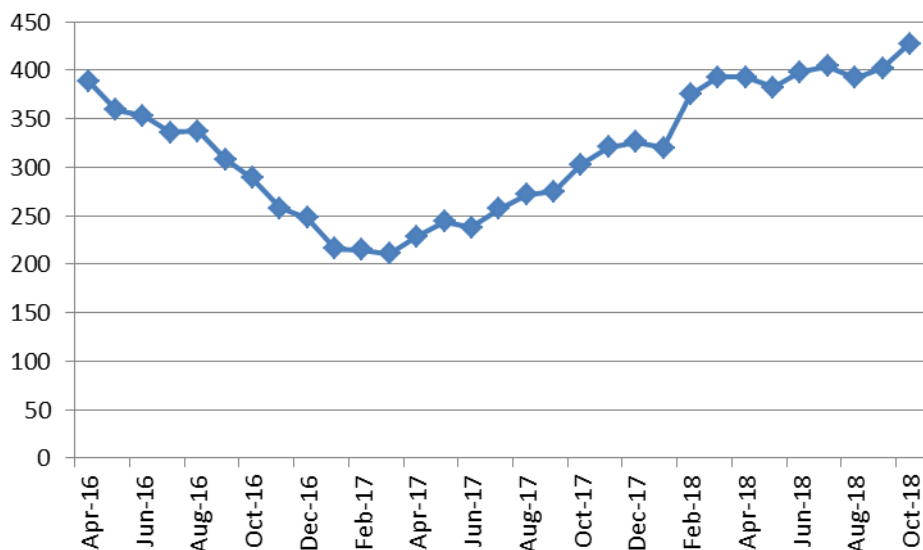
Of the 352 CPPs ending in the year (see Graph 8), 104 (25%) ended within up to three months of the plan starting (compared to 20% nationally), 55 (13%) ended between three and six months (11% nationally), 189 (45%) ended between six and twelve months (42% nationally), 70 (17%) ended between one year and two years of the plan starting (24% nationally), and 4 (0.9%) of those ending started over two years before (3% nationally).

Graph 8 – number of CPPs ended by duration



At the end of October 2018, 427 children were subject to a CPP (see Graph 9), which when equated to the most recent population estimates equates to 72 per 10,000 of the under 18 population; above the national rate of 45 and regional average of 66 per 10,000.

Graph 9 – Number of children with Child Protection Plans at month end



To try and understand the reasons behind the increase in CPPs, the Performance team have undertaken some in-depth analysis. The analysis looked at two fifteen month periods in particular: between January 2016 and March 2017 [period 1]; where the number of CPPs had reduced, and between April 2017 and June 2018 [period 2]; where the number of CPPs had increased.

The two periods were compared, and following the analysis, we can say that the increase in CPPs is not due to:

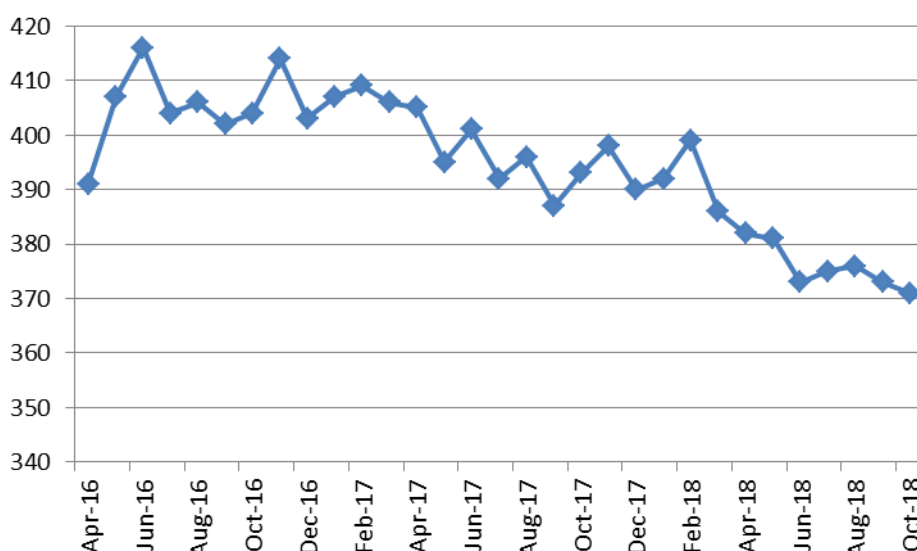
- More referrals - the number of referrals to children’s social care was roughly the same in period 1 as period 2
- CP plans remaining open for longer - those ending after 2 or more years has reduced from 10% to 1%, those ending after 1 to 2 years has reduced from 26% to 14%
- Larger sibling groups – average sibling group size was 1.8 children per household in both periods
- Any particular age group of children being made subject to CPPs

Further analysis of the data has shown that the rise has coincided with the setting up of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), which has resulted in a change in the way that cases are triaged. By having one central point for all referrals across the county with multi-agency input into the triage process, this has meant that thresholds are consistently applied, and that safeguarding concerns can be identified in a more timely fashion.

A task and finish group has been set up to further understand the increase, part of which will include auditing cases where the CPP has ended recently.

At the end of October 2018 2017, 371 children were in care (LAC) (see Graph 10), which when equated to the most recent population estimates equates to 63 per 10,000 of the under 18 population; in line with the national rate of 64, and below the regional rate of 95 per 10,000.

Graph 10 – Number of children in care at month end



Recent regional analysis shows that Northumberland has the lowest LAC rate in the North East, with this being as a result of a more robust process around the decision making for children becoming looked after. A legal gateway panel meets each week to discuss children who may need to enter care, with previous decisions made at previous meetings also reviewed at the appropriate period. This has resulted in LAC numbers reducing recently, which is in contrast to the regional picture.

6. IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	Management of caseload allocation is a key part of safeguarding children.
Finance and value for money:	Figures provided in this report will allow managers to monitor the level of caseloads and activity on a quarterly basis in order to ensure resources are being allocated appropriately.
Legal:	The report includes information on Looked After Children cases, with a number of these being subject to care proceedings.
Procurement:	None.
Human Resources:	The council should continue to monitor the impact of resource investments with regards to workloads to ensure effective targeting to support staff and to improve performance. At present, there is a national focus on supervision, training and stress-levels of social workers.
Property:	None.
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	The Laming Recommendations require that Directors must ensure that all cases of children assessed as needing a service have an allocated social worker and that Children's Services continues to prioritise and allocate the most at risk cases. This is the core element of the Ofsted inspection framework.
Crime & Disorder:	The prevalence of domestic violence and substance misuse are monitored during case reviews, and influence workload management decisions.
Customer Considerations:	The data in the report indicates the extent to which service user's needs are being met in the early stages of a case.
Carbon Reduction:	None
Wards:	None

7. CONSULTATION

The following have been consulted: Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services; Service Director – Children's Social Care; Acting Head of Safeguarding.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Lord Laming – The Victoria Climbié Inquiry.
Lord Laming – The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report
Social Work Task Force – Building a safe, confident future
HM Government - Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation
Wood Report – Review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children boards
ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Report Phase 5
ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Report Phase 6

9. Report sign off.

Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Executive Director of Education	Cath McEvoy
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wayne Daley

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