



13th September 2021

Agenda Item: 6

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, FINANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE & IMPROVEMENT

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CORE DATA SET - PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE FOR QUARTER 1 2021/22

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides the Committee with a summary of the performance and finance of the Council's services for children and young people for quarter 1 of 2021/22 (1st April to 30th June 2021).

Information

2. The Council's Planning and Performance Framework establishes the approach that the Council takes to planning and managing its performance to deliver effective and responsive services.
3. The Council has agreed that the key measures of its performance will be defined through a number of core data sets which are detailed in its Council Plan and each of its Departmental Strategies.
4. Performance against these core data sets is reported to Committee every three months (quarterly) to support the performance management of the delivery of services.

Performance Reporting for 2021/22

5. This report provides a summary of the quarter 1 position for the Children's Social Care and Education Core Data Set performance measures that fall within the responsibility of the Children and Young People's Committee. The full Core Data Set is included in **Appendices 1 and 2**. **Appendix 1** shows those measures which have received updates since the previous quarter. **Appendix 2** shows those measures which have not changed.
6. For each measure, the following information is provided:
 - Current performance and whether a high or low value is regarded as 'good'.
 - The period this current value relates to.

- An indication of whether performance has improved (+), declined (-), or remained the same (=) over the current reporting period. The most recently available annual performance and which year this relates to.
- The underlying numbers used to calculate the % for some measures is provided within the measure description.
- If a measure is cumulative, this is stated in the measure description.
- Comparator data of the national average for England, and that of the Council's children's services statistical neighbours, where this data is available.

Child and Family Assessments

7. The Authority continues to see consistently good performance in this area despite an increase in demand and blended working practice.

Child Protection

8. The Service is aware that for some time there has been a gradual reduction of the number of children in the County subject to child protection plans and this has brought the Authority into line with our statistical neighbours.
9. Child Protection Coordinators continue to closely monitor the length of time that children are subject to child protection plans and there is a robust system in place for addressing drift and delay where this is apparent.
10. The Service continue to hold discussions with our Child Protection Coordinators, and Children's Service Manager colleagues in social care about the numbers of repeat child protection plans. This has also been a discussion point for Child Protection Coordinators in their quarterly meetings with team managers across the County. There is concern about 'revolving door' scenarios, and the use of forums such as Complex Case Panel are to be encouraged to support thinking around these complex situations.
11. Child Protection Coordinators and all social work teams remain very mindful of the need to ensure all reviews are held within timescales, and the requirement to seek service manager agreement to move a conference outside of this, which would only be agreed with valid justification usually to ensure attendance of relevant family members and/or professionals that would be crucial to the meeting being a productive one. The Authority remains in line with our statistical neighbours on this measure.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing

12. As anticipated, the number of children for whom Child Sexual Exploitation concerns have been identified has increased upon the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions. This has translated into more Child Sexual Exploitation strategy meetings for both children in local authority care and children based at home; there has been a greater increase for Child Sexual Exploitation strategy meetings for children based at home but this increase is in line with previous data pre-Covid measures.
13. As anticipated, numbers of children missing have increased with the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions. The total number of children who have gone missing has not increased significantly but the number of times they have gone missing has increased. 5+ missings

remain similar to previous quarters meaning that the children who have been missing on multiple occasions have not exceeded 5+ occasions. Nevertheless, the reasons for these increased missing incidents for individual children will be analysed.

Looked After Children

14. This measure considers children in care who have had more than three placements during the previous 12 months as a proportion of all children in care. The latest data indicates continuing strong performance in general, though the steady decline during the last year reflects the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the challenge it continues to present in maintaining stable placements which has been referenced in this commentary during previous quarters.
15. Although this data continues to evidence that the majority of children in care experience very stable placements over the longer term, the decline during the past year in the actual percentage of children in care to which this applies is reflective of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on placement stability. Equally older children in care aged 16+, who make up more than 25% of the total number of children in care, typically experience more changes of placement as part of their care plan as they move into semi-independent accommodation as part of their wider transition into adulthood.

Adoption

16. The increase in time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family from previous quarters is due to delays in some court hearings, due to the pandemic. There are long delays when a final hearing is to be contested within the County. The length of time will also be impacted by a number of children who are harder to place.
17. Performance for the time between the Local Authority receiving the court authority and deciding on a match indicated that once court authority has been obtained to seek adopters the match moves ahead quickly.

Care Leavers

18. Due to a known issue on Mosaic, which is affecting the updating of care leaver information on employment, education, and training and accommodation, the performance indicators for quarter 4 cannot be accurately calculated. In April, the Service identified 93 young people whose data could not be updated due to this issue.
19. The Information and Systems Team have been in contact with Servelec regarding the issue and continue to work to resolve the problem. As this work is ongoing, it is unlikely that accurate performance metrics for care leavers will be available for quarter 1 of 2021/22. Providing the Mosaic issue is fixed within the next month, it is estimated that quarter 2 performance indicators would be available and accurate.

Youth Offending

20. The rate (per 100,000 population) of First Time Entrants remains low relative to previous years with significant reductions when compared to the last full year. National statistics highlight a long-term decline in First Time Entrants, with greater numbers of young people

being diverted from formal outcomes (e.g. receiving a Community Resolution as an alternative). This is a pattern which has been reflected locally.

Summary Financial Position

21. The Children and Families Department Revenue Budget is forecast to overspend by £5.989m, including additional Covid-19 costs of £4.751m and £1.238m (0.82%) excluding Covid-19 costs as summarised in the Table below.

Table 1 – Summary Revenue Position

Previous Variance Incl Covid Addn Costs	Previous Variance Excl Covid Addn Costs	Division	Annual Budget	Actual to Period 3	Year-End Forecast	Under(-) / Overspend Variance	Covid19 Additional Costs	Variance Excluding Additional Costs	Variance as % of Budget
£000	£000		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	%
		Children & Young People's Committee							
2,233	99	Youth, Families & Social Work	61,596	12,777	64,040	2,444	2,344	100	0.16
(51)	(51)	Education Learning & Skills	6,219	1,692	6,157	(62)	0	(62)	1.00
3,747	1,200	Commissioning & Resources	69,757	11,008	73,364	3,607	2,407	1,200	1.72
0	0	Capital & Central Charges	12,892	(33)	12,892	0	0	0	0.00
5,929	1,248	Net Committee Overspend	150,464	25,445	156,453	5,989	4,751	1,238	0.82

22. The Youth, Families & Social Work Division is forecasting an overspend of £2.4m including Covid-19 additional costs of £2.3m. The major contributing factor is £2.0m overspend on social work staffing which has arisen due to the service still needing to use high levels of agency workers during Covid-19. The reasons for the high use of agency social workers include;

- 1) workforce preparedness; newly qualified social workers who have experienced their first year of practice during lockdown have not had the joint working opportunities they would have had in a non-pandemic year. Consequently, they have not yet fully developed the necessary skills, confidence and experience to undertake child protection work.
- 2) demand in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is currently at its highest ever level, 900 referrals per month higher than the same period last year and over 500 referrals per month higher than the same period in 2019. This is a consequence of latent demand and hidden harm; children are now being seen again by schools and services. Although we are working proactively to manage demand, it is anticipated that high levels of demand may decrease slightly during school summer holidays but will resume in the autumn.
- 3) there are very significant delays in the Family Courts, this is a consequence of Covid related delay and an ongoing lack of judicial time. Children are having final hearings delayed by up to six months and hearings are being cancelled at short notice. As cases are not being progressed Social Worker caseloads are increasing, and re-assessments

are being requested when there has been delay. Delays in Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption cases mean that children are remaining in care for longer.

23. The remaining overspend of £0.4m relates to Looked After Children Placements, in particular supporting 16 & 17 year olds living independently and the homes for young people with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.
24. The Commissioning & Resources division is reporting a £3.6m overspend including Covid-19 additional costs of £2.4m. The major contributing factor is an £4.1m overspend on external residential placements for Children Looked After of which £2.9m is an estimate of Covid-19 related costs (additional placements, specific additional/anticipated costs and temporary additional internal residential provision); the remaining overspend of £1.2m is the impact of the closure of Minster View.
25. External placements increased by a net of two in June which was as predicted for the month.
26. There is a net £0.5m underspend across a number of other budget heads, some of which are temporary in nature. This is mostly made up of staffing underspends, unused budget for pay protection and a temporary subsidy on the NHS employers pension rate. The remaining £0.3m overspend mainly consists of staffing budget overspends linked to the Vacancy Level Turnover across the division and a budget shortfall for Trade Union recharges.
27. Clayfields is currently forecasting a deficit of £0.3m against its income target of £0.51m. This takes into account an estimated £605,000 (550 welfare bed nights @ £1,100) loss of income for the period April – July. Original plans to increase the occupancy by the summer have been delayed further due to large amounts of staff having to self-isolate because of Covid-19. It is estimated that full occupancy should be achieved over the Autumn. The forecast also takes into account a final loan repayment estimated at £0.1m and a contribution towards the increased cost of employer liability insurance of £0.2m. The balance on the trading reserve is £0.564m
28. As well as the implications arising from the Covid-19 emergency there are risks associated with the forecast in relation to external residential placements and social work staffing due to the volatile nature of the demand on these budgets. In view of the high cost of external residential placements the forecast is highly sensitive to changes in e.g. numbers, weekly costs and placement mix. There is a robust monthly monitoring process to track trend data, average costs and actual numbers of children in placement to highlight potential issues as soon as possible.

Other Options Considered

29. This report is provided as part of the Committee's constitutional requirement to consider performance of all areas within its terms of reference on a quarterly basis. The departmental strategy was agreed on 24th January 2018 and the format and frequency of performance reporting were agreed by the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee on 12th March 2018. Due to the nature of the report no other options were considered appropriate.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

30. This report is provided as part of the Committee's constitutional requirement to consider performance of areas within its terms of reference on a quarterly basis.

Statutory and Policy Implications

31. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

32. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

33. Reporting on the performance of services for looked after children and care leavers will better enable the Council to ensure that children are effectively safeguarded.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That Committee considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the performance information on the Council's services for children and young people for the period 1st April to 30th June 2021.

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Constitutional Comments (CEH 18/08/21)

34. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (CDS 17/08/21)

35. There are no direct financial implications arising from the 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.

[Children and young people core data set – performance and finance for Quarter 4 2020-21 – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 26th July 2021](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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