

5 February 2024**Agenda Item 8****REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND
THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND)****CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE, RISKS AND
FINANCIAL POSITION – QUARTER 2 2023-4****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide the Committee with a summary of the Children and Families Department's financial position for the current financial year.
2. To provide the Committee with a summary of the Children and Families Department's performance against the Ambitions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan.
3. To provide the Committee with a summary of the Children and Families Department's key departmental risks.

Information

4. There is a wide range of performance data that supports the effective delivery of children's services. This data can be complex to understand, given the breadth of functions that the department provides, often working in partnership with wider services including schools. Performance indicators span early help and children's social care, youth justice and a range of education related measures around attendance, exclusion and attainment, including relating specifically to vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities. Given that this is the first performance report received by the Children and Families Select Committee, Members may wish to consider whether engaging in a workshop to develop their understanding of performance indicators would be beneficial in supporting them to carry out their role in scrutinising Children and Families Department performance.

Performance against the Ambitions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan

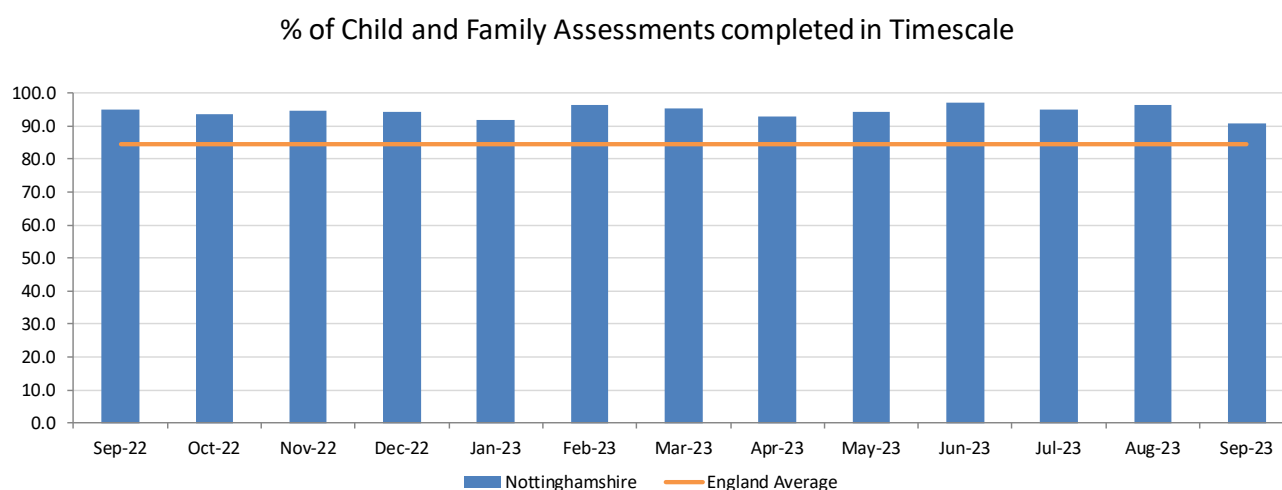
5. This first performance outlines progress against the performance measures within the Council's Annual Delivery Plan, as relates to children and families.

Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 2 - Supporting Children and Families

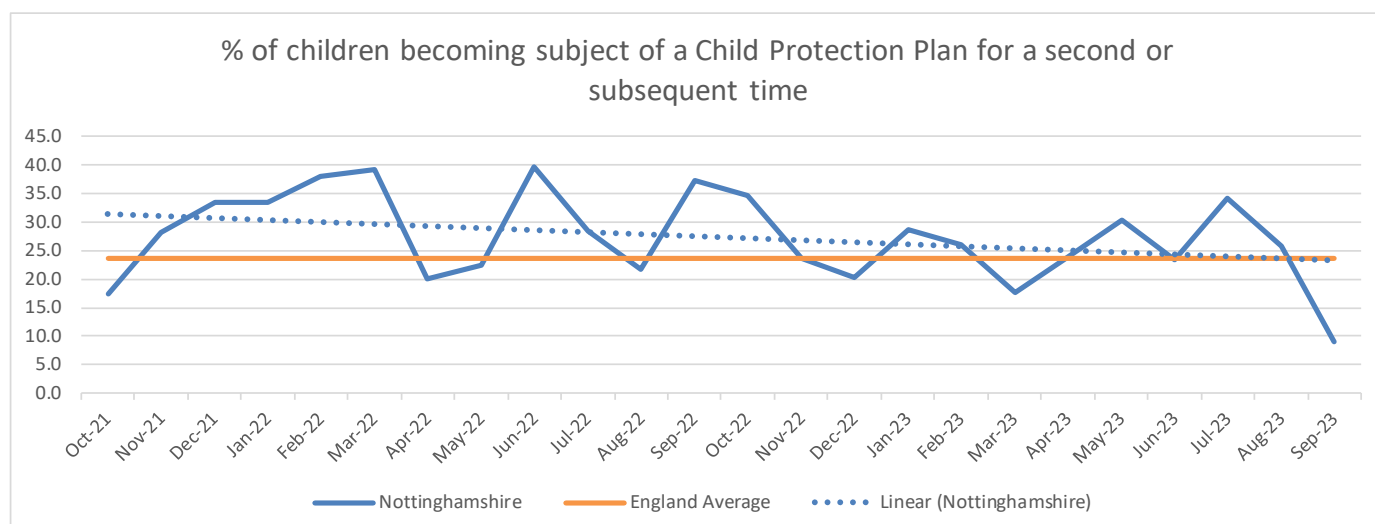
6. Latest data for the 2022/23 academic year shows that the number of pupils in Nottinghamshire reaching a good level of development at the early years foundation stage has improved, up 0.6 percentage points on the previous year. This is above both the national average and the average rate for statistical neighbours. Performance at the early years foundation stage is essential to ensuring children have the knowledge and skills they need to start school.
7. Almost 1 in 4 assessments undertaken for children and young people and their families were targeted early help assessments by children's centres and the family service, rather than a social care assessment, and 11.9% of children who have started a child in need (CIN) plan or child protection plan (CPP) this year received one of these early help assessments in the previous two years. The ambition is for more children and families in need to receive early support rather than their first experience of support being a statutory assessment.
8. Work is ongoing with partners to ensure that children and families get the right support at the right time and at the right level and to provide help at the earliest opportunity based on need rather than an application of threshold. Support will be provided through early help services where it is appropriate to do so, increasing the number of families receiving support and reducing the number who experience social work assessments that do not lead to support. The Needs Led Front Door and Early Help Redesign transformation projects are at the forefront of making these changes.
9. In terms of the effectiveness of the early help offer, this is demonstrated through the percentage of families supported to make significant and sustained progress, which has increased this quarter, up to 69.7% for the year to date. This means that 7 out of 10 families supported have made and sustained significant progress in all identified areas of need for six months after closure, with more making progress against some areas.
10. The proportion of new Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within timescale (140 days) between April and September 2023 was 36.7% compared with just 0.7% during the same period in 2022. During the period April to September 2023, 135 new EHCPs were issued within timescale compared with 7 in the same period during 2022. In total 368 new EHCPs were issued between April and September 2023 compared with 237 for the same period in 2022.
11. There are two national metrics for annual review performance: (1) the percentage of annual reviews completed within 12 months (6 months for children aged under 5), and (2) the percentage of amendments following an annual review completed with 12 weeks of the annual review.
12. Between April and September 2023, 51.1% (a total of 1,699 were due) of annual reviews were completed within timescale. This compares with 77.9% (1,283) during the same period in 2022. Amendments completed within 12 weeks has shown an improvement in the period April to September 2023. During this period in 2023, 1,065 EHCPs required amending and 84.6% of these were amended and finalised within 12 weeks of the annual review meeting compared with 56.8% (2005) during the same period in 2022.

Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 3 - Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

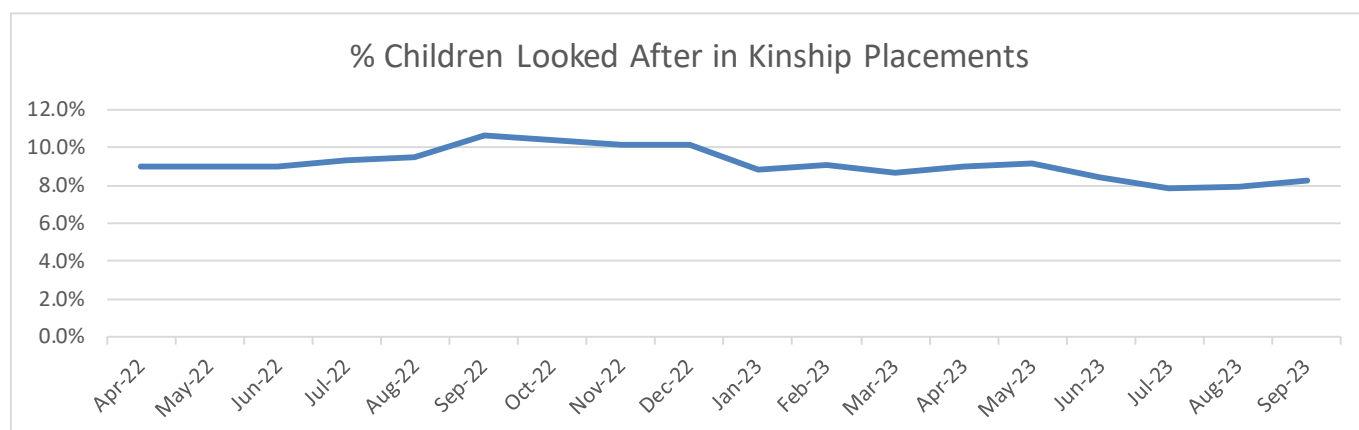
13. The proportion of child and family assessments completed which do not result in ongoing children's social care involvement remains high at 68.3% compared with a statistical neighbour average of 32.9%. As detailed above, work is underway with partners through the Needs Led Front Door and the Early Help Redesign transformation projects to support children and families at the right time and at the right level and to provide help at the earliest opportunity based on need rather than an application of threshold.
14. The proportion of child and family assessments completed in timescale remains high, with 94.7% of assessments completed within the statutory timescale of 45 days so far this year, as can be seen in the chart below. This is 10 percentage points above the England average for 2022/23.



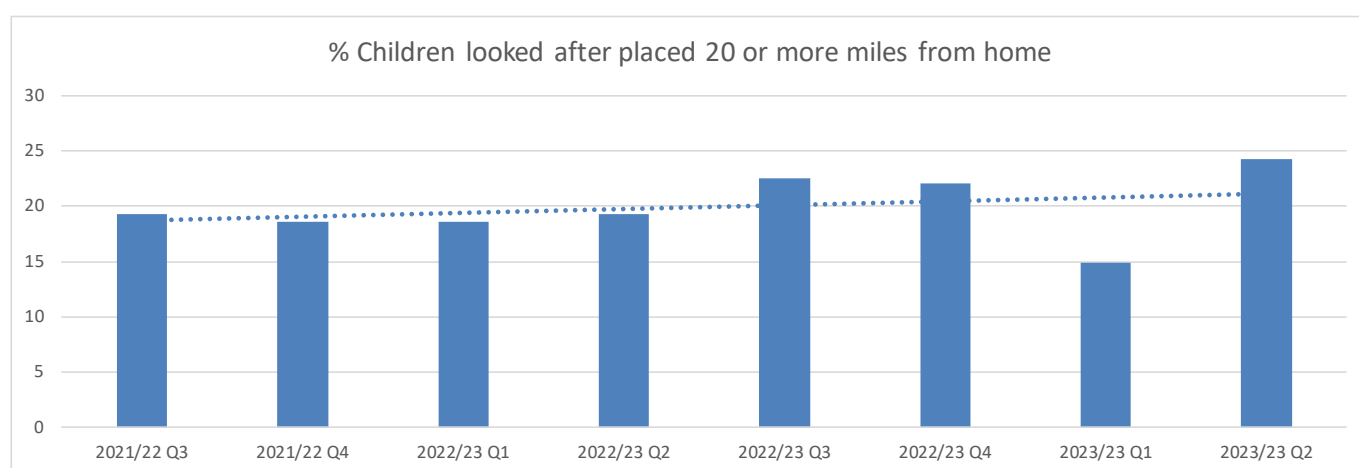
15. Although there has been a small increase in the proportion of referrals which were a second or subsequent referral within 12 months this quarter, the long-term trend shows that re-referrals are decreasing.
16. Nottinghamshire continues to be at or above the national average in respect of repeat child protection plans and work has been undertaken to understand why this is the case. A Family Networking approach has been introduced within the Assessment Service, which will help with understanding of children and families' experiences, identify the support from their wider family and friends and ensure ongoing support is available to provide sustainability once social care involvement is no longer required. Workshops with Assessment and District Child Protection Managers and Child Protection Chairs identified opportunities for wider improvements, including supporting managers to build confidence in their decision making to ensure children and families are provided with the right support at the right time. Work is also underway with partners in respect of strategy discussions and multi-agency decision making to ensure that children receive the right support at the lowest and safest level of intervention. Latest data in the chart below shows this is starting to have an effect, with the trend line showing that the proportion of repeat child protection plans is decreasing and is now close to the national average.



17. There has been significant improvement over this quarter in the number of children on child protection plans lasting 2 years or more. The numbers have reduced due to plans coming to an appropriate end through de-escalation of concerns, or through children becoming accommodated via the care proceedings process. There is monitoring of this cohort of children at around 15 months to ensure that children's plans are being progressed appropriately prior to reaching the 2-year mark.
18. There has been a small reduction in the proportion of child protection cases reviewed in timescale, down from 86.4% in quarter 1 to 83.6% in quarter 2. As this measure is cumulative across the lifetime of the plan, the impact of staff absences earlier in the year, along with issues such as lack of social work reports and/or social work attendance at meetings and technical issues associated with Microsoft Teams, has continued to reflect in the statistics. There have also been issues around lack of preparation of families for meetings and issues of professional quoracy/reports during school holiday periods. This is currently an area of high priority for the service. Chairs have been reminded of booking timescales and the need to ensure Children's Services Manager approval for out of timescale reviews and there will be higher scrutiny of these requests going forward. Over the next 12 months as with initial conferences, there will be a greater emphasis on quality and outcomes in line with the commitment to strengths-based values.
19. 8.3% of children in care currently reside in kinship placements, that is fostering placements with family and friends. This is below the target of 12% of all children in care and a reduction on performance last year as shown in the chart below. Efforts have been focussed on young people remaining local to and living with family members as kinship placements are an essential plank of Nottinghamshire's placement sufficiency strategy. Almost half of new foster carers are family and friends carers and this figure is expected to increase in future periods.



20. There has been a slight reduction this quarter in the proportion of children who leave care subject to a special guardianship order or child arrangement order. Current performance, at 17.9% is still above both the latest available national average of 17% and the statistical neighbour average of 14%. A process has been developed to support improved extended family engagement for children in care through the Family Network approach.
21. 66% of children in care currently reside in a family-based setting which remains Nottinghamshire's ambition for children wherever possible. This includes fostering placements and placements with family and friends. This is an increase of 8 percentage points since 2022/23.
22. There has been an increase in the proportion of children in care placed 20 miles or more from home as shown in the chart below. Currently 24.2% of children are placed 20 miles or more away. This is 7 percentage points higher than the England and statistical neighbour averages. The majority of these placements are in independent fostering agency and external residential placements as availability of suitable fostering and residential placements more locally remains a challenge.



23. More than half of children in care remain in long term placements – that is in the same placement for more than two years – which supports the ambition for children in care to live in safe, stable, and loving placements. There are an increased number of placements for those children aged below one, driven by more complex care plans as directed by the Courts, and those aged over 16. Whilst not all positive, some of that disruption is due to a

well-developed pathway to independence and also, with the higher number of over 16s in care, is reflective of attempts to reconcile with birth families.

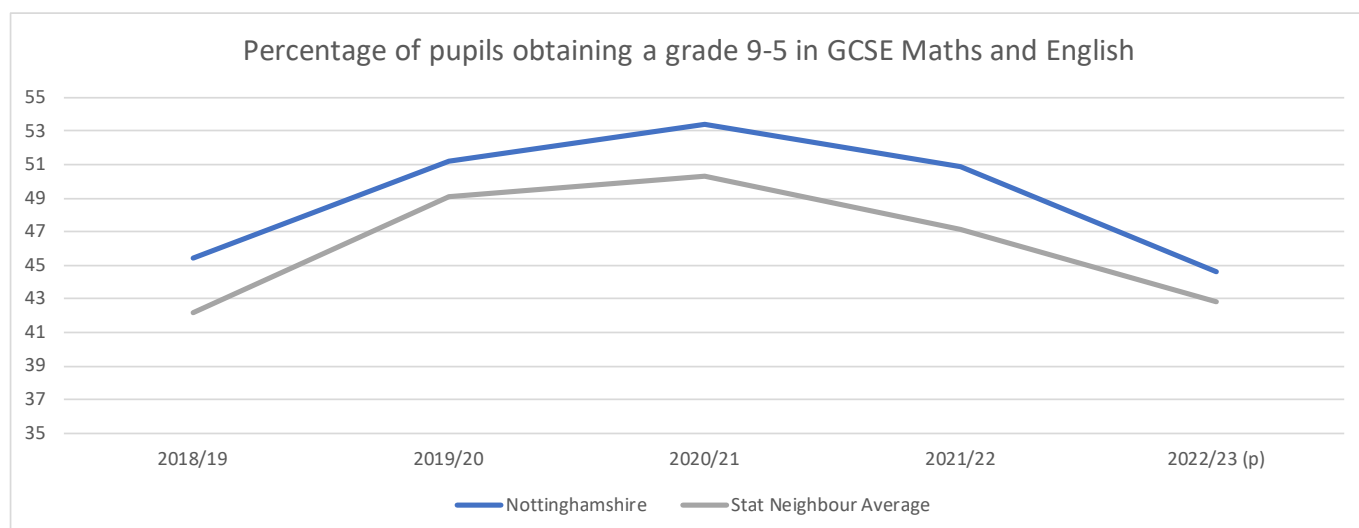
24. There has been a further increase in care leavers living in suitable accommodation this quarter. As can be seen in the chart below, this has been an improving trend for the last two years. There has been an increase in Supported Accommodation Provision (including the specialist provision for former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children care leavers which is continually expanding to meet demand). This more modern and more suitable accommodation is seen as meeting young people's needs and has decreased the need for other forms of emergency or unsuitable accommodation. Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisor roles help to proactively prevent accommodation breakdown and risk of homelessness/unsuitable accommodation provision.



25. There has been a slight drop in the proportion of care leavers in Education, Employment or Training (EET) during this period due to them finishing their studies/courses and being in-between options during quarter 2. From September/October there is more certainty about which Further or Higher Education options they are participating in and so quarter 3 should see an increase. There is continuing support for young people as opportunities for care leavers within employment, education and training are promoted as part of the Nottinghamshire Achievement Offer. There is also an increase in employability briefings within the world of work. The Achievement Offer has been reviewed and will be relaunched this Spring.
26. First time entrants to the youth justice system remains low and has reduced compared with the same point last year with 56 entrants per 100,000 compared with 75 at the end of quarter 2 2022/23. The reoffending binary rate also remains low, at 13% currently compared with an average of 31% nationally and for statistical neighbours.

Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 4 - Building skills that help people get good jobs

27. Provisional figures show that 44.6% of pupils in Nottinghamshire schools obtained 9-5 grades (a strong pass) in English and maths at key stage 4 last year. This is a reduction of 5.3 percentage points on the previous year as grade boundaries were brought back in line with pre-pandemic levels. This is above the statistical neighbour average of 42.8% as it has been over the last 5 years, as seen in the chart below.



28. 12.4% of children in care for at least 12 months achieved the same 9-5 grades in English and maths. Outcomes for this group of children have bucked the national trend with a 2.8 percentage point increase compared with the year before. As with the total school cohort, this is above the national average of 11%. These achievements have been supported by the Virtual School and Achievement Service working closely together to increase educational placement stability and resilience and increased line of sight through transition to post-16 support.
29. There has been a slight narrowing of the gap in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those who have received free school meals in the last six years) who have achieved grades 9-5 in English and maths, down from 32% to 29.5%. This is still higher than the national average of 26.7%.
30. 92% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools in Nottinghamshire are currently rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Both of these are broadly in line with the national and statistical neighbour averages for these measures and show that the majority of pupils and their families have access to a good quality of education.
31. Since the pandemic, persistent absenteeism, where a pupil misses 10% or more of their education, has been an issue nationally. Latest available data for Nottinghamshire shows a slight decrease in persistent absenteeism, with 19.7% of pupils being recorded as persistently absent during the Autumn and Spring terms compared with 21.2% over the same period the previous year. This is below both the national average of 21.2% and the statistical neighbour average of 20.8% for the same period, showing Nottinghamshire is recovering faster than most in this area.
32. The latest data for children in care from 2021/22 shows that persistent absenteeism is also a problem for children who are looked after for more than 12 months, with 19.2% being recorded as persistent absentees. This is in line with the national average and the average for statistical neighbours. Over the same period, 11.85% of this group of children were subject to one or more suspension. This is in line with previous years but 2 percentage points above the national and statistical neighbour averages.

33. Overall rates of suspension for pupils in Nottinghamshire schools remain low at 1.7% for the Autumn term 2022/23. This is a slight increase on the same period last year but remains in line with national and statistical neighbour averages of 1.6%.
34. Just 0.05% of pupils in Nottinghamshire schools were permanently excluded during the 2022/23 Autumn term. This is in line with the national and statistical neighbour averages for this period. For children currently in care there were no permanent exclusions recorded, as has been the case for the last few years.
35. The proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds in Nottinghamshire reported as not being in education, employment and training remains low at just 2%. This has remained consistently low for more than two years now.

Departmental Risks

36. The department is managing several key risks. The table below describes these risks and the mitigating actions being undertaken:

| Risk ID | Risk Category | Risk Description | Risk Mitigations |
|---------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| C01 | Service Delivery | <u>Placement Sufficiency</u> Our ambition is to have more children and young people able to live in family-based placements, close to home. However, the context is a local and national shortage of suitable placements, particularly foster care. This impacts both on the types of placements we are able to match with and whether placements are close to home. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work is taking place across D2N2 to increase recruitment of foster carers and holistic care packages to retain them. - There is a focus on kinship, family and friends, Special Guardianship/Care Arrangement Orders to keep young people within their own networks. - Increased support is available to children on the edge of care to support children to remain safely at home whenever it is possible to do |
| C07 | Service Delivery and Reputation | <u>SEND Area Inspection</u> The SEND Area Inspection outcome identified significant challenges and there is a need to make significant improvements in the short and medium term to improve children's experiences and outcomes and demonstrate sufficient progress to the Department for Education, NHS England and Ofsted/CQC. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focussed work is taking place in line with an approved improvement plan that is monitored regularly through governance arrangements. - A longer-term SEND Strategy is being developed collaboratively to ensure that improvements can be sustained. - Within the plan there is a strong focus on engaging with children and their families to ensure their experiences are improving. |

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|-----|------------|--|--|
| C11 | Reputation | <u>Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services Inspection</u> The last full children's social care inspection in 2019 rated the Council as 'Good' and re-inspection is due in 2024. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A children's social care improvement plan is in place with key priorities that are monitored regularly. - Preparation work is underway with partners, leaders and staff to ensure colleagues understand what to expect and feel well prepared. |
| C17 | Workforce | <u>Workforce Recruitment and Retention</u> There are particular areas of the workforce where recruitment and retention is difficult both locally and nationally. This includes social workers, which impacts on the quality of practice, and educational psychologists, which impacts on the Council's ability to assess the needs of children with SEND within statutory timescales. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversifying routes into social work to try to retain social workers as they progress through their careers. - Focussing on supporting the training and development of practitioners - Assessing impact through the annual health check survey. - Implementing a "grow your own" route into educational psychology to increase capacity in a sustainable way. |

Summary Financial Position – Period 7 2023/24

37. The Children and Families Department Revenue Budget is £180.0m and actual expenditure at the end of Period 7 (end of October, 58.3% of year) is £105.6m (59% of budget). The full year forecast is £182.4m, which is an overspend of £2.5m (1.4%).
38. Care, Help and Protection Division reported a forecast underspend of £0.5m (£0.4m Period 6) including a £0.1m underspend on social worker staffing (£0.3m underspend in Period 6). This includes £1.0m of temporary budget. The movement in the month was mainly due to a reduction in staff costs due to delays to new staff start dates.
39. The full year forecast on agency spend across all teams was £7.1m. There were 96.3 FTE agency Social Workers and 26.1 FTE non-social work qualified agency workers. These numbers will have reduced by the end of March 2024 as some Maternity leave cover and cover for newly qualified social workers will have come to an end.
40. The Commissioning & Resources Division budget is £108.9m. At Period 7 there was an actual spend of £54.5m (50% of budget), however the full year forecast is £111.4m, which is an overspend of £2.5m (2.3%). There was a £3.3m overspend on External Looked After Children Placements (£2.4m Period 6) after £1.3m temporary funding for the remaining costs/cases previously linked to the pandemic. The forecast on External Looked After Children numbers increased by two in the month and the 'placement mix' was slightly adverse, exacerbated by several very high-cost residential placements, ranging from £10,000 to £18,000 per week (average usually £6,000 per week), adding around £0.8m to the forecast. Obtaining contributions from Health is still extremely challenging.

41. Education, Learning & Inclusion Division forecasted a £0.4m overspend, this in the main is due to pension enhancements as a result of the May 2023 Consumer Prices Index rate, which the annual increase is based upon, being considerably higher than previous years (8.7%).

Financial Implications

42. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Children and Families Select Committee:

- 1) considers and comments on:
 - a) the summary of Children and Families Department performance against the ambitions in the Annual Delivery Plan measures.
 - b) the summary of Children and Families Department key departmental risks.
 - c) the financial position of Children and Families Department, as at Period 7 2023/24.
- 2) considers whether it would be beneficial to take part in an externally facilitated workshop with the Cabinet Members for Children and Families and Education and SEND, to develop an increased understanding of performance indicators relating to children and families.
- 3) agrees to receiving performance updates on a quarterly basis.

Councillor Tracey Taylor
Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Councillor Sam Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and SEND

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SF 24/01/24)

43. The matters considered in this report and the recommended actions are within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee.

Financial Comments (JG 23/01/24)

44. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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