

15<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Agenda Item: 7

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, FINANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE & IMPROVEMENT**

### **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CORE DATA SET - PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE FOR QUARTER 3**

#### **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 3 of 2020/21 (1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>th</sup> December 2020).

#### **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 2020/21**

5. This report provides a summary of the quarter 3 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. Performance in this area remains consistent with no concerns raised. The Service continues to meet and exceed targets.

## **Child Protection**

8. The numbers of children on child protection plans in Nottinghamshire has seen a reduction since last quarter. The numbers of children becoming subject to a child protection plan fell each month, and the number of children with a discontinued child protection plan this quarter is notably higher than in quarter 2.
9. At the end of quarter 2 there was a programme of robust oversight put in place to consider Child Protection Plans that had been in place over two years, with additional discussions taking place between social care Team Managers and Child Protection Co-Ordinators (CPCs) where required. This quarter out of 37 alerts raised by CPCs, five contained an issue relating to a plan being in place for over 15 months. It is notable that in October 2020, particularly high figures were seen in Ashfield, Mansfield and Bassetlaw, however, by November 2020 the figure in these areas was 0. In November 2020 in these areas a higher than usual number of child protection plans were ended.
10. The number of children becoming subject of a repeat plan in a two year period following the end of the previous plan has remained high this quarter. According to the quality assurance data collected by conference chairs the concerns identified for these families included drug and alcohol misuse, domestic abuse, mental health and neglect. In the majority of meetings the concerns were the same as those identified in the previous plan. This information has been shared with the relevant Children's Service managers in order to inform continued oversight of this issue. In addition the Independent Chair Service will be developing more robust oversight of these situations as part of their continued quality assurance role.
11. There has been a drop from the last quarter in the percentage of cases reviewed in timescale, due to staffing issues relating to Covid 19, although the figure remains within target. There is ongoing focus on ensuring that conferences remain within timescales wherever possible, and any decision to move a planned conference date can only be made by a service manager.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing**

12. The numbers of children reported to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as being at risk of CSE has not fallen significantly this quarter. 19 of these children have been

assessed as needing to be discussed at multi-agency meetings focussed on the risks of CSE, due to the assessed risks.

13. The numbers of children reported missing has declined this quarter to 262 children, which mirrors the renewed restrictions on the population following the summer due to the pandemic. It may well reflect the greater supervision of children due to children being at home with carers, and the reduction of opportunities for movement due to lockdown restrictions. The percentages missing from home and care are roughly the same as in quarter 2 with slightly more continuing to be missing from home than from care. The 262 children have gone missing 477 times in total, with 10 children being reported as missing a total of 89 times between them in quarter 3. There has been a small reduction in the number of children who have been reported missing five or more times in the last 12 months. The percentage of children missing from care in Nottinghamshire is below both the national average and our statistical neighbours at 7.6% compared to the most recently available England average of 10% and the statistical neighbour average of 9.5%. The percentage of return interviews completed in timescale has dipped this quarter which is of concern, and work is ongoing to address this.

## **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, though the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to present challenges in maintaining stable placements. During the first national lockdown, placements became less stable as providers took the necessary - sometimes emergency - action to maintain social distancing or to enable appropriate shielding of children in care with complex health needs. The latest data indicates that placements have continued to be more stable since the first lockdown and that the shorter period of national restrictions during quarter 3 2020/21 has not had the same adverse effect (albeit the actual number of children in care - and thus the volume of placements - has continued to increase). From an operational standpoint, it feels as though the latest period of national lockdown is proving more challenging, so it will remain to be seen whether the current performance will be maintained for quarter 4 2020/21. Please note that some level of caution should be exercised when benchmarking against national data because there is a difference between how the current Nottinghamshire figure is calculated and the way in which the national average data was computed in 2018/19. It effectively over-inflates the Nottinghamshire figure, hence the target of 12% has been derived to account for this.
15. The continued strong performance in this indicator underlines the fact that the majority of children in care experience very stable placements over the longer term. It is not until they are aged 16+ that a greater proportion of children in care might experience more changes of placement, but these are part of the normal care plan for older young people in care as they transition into semi-independent accommodation to equip them with independence skills as part of their wider transition into adulthood. That having been said, the wider instability of placements generally during the past year (as a result of the pandemic) has resulted in a small reduction in the overall percentage of long-term stable placements. Please note that the same issue around differences in data computation described above regarding stability of placements applies equally to this indicator; hence this target has likewise been modified to account for this.

## **Adoption**

16. The figures in quarter 2 were positively affected by foster care adoptions. In quarter 3 there is a reduction from quarter 1. However these figures are impacted on by trying to find adopters for some harder to place children. The Council is keen to make all efforts to obtain placements but this small number of children who wait longer to move to their adopters is likely to impact on the figures. Nottinghamshire does not have a high number of foster care adopters so the quarter 2 number is unlikely to be repeated often. It is an area to work on and we are actively doing so with Adoption East Midlands.
17. Quarter 2 figures were again affected by a foster carer adopting. The current figure is higher than over the last year. There are however relatively few children with a Placement Order waiting to be matched. Those waiting tend to be older children or those with developmental uncertainties, health / disability issues.

## **Care leavers**

18. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on looked after and leaving care young people in relation to employment, education and training. The Council has actively contacted all young people aged 16 - 24 years across looked after and leaving care who are linked with Personal Advisors and Achievement Advisers to support them with any furlough, loss of employment and education provision being on hold. The Council has issued government laptops and WiFi Dongles have been issued to enable young people to continue to access their employment and education, as well as linked with all colleges and universities to ensure that the young person still has educational provision or has been able to complete their course. It is expected that there will be an impact on Employment, Education, or Training (EET) figures as a result of Covid-19 across the next 12-18 months where education and employment has not been accessible. However, the development of the new Achievement Service and pro-active approach to our young people, whilst working alongside multi-agency partners, has helped maintain the EET figure for this quarter above the target.
19. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the availability of accommodation provision across Nottinghamshire, and due to lockdown and Covid-19 outbreaks has meant that move on into supported accommodation provision or Council tenancies has been stalled. This has therefore impacted on the quality and suitability of accommodation provision. The Council has been actively working with the District Councils to explore where there may be blockages with enabling young people to transition into their own tenancies, including identifying suitable housing provision and tenancies for our former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to help create more availability within Supported Accommodation Provision. There has been an increase in demand for temporary accommodation for young people facing homelessness or who previously would have stayed with friends and family but due to lockdown restrictions are no longer able to do this. The Council has launched the new Care Leaver Emergency Accommodation (CLEA) as a pilot using Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) funding to help prevent street homelessness or temporary accommodation via the District/Borough Council. Although preventing homelessness, this will show on our statistics as not being suitable accommodation as it is not a longer term stable solution for them.

## Youth Offending

20. The rate (per 100,000 population) of First Time Entrants (FTEs) is now beginning to plateau relative to last year's data, with rates having significantly decreased over previous quarters. At this stage it is difficult to ascertain what the longer-term average is likely to be, considering the unique circumstances presented by Covid-19 and the associated restrictions on individual liberty. The Youth Offending Team Data Summary (YDS) data used by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) tracks earlier data and again shows significant decreases in the FTE rate which is further reflection of the successful embedding of child-centred policies in the Out of Court process.

## Summary Financial Position

21. The Children and Families Department Revenue Budget is forecast to underspend by £0.495m (0.33%) as summarised in **Table 1** below.
22. The Authority has received four tranches of main Covid-19 grant allocations totalling £47.1m. This amount was not factored into projections when setting the 2020/21 budget in February 2020. A revised budget estimate has therefore been set whereby Covid-19 grant has been allocated across Committee budgets based on the current known financial impact of the Covid-19 crisis and **Table 1** reflects the position after the allocation of this funding.

**Table 1 – Summary Revenue Position**

Forecast Variance as at Period 8	Division	Annual Budget	Actual to Period 9	Year-End Forecast	Under(-) / Overspend Variance	Variance as % of Budget
£000		£000	£000	£000	£000	%
	<b>Children &amp; Young People's Committee</b>					
229	Youth, Families & Social Work	62,227	45,102	62,456	229	0.37
(59)	Education Learning & Skills	6,666	4,386	6,607	(59)	0.89
(457)	Commissioning & Resources	68,319	45,330	67,604	(715)	1.05
50	Capital & Central Charges	13,076	12,793	13,126	50	0.38
(237)	<b>Net Committee Overspend</b>	<b>150,288</b>	<b>107,611</b>	<b>149,793</b>	<b>(495)</b>	<b>0.33</b>

23. The Youth, Families & Social Work Division is forecasting an overspend of £0.2m. The major contributing factor is a £0.9m overspend on social work staffing which has arisen due to a combination of additional capacity staff to respond to anticipated increased workloads, maintain manageable caseloads, new posts to be established and agency workers.
24. The forecast agency spend for the Hard to Retain teams is £5.7m (2019-20 £5.4m). There were 78.7 fte agency Team Managers and Social Workers at the end of December and it is estimated that there will be 76.7 fte agency workers by the end of March 2021. This equates to an average of 76 fte agency workers for the year. The forecast also includes

29.9 fte agency Social Work Assistants and a reduction to reflect the annual leave, sickness and bank holidays to be taken by agency workers. All agency posts continue to require the explicit approval of the Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work, and are subject to scrutiny by the quarterly Agency Challenge Panel.

25. The overspend was offset by a net underspend of £0.7m across all other budgets which includes vacancies, staff related running expenses, non-looked after children placements and additional grant income.
26. The Education, Learning & Skills Division is reporting a £0.1m underspend. The major contributing factor is a £0.5m overspend on the school improvement sold service offer offset by a £0.6m underspend across all other budgets which includes vacancies and additional grant income. A review of the sold service offer for 2020/21 and beyond has been undertaken.
27. The Commissioning & Resources division is reporting a £0.7m underspend. The major contributing factor is a £1.2m underspend on Children's Centres of which approximately £0.5m is staffing related due to vacancies and a temporary subsidy on the NHS Employers pension rate for 2020-21. There is also £0.3m of additional gainshare income, related to the former Children's Centre contract, which exceeded expectations, and £0.5m across all other budgets.
28. The overspend on external residential placements for Children Looked After is £0.4m which is mainly due to general cost increases observed towards the end of 2019-20 and the cost of additional support for complex cases.
29. Since the beginning of April 2020 external LAC numbers have grown by 73 from 445 to 518 at the end of December 2020 and is currently forecast to reach 550 by the end of March 2021. This projected level of growth is approximately 75% higher than originally expected.
30. The remaining £0.1m overspend is attributable to ICDS (Integrated Children's Disability Service) Direct Provider Services attributable to commissioned Personal Care costs and various other budgets across the division.
31. Clayfields House Secure Children's Home is currently forecasting a surplus against its income target of £0.536m. From early September 2020 it has been invoicing for all beds, including extra costs for 1:1 and 2:1 support. Additionally, the Youth Custody Service has approved an inflationary increase to bed prices backdated to April 2020. Any surplus at the end of the financial year will be added to the trading reserve balance which is £0.180m.
32. As well as the implications arising from the Covid-19 emergency the main areas of risk associated with the forecast are 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 (due to complexity of need, market conditions, inflation, capacity of internal provision) 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**

33. 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 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and the format and frequency of performance reporting were agreed by the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018. Due to the nature of the report no other options were considered appropriate.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

34. 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**

35. 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**

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

## **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

37. 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 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

**Nigel Stevenson**

**Service Director for Finance, Infrastructure & Improvement**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Matthew Garrard

Team Manager – Performance, Intelligence and Policy

T: 0115 9772892

E: [matthew.garrard@nottsccl.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.garrard@nottsccl.gov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (EP 01/03/21)**

38. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. If Committee resolves that any further actions are required it should ensure that such actions are within its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SAS 23/02/21)**

39. There are no financial implications arising directly 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.

[Children and young people core data set – performance and finance for Quarter 2: report to Children and Young People's Committee on 30th November 2020](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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