

Children's Performance Summary Quarter 2 17/18

Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny

Date: 29th November 17

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Wards:	ALL
Locality Affected:	ALL
Parishes Affected:	ALL

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This performance summary provides the narrative in relation to performance in children's services between April and September 2017. The detailed performance report is attached in Appendix 1 and 2, and should be referred to for the detailed data analysis and numbers. This report captures the key headlines from the appendixes and gives the overall feel for activity, and performance with direction of travel for the service overall during the year to date. It also gives comparator data performance from the Children's social care in year benchmarking group, which is essential intelligence in relation to current trends in other authorities and how our activity compares in relation to social care.
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee need oversight of Children Service's performance in order to hold them to account. The report highlights areas of performance which are positive, as well as areas where there are challenges. The Committee also need an understanding of the areas of performance where Swindon is compared with others, and how that information is used by external bodies such as the Department of Education and OFSTED.
- 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 where there are areas where stronger partnership working would be of benefit.
- 1.4 The Swindon challenge is a key driver in helping to raise attainment standards within Swindon's schools. This report provides an overview of attainment and attendance, as well as fixed term and permanent exclusions, and how Swindon compare's with others in this area.
- 1.5 Early help services are key to providing effective interventions, and therefore preventing children reaching a higher level of need and social care services. Swindon is uniquely placed with an integrated community health, early help, education support and social care services delivery model. This report provides a performance overview of these services.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Jo Ash, Direct Dial (01793) 465849, jash@swindon.gov.uk.

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2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the key performance messages from the detailed performance information in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.
- 2.2 Identify any areas of concern that require further investigation, and these are owned by Head of Children, Families and Community Health, and the Head of Education depending on the area of performance concerns relate to.

3. Detail

Key Performance Headlines: Quarter 2 2017/18:

- 3.1 The number of contacts and referrals to Children's services Family Contact Point (FCP/MASH – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) is showing an increase during the first half of 17/18. The service had on average 1240 contacts each month between April and September 17. 42% of contacts received in the period came from the police, and are predominantly linked to episodes of domestic abuse where a child resides at their family address. 22% of contacts are closed with no further action, or with information and advice. A mini Peer Review with Oxfordshire Council was undertaken in October 2017, to analyse the flow of work through FCP/MASH; with specific reference to decision making; understanding the early help signposting and analysing the re-referral rates. Of those contacts that progress to social care referrals, the majority (97.5%), require a statutory assessment. Of those assessments completed, in the region of 80% go on to be a child in need. This is a higher percentage than others. The reason for this is that FCP/MASH, arrangements in Swindon are working to ensure that in the vast majority of cases, only the right cases are progressed to assessment at the outset. Those not assessed to be in need are often referred to early help service provision for support. 25% of social care referrals are re-referrals from the previous 12 months. This is a reduction from 28.1% for the same period in the previous year.
- 3.2 Timeliness of statutory assessment completion is an area of significant improvement, which is positive, and has been achieved as a direct result of management directive and workforce contribution to ensuring performance improvement in this area. A statutory assessment took on average 28 working days to complete, based on the number of assessments completed between April and September 17. This is a vast improvement on the end of 16/17 position where an assessment took on average 39 days to complete. Swindon is now in line with its comparator group and national average.
- 3.3 The number of children becoming subject to a section 47 child protection enquiry remains higher than others, and a higher proportion (51.7%), go onto

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conference compared with 42.4% nationally. Of those becoming the subject of a conference nearly all become subject to a plan. Swindon has 330 children on a child protection plan, and this is higher than others. 15.6% of children starting a plan between April and September 17 had been on a plan at some point previously. This is a decrease from last year and is now lower than others, which is positive, as a high number of subsequent plans can indicate that children's plans are not effective interventions, or ended prematurely. There will always be instances where repeat plans are inevitable if there is a change in the family's circumstances. Timeliness of child protection reviews is generally good and consistent thereby making sure that children's needs and risks are re-evaluated as part of reviewing the overall child protection plan.

- 3.4 The number of children looked after continues to be at a higher level than previously in Swindon, but the increase experienced in 16/17 appears to be showing signs of stabilising between April and September 17, with 333 children looked after for both the April and September 17 snapshot. Short term stability of placements is more positive than long term, and this indicates good planning for initial placements, but longer term challenges for maintaining placements for children who have been in care for a longer period. Children with complex needs, presenting in more challenging behaviour, is a significant contributor to the reasons for placement breakdowns. There has also been a further increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children with 22 being looked after at the end of September 17. All of these factors have contributed to an increase in the usage of commissioned placements which now accounts for 42.2% of the children looked after population. Participation of children in the looked after children process remains consistently robust and above national comparator which is positive.
- 3.5 The number of children being adopted is still below national average, but has increased in the last year, whilst nationally a decrease has been experienced. Swindon has also had a higher number of special guardianship arrangements in the first half of this year. Timeliness of adoption, particularly length of time between entering care and being adopted is low in the national context. The lower number of adoptions impacts on performance here, as the vast majority of children are placed for adoption well within the national thresholds set, however a couple of statistical outliers on historical cases continue to skew the average. This is apparent in national publications such as the Adoption scorecard which also reports a 3 year average, rather than reflecting latest performance. Court proceedings for children are responsive, and permanency planning arrangements have been improved, all of which results in a predominantly timely and robust pathway through the adoption process.
- 3.6 The proportion of care leavers engaged in education/employment/training has continued to improve with 60% reported for September 17. This is above

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national average, and 5% improvement on the March 17 position. 86% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation which is also stronger than national comparators. This is an area of strength, and considerable improvement from previous years.

- 3.7 Primary school attainment showed positive progress in 2017. Outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile measure of good development improved and are just below the national average. Key stage 1 results reported robust progress in reading, writing and maths and indications are that virtually all measures are in line with or above the national average. This is the second year of teacher assessments within the statutory guidance, suggesting the bedding in of the new curriculum and teacher assessment approach. Key stage 2 results were also positive with improvements across all subjects but particularly in writing. Swindon was the most improved local authority in the country at KS2 for pupils reaching the expected level in all core subjects. A key area of focus will be to improve outcomes at the higher attainment level of greater depth. Progress measures are slightly below the national average.
- 3.8 Secondary attainment presents a more taxing picture and reflects the continuing need for the Swindon Challenge programme, to ensure the Regional Schools Commissioners Office, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), stand-alone academy trusts, teaching schools and local authority continue to work together to improve attainment outcomes for children in Swindon. Most attainment and progress measures have Swindon in the bottom quartile of local authorities. The attainment challenges are also reflected in the post 16 and 19 attainment outcomes. Fixed term and permanent exclusions have continued to increase during 2016/17, with permanent exclusions in particular showing a very high increase from 24 in 15/16 to 57 in 16/17.
- 3.9 For children requiring an education/health and care plan, there has been a significant improvement in the timeliness of completion from 60.5% in September 16 to 93.9% in September 17.
- 3.10 The number of young people engaged in education/employment and training broadly in line with national average. The NEET rate, (those not engaged in education/employment/training, is slightly higher in Swindon, but this is due to robust tracking processes meaning that we have relatively few young people with unknown learning destinations, and therefore have better data intelligence to hand to support professionals in working with this vulnerable group of young people. Cabinet has recently approved the Cabinet approved the Skills and Employment Strategy for 2017 – 2020 which sets out Swindon's ambitions and plans for ensuring young people and adults are able to access learning and skills to compete for jobs and achieve their potential.

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- 3.11 Over 80% of First time entrants are dealt with by the police under their pre court processes, with no Youth Offending Team (YOT) involvement. A joint initiative with the police is exploring ways in which the YOT can contribute to their prevention strategy to reduce this figure and stop them committing more crime (and entering the youth justice system) further down the line. The number of first time entrants into the youth justice system has reported a decrease which is welcome. However, there continues to be a lack of clarity around reasons for data discrepancies between the police and the local authority which means the data should be considered with an element of caution. Information sharing agreements are being sought to enable the sharing of individual data in order to understand the reasons for the discrepancies.
- 3.12 The Early help offering continues to be strong, and the positive CQC inspection of community health services in March 17 reflected this. The integrated approach in Swindon ensures that professionals have live data at their fingertips in relation to other professionals involved with families, and helps to ensure a smooth transition between early help and social care service provision, as well as stepping down cases from social care to early help following successful interventions. 55% of social care referrals had a previous early help involvement. The Healthy child programme measures have been affected by staffing challenges in the last quarter and this is reflected in the coverage of visits by health visitors. Breastfeeding rates have still improved, despite these challenges.
- 3.13 The Family service data is now starting to take shape, and the numbers of children and families engaged with the service has continued to increase for quarter 2. A third of children worked with are also in receipt of an early help record and plan. The recording of outcomes is still in development, but data should be robust enough in the next report to provide some more insightful analysis.
- 3.14 Children & families continue to be consistently and efficiently identified when eligible for the Troubled Families programme, and an increasing number have a dedicated lead professional allocated. There has been a considerable emphasis on improving outcomes for this vulnerable group, and this has resulted in an increase in the number of claims. Work in this area was acknowledged by the recent Troubled Families Spot Check, undertaken by the DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government), and from which the feedback was positive both in relation to the practice linked to working with these families, and the consolidated data approach.

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Alternative Options

- 3.15 There are no alternative options for consideration within the context of this report.

4. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 4.1 For 2017/18, the budget for Children, Families and Community Health is £26.9m. Based on the September monitoring position, the service is reporting a projected overspend of £2.3m. The service has experienced significant demand pressures for residential external placements and independent foster carers. This increase in demand has also resulted in a pressure on the budget for legal costs.
- 4.2 The 2017/18 Skills and Attainment Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget is £84.9m. Based on the September monitoring position, the DSG is projected to be £0.203m over budget. The main pressures are due to an increase in demand in external placements, High Needs Top ups paid to Mainstream and Specialist settings and for Element 2 funding for Post 16 pupils. These overspends are partially offset by funding recouped from schools and academies for Permanently Excluded Pupils.
- 4.3 The 2017/18 Core Skills and Attainment budget is £1.939m. Based on the September monitoring position, the service area is reporting a projected overspend of £0.054m, which is due to the service area's share of redundancy costs plus school improvement projects.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

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)

- 4.4 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.

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Diversity Impact Assessment

- 4.5 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

- 4.6 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.

5. Consultees

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

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 None

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Key Performance Indicator Overview Social Care and Education
Appendix 2: Key Performance Headlines Early Help Services