

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

27 JUNE 2019

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Lisa Evans

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRESS UPDATE: 2018/19 – QUARTER 4 (JANUARY – MARCH 2019)

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of performance across Children's Services for Quarter 4. It is based on the Children's Strategy priorities agreed by Cabinet in June 2017.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that Members are aware of progress and issues in the delivery of the Children's Services Strategy 2017-20.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to note the report, and in particular:

1. The current position in relation to key indicators of volume and demand in children's social care.
2. The current position in relation to the numbers of children in care.
3. The continued high performance around meeting statutory deadlines and timescales.

DETAIL

1. This report summarises performance information in relation to the Children's Services Strategy 2017-20. This strategy, agreed by Cabinet in June 2017, sets out the key priorities for Children's Services and the key performance indicators associated with delivery.
2. The update report is in three parts:
 - a. Update on 2018/19 priorities;
 - b. Update on other actions and progress against the wider strategy;
 - c. A summary of key points.

Update on 2018/19 priorities

3. An update on the key priorities for 2018/19 is provided below:

- a. **Work to ensure all schools/academies in Stockton are good or better** – A detailed report on performance was presented to Cabinet in October 2018. The performance at the end of March was that for primary 92% of schools are good or outstanding, and for secondary the rate was 77%.
- b. **Develop options for alternative provision and curriculum delivery for 14-19 year olds at risk of disengagement and becoming NEET.** We are working with schools to design a new approach to supporting children at risk of exclusion and alternative provision. The proposals include the consideration of the role played by Bishopton PRU and the opportunities to develop alternative forms of curriculum.
- c. **Refreshing our approach to social work training and skills, and the quality of supervision.** A revised workforce strategy has been developed and agreed.. A review of supervision has been completed and a series of recommendations for improving the focus of supervision are being implemented, this includes a greater focus on more reflective supervision.
- d. **Working to transform support for young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs.** Work continues to be taken forward with the Clinical Commissioning Group as part of the Future in Mind programme, and a recent application for mental health support teams in schools has been submitted. The SHUE2 survey will shortly be available for analysis.
- e. **Developing an enhanced Care Leavers offer to support independence.** The outcomes of the reporting in scrutiny review were agreed by Cabinet on 14th February. The care leavers offer is now live on the Information Directory.
- f. **Develop and test new approaches to increase capacity in fostering.** Options for supporting an increase in the numbers of in house foster carers, and the capacity of in house fostering are being considered as part of the wider work on children in our care and as part of collaboration work with other Tees Valley Councils. New fostering recruitment videos have been developed.
- g. **Implement a refreshed approach to corporate parenting.** The new Corporate Parenting Board is providing additional focus on key priority areas. The Stockton care Leavers Association Fund is now live as a fund managed by Tees Valley Community Foundation, and was the recipient of funding as one of the mayor's charities in 2018/19.

Update on other actions and progress

Giving children the best start in life

4. There are a number of other outcomes and updates to report on:
 - a. Take up of the existing free entitlement to 15 hours of education remains at 100%.
 - b. The take up of the free offer for disadvantaged 2 year olds is now at 94% - a continued and sustained improvement from 2016 when this rate was 47%.

Focusing on schools and learning outcomes

5. A joint area inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities was undertaken in February 2019, with the report on outcomes published in May 2019.
6. The inspection concluded that although there were many strengths, with the effective provision and support in early years and the value of the Council's work with schools particularly commended, there were four areas of focus which the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group must respond to in the form of a Written Statement of Action:
 - a. coproduction, engagement and communication with parents are underdeveloped
 - b. the quality of EHC assessments and plans is too variable
 - c. strategic joint commissioning, in a way that demonstrably improves EHC provision and outcomes for children, young people and families, is not fully embedded

- d. local area leaders have not developed an effective approach to measuring and evaluating EHC outcomes for children and young people.

7. The response is currently being developed and will be submitted on 12 August.

Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children and young people, backed by outstanding social work practice

8. In terms of key performance data collected and analysed in Children's Services:

- a. The rate of contacts to children's social care (i.e. into the Children's Hub) has reduced in 2018/19 and is now at a similar level to 2015/16.
- b. Rates of referrals are now at their lowest rates since 2014/15, and although the rates of assessments undertaken has risen slightly since 2017/18 it remains well below the peak of 2016/17.
- c. 98% of single assessments continue to be undertaken within the statutory deadline of 45 days, significantly higher than the national average of 82%.
- d. The rate at which children are classed as being 'in need' has continued to fall and is now at its lowest rate since 2012/13. The rate at which children 'start an episode of need' is also reducing.
- e. The rate of children on a child protection plan increased in 2018/1900 to 57 / 10,000 though this is considerable below the regional rate and down from the highest rate in recent years of 87 / 10,000 in 2012/13.
- f. Only 1.7% of child protection plans were in place for more than 2 years (an indicator of potential drift – this rate was 3.4% overall last year, lower than the national rate)
- g. We continue to see an increase in the percentage of children subject to a second child protection plan. This has been subject to a peer audit process, working with Northumberland Council.
- h. 96% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 working days of the Section 47 enquiry, significantly higher than the national average of 77%

9. We continue to operate a rolling recruitment campaign. As at the end of March 2019 there were 9 vacancies across the teams. 7 students will fill 7 of the 9 vacancies when they qualify at various times over the coming summer months.

10. Agency Social Workers are covering maternity leave, sickness, secondments and vacancies until the pending starters commence/the remaining vacancies are recruited to. As at the end of March 2019 there were 8 FTE agency workers currently in post.

11. The overall summary position is therefore that:

- a. We have continued to see a reduction or levelling off on the key indicators of demand – contacts, referrals and assessments.
- b. We continue to maintain high performance around timeliness and efficiency of our processes;
- c. We have made significant progress in reducing the number of children classed as being 'in need'.

A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and care leavers

12. There were 502 children in our care at March 2019, a rate of 116/10,000 children and young people. The rate reduced slightly in this quarter. Regional comparative figures are not yet available.

13. A specific programme of work has been established to identify and prioritise solutions. This project is exploring prevention; decision making; sufficiency of placements; opportunities to

expand our approach to reunification; and a review of out of borough placements. This work forms part of the overall transformation programme for Children's Services.

14. In terms of key performance data, for quarter 4:
 - a. The proportion of children in our care with three or more placement moves is lower than the last available national average, 9% compared to 10% nationally, although the proportion of placements lasting 2 years + has reduced from 75% to 63% is a focus for action.
 - b. The percentage of looked after reviews held in timescale remains high – 97.8;
 - c. 100% of 17-18 year old care leavers are in suitable accommodation and 93% of 19-21 year old care leavers;
 - d. 61% of care leavers aged 17-18 are in education, employment and training, and 51% of 19-21 year old care leavers (latest comparisons are not yet available)
 - e. The time taken from children entering care to moving in with an adoptive family has reduced to 524 days (this is calculated as a 3 year rolling average – the previous 3 years figure was 599 days)
 - f. All residential care homes remain good or outstanding.

15. In summary:
 - a. Our rate of children in care remains high, and continues to be a significant area of focus.
 - b. We remain efficient in terms of timeliness.
 - c. Despite the high rate of children in our care, we remain high performing around placement stability, and perform close to the national averages for care leavers.
 - d. There are improvements in our performance around adoption.

Leadership, management and governance

16. An update on progress includes:
 - a. The new Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership published its proposals in April.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no specific community impact implications arising from this report. Implications were considered in the Cabinet report to agree the strategy in June 2017. However, the focus in the strategy on ensuring the best start in life, the focus on tackling disadvantage and the emphasis on supporting children in our care and care leavers are all associated with the approach of prioritising the needs of more vulnerable groups.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

18. The specific actions in the strategy around children in our care and care leavers are focused on the delivery of corporate parenting and help to fulfil the priority in the Children's Services strategy of a relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and care leavers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no specific financial implications. The management of budgets has been included in the Children's Services Strategy as a key priority and is therefore subject to the oversight process for the strategy as a whole. The key financial implication arising from the costs associated with out of borough placements, and this is subject to additional oversight through the Children's Multi Agency Panel process. Overall demand pressures in Children's Services continue.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no specific legal implications arising from this update report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

21. There are no specific risk implications from this report. Key risks remain the extent to which the Council can continue to meet the demand for placements for children in care.

CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

22. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People has been consulted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

23. Children's Services Strategy 2017-2020

Name of Contact Officer: Martin Gray

Post Title: Director of Children's Services

Telephone No. 01642 527043

Email Address: martin.gray@stockton.gov.uk