

Birmingham City Council

Education, Children and Young People

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 17 January 2024



Subject: The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan Update

Report of: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update to Members on progress made since July 2023 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting regarding the The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the attached report, agree any comments and/or recommendations.
- 2.2 To continue to return on a quarterly basis to provide regular updates on progress to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan was launched in November 2022 to align within one plan, all City Council improvement and transformation activity that impacts on children, young people, and their families.
- 3.2 The objectives of the plan and associated activity seek to compliment and reinforce those set out within the City Council's Corporate Plan and improvement and transformation activity, our partnership Change for Children and Young People Plan 2023-2028 and across the UNICEF Child Friendly City commitments.
- 3.3 The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan was first presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2023 and again in April 2023.
- 3.4 In July 2023, a progress update was provided to the Committee and offered an overview of progress to date illustrated through a review of project and action BRAG status.

- 3.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested for further progress updates to be provided on a quarterly basis.
- 3.6 The Plan centres on five overarching workstreams that each comprise of numerous strategic and operational actions.
- **Workstream A:** Implement a strong and effective Children and Families Directorate to deliver best in class services for children, young people, families, and communities
 - **Workstream B:** Strengthen approaches to identify, recognise and respond to the vulnerability of specific groups of children and young people
 - **Workstream C:** Transform and improve services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in line with statutory requirements and to deliver sustainable, well performing services with inclusion of children and young people at the heart.
 - **Workstream D:** Transform and improve Children and Young People's Travel Service to deliver a sustainable well performing service with outcomes for children and young people at its heart
 - **Workstream E:** Ensure services are sustainable, compliant, and designed to deliver best outcomes for children, young people, families, and communities
- 3.7 Progress reporting across Workstream C (SEND Improvement) and Workstream D (Children and Young People's Travel Service Improvement) will continue to be reported in detail through their respective Programme Leads and overseen by their respective Improvement Boards, a quarterly update is provided to the Improving Services for Children and Families Board to ensure there is continued line of sight and triangulation across interdependencies.
- 3.8 The strategic accountability for the delivery of the Plan is managed through the Improving Services for Children and Families Board. The Board consists of senior leaders from across the Council, with representation from Birmingham Children's Trust, to ensure a whole system focus is maintained.
- 3.9 The Board has an independent Chair, a credible expert and experienced DCS, well positioned to provide continued challenge and oversight.

4 Improvement Journey ~ Progress to Date

- 4.1 The most recent progress reporting of projects and actions was provided to the last Improving Services for Children and Families Board, 27th November 2023, for reporting period September (end)/October 2023.

4.2 Headline progress reported:

Workstream	Headline Progress – Since July 2023
<p>A: Implement a strong and effective Children and Families Directorate to deliver best in class services for children, young people, families, and communities</p>	<p>E2.6 Review the vision, strategy, and delivery model of services for young people leading to service redesign, including securing internal/external budget viability and growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 6 actions across this project, overall project status is green, to reach blue BRAG rating, the automation of information will be monitored further across the next reporting period to ensure that activity is fully embedded. The Head of Digital, Evidence and Performance commenced in post in June 2023 and has supported the progression of actions from inflight to complete and embedded. Key Performance Indicators reporting and tracking is in place. Data quality and analysis has significantly improved and has supported the value of reporting across Directorate Performance Management, SEND, Cabinet Members Briefings and Overview and Scrutiny. A strategic review of our education management information software system, Impulse Nexus, is underway. Focussed on maximising system capability and ensuring that the right people have the right level of access and permissions. The Directorate Performance Board programme of work has been redesigned to facilitate increased collaboration.
<p>B: Strengthen approaches to identify, recognise and respond to the vulnerability of specific groups of children and young people</p>	<p>B1.8 Develop an Attendance Strategy with key stakeholders that includes emphasis on the primary phase and ensuring early help is in place to support children and families - In line with statutory guidance and best practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During September 2023, preparatory activity took place in readiness for proposed online and face to face workshops. An online survey was designed to capture the voices of children and young people to inform the Attendance Strategy A series of face to face and online workshops were held with parents, agencies, and schools to identify priorities to inform the development of the Attendance Strategy. Most agencies were represented, and valuable discussions took place.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drafting of the Strategy is now underway. <p>B4.1 Ensure arrangements for reporting, monitoring, and supporting Elective Home Education are robust, including ensuring there is sufficient capacity, to enable timeline of visits and reviews of EHE in line with statutory duties and best practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Daily meetings have been established whereby Elected Home Education Managers and Advisors assess EHE referrals at the point of submission/receipt. ▪ The process involves contacting schools that have sent the referrals and the parents of respective children, to understand the rationale for the referral and to explore, where appropriate, alternative options in the interest of the child/ren – keeping children and young people at the heart of decision making and planning. ▪ This reflecting a robust and timely response to referrals. ▪ EHE Managers are working in partnership with Virtual Schools Service and Birmingham Children's Trust to establish a pathway to respond to referrals for home educated children on Child Protection Plans. ▪ EHE Managers attends the EHE EHCP Panel meetings led by SENAR. Development of a process to support decision making relating to EHE referrals of children on EHCP Plans is underway. <p>B5.8 Ensure robust, best practice, systems are in place for Chaperone Licensing and Children in Employment functions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The online Chaperone Licensing Application Process is in its final stages – the system has been tested with new Chaperone applicants who have informed that the experience was positive. ▪ The customer review team have also engaged existing Chaperones to seek their view of the digital process, positive feedback was received ▪ The team have received positive acknowledgement of the improved timeframe for receiving chaperone licences ▪ All work permits have been processed and currently there are no pending applications. ▪ All telephone and email enquiries have been answered within one day. ▪ No complaint's received this reporting period ▪ All Chaperone licencing applications processed and working to time scales of 4 weeks ahead, consistent processing of application within an average timescale of 4 days.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 189 emails detailing positive feedback from customer experience. ▪ Chaperone checks for other local authorities completed on the same day. ▪ The process for responding to any potential concerns received into the service in relation to Chaperones, is currently under review to create a more robust approach to responding, managing, and concluding any investigations. ▪ This work has been prioritised and the programme team are working with the Head of Service and the CET Team Manager to establish a revised systematic approach whilst ensuring that any current referrals are appropriately addressed.
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Of the 34 projects:

- **19 are BRAG rated as Amber** (project started and progress is being made) – this is a positive decrease from the last reporting period
 - **3 BRAG rated Green** (project completed but continues to be monitored to ensure it is embedded) - this is a positive increase from the last reporting period
- **7 projects** are led by the Children and Young People's Travel Service Improvement Programme
 - **5 projects** are from the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan and led by the SEND Improvement Board

Of the 299 actions:

- **49 are BRAG rated as Blue** (Blue = action delivered, embedded, and sustained). Increase of 4 actions assessed as being embedded since the last reporting period
 - **48 are BRAG rated as Green** (Green = action completed but continues to be monitored to ensure it embeds)
 - **114 are BRAG rated as Amber** (Amber = action has started, and progress is being made)
 - **2 are BRAG rated as Red** (Red = Significant delay in implementation/still a worry)
 - **17 are BRAG rated as Grey** (Grey = action not yet started/due to start)
- **36 actions** are led by the Children and Young People's Travel Service programme
 - **33 actions** are from the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan and led by the SEND Improvement

4.3 We currently have two Red BRAG Rated Actions:

E 2.5 Develop and implement Phase 3 of Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES) redesign

- The Section 114 Notice has impacted on recruitment with disruption to offers of work to external positions, resulting in vacancies
- This action requires review, clarity, and potential alignment to an alternative action owner/s to ensure that desired outcomes have been profiled correctly.

E 2.6 Review the vision, strategy, and delivery model of services for young people leading to service redesign, including securing internal/external budget viability and growth.

- This action requires review, in light of the current financial pressures to which the directorate is responding. Action 2.6 requires alignment to the ongoing work to redesign the 14-19 careers and youth services around a reduced budget.

4.4 Figures 1.1 and 1.2 provide an illustrative overview of progress across the respective reporting period (October 2023).

Figure 1.1

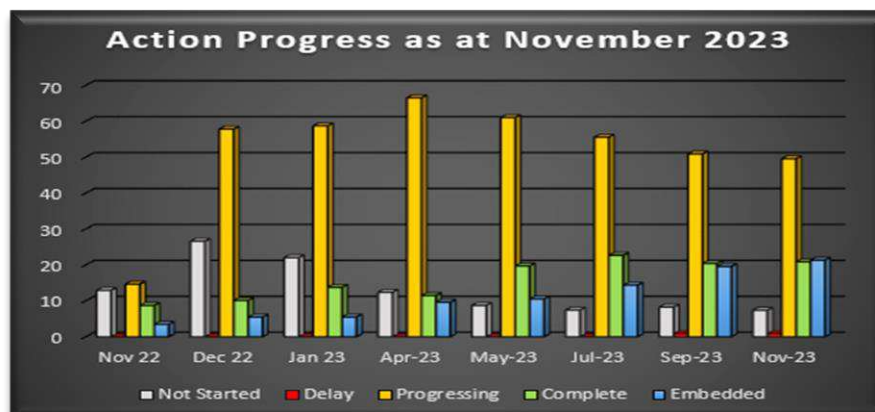
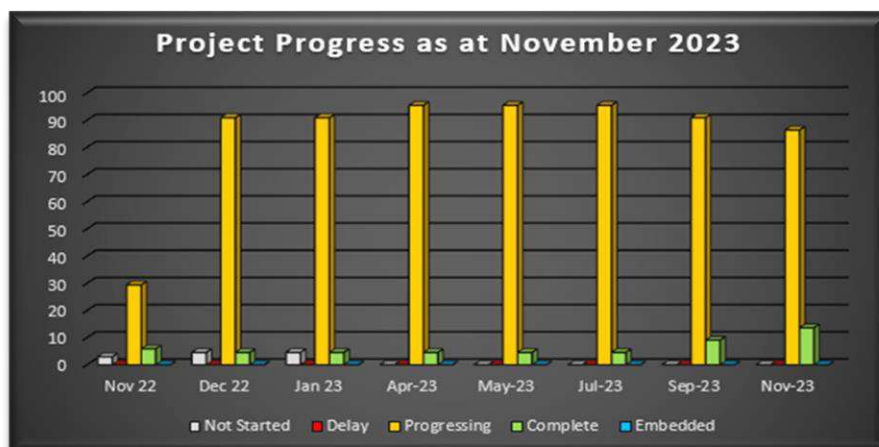


Figure 1.2

- 4.5 During the April 2023 meeting of this Committee, the potential to hold a data workshop was discussed. On 6th November 2023, David Fallows, Head of the Digital, Evidence and Performance Service along with Sue Harrison and Cllr Karen McCarthy led a workshop for Overview and Scrutiny Members on Children and Families Data and Performance.
- 4.6 The aim of the workshop was to give an overview of all the key sources of data across Children and Young People. During the workshop, Members were also given an overview of different analysis products, tips on how to interpret them and an overview of performance reporting and management across the Directorate.
- 4.7 The workshop was well received by Members. It was agreed that a further presentation would be provided to Members in 2024, detailing a Data and Digital Roadmap, outlining intended resolutions to some of the challenges presented in the workshop regarding data availability and quality.

5 Strategic Risks and Challenges

- 5.1 A2: Develop and implement a fit for purpose operating model for the Children and Families Directorate:
- The progression and completion of 10 out of the 19 actions is solely dependent on the Directorate redesign, further emphasising the importance of progressing the redesign at pace.

Risk/Challenge	Mitigation
<p>Council Wide and Directorate Financial Position.</p> <p>It is noted that the Council is in a different financial position since the launch of the Improvement Plan, the Section 114 is expected to affect the Council's ability to respond to asks as anticipated at the time that activity and scheduling was agreed</p>	<p>An update on the Council's financial position and associated projections and planning will feature as a standing agenda item at the Improving Services for</p>
<p>Directorate Redesign.</p> <p>Potential impact of the Section 114 arrangements on the planned Directorate Redesign in terms of how this will affect pace of implementation.</p> <p>Many projects are affected by the pace of implementation of the redesign as they are reliant on permanent and stable teams to deliver improvements, for example implementation of new processes and procedures.</p>	<p>The redesign will feature as a standing agenda item at the Improving Services for Children and Families Board, this will allow for robust monitoring and due notification of any arising issues.</p> <p>A dedicated team including colleagues from HR and the Directorate are working collaboratively to respond to and resolve issues as they arise.</p>

- 5.2 The Directorate Improvement Plan, milestones and schedule of activity will aim to offer due consideration to emerging insight to inform chosen future project methodology, future priorities and workstreams.
- 5.3 Review of the Feasibility Studies – Whilst this activity usually takes place before a project is initiated to assess the merits of a workstream, this assessment is a useful tool to support inflight project review activity. This will strengthen the Directorate's ability to assess potential alternative approaches to achieving milestones. This to include potential new activity and realising outcomes across existing actions.

6 Securing Continued Improvement – Building on Progress

- 6.1 The Directorate is focussed on systematic, sustainable progress that is underpinned by the way we work and reliant on organisational arrangements equipped to facilitate impactful outcomes.
- 6.2 The Directorate improvement journey is an evidenced based operating model that is aligned to internal Directorate and Council wide and partnership ambitions and seeks to empower the Directorate to actively embed continued improvement methodology into business as usual.
- 6.3 Through the Improvement Plan and respective activity, the Directorate has been able to consistently demonstrate improvement through carefully evidenced based project and action planning.
- 6.4 During the November 2023 Improving Services for Children and Families Board, whilst reviewing 2023 progress, the Independent Chair outlined what was described as significant progress made by the Directorate which has been centre to much success across services for children and families.
- 6.5 The January 2024 Improving Services for Children and Families Board will take place in person, this to support next steps and allow members to come together to reflect, recalibrate and inform the direction of our 2024 improvement ambitions.
- 6.6 The ability to review and refresh denotes the Directorates improvements arrangements have flex and can respond to changing need and resources to ensure continued conditions for success.
- 6.7 We recognise the opportunity to refresh our efforts to strengthening our ability to collaborate and co-produce and draw on the expertise of the workforce.
- 6.8 The Directorate will continue to make progress, however we recognise that pace may well be impacted by current financial implications.

7 Any Finance Implications

- 7.1 As captured within section 5 of this report.

8 Any Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan will support the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services to fulfil the functions

and discharge duties as set out in Sections 18 and 19 of the Children Act 2004, associated statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities Directors of children's services: roles and responsibilities and in the Council's Constitution.

9 Any Equalities Implications

- 9.1 The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan supports the Council's Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business ambitions. The plan also

10 Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix one: Children and Families Directorate Key Performance Indicators.

Appendix One

PROJECT PROGRESS DASHBOARD

RAG	Description
Grey	Not yet due to start
Red	Significant delay in implementation/still a worry
Amber	Action started and progress being made
Green	Action completed but continue to monitor closely to ensure it has embedded
Blue	Action delivered and performance embedded and sustained for over 3 months and meeting/exceeding targets (where the action is measurable)

3.	<i>Individual Project Summary</i>									
Project Ref	Project Title	Project Lead (name)	Previous BRAG Status	Grey	Red	Amber	Green	Blue	Direction of Travel	Comments
A1	Develop and implement the high-level strategic vision for the Directorate underpinned by values and behaviours	Director of Children and Families							↔	
A2	Develop and implement a fit for purpose operating model for the Children and Families Directorate	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A3	Implement a robust evidenced based practice approach across the Children and Families Directorate that supports the Directorate to successfully implement its vision and values working alongside the partnership	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A4	Establish a performance culture that uses performance as a tool for continuous improvement and ensures operational, senior managers and Elected Members are able to have a firm grip on performance	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	

A5	Ensure effective digital systems and technology are in place to support the Directorate to deliver good services and support IT enabled change	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A6	Recruit, retain and develop a high-quality permanent and stable workforce that represents the community - making Birmingham City Council the employer of choice for children and families professionals	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A7	Ensure there is effective professional development that is accessible to the Children and Families Directorate workforce	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A8	Establish and embed a learning culture across the Children and Families Directorate so that learning systematically informs the way we work and service development	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A9	Establish robust operating and governance arrangements that enable senior leaders and elected members to maintain a line of sight to services	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A10	Ensure staff have opportunities to shape and influence continuous improvement with the Directorate	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A11	Implement and embed a co-ordinated, planned, and strategic approach to Directorate communications	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A12	Ensure there is an effective strategic partnership for children and young people in Birmingham that is ambitious for our children with a shared vision, purpose, and plan	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
A13	Ensure financial processes are embedded so that budget resources available to the directorate are allocated and used most effectively	Director of Evidence, Strategy and Commissioning							↔	
B1	Embed Children Missing out on Education systems to ensure there is robust oversight, tracking and a partnership approach to supporting children, young people, and families and securing a rapid response	Director of Thriving Children and Families							↔	

B2	Ensure robust arrangements are in place to respond to safeguarding issues in schools	Director of Thriving Children and Families							↔	
B3	Ensure robust Early Help services are in place	Director of Thriving Children and Families							↔	
B4	Ensure robust arrangements are in place for children and young people who are Electively Home Educated	Director of Thriving Children and Families							↔	
B5	Ensure there are robust systems and processes in place regarding children attending residential/alternative/school based resourced provision /out of school settings and post 16 settings	Director of Thriving Children and Families							↔	
B6	Ensure robust Safeguarding arrangements for children and young people are in place across the Council and the Directorate (including commissioned services)	Director of Children and Families							↔	
B7	Continue to strengthen the support for learning and education provision for children ever known to a social worker	Director of Thriving Children and Families							↔	
C1	SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Priority one - System Leadership (SEND Strategy, Inter-agency Working, Local Offer)	Director of SEND and Inclusion	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
C2	SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Priority two - Getting the basics right – identifying and assessing need (Coordination of Assessments, Quality of EHC Plans, Waiting Times)	Director of SEND and Inclusion	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
C3	SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Priority three - Working Together Well (coproduction, parental engagement, parental satisfaction)	Director of SEND and Inclusion	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
C4	SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Priority four - Pathways – meeting need and improving outcomes (academic progress, attendance and exclusions, employment)	Director of SEND and Inclusion	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
C5	Building on the SEND Improvement Journey, continue to strengthen the system and	Director of SEND and Inclusion	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly

	capacity to promote inclusion of children and young people									
D1	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service Strategy, Policy, and Service Planning and Workstream	Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
D2	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service People and Organisation Workstream	Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
D3	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service Customer, Channels and Communications Workstream	Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
D4	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service Transformation and Route Optimisation Workstream	Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
D5	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service IT and Digital Infrastructure Workstream	Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
D6	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service Data and Performance Management Workstream	Assistant Director Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly
D7	Deliver the Home to School Transport Service Contracts and Commercial Workstream	Assistant Director	N/A						N/A	Reportable Quarterly

		Children and Young Peoples' Travel Service								
E1	Strengthen services and partnership approach to support improving outcomes for children and young people	Various							↔	
E2	Deliver Directorate transformation projects to inform and deliver a sustainable service	Various							↔	