

Children Services Performance Summary 16/17 Outturn

Children's Health, Social Care and Education

Overview and Scrutiny

Date: 5th July 2017

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Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report provides the 16/17 annual performance report for children services. It highlights the key activity and performance measures in the service, and refers to areas of both strengths and challenges in relation to Swindon's performance during the year. Comparator data is based on the 15/16 outturn, as the national data is not published until 16/17. The detailed performance report in **Appendix 1** provides all the detail, and an overall summary of performance is included in this report to give at a glance context. For details of all the actual numbers please view **Appendix 1**. The performance included in this report will also be submitted to and published by the Department of Education and used by OFSTED in preparation for inspection.
- 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.
- 1.3 Children services performance contributes to the Council's corporate priority in terms of protecting the vulnerable. Partnership working is key to improving outcomes for children in need and this report helps to indicate areas where stronger partnership working would be of benefit.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

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

3. Key performance messages

- 3.1 2016/17 performance in relation to Children's Social Care has seen some marked areas of improvement and change, as well as some areas of consistent challenge. The overall contact rate to Children Services has now steadied, and in

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16/17 the number of contacts was broadly in line with the previous year, which is the first time in the last 4 years. As reported to the Board in March 2017, the number of referrals accepted by social care has also decreased. As a result the gap is narrowing between Swindon and the national average for this activity measure, which is positive. The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangement continues to be a key driver in this reduction, ensuring that effective screening and signposting of contacts to the Family Contact Point/ MASH means that the majority of referrals into social care progress to a statutory assessment.

- 3.2 The re-referral rate to children's social care has seen movement in year and following an increase in the last quarter the final outturn was 26.6%. Although this is a reduction from 15/16 (27.9%), it is still higher than the national average. Reasons for this include domestic violence notifications that make up a large proportion of social care referrals. There is recognition however, that processes linked to step up and step down from social care require more development and this will be a key focus over the coming months.
- 3.3 The number of children being the subject to statutory assessment has remained at a high level despite the decrease in the social care referral rate, indicating that thresholds are effective, indeed 96.8% of social care referrals resulted in assessment. This means that overall, the demand on the social care service is still high, and this is reflected in the number of children on child protection plans and those coming into the care of the authority. The overall number of children in need (section 17), has decreased.
- 3.4 The overall number of children commencing child protection plans has increased.
- 3.5 The number of children coming into care in Swindon remained at a higher level during 16/17, with 327 children in care as at the 31st March 17. This is slightly above national and statistical neighbour average based on the 15/16 comparator data. Part of this increase is attributable to an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children, of which there were 19 at the end of March 17, and this equals nearly 6% of the overall children in care population. Permanence planning and timeliness has improved both in relation to making a timely decision to adopt in the child's best interests and for proceeding to interim care orders, when it is clear that re-unification under a voluntary section 20 care agreement will not achieve the best outcomes for children. The overall number of adoptions and special guardianships has increased and the overall timeline of the adoption process is timely for the vast majority of cases. At the end of March 17, 34 children were on placement orders, and these will be reflected in adoption orders during 17/18.
- 3.6 Youth offending for children in care continues to be a challenge and Swindon reports a higher number of offenders compared with others. The actions outlined

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in the post inspection plan for this service are being implemented to impact on performance in this area.

- 3.7 On a positive note, the number of care leavers engaged in education/employment and training has seen a positive direction of travel for 16/17 and this coupled with a very low number of children with unknown destinations gives confidence that engaging our vulnerable young people in relation to education opportunities is having a positive effect. Partnership working with post -16 providers is crucial to this area of performance.
- 3.8 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 and 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, however getting families to a point where they have a lead professional working with them to achieve sustained improvement is more of a mixed picture.
- 3.9 The activity in relation to school fixed term exclusions tells the same story as detailed in the two Board reports: 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.
- 3.10 In relation to educational attainment, the Swindon Challenge initiative has been introduced to raise standards in Swindon schools, including raising attainment in key subject areas such as English. The Swindon Challenge Board includes the regional schools' commissioner, head teachers, governors, local businesses and senior council leaders, and will invest £600k in raising standards over the next three years. One aspect to be funded, for example, is having expert consultancy support for secondary Heads of English through their termly network meetings. There will also be an emphasis on phonics outcomes for Year 1 pupils to ensure they are at the national average or above and that reading, writing and mathematics standards are at least in line with national averages when children

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leave primary school at the age of 11. Attainment data will be fully reported in the autumn once the Department of Education releases the statistical publications.

- 3.11 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 definite improvement in relation to the timeliness of completing plans between 2015 and 2016 (performance is reported for the calendar year for this measure). Progress against the key actions identified by commissioners continues with the development of an SEN audit framework. A SEN performance dashboard has also been developed to help with interpretation of performance for all partners involved.
- 3.12 The overall number of young people who are NEET in Swindon has increased slightly, as a direct result of reducing the number of young people in 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 co-hort but lower NEET, may well have a proportion of unknowns that will be NEET but not reported as such. The youth employment rate in Swindon compares favourably with the national average.
- 3.13 Swindon community health professionals continue to work together to provide a strong community health service provision for children and young people. The CQC inspection of our regulated children's community health activities took place in the last week of March this year. The inspection went well and informal feedback was pleasing. The expectation is that the final report is to be published in July 17. The implementation of the Healthy Child Programme continues, and ante-natal and post-natal checks are taking place routinely to support mothers 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 new regional provider arrangements for the child health service commenced on the 1st April 17. Information sharing agreements are in place to ensure that service efficiency is not affected as a result of the service not being delivered within the Borough.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 None.

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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 and Education was £24.385m. The Outturn variance from the budget for 16/17 reported over-spend of £1.757m. There have been a number of pressure, the main ones being an increase in demand for placements £1.248m; the use of Agency staff to cover vacant posts, sickness and maternity cover of £800k. In addition there was a pressure of £263k on the budget funding legal counsel fees, applications and staff costs as a result of an increase in demand, particularly in relation to proceedings for children coming into care. These pressures have been partially offset by staff savings and various other net savings across the service.

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

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7. Background Papers

7.1

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: detailed performance summary