

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

16 JULY 2020

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Lisa Evans

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRESS UPDATE: 2019/20 – QUARTERS 3 AND 4 (OCTOBER 2019 – MARCH 2020) AND AWARD OF PLANNED HIGHER VALUE CONTRACT

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of performance across Children's Services for the second 6 months of 2019/20. It is based on the Children's Strategy priorities agreed by Cabinet in June 2017. It will be the last such report, as future reporting will be appended to reports on Council Plan updates for 2020 onwards.

This report seeks approval from Cabinet for the award of a planned higher value contract scheduled for 2020/21, where the value exceeds the limit on officer delegated authority and which is funded within the approved MTFP.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS

1. To enable Cabinet to have oversight of the progress in implementing the Children's Services strategy.
2. To enable Cabinet to exercise its strategic oversight of higher value planned procurement projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Note the contents of this report.
2. Approves the contract listed in **Annex 1**.
3. Gives authority to the relevant Director to make the specific contract award decisions and any subsequent contract variation and extension decisions in accordance with the delegations listed in **Annex 1**.

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 constitution defines a range of decisions that require a specific Cabinet approval, the financial threshold for which is set at a level of £500k or more. **Annex 1** lists a contract that exceeds the financial threshold and has not otherwise been delegated to officers.

Update on 2019/20 priorities

Giving children the best start in life

3. 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 has remained high at 94%.
 - c. Sufficiency planning continues to be strong, with a strong provider market, and activity based on the annual sufficiency plan.

Focusing on schools and learning outcomes

4.

School	Previous inspection judgement	Date of most recent inspection	Most recent inspection judgement
Frederick Natrass Primary Academy	Good	Feb 20	Good
Mandale Mill Primary (maintained)	Requires Improvement	Feb 20	Good
Rosebrook Primary (academy)	Good	Oct 19	Good
St Patrick's Primary, Stockton (maintained)	Good	Jan 20	Good
The Glebe Primary (maintained)	Good	Dec 19	Good
Tilery Primary (maintained)	Good	Nov 19	Good
Northfield School and Sports College (maintained)	Good	Jan 20	Good

5. The current rate of schools judged as good or better is: 96.7% primary (58/60); 76.9% secondary (10/13). Overall 97.5% of primary and 86.3% of secondary pupils attend good or better schools. This is an improvement for primary and places Stockton as first in the NE region. Performance on secondary also places us first in the region for the % of pupils attending a good or better school.
6. Work continues to respond to the outcomes of the SEND Local Area inspection in February 2019. The Written Statement of Action required as a result was agreed by Cabinet in October 2019.
7. The key actions and an update for this period are:
 - a. Co-production – a joint statement and approach to co-production was drafted (and has since been agreed).
 - b. Work to take forward the joint commissioning of services has been accelerated, with processes now in place to determine provision for occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. Work also continues on the transformation of CAMHS services, as part of the Whole Pathway Commissioning approach.

- c. A national organisation, NDTI, has been engaged to work with schools and parents on improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans. This work has involved detailed analysis of a sample of plans and was planned to have resulted in new format of EHCP plans for new plans post August (this work has now been delayed as a result of COVID-19).
 - d. An outcomes framework has been developed and will be embedded into the new format for Education Health and Care Plans.
8. Regular monitoring visits are being undertaken with officials from the Department for Education and NHS England.
9. Work has progressed on a new model and approach around behaviour support. This includes a new approach which has been agreed with schools, and is based on:
 - a. Guidance for schools and clarity of the support on offer;
 - b. The development of an outreach service, which is part funded through TVCA;
 - c. The development of an alternative provision framework contract for schools to select providers from;
 - d. The commissioning of new forms of provision for Key Stages 1 and 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 provision to form part of the new model. Given that the size of the key stage commissioning proposals;
 - e. A clear role and remit for Bishopton Centre, linked to the proposal to develop a high-class site.

Delivering effective early help – supporting families

10. Our early help work continues to evolve. We have continued to expand on our work with schools around restorative practice, based on the restorative practices, and doing 'with' rather than doing 'to' or 'for'.
11. Family Hubs significantly diversified their offer into providing more virtual support in the early stages of the COVID-19 responses, and operated as the basis for the programme of collection and delivery of free school meal packages, in advance of the national FSM voucher scheme being operational. A total of 1300 parcels were distributed every week as part of this highly successful programme, designed and delivered very quickly.
12. Early Help teams have also led on the development of closer working arrangements with schools, to ensure that all children not in school have been 'risk assessed' and appropriate contact and engagement has been happening during the initial stages of COVID-19 lockdown.

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

13. In terms of key performance data collected and analysed in Children's Services, the pattern in 2019/20 is now of increasing demand and growth, following the stabilisation and reduction experiences in 2018/19:
 - a. Rates of referrals have increased in 2019/20 by 20%. This is a similar pattern in Tees Valley, though not across the whole region;
 - b. There has been a reduction in the number of repeat referrals in 2019/20 – the rate has reduced by 7.8% - this is especially important as the stop/start nature of our work was an issue highlighted in the ILACS inspection in 2019;
 - c. There has been an increase in the rate at which assessments are being undertaken – up by 18%, again in line with the experiences in other Tees Valley authorities. This highlights the fact that there are more referrals and many of these warrant further investigation by the social work teams;

- d. Despite the increasing volume, 98% of single assessments continue to be undertaken within the statutory deadline of 45 days, significantly higher than the national average;
 - e. The rate at which children are classed as being 'in need' has increased in this period to 528/10,000, again mirroring increases across Tees Valley;
 - f. The rate of children on a child protection plan has increased in this period to 80/10,000 and is especially disappointing given the good work in 2018/19 on this measure which led to a reduction;
 - g. We have though seen a 15% reduction in the rate at which children become subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time;
 - 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%.
14. We continue to operate a rolling recruitment campaign. Recruitment and retention of social workers has again been an issue in 2019/20. As at the end of March 2020 there were 7 FTE vacancies across the teams.
 15. 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 2020 there were 14 FTE agency workers currently in post.
 16. The overall summary position is therefore that:
 - a. We have seen a pattern of increasing demand across social care;
 - b. We continue to maintain high performance around timeliness and efficiency of our processes.

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

17. There were 581 children in our care at the end of March 2020, a rate of 132/10,000 children and young people. This represents a significant (15%) increase in the number of children in our care. Rates increased by 6% in the region, but by a higher rate in the Tees Valley. There is therefore a continuing focus on our work to Regional comparative figures are not yet available for the 6 months, though the first quarter data suggests similar rises in neighbouring authorities.
18. In terms of key performance data, for the period to September 2019:
 - a. In terms of placement stability for children in care, children in Stockton experience less movement and have longer term placements than the national average;
 - b. The percentage of looked after reviews held in timescale remains high – 97.8;
 - c. The time taken from children entering care to moving in with an adoptive family has reduced further to 501 days (this is calculated as a 3-year rolling average – the previous 3 years figure was 549 days);
 - d. The time taken from a placement order to a match with an adoptive family has reduced to 171 days – significantly faster than the national rate of 200;
 - e. All residential care homes remain good or outstanding;
 - f. 94%% of care leavers aged 19-21 are in suitable accommodation, considerably higher than the national rate;
 - g. 53% of care leavers aged 19-21 are in education, employment and training – the same as the last reported England average.
19. In summary:
 - a. Our rate of children in care remains high, is increasing and continues to be a significant area of focus.
 - b. We remain efficient and effective 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

20. An update on progress includes:

- a. Immediate actions following the ILCAS inspection in May 2020 have been completed. These related to the oversight arrangements in place for families who are at risk of entering the court process (known as the Public Law Outline). New arrangements are in place and there is a much stronger grip on the management of this element of the system. All families who have been assessed as being in need also have a social worker allocated as their lead professional.
- b. A transformation programme for Children's Services is planned to be introduced later this year. This is the mechanism for addressing the other key issues in the 2019 inspection around a stop/start nature of intervention identified in that inspection.
- c. The new Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership published its proposals in April, and the partnership continues to develop its active learning approach and has also undertaken a number of learning reviews in this period.
- d. Work is underway with Tees Valley authorities to explore the opportunities for significantly increasing the residential provision across the local authorities.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

21. There are no specific policy changes contained in this report.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

22. There are specific references in the report to plans and progress in relation to children and young people in our care.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

23. The bulk of the report does not include any financial implications, apart from the specific proposal around procurement. The report includes a higher value contract expected to be awarded in the current financial year. The expenditure committed as a result of this procurements is planned and remains within the Council's approved budget/MTFP or is subject to a bid for external funding which will ensure that at the point of contract award funds are available within the MTFP.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

24. Notwithstanding Cabinet approval it remains the responsibility of officers to ensure that the correct processes within Contract Procedure Rules have been followed and that where applicable the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 are complied with.

25. Where the value of goods, services or works exceeds the threshold at which the procurement process must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations either a tender exercise or the use of a suitable framework agreement will comply with the Regulations.

RISK ASSESSMENT

26. These procurements are categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

28. None.

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Contract for Delivery of Pathway Development Centres for Stockton Key Stage 4 pupils	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council will carry out a tender process to appoint suitable non-mainstream school providers to deliver Pathway Development Centres for Key Stage 4 pupils who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion from a mainstream school. 2. The new framework will be in place 01.09.2020 and will be for 2 years. 3. The current annual spend is circa £450,000 	
Key Decision: No	Funding within MTFP: Yes
Delegated Officers: Martin Gray, Director of Childrens Services	
Checks and Balances: In consultation with other appropriate officers for professional advice to include finance and procurement.	