



16th December 2019

Agenda Item: 13

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PROGRESS AGAINST THE IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on progress against the Improving the Effectiveness & Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan presented to Committee on 16th September 2019.
2. To consider whether there are any further actions Committee requires in relation to the information contained in the report.

Information

3. On 16th September 2019 the Children and Young People's Committee received a report entitled '2019/2020 Children and Families Budget Update'. This report provided a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing the departmental budget, the factors behind the volatility of spending on children's services and the actions proposed in mitigation. Committee agreed to receive an update every three months.
4. An update on the departmental budget position is provided to Committee in the paper entitled 'Children and Young People Core Data Set – performance for quarter 2 2019/20'. As the information is available to Committee through that source the analysis is not repeated within this report.
5. An updated version of the 'Effectiveness and Efficiency Plan' is attached as **Appendix 1**. Of note is that the deployment of agency social care staff is forecast to have dropped from 83.9 full time equivalents, the actual figure as at April 2019, to 69 fte at March 2020. All but four of these deployments are in teams specified as being "hard to recruit" to. Recruitment and retention issues have led to caseloads in the majority of the District Child Protection Teams being too high. Additional capacity agency staff have been recruited to those teams and as a consequence caseloads are now reducing towards the target of 20, although this remains an ongoing challenge. Caseloads in the Looked After Children service remain at 18 to 24 children per social worker depending on the complexity of the children's needs.
6. A recent independent audit concluded that the threshold for children coming into care is correct. A variety of measures are being taken forward to make sure that children are in high quality placements that also provide value for money. A marketing campaign aimed

at recruiting foster carers by the Local Authority, thus reducing the number of placements with independent fostering agencies, commenced in November. The Local Authority has also increased the number of 'block contract' residential placements with external providers. The total number of new homes under this arrangement will be four with three now open. A fourth home is being sourced by the provider to become a specialist unit to accommodate a Nottinghamshire child in care who is deaf and presents with a range of special needs. Joint work is taking place with Nottingham City, Derby City and Derbyshire County Councils to establish a Commissioning Framework for residential and independent fostering agencies. The tender process is nearing completion and a wide selection of providers have applied and will be eligible for the framework, and contract management arrangements are in place. These arrangements will commence in February 2020.

7. The department has made significant progress in establishing a new strengths-based model, branded as 'Nottinghamshire's Children, Nottinghamshire's Future'. A practice development day to promote this approach was held in October 2019 and attended by 550 members of staff from Children and Families department. A working group is overseeing the plan to implement and embed this way of working. This will include revising the approach to child protection conferences and having a comprehensive training offer. Group reflective supervision has been rolled out across safeguarding teams. An evaluation will be completed in May 2020.

Other Options Considered

8. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

9. These recommendations provide the range of measures being taken by the Children and Families department via the Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan, to address the financial and service challenges currently being faced.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. 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

11. The 'Effectiveness and Efficiency Plan' aims to address the financial challenges that the Children and Families department is facing due to increased demand.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee considers whether there are any further actions required in relation to the information contained in the report on progress against the Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Children's Services Plan.

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Constitutional Comments (AK 21/11/19)

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

Financial Comments (SAS 04/12/19)

13. 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.

[2019-2020 Children and Families budget update – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 16th September 2019](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1325