

Children's Services Performance Report

Children's Health, Social Care and Education

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 29th March 2017

Authors:	Head of Children and Families & Community Health Head of Education
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

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.
- 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 **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 Identify any areas of concern that require further investigation.

3. Key Performance Messages

- 3.1 This report presents the data position at the end of January 17 wherever available, and for data reported quarterly, the position at the end of Quarter 3. More detailed performance information is provided in **Appendix 1**, but key performance messages have been highlighted below based on current strengths and challenges.
- 3.2 The latest data in relation to the number of contacts received by children, families and community health, and the subsequent number being referred to social care shows initial signs of stabilisation. Although still high, the volumes in 16/17 to date are slightly lower than at this point in the previous year for both contact and referral. This is welcome, and potentially linked to the implementation of the MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub), in Swindon. This has improved partnership working at the contact and

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referral stages, and ensured that the right referrals are progressed to social care statutory assessment. However, the pressures on the service are still high in relation to assessment and provision of services. More statutory assessments are being completed than previously, and these volumes are mirrored in the increase of children on child protection plans and becoming looked after. Swindon is above the national average for both of these groups. The number of children coming into care as unaccompanied asylum seekers has increased in line with national expectation. The increases in this group and the overall number of children being looked after has resulted in the increase of usage of commissioned placements. The in-house provision continues to improve and build resilience in terms of skill set and placement capacity, but is not yet at a level to cope with the increased demand for placements. Caseloads within the operational teams are being managed with the workforce development programme, and this is starting to reap the benefits in terms of social workers graduating from the academy. The number of agency staff is expected to reduce over the next 6 months, and will be covering sickness, and maternity leave as opposed to vacant posts. The current staff vacancy rate stands at 11%, down 1% from the last report.

There are challenges in relation to some of the timeliness of review and visit activity, particularly in the context of increased numbers of children on child protection plans and being looked after. However, visits within timescales have improved, and continues to do so, and the level of child protection reviews completed within timescales is above the national average. Looked after children reviews continues to prove challenging, and as a result is a local service priority measure. This means that actions linked to improvement are monitored monthly by the senior management team, and that will continue until performance is at the required level.

- 3.3 On a positive note, continuing strengths include a high percentage of children being looked after in family placements, with a lower proportion residing in residential placements compared with others. Fewer children are also becoming the subject of a second or subsequent child protection plan, and a higher number of children are achieving permanency in the form of adoption or special guardianships, and the timeliness of decision to move to adoption has improved. The number of children accommodated under section 20 has also reduced to be more in line with national averages. This has been aided by ensuring that permanency is considered routinely at second child looked after review as well as a robust Permanence Monitoring Panel.
- 3.4 The Quality and Performance Quarterly Board met in February 2017 and was chaired by the Director of Children Services. This Board provides a

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robust forum for presentation and discussion of qualitative audits and required actions, particularly in relation to practice improvements. It enables the service to rate itself from a qualitative and quantity evidence based perspective.

- 3.5 The Swindon Early Help offer is extensive and covers a broad spectrum of services, including community health and education support services. The latest data in relation to early help records is not available for reporting, but the local service data shows that over half of all children coming into contact with social care, have received an early help service, either before, or at the point of referral to social care. Further analysis is needed to understand if these Early Help Record & Plans have developed into actively 'worked' plans with a team around the child. The number of families identified as eligible for the troubled families programme is positive, but getting families to a point where they are have a lead professional working with them to achieved sustained improvement is more of a mixed picture.
- 3.6 The activity in relation to school fixed term exclusions tells the same story as detailed in the last board report: 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 increased notably, and the number for the current academic year to date, exceeds the total number made in the previous year. 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 The performance story in relation to SEN, also remains consistent with the last performance report: 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. There has been a slight increase in the number of EHCP's produced in this quarter compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Progress against the key actions identified by commissioners continues with the development of an SEN audit framework and SEN performance dashboard to aid with performance management in this area.
- 3.8 The number of care leavers who are NEET (not engaged in education/employment/training), has decreased which is positive, but Swindon is still above the national average. Swindon had a higher number

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of young people with physical disabilities in this group compared with others based on the latest performance position. Conversely, the number of young people who are engaged in learning has increased and is above the national average. This is because Swindon has a relatively low number of young people with unknown learning destinations. This means Swindon is good at tracking young people and knowing what their learning destination is. Those authorities with a higher unknown cohort but lower NEET, may well have a proportion of unknowns that will be NEET but not reported as such.

- 3.9 Swindon community health professionals continue to work together to provide a strong community health service provision for children and young people. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection for community health services will take place at the end of March 17. There has continued to be a high uptake in relation to all immunisations for children when compared with others. 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. Robust information sharing between the hospital midwifery department and the borough child health team has helped provide a more timely service for expectant mothers in Swindon. The move of the child health service into a new regional provider will be managed to ensure effective information sharing continues to provide the best health outcomes for children in Swindon.

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 £24.385m. The forecasted variance from budget for 16/17 was a projected overspend of £1.779m based on the year to date January 17 position. The service pressures have decreased 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 in the shorter term, whilst the workforce development strategy and outcomes are

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in progress. 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.

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 2016/17.