



26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Agenda Item: 7

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

### **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CORE DATA SET - PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE FOR QUARTER 4 2020/21**

#### **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 4 of 2020/21 (1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 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 2020/21**

5. This report provides a summary of the quarter 4 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. Continued positive and consistent performance in this area with no concerns raised.

## **Child Protection**

8. In March 2021 there was a noticeable reduction in the numbers of children subject of a Child Protection Plan. This may have been related to the start of lockdown. Since the reopening of schools and the reduction in lockdown measures, we have seen a corresponding increase in Initial Child Protection Conferences held and will be monitoring this over the months ahead.
9. The Independent Chair Service continues to closely monitor the length of Child Protection Plans and will seek an update/response from the relevant Children's Services Manager when a plan reaches 15 months. It is hoped that this will focus the planning to ensure that children's needs are appropriately met.
10. The Council continues to monitor the number of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time and note whether the concerns are the same as previously or different. Children's Service Managers in the Assessment Teams alert their counterparts in the District Child Protection Teams, and in the Independent Chair Service if they are agreeing an Initial Child Protection Conference for a child for a second or subsequent time.
11. The majority of children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan continue to have that plan reviewed within the required timescales.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing**

12. There has been an increase in the number of children reported to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub as being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation in quarter 4, which is part of the rise in enquiries to the Authority as lockdowns have eased. This should be seen as a positive as agencies are proving to be alert to concerns. All Child Sexual Exploitation concerns are considered and the appropriate measures put in place in terms of support for families, for example through child in need arrangements or child protection measures. It is notable that a lower number of multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation strategy meetings have taken place in the quarter and this is currently subject to further analysis which will be reported on in the end of year report.
13. The numbers of children who have gone missing and reported to the police in quarter 4 is comparable to the numbers last quarter. More children are reported missing from home

than from care, again comparable to quarter 3. 267 children were reported to the police as missing 520 times in the quarter, a slight increase on the last quarter but lower than the high of 599 in the summer when lock down restrictions were eased and the weather was good. Numbers can be expected to rise again in quarter 1 now lock down restrictions are again easing and the weather improves. A number of children were reported missing 5 or more times in the period. This was 22% of the total children reported missing - the same as in quarter 3. This cohort receive close management attention. The percentage of children missing from care in Nottinghamshire continues to be below both the national average and the Council's statistical neighbours at 7.5% compared with the most recently available England average of 10% and the statistical neighbour average of 9.5%. Of the return interviews which were engaged with by the child, 79% were completed in 72 hours of the child's return. This is an improvement on the last quarter and work continues in this area

## **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. The corresponding commentary for the previous quarter - written in February 2021 - suggested that the introduction of the most recent period of lockdown was proving challenging in terms of maintaining placement stability. Whilst this has led to a small reduction in overall placement stability during quarter 4, the data continues to evidence comparatively strong performance - against both internal and national benchmarks. 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. The impact of the pandemic on the wider instability of placements has resulted in a small reduction in the overall percentage of long-term stable placements, but the data continues to evidence comparatively strong performance - against both internal and national benchmarks. 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. There is considerable delay in care proceeding cases within local courts which will mean children remain looked after for longer before placement orders can be made and the move to adopters take place.

17. Performance for the time between the Local Authority receiving the court authority and deciding on a match is very positive and shows that as soon as a placement order is made by the court, Adoption East Midlands is identifying adopters and matching children. This includes work to actively track all children with adoption plans to prevent placement delay and identify any children who may be harder to place.
18. It should be noted that the aim of the Authority is to achieve a family centric outcome which offers a stable and loving home. This may take the form of kinship care opportunities which can offer a better outcome for the child than adoption.

### Care leavers

19. 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.
20. 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

21. The rate (per 100,000 population) of First Time Entrants remains low relative to previous years and will likely be owed to a cumulation of factors, including Covid-19 impact on criminal activity and a revised out of court disposal protocol which sees more children being managed and supported without the need to go to court. Systems/processes have largely caught up with the majority of backlogs now removed.

### Summary Financial Position

22. As at the end of March 2021, the Children and Families Department was underspent by £2.031m after contributions to reserves; this is equivalent to 1.36% of the final budget and is summarised in the Table below.

Committee	Final Budget	Actual Out-turn	Under(-) / Overspend Variance	Variance as % of Final Budget
	£000	£000	£000	%
<b>Children &amp; Young People</b>				
Youth, Families & Social Work	61,599	61,779	180	0.29%
Education Learning & Skills	5,650	5,601	-49	-0.87%
Commissioning & Resources	68,114	65,891	-2,223	-3.26%
Capital & Central Charges	14,037	14,098	61	0.43%
<b>Net Committee Overspend</b>	<b>149,400</b>	<b>147,369</b>	<b>-2,031</b>	<b>-1.36%</b>

23. The final out-turn for the Youth, Families and Social Work Division is a net overspend of £0.180m. The major contributing factor is a £0.8m overspend on social work staffing with £1.0m relating to the Hard to Retain teams. The overspend arose due to a combination of staffing changes including additional capacity staff to respond to increased workloads and maintain manageable caseloads, new posts established and the continued need for agency workers. All agency posts required the explicit approval of the Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work, and were subject to scrutiny by the quarterly Agency Challenge Panel. There was a £0.2m underspend on other social work staffing which reduced the overspend.
24. The agency spend for the Hard to Retain teams is £5.7m (2019-20 £5.4m) and at the end of March there were 69.7 fte (73 fte 2019-20) agency Social Workers and Team Managers in these and the Looked After Children team. This equates to an average of 76.9 fte agency Team Managers and Social Workers for the year. Included in the agency spend is 33.1 fte agency Social Work Assistants in the District Child Protection teams and Business Support in Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub operations and Fostering in post at March 2021.
25. The overspend was offset by a net underspend of £0.6m across all other budgets which included vacancies, staff related running expenses, non-looked after children placements and additional grant income.
26. The final out-turn for the Education, Learning and Skills Division was a small net underspend of £0.048m. The major contributing factor is a £0.6m 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 final out-turn for the Commissioning and Resources Division is a net underspend of £2.2m. The major contributing factor is a £1.4m underspend on Children's Centres, the majority of which is temporary i.e. approximately £0.6m is staffing related due to vacancies, £0.3m gainshare from Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership related to the former Children's Centre contract and a 3.5% temporary subsidy on the NHS Employers pension rate for 2020-21. There is a further £0.5m underspend across all other budgets.
28. There was also a £0.6m underspend on external residential placements for Children Looked After although it should be noted that that this was after the addition of £6.4m of temporary Covid-19 funding. Since the beginning of April 2020 external Looked After Children placements have grown by a net of 55 from 445 to 500 at the end of March 2021. The original pre-Covid-19 estimate was for numbers to reach 505 by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (also before any positive effects of the Social Impact Bond and increased internal fostering which were still at early stages). During 2020, numbers grew rapidly during the pandemic and at one point were projected to reach 550.
29. The remaining £0.2m underspend was across a range of other budgets.
30. The final out-turn for Clayfields Secure Children's Home was a surplus of £0.528m above its income target of £0.134m. From early September 2020 it had been invoicing for all beds, including extra costs for 1:1 and 2:1 support. Additionally, the Youth Custody Service

approved an inflationary increase to bed prices backdated to April 2020. The surplus was transferred to the trading reserve and a balance of £0.563m will carry forward to 2020/21.

### **Other Options Considered**

31. 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**

32. 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**

33. 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**

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

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

35. 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> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

**Nigel Stevenson**

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### **Constitutional Comments (CEH 29/06/21)**

36. Children and Young People's Committee has authority under its terms of reference to consider this report and recommendation.

### **Financial Comments (SAS 29/06/21)**

37. 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 3: report to Children and Young People's Committee on 15th March 2021](#)

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

All.

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