

Children's Services Performance Report

Children's Health, Social Care and Education

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 9th November 16

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Wards:	All Wards
Locality Affected:	All Locality Areas
Parishes Affected:	All Parish Areas

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report provides the Children's Health, Social Care and Education Committee with an update of performance and key issues relating to Children Services. It is a high level summary of the key messages from the detailed performance report which is attached in the Appendix 1. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the actual data and performance context. This report highlights the areas of performance to be noted by the Board. As part of our annual reporting process we also produce a detailed performance overview specifically for social care with annual trend data for all our key performance indicators, comparator context - and a summary of performance with any service actions identified. This is included as Appendix 2 for those interested in a higher level of detail in relation to the social care aspects of children services.
- 1.2 A key purpose of Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to hold Children's Community Health, Education Support, Early Help and Social Care Services to account.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the key performance messages from the detailed performance information in the Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.2 Identify any areas of concern that require further investigation.

3. Key Performance Messages

- 3.1 This report presents the quarter 1 performance for 16/17 in Children's Services. More detailed performance information is provided in the each of the appendices but key performance messages have been highlighted below based on current strengths and challenges.
- 3.2 Children's Services continue to face significant pressure from increased demand and the challenges of securing permanent, experienced and

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suitably qualified staff, which is a challenge mirrored nationally. The number of children looked after has remained at a higher level reported in the last report. It should be noted that historically Swindon had a lower rate of children becoming looked after compared to their statistical neighbours and nationally. Fewer children are benefitting from long-term stable placements. The increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children coming into our care as well as a limited number of local in-house foster placements has contributed to a higher percentage of children being placed in independent fostering agencies than previously. On a positive note, the number of children being the repeat subject of child protection plans has decreased, as has the overall social care re-referral rate. Indeed, although contacts have continued to increase at our 'front door', Family contact point/MASH, the rate of referrals that actually progress to social care has decreased in quarter 1, when comparing this year to last. This will be at least in part a welcome impact of the introduction of the MASH (multi agency safeguarding hub), which has improved information gathering at the early stages of contact process.

Inevitably, high workloads can impact on the timeliness and effectiveness of some interventions although performance in relation to the timeliness of child protection visits is showing consistent improvement. The latest social worker vacancy rate is 14% which mirrors the national. Increased social worker capacity has been agreed to ensure caseloads are more manageable. The operational team managers are working well together to support the workforce and implement service improvements. The first cohort of newly qualified social workers joined the academy on the 20th June. This is a critical programme in developing a sustainable workforce.

- 3.3 On a positive note, strengths in performance include a high percentage of children being looked after in family placements, with a lower proportion residing in residential placements compared with others. The timeliness of statutory assessment completion has improved during quarter 1 of 16/17. The number of assessments taking longer the 45 days is the lowest it has been in the last year. Fewer children are also becoming the subject of a second or subsequent child protection plan, and this coupled with a lower re-referral rate gives confidence that child protection plans are achieving sustainable outcomes.
- 3.4 The quality and performance quarterly board chaired by the Director of Children Services receives a comprehensive set of qualitative and quantitative information. This includes themed audits that are presented by team managers and provides the context for judgements on key quality indicators that have been locally set. This governance arrangement

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promotes open discussion by managers along with the identification of any improvements required in relation to the service.

- 3.5 The Swindon Early Help offer ensures support is available to children, young people and their families as soon as problems start to emerge or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future. In the first quarter of 16/17 the children's workforce has continued to complete a higher level of Early Help Assessments and Plans. In addition, Health Visitors, Family Nurse Partnership Practitioners and Targeted Mental Health Service are working with more children and families to ensure they receive the support they require.
- 3.6 The level and rate of fixed term exclusions from Swindon schools remains high in comparison with other authorities, and increased when looking at the 15/16 academic year compared with 14/15. The number of permanent exclusions has reduced slightly between 14/15 and 15/16 academic year, but it still at a higher rate in the context of the last 5 years' performance. The Education Strategy Board, chaired by the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner, is monitoring progress against the strategies that have been put in place to work with schools to reduce the level of exclusions and support pupils and families at risk of exclusion.
- 3.7 Work is ongoing to embed the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms. Swindon continues to have a higher percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) compared to England and statistical neighbours. The service has undertaken a turning the curve exercise. The resulting action plan will focus on a number of priorities including, the ongoing review of SENRAP (Special Educational Needs and Assessment panel); workforce development in relation to quality first teaching; and a review of the SEN funding formula including the notional SEN budget to increase the funding to schools without the need for a statutory plan.
- 3.8 Compared to last year, there is a reduction in the Youth unemployment rate (16-24s) and a slight improvement with our NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) figures overall), but fewer young people are participating in learning activities and there are more young people with 'unknown' post-16 activities. There has been an increase in the number of young people declaring work as their destination, and this will be work without training and so does not count as EET (In Education, Employment or Training). The fact that they are working is positive and a preferable option to NEET, however further work needs to be done to increase jobs with training to build a sustainable future for these young people. It might also highlight that Swindon has a higher percentage of unqualified

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employment routes than others. Although there has been a significant increase in the percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training (EET), there are still too many Care Leavers who are NEET compared to other authorities. The high number of Care Leavers who have a disability in our NEET co-hort has again proved challenging for routes to EET. However, Swindon continues to keep in touch with all but 1 care leaver in the co-hort and places Swindon above others in terms of making sure the service keeps in touch with this vulnerable group of young people.

- 3.9 Swindon community health professionals continue to work together to provide a strong community health service provision for children and young people. There has been a high uptake in relation to all immunisations for children when compared with others. The new meningitis vaccination has been introduced for year 9 students in 15/16 and the early indications are that take up is positive. The implementation of the Healthy Child Programme continues, and ante- natal and post-natal checks are taking place routinely to support Mother's in their child's health and well-being.

3.10 Supporting Information

None

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 None

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The budget in 2016/17 for Children, Families and Community Health was £24.613m. The forecasted variance from budget for 16/17 was a projected overspend of £2,049m based on the year to date August 16 position. The service pressures have increased in the last quarter, particularly in relation to commissioned placements, and additional staffing costs. Difficulties in recruiting staff and increasing workload demands have necessitated the use of agency social care staff across the service. There are a higher number of children coming into care and this inevitably impacts on legal costs, as legal services support the process of children coming into the care of the local authority.

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Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) requires every Local Authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to account, undertake policy development and review, monitor and improve performance report.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other direct implications arising as a result of this report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) is required at this stage as this report proposes no changes to services. Any DIA that is required during a review of topics included within the work programme, will be identified at the appropriate stage.

Risk Management

- 5.5 No risk management issues have been identified at this stage. Any risk management issues will be identified at the appropriate time when a topic is under review by the Scrutiny Committee and if it makes any recommendations.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Children's Services Performance Report Quarter 1 16/17
Appendix 2: Performance Overview of Children's Social Care Annual Performance report.