

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 12th DECEMBER 2018
REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDRENS WELLBEING
COUNCILLOR KATE BOOTH**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out my portfolio priorities and provides an update on areas of my portfolio of responsibility that relates to the Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

The City Council's Constitution clearly sets out the portfolio and areas of accountability. The portfolio that I have political accountability covers all the local authority children's services and social care. My post is required by law to held directly accountability for the effectiveness, availability and value for money of the local authority's children's services (particularly education and children's social care.)

Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS)	This role requires close joint working and formal reporting with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture, Cllr Jayne Francis to ensure appropriate accountability for statutory education functions contained within the LMCS role – including fair access to schooling for all children, high quality early years provision and children's involvement in public decision making.
Safeguarding Children and Young People	With statutory partners, the safety and wellbeing of all children.
Children's Services	Leadership, strategy and effectiveness of children's services – responding to the needs of all children and young people, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers.
Overseeing the Children's Trust	Oversight of the 'client side' role of the Children's Trust to ensure the delivery of agreed outcomes, KPIs and finances within the legal and contractual framework agreed
Overseeing Early Years	Ensuring a sufficiency of places and a citywide Early Years Health and Wellbeing offer.
Corporate Parenting	Political leadership on improving the lives of Children in Care. Ensuring all Council members, officers and services

	understand and actively promote the Council's responsibilities to Children in Care.
Lead Member for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion	Lead Member, working with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture, leading the SEND agenda across children's agencies and holding officers and partners to account for the delivery of the Birmingham SEND strategy.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY PRIORITIES

Over the past six months since taking on this role, I initially concentrated on getting out and about meeting frontline staff to understand the wide breadth of the portfolio and get a greater understanding on frontline pressures. I have also been meeting key stakeholders and visiting some of our schools in the City.

The children's social care improvement journey is well documented and this Committee has received many reports from previous Cabinet Members and more recently from the Chair and Chief Executive of our Childrens Trust. The Trust was officially launched in April this year, and I am confident that our improvement trajectory continues although the change of the scale required does take time.

I reported earlier this year in July to the Learning, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting out my priorities which include:

- Oversight of the Children's Trust; and in particular ensuring that we continue to focus on improving the safeguarding of our children and young people
- Working with our provider partners to improve outcomes through the Birmingham Forward Steps service created by the Early Years Health and Wellbeing contract. The integrated service is focused on improving how we provide universal antenatal visits and the child health programme as well as targeted services for the children and parents who need our intervention; ensuring they receive timely support locally, bringing together the health visiting service and children's centres.
- Focusing on our Special Educational Needs, improvement work was underway prior to the Ofsted Inspection into SEND in June this year. With Health jointly leading we have developed a comprehensive action plan to address the shortfallings highlighted in the report and more importantly to improve and better communicate our offer to our children.
- Linked to the above is the education provision for children with Special Educational Needs. I am keen to ensure that we work on a plan to look at how we can begin to work towards ensuring our children with special educational needs are able to access schools locally within Birmingham that meet their needs with appropriate support. Far too many of our children have been placed in schools outside of Birmingham.

- Travel Assist, has had a great deal of focus over the last year and was subject to a full debate at this Scrutiny Committee last month. I am aware we need to improve and provide better alternatives for our children and young people using this service. We need to improve the current offer and where appropriate support children and young people with disabilities to become more enabled and independent.
- Childhood exploitation is an area of work in which everyone need to be more vigilant. If we see or notice anything, it is all our responsibility to report it. I am pleased to note that social workers, the police, voluntary sector and our schools are doing some great work.
- Improving our Mental Health Offer through making information more easily accessible for our children and young people, with Cllr Alex Yip. The Post 16 Forum, chaired by Jane Götschel, Headteacher at Lordswood Girls School arranged a Post 16 Mental Health Conference in July, where Cllr Yip and I were keynote speakers. Following the success of the conference, the need for more resources and support for mental health and wellbeing was identified, including the opportunity to publish a mental health brochure for all young people, or the development of an App. Corporate sponsorship will be sought to fund this initiative. To inform this development, a young person's Focus Group has been arranged for 17 December 2018. To date, 10 schools and colleges have confirmed participation. Additionally, UCB and the Prince's Trust have been approached for student ambassadors to help facilitate the session.

Further training to build capacity and confidence among Post 16 providers have also been arranged:

- Cognitive Behavioural Approaches on 30 November 2018, facilitated by Education Psychology
- Understanding the Teenage Brain in February 2019, facilitated by FTB
- Managing Successful Transition to Post 16 and HE - July 2019.

4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

As a City Council we are becoming more outward focused and work with our partners has improved. The issues on improving outcomes for our children are wide and cross all portfolios and agencies in the City. There are some great pockets of good practice in individual service areas; but more needs to be done to create a City where all children have the opportunity to realise their potential. Children are collectively all our responsibilities as Corporate Parents; the proverb 'It takes a whole village to raise a child' does resonate.

As there are many factors child poverty, adverse childhood experiences and homelessness that unfortunately impacts on our young children and their families. I know this is complex and multi-layered but we are clearer as an organisation with our partners that we need to focus far more on the early intervention and prevention activity to try and eradicate the cycle of deprivation and health inequalities that exist within our City.

We are working far more closely with our schools, voluntary sector, health, police, our families and all other partners to improve the opportunities for our children so they get the best start in life with aspirations which will see them succeed. With our partners we have established a jointly resourced and integrated Children and Young People Strategic Partnership. Through this we will be establishing a jointly-resourced Childrens Improvement team, colocated work as an integrated turnaround team. The first meeting was held in the last week of November with Paul Jennings from health chairing, and there were over 80 delegates in attendance. Alongside Local Authority and Health colleagues, other delegates included Councillors and MPs, the Police, Probation Service, Birmingham Children's Trust, the West Midlands Combined Authority, Birmingham Education Partnership – plus representatives from a range of education settings and voluntary organisations. But the most important voice of all was that of parents. Together, we looked in detail at five key themes: continuous improvement; vulnerability; community development; partnerships; and integrated care delivery. It was good to see the commitment from everyone on improving outcomes for our children.

There has been a lot of training across all schools to assist in early recognition of radicalisation and setting out clear reporting lines. Birmingham works uniquely via the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award which produces resilient young people who understand how to avoid any extremist influences. Birmingham has 239 schools engaged with the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award embedding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The programme helps to support long term safeguarding, help children develop personal resilience, improving attendance, attainment and progress, community engagement, and children's wellbeing,

5. Performance Update

Within the Council Plan are a number of performance targets with either monthly or yearly returns. The recent monthly returns include:

REF 2.1.1 Percentage of new Education Health Care (EHC) plans issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptions

Nationally there is a DfE target of 95% of plans completed within 20 weeks. The national average for performance against this measure is 61% with 90% being seen by the DfE as the expected target for high performing LAs is 90%.

April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	October
86.4%	65.70%	82.9%	86.9%	80.6%	84.6%	93.1%

Figures dipped at the beginning of the year due to work being done to finalise transfer of Education Statements to EHC plans. There has been a pick-up in plans although the figures are below the high council target of 95% completion. For October 93.1% equated to 54 out of the 58 plans being produced on time.

REF 2.1.3 Children's Trust meeting or exceeding their performance targets

The Children's Trust reports monthly on 15 indicators. The agreed contractual position is that they should be delivered at the contractual target or an agreed level of tolerance.

For October, of the 15 contractual KPIs

- All 15 KPIs were performing within contractual target or tolerances
- 10 performing better than target level
- 1 performing at target level
- 3 missed target but performing within contractual tolerance

KPI 1 % of referrals with a decision within 24 hours

- performing at target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 2 % of re-referrals to CSC within 12 months

- not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 3 % of assessments completed within 45 working days

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average better than target

KPI 4 Child in need cases open for more than 2 years

- not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 5 % of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 6 % of children who become subject to a Child Protection plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 2 years

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average better than target

KPI 7 % of children (under 16 years) who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more and in the same placement for 2 years or more

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average better than target

KPI 8 % of Looked After Reviews held on time

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average better than target

KPI 9 % of care leavers who are in Education Employment or Training

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average better than target

KPI 10 average time between LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 3 year average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 11 % of young offenders that re-offend within 1 year

- Performance better than target during October

KPI 12 % of established Social Worker posts filled by agency/interim staff

- not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 13 % of Child Protection plans ending within 3 months or less

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average better than target

KPI 14 – average caseload of qualified Social Workers

- not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

KPI 15 - % of Social Workers who have had supervision in month

- Performance better than target during October
- Previous 12 month cumulative performance average not reaching target but performing within agreed contractual tolerance

6 UPDATE ON KEY BUDGET ISSUES/KEY FUTURE BUDGET ISSUES

For 2018/19 all reductions in spend have been achieved within the CYP Directorate, with the exception of Travel Assist. Work continues on this service as discussed in depth at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in November.

The Children's Trust has been spending to profile.

One of the biggest challenges for Children's services in the city is the increasing demand for some services in particular and overall reducing budgets.

Partnership working will be critical to changing existing practise that may currently lead to duplication or inefficiencies across service delivery for children and families.

For 2019/20 the biggest budget pressure remains Travel Assist, but other services linked to Early Years and SEND will need to be carefully managed to ensure that General Fund costs do not rise. Part of the savings plan involves increasing income targets in some areas, largely through subscriptions or payments to cover costs. These fees have been kept as low as possible, to limit the impact on subscribers, such as schools.

The relationship with the Schools Forum continues to develop, and as the commissioner of Schools Funding for the city, I will continue to work with them to ensure that schools are receiving the best value for money from services.

7 Challenges and Closing Summary

Safeguarding all our children remains this administration's key priority and in particular protecting our vulnerable children and children in need.

The budget also remains a fundamental challenge identifying and realising savings whilst ensure the impact is mitigated so the outcomes for our children and in particular our children is not compromised.

Latest Ofsted Inspection – Children's Services

The last week in November, Ofsted confirmed the start of their inspection of the council's children's social care services as delivered by Birmingham Children's Trust. The inspection is being undertaken over a three-week period. Ofsted spent the first week off-site and then a team of inspectors will spend two weeks on-site from today (3 December). During the off-site week, they looked at child-level data and case file audits, as well as other performance and management information. They will also have focused on social workers' direct practice with families. We are expecting feedback from the Inspection in January 2019.

I have been holding regular meetings with the Children's Trust Chief Executive Andy Couldrick and Chair Andrew Christie, as well as the Governance arrangements to monitor and have oversight on progress going forward.

Ofsted Inspection - April

At the previous Ofsted fifth monitoring visit in April, Ofsted reported that they had found 'further progress in improving the quality of services for young people leaving care.' This was the first Ofsted monitoring visit to the Children's Trust.

The report noted that personal advisors know their young people well and are aware of and ensure young people have access to their entitlements. It also found that:

- ✓ There is a continuing focus on reducing the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

- ✓ A new pathway plan template is a 'significant improvement' enabling young people's views and aspirations to be better captured, although work is required to ensure these are completed in a timely manner
- ✓ There has been an increase in the number of care leavers in apprenticeships since the last inspection, and work-based taster days have been a success

The report highlighted areas for development, including the need to move to focus on quality over compliance, a greater understanding and use of reflection, and consideration of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) for children in long-term foster care.

Ofsted Inspection – Special Educational Needs

Earlier in June we had an Ofsted Inspection of our Special Educational Needs, this was shared with this Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October this year. The inspection was difficult reading however we were aware that significant improvements are required in this service area. This was documented in our self-evaluation which was shared with the Ofsted Team, prior to Inspection.

Work on improving this area started in the summer and jointly a draft Written Statement of Action (WSOA) has been produced which will be submitted to Ofsted for approval shortly. The statement of action has been **co-produced** between **partners** and **Birmingham Parent Carer Forum**, and will be subject to wider **engagement with schools, GP practices, wider partners** and **providers**. Ofsted will let us know whether they are content with the WSoA and if they are I will ensure this is shared.

We have supported the re-establishment and re-launch of the Parent Carer Forum and have identified and organised parent carer engagement opportunities such as 'The Journey of the Child' workshop, which took place on 13th November 2018. Birmingham Voluntary Service Council has also been commissioned to undertake a survey with parents, enhanced by a SEND consultation event with parents and the voluntary sector, to identify priorities. The Parent Carer Forum will be involved in workstreams and training as well as the quarterly oversight of progress against the 'Written Statement of Action'.

I know from the meetings that I have attended with special schools, parents and talks with our partners that we need to be clearer in our communications and ensure that the journey of our children with special educational needs is clear from the outset. Parents need to know what level of support their children will receive and at what times during their child's education changes will take place so they are better prepared. The approach taken will be in line with our whole life disability strategy. The communication of this is important so our parents are clear on the interventions and support they can expect for their child through their journey to adulthood.

There are an increasing number of children with merging and identified SEND in the PVI early years sector being notified to the Area SENCO team academic year on year. It is for this reason that I am keen that with our partners we can

look at a whole life approach – so we do have clarity on when and where additional support can be provided and what support is most suited to improve outcomes.

Closing Remarks

Over the past six months I have been out to social work teams and setting and the seeing the dedication of our frontline social work staff is incredible. We have some fantastic staff who I know we are all so grateful for. There are areas that obviously need to be improved further but what I have seen in my visits fills me with the confidence that Birmingham is a great City and we can and will improve with our Partners our offer to our children.

- UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award: we have over 200 of our schools signed up to this from nurseries through to secondary schools. Human rights are fundamental and this includes children's rights so it is wonderful to see our young people so passionate about their rights and respecting others. They are so keen to help others learn about children's rights and why they are so important. Birmingham is a national leader in this area, it is fantastic to see so many schools getting involved and we will continue to support every school that wants to take part.
- Collaborative cross-party working to develop mental health resources for young people.
- Building capacity and expertise among the Post 16 sector to better support young people with mental wellbeing. Ensuring any new resources are co-produced with young people.
- Fantastic social work practice on the frontline.

It continues to be a very challenging time, but I am optimistic that we have the right foundations in place to see improvements. I look forward to continuing to work with you all and our partners to ensure our children have the best possible start, protecting them and providing them with the aspirations and opportunities to thrive and realise their potential.

Councillor Kate Booth
Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing