

10th February 2020

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

YOUR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE YOUR FUTURE – DEPARTMENTAL STRATEGY SIX MONTH REVIEW OF PROGRESS (APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2019)

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides the Committee with an overview of performance against the Children and Families Departmental Strategy at the end of quarter 2 of the year 2019-20.

Information

2. The Council Plan - Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future - sets out the strategic ambition for the future of Nottinghamshire and the Council. It is focused on the future of Nottinghamshire as a prosperous place where people want to live, work, visit and invest.
3. The Council Plan is the core component of the Council's Planning and Performance Framework. The Framework sets out that delivery of the Council Plan will be through four Departmental Strategies detailing the activity and key measures to achieve the Council's strategic ambition. The first four Departmental Strategies – for Adults, Children's, Place and Resources - were developed during 2017 and agreed by Policy Committee in January 2018.
4. The Planning and Performance Framework also sets out how the Council will plan and manage its performance. The approach and format for reporting this was agreed by the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee in March 2019. As part of that approach Members agreed that progress against the four departmental strategies will be reported to committee every six months.

Review of Progress from April – September 2019

5. The Dashboard set out at **Appendix 1** provides an overview of performance for the key activities and measures set out in part 3 of the Children and Families Departmental Strategy. The Dashboard is focused on the 12 Council Plan commitments and covers the first six months of April – September 2019.
6. During this period the Council has continued to operate in a challenging financial landscape with ongoing change to local authority funding coupled with many Council services experiencing continued increases in demand.

7. Progress has been made against the Children and Families Departmental Strategy, with the actions contributing across the range of Council Plan Commitments. Highlights include:

Commitment 2 – Children are kept safe from harm (Recruitment and Retention)

- During the six-month period (April – September 2019), the Council received 76 applications, not all of which met the criteria for shortlisting, because they were either not able to evidence the required skills and experience for shortlisting sufficiently or lacked a social work qualification. 50 candidates were selected for interview, and 38 new social work staff were recruited. For some candidates, this was their first formal interview and – where it was felt that they had potential but had lacked confidence at the interview – they were offered an opportunity to re-apply. Towards the end of September, the intake to the Assisted and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme was approaching 50, which is the highest level the Council has achieved in recent years. From the Autumn student intake, all students on placement with the Council will be offered the opportunity to access the new Student Progression Programme – which makes the application process more streamlined, and allows for recognition of their time working with the Council on placement (where there will have been ample time to observe their practice and ascertain their suitability for the role). Comment on the outcomes from this new initiative will be included in the next report. Turnover within the hard to recruit to teams stood at 4.82% in September, which was a reduction on the 5.29% reported at the end of March. The figure for the Children’s and Families Department as a whole was 3.41%. The target turnover figure is 5%, and the Department has remained close to this figure over the last two years. The national collection of data on children's social workers from 2018 (released in February 2019), showed that turnover in the wider workforce stood at 16% - so the Department is managing to maintain a relatively consistent, and low, level of turnover across their frontline teams.
- Length of service statistics continue to improve, with 65% of the workforce in post for 5+ years (up 4% on March 2019 figures). 36% of the Hard to Retain teams (HRT) have been in post for 5+ years (the target is 50%), and 29% have been in post for 2-5 years (the target is 30%). External advertising of social work roles has been maintained via the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) website, regular advertorials in Professional Social Work magazine, adverts on Indeed, and on all feeder University jobs boards. The Council’s link with local universities continues to generate a good level of graduate applications, and a fast-track recruitment process will be introduced for final year students who are on placement with the Council (from January 2020) – encouraging them to remain with the Council and take up permanent posts when they complete their training.
- In addition to on-going recruitment process, the Council continues to run the Grow our Own (GOO) social worker training programme, in partnership with Nottingham City and Manchester Metropolitan University. The first cohort, who started in Autumn 2018, are approaching the end of their course and will be undertaking their final placements shortly. The second cohort was recruited to the programme in August and will be starting their studies from the end of September. This, alongside involvement with Step Up, and the Council’s Return to Children’s Social Work programme, will provide an additional stream of new recruits, to help fill vacancies and reduce agency costs.

Commitment 2 – Children are kept safe from harm (Ofsted)

- A refreshed regional self-evaluation has recently been finalised in December 2019, incorporating the updates and recommendations from the recent Ofsted inspection in October 2019. Regional Improvement Alliance Challenge Conversations are now also scheduled for the upcoming year with the Council's triad (Leicester, Lincolnshire & Nottinghamshire) in two different parts; one high level discussion picking out key lines of enquiry from the self assessment and the other focused more around practice and derived from findings in part one. The first part is scheduled to take place at the end of January, with the other part to be completed by the end of March 2020.
- The Ofsted short inspection carried out in October found Nottinghamshire to be rated 'Good' overall, with 'children in need of help or protection' as 'Requires Improvement'. Ofsted praised the services provided to children in care and care leavers especially, as well as the ability of leadership to identify areas for improvement. The areas for improvement identified were the quality and multi-agency involvement in strategy discussions, the consistency of social work practice, the awareness and response to privately fostered children and the assessments and level of support provided to children in care placed with family and friends.

Commitment 2 – Children are kept safe from harm (D2N2 Teaching Partnership)

- Across quarters 1 & 2 the D2N2 Teaching Partnership delivered 10 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, with social work practitioners from four local authorities attending these events. Nottinghamshire's Practice Educators continue to benefit from a tailored programme of CPD activities, organised by the Partnership. The Productive Partnerships event in July provided the Council's social workers with an opportunity to engage directly with family support charities from across the County – raising their awareness of the services available, and helping to generate stronger relationships between them and local charity partners. A further 15 CPD events are currently being planned from January 2020 onwards. The Partnership has received a further £170,000 funding from the DfE to fund the administration of the Partnership over the next three years. DfE funding was always time limited, and as such the sustainable model for delivery is for the 6 Practice Education Leads (PELs) originally employed by the Partnership to return to their originating local authorities but to continue to support the delivery of CPD activities on an ongoing basis. This has been made possible due to the strong relationships built between the local authorities, universities and other partnership organisations.
8. Further progress is expected to be made against the actions in the Departmental Strategy over the remaining six months of the year. Particular attention will be given to any commitment where delivery of an action has not yet been matched by a change in the measure of success linked to it. This will include:

Commitment 3 – Children and Young People go to good schools

- The percentage of young people qualified to Level 3 (2 or more passes at A-Level or equivalent) shows no change from the previous academic year. Data for young people aged 19 years at the end of the 2017/18 academic year shows 51.8% of those who attended a Nottinghamshire school at age 16 years attained this. Nottinghamshire

remains at the bottom of its statistical neighbours on this measure behind Northamptonshire (where 52.2% attained Level 3). The gap between Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire has narrowed slightly from 0.6 percentage points last year to 0.4 points this year. Cheshire West and Chester is placed first where 59.6% attained this measure. Against all authorities nationally Nottinghamshire is placed 116th (out of 150, where 1st is best), which represents a slight improvement in rank from 121st last year. The statistical neighbour average is 56.2% (a slight fall from 56.7% from the previous year), while nationally the figure for the state sector is 57.2% (a slight decrease of 0.4 percentage points).

9. The Committee is invited to consider the progress reported in **Appendix 1** and any further information that it might require. An update on the Core Data Set of performance measures for the Children and Families Department will be provided at the end of quarter 3 (October – December 2019) and a year-end position on the Departmental Strategy at the end of quarter 4 (January – March 2020).

Other Options Considered

10. The matters set out in the report are intended to provide effective and proportionate performance management reporting to the Department and the Committee. This approach was agreed by the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee in March 2018 and no other options were considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. The Council's Constitution requires each Committee to review performance in relation to the services provided on a regular basis. The recommendation contributes to this requirement.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee considers the performance issues outlined in the report and whether any additional information or actions are required in relation to them.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 09/01/20)

14. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If the Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 13/01/20)

15. 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.

[Departmental Strategies – report to Policy Committee on 24 January 2018.](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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