

# **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 7 SEPTEMBER 2022**

## **PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW OF CABINET MEMBER CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES**

### **REPORT BY: COUNCILLOR KAREN MCCARTHY**

#### **1. Purpose of report**

This report sets out portfolio priorities for the Cabinet Member Children Young People and Families for 2022/23 and provides an update on areas of responsibility.

#### **2. Portfolio responsibilities**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families has accountability for:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Further detail</b>
Lead Member for Children's Services	Political accountability for all the local authority children's services, including education and children's social care. This post is required by law to hold direct local accountability for the effectiveness, availability, and value for money of the local authority's children's services (particularly education and children's social care).
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 looked after children. Ensuring all Council members, officers and services understand and actively promote the Council's responsibilities to looked after children.
Lead Member for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion	Lead Member for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion – Lead Member on the SEND agenda across children's agencies and

	holding officers and partners to account for the delivery of the Birmingham SEND Strategy.
Education of Children and Young People	Political leadership on strategic and statutory duties, including school improvement, school places and travel to and from school. Oversight of Dedicated Schools Grant
Youth Engagement and Youth Service	Youth Engagement and Youth Service, along with Lifelong Learning (post 14 skills and adult education) – Clear progression and vocational pathways from education into further and higher education and employment. Provision of all-age guidance, skills development, training, and work experience to meet the economic needs of the city now and in the future.
Skills and Entrepreneurship in schools	Development of 14-19 career pathways, enterprise, and entrepreneurship in Birmingham schools.

### 3. Lead Member for Children's Services

[As set out in DfE statutory guidance](#), the Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS) is responsible for ensuring that the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers, are addressed. In doing so, the LMCS will work closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people. The LMCS should have regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services. As politicians, LMCSs should not get drawn into the detailed day-to-day operational management of education and children's services. They should, however, provide strong, strategic leadership and support and challenge to the DCS and relevant members of their senior team as appropriate.

### 4. Children and Families Directorate

The Children and Families Directorate has a total staff headcount of 1,757 and directly delivers 26 service areas, mostly sitting under the Children, Young People and Families Cabinet portfolio. These include early years, SEND and inclusion, education safeguarding, universal education services, careers, youth services and 14-19 education. The directorate supports 320,000 children and young people with universal services, of which around 10,500 have an Education, Health and Care Plan and approximately 4,400 vulnerable children receive support from the Virtual School.

In addition, the directorate also delivers services sitting under the Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism portfolio (libraries) and Deputy Leader's portfolio (adult education, employability and skills).

### 5. Improvement Journey and Priorities

The Children and Families Directorate is on a journey to improve, to ensure children and families have stable, sustainable services, underpinned by robust support and

capacity to continuously improve. The DfE appointed Commissioner, John Coughlan, continues to have oversight of all the key improvements that relate to improving services for children and young people with SEND. Whilst some services are performing well, others need to continue to improve. The vision that Birmingham's children are safe, healthy, included, confident and achieving underpins the ambition to see all our children and young people thrive.

The newly re-established Birmingham Children's Partnership, which draws together the key agencies and organisation that support children and families, is developing a new Children and Young People's Plan for the city which will be published in during 2022/23

### Strategic Priorities for 2022/23

1. Strengthen approaches to identify, recognise and respond to the vulnerability of specific groups of children and young people
2. 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
3. Transform and improve Children and Young People's Travel to deliver a sustainable, well performing service, with outcomes for children and young people at its heart
4. Ensure services are sustainable, compliant with statutory requirements, and designed to deliver best outcomes for children, young people, families, and communities

### Education priorities

- To ensure that all children and young people, particularly in the primary phase in education, achieve better outcomes by aiming to reach top quartile performance through:
  - improving attainment, particularly in phonics, and at the end of KS2
  - improving attendance, particularly in primary schools
  - reducing exclusions, particularly in the 13% of primary schools who permanently excluded in 2019/20 (87% of primary schools in Birmingham made no permanent exclusions in 2019-20 and 32% made no suspensions)
  - developing our systems to support and challenge schools, together with our commissioned provider of school improvement, the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), so that the percentage of schools and settings judged by Ofsted as good or better improves from the current 83.1%
- To ensure that particularly vulnerable children, including those from refugee families and particularly those in temporary accommodation and those with 'No Recourse to Public Funds', receive support to access learning consistently.
- To ensure there is resilience in educational leadership with a focus on current presenting challenges such as schools' finances, schools' sustainability, and teacher wellbeing in addition to the opportunities possible through the white paper on education.

## Early Years priorities

The key priorities to improve children's readiness for school across the city include:

- improving the take-up of early years entitlements
- supporting key areas of need, such as speech and language development
- adopting an approach to transition in the early years which supports children and their families, particularly those with SEND, to make a good start to their education in primary school

## Commissioning priorities

The areas of focus for Commissioning next year include:

- Completion of contract re-negotiation with Birmingham Children's Trust towards a more strategic partnering relationship over a longer contract period
- Development and implementation of family hubs
- Cost of Care Exercises for services without current frameworks
- Further develop the Contract Management Framework (to align with the Corporate Procurement Approach and changes in legislation)
- Early Help Outcomes Framework and commissioning with BCT and agree long term arrangements for Early Help
- Review of the Therapy Arrangements to support children with SEND
- Review and where needed re commission Short Breaks provision for disabled children

## **6. Progress in key areas**

### **6.1 Directorate**

Soon after the appointment of the new Director of Children's Services, the council renamed the former Education and Skills Directorate to the Children and Families Directorate to ensure there is clear emphasis and understanding of the Directorate and the services it delivers and influences for children, young people and their families, ensuring children and young people are at the heart of all our services and focus.

### **6.2 Directorate Leadership and Management sufficiency and stability**

A critical foundation of the improvement journey is to have a permanent and stable leadership team with capacity to:

- Drive improvement and transformation.
- Develop long lasting relationships with partners; and
- Provide the environment where staff can thrive.

During 2022 significant progress has been made in creating a sufficient and stable senior leadership team to support Sue Harrison, Director of Children and Families. A revised Children's Services leadership team structure was agreed by Cabinet on 7 June 2022. A permanent Deputy Director and Director of Commissioning and Strategy, Helen Price, joined Birmingham on 4<sup>th</sup> July and a permanent Director of SEND, Helen Ellis, will join on 1<sup>st</sup> November. Marion Gibbon, Assistant Director Public Health, has joined the Children and Families Senior Leadership Team and Lisa Fraser

is Assistant Director Education and Early Years. Interim appointments have been made to the Assistant Director Lifelong Learning and Assistant Director Thriving Children and Families roles, which are to be advertised on a permanent basis in the autumn. An appointment process is underway for the two-year fixed term Assistant Director Children's Travel Service.

#### Getting the basics right

Since January 2022 there has been a focus on ensuring the building blocks are being put in place for the whole Directorate to improve, which includes:

- **Baselining services:** All services and teams have been 'baselined' to establish a comprehensive 'position statement' of services their performance, compliance with statutory obligations and requirements, their funding, and their composition. The findings from this exercise have informed the improvement plan.
- **Children and Families Improvement:** Cabinet Report presented in June 2022 identifying resources required for improvement and transformation for next phase; further Cabinet Report to follow in November 2022 to establish the resources required for the next phase of transformation.
- **A Children's Services Improvement board has been established.**
- **Developing the Improving Services for Children and Families Plan:** The activity and projects which will enable the improvements required to take place are overseen by a multi-disciplinary board. The Plan is currently under development and is informed by the baselining activity.
- **Culture and practice:** Crucial to the Improvement Programme and Future Children's Services model is Restorative Practice – an evidenced based approach to delivering successful children and families services. this approach will be rolled out across services during Autumn 2022.
- **Staff:** Regular fortnightly staff communications are now in place; Monthly Staff Induction sessions; First Staff Pulse Survey took place in April 2022 to inform the improvement journey; Staff Reference Group now in place meeting monthly; Termly All Staff Events are now being embedded. A new Leadership Forum, bringing together all Heads of Service/senior leaders on a monthly basis is in place.

### **6.3 SEND and Inclusion**

Work continues to address the areas of significant weakness within SEND and Inclusion that were identified by Ofsted/CQC with progress being reported regularly, including to this committee. A permanent Director of SEND and Inclusion, Helen Ellis, will be joining BCC in November 2022 to further strengthen leadership in this area.

The SEND Improvement board meets monthly, chaired by Birmingham's SEND Commissioner. The board monitors the partnership's progress against the [Accelerated Progress Plan](#).

Birmingham's SEND strategy is being refreshed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. This strategy will link with the Inclusion Strategy, the SEND Sufficiency Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.

Additional staff have been recruited to the SENAR service. Since the increase in staffing, children & young people and their families are receiving more timely

education, health and care plans, which means children and young people are being provided with the support they need more quickly. The percentage of EHCP assessments being completed within 20 weeks (65% in May 2022 compared to 53% in May 2021 and a national average of 65%).

The statutory deadlines for issuing EHCP school phase transfers were met for 90.91% of reception placements, 96.55% of Year 2 placements and 98.82% of secondary placements. This compared to 0% in 2021.

As children move between phases of education, this can be a difficult time if clarity about the next place/setting has not been provided. Where a child has an EHCP this can cause additional anxiety for parents and children without knowing the place and the support being put in place. Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure families and children know what the next setting/school will be when transferring from Nursery to Reception, Reception to Primary and from Primary to Secondary. At the time of writing the statutory deadline is 15th February every year for these 'phase transfers'.

When children and families are not aware where they will be educated until past the statutory deadline, i.e., too late, this causes more anxiety. Without knowing where the child is going also makes it very difficult for children/families to appeal or challenge the proposed education setting (should they wish to) and creates a spike of activity at an already busy time of year. There will always be reasons for any anomalies, including lack of available places, parental preference changing, education settings looking for support with their ability to meet needs.

Through improving the experience for children and families by ensuring the vast majority have clarity on where their child will be educated Birmingham has:

- i) ensured children are not unnecessarily distressed;
- ii) relieved anxiety about what is happening next;
- iii) built much better trust with families;
- iv) developed resilience in the system to support with appeals.

Averaging greater than 90% is a tremendous effort but it is important for us to strive to deliver 100% for all families at these key phase transfer points as well as improve the other aspects of the system for the future.

We recognise there is a lot more still to do in this area but there is growing confidence in the partnerships commitment to improving the quality of its SEND services for children and their families recognise the frustrations of some of our service users; it has taken some time to ensure the current strategic leadership and delivery plans are in place to ensure the steady incremental change needed to deliver a sustainable system that continuously improves. The lead member will continue to hold officers to account and closely monitor progress.

Work on our SEND sufficiency is progressing and is aligned with the wider SEND and Inclusion Strategy and Accelerated Progress Plan. This will help to ensure we have sufficient special school places for those who need them, alongside adequate

mainstream resourced provision which enables young people to access their local mainstream school with some additional support.

A working group has been set up to review a set of commissioned forecasts from Edge Analytics Ltd and meets weekly. The focus is on:

- sharing data on demand, including pupils in independent provision or in other authority areas, as well as pupils not in education, pupils awaiting an EHCP, pupils awaiting a different placement or tribunal outcomes
- updating information on commissioned numbers and the supply of places for Sep 2022 and to progress 2023/24 options, including:
  - making creative use of existing space and buildings, exploring new funding models for expansion projects and driving lean construction through effective programme and project management tools
  - making best use of funding sources available
  - considering the impact of conditions of our current estate for continued reliance on existing good and outstanding schools, sustainability and sufficiency, ensuring maintenance and the quality of accommodation remain up to standard

Birmingham will be submitting three bids for Free School provision in advance of the October 2022 deadline.

#### **6.4 Early Years**

Children should have accessed their early education entitlement and reached expected educational and developmental milestones by the time they start KS1 at age five. Children who take up their early education entitlement (for targeted two-year-olds and all three and four year olds) are far more likely than those who did not to achieve a good level of development at the end of Foundation Stage.

In 2019 (which is the last set of published data available), 68% of all children in Birmingham reached a good level of development. Of those, we know that just under 10% of the cohort of Birmingham children completing Foundation Stage had not accessed any of their early education entitlement at all. Where they hadn't accessed early education only 53% of these children achieved a good level of development, compared with 70% of children who had accessed at least some of their early education entitlement, an attainment gap of 17%. Children who have accessed early education consistently achieve above those who have not regardless of background.

The main priority is improving children's outcomes and narrowing the attainment gap. As the information on attainment indicates, a basic core element to improving outcomes is to increase the take-up of the early years' entitlements.

##### Early education take-up

Early education entitlement (EEE) take-up by 2-year-olds and 3 and 4-year-olds in Birmingham is lower than the national level but improvements are being seen on the levels of take-up before the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Spring term 2022 EEE take up for eligible 2-year-olds increased citywide by 3% compared to spring term 2020 which was pre-COVID. 8 out of the 10 districts

had an increase in take-up most notably Northfield and Edgbaston districts. There was no change in take up rates for Hodge Hill and Yardley districts.

- A recovery has also been seen in 3 and 4-year-old take-up with participation returning to 88% in spring term 2022 (1% higher than the same period in 2020). There are four districts where take-up is lower (Hodge Hill 2%; Northfield 1%; Sutton Coldfield 1%; and Yardley 2%).

The Early Years team uses detailed take-up data broken down by age, ethnicity, and district to target areas of greatest concern.

#### Readiness for school – new initiatives

- *WellComm* supports speech, language, and communication development. The impact will be measurable as each child's progress is tracked within their setting from the point of admission.
- *The Balanced System* is currently being introduced across the city. It will map early years speech, language, and communication services to inform the implementation of inclusive district-based services for families.
- *Birmingham Early Years Transition Approach* has been developed by a multi-agency team to support school readiness and will be used for the first time in 2022 reception intake.

## **6.5 Education of children and young people**

#### Education Performance

The latest complete published data was included in the [Education Performance Report 2019](#) and presented to Overview and Scrutiny. Published data for 2022 will be analysed by officers and a comprehensive presentation on education performance, including the 2022 Education Performance Report with validated data will come to Overview and Scrutiny later in the municipal year.

#### Key Education achievements

- School leaders have galvanised around the SAFE taskforce. The SAFE taskforce is DfE funded and schools-led, targeting young people at risk of exclusion and exploitation through a range of initiatives, both within and outside the school day.
- Analysis of section 175/157 returns enable us to target advice, support, and challenge on safeguarding matters with schools and settings; analysis further informs the safeguarding training offer where identified themes and trends are shared with partners, such as the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Prevent education is a mature system which has recently been positively peer reviewed by a partnership led by Luton Council.
- The UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award is now held by over 240 schools across the city and has significantly contributed to schools' curricula and the personal development of children and young people in Birmingham. A celebration event was held at the Rep Theatre in July 2022 to celebrate schools' achievements in this programme. BCC's plans to seek accreditation as a UNICEF Child Friendly City will further enhance this work.



### Pupil place planning

An annual pupil place planning sufficiency strategy is produced. Officers work through the implications with schools to ensure the right number of places are available for children and young people in Birmingham. In practice this means expanding the number of places (for example in secondary and special schools) and reducing them where there are too many.

### Attendance

Attendance, particularly in the primary phase, is an area requiring focus. In Birmingham, overall absence was 0.6% higher in Autumn 2020 than Autumn 2019 and with slightly higher than average rises for pupils eligible for free school meals and those on SEN support. The smallest rise was for pupils attending special schools. During the same period, however, absence rates in England fell slightly, so there is now a gap of 0.8% between Birmingham's overall absence rate and the national picture.

Action being taken to improve attendance:

- Statutory legal processes for attendance are well established in Birmingham and are particularly effective in the secondary phase.
- We have consulted with schools to reduce the threshold for issuing education penalty notices from September 2022 as part of the updating of our Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.
- We are improving the way that attendance data, particularly of vulnerable children, can be analysed so that we can intervene sooner.
- A key element of our FAST Track to Attendance process is Early Help intervention and associated multi-agency working.
- We are developing a strategy for school attendance that reflects the recently updated DfE attendance guidance.

### Work to reduce exclusions

Permanent exclusion rates in Birmingham remain above the overall national rate and across the education phases, but most notably in primary schools. Birmingham is ranked 100 out of 152 local authorities overall, with the rank for secondary school pupils at 85 and for primary school pupils at 137. Permanent exclusion rates in primary schools in Birmingham are higher than for core cities and statistical neighbour councils. However, for pupils in secondary schools, Birmingham's permanent exclusion rate is lower than for statistical neighbours and on a par with core cities.

Year	Permanent exclusions (all schools)		Permanent exclusions Primary schools		Permanent exclusions Secondary schools	
	Birmingham	England	Birmingham	England	Birmingham	England
2019/20	0.08%	0.06%	0.04%	0.02%	0.14%	0.12%
2018-19	0.12%	0.10%	0.08%	0.02%	0.18%	0.20%
2017-18	0.11%	0.10%	0.09%	0.03%	0.15%	0.20%
2016-17	0.13%	0.10%	0.08%	0.03%	0.20%	0.20%

Suspension rates in Birmingham are lower than national average overall. For 2019-20, when children were out of school from the COVID-19 lockdown from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to the end of the school year, suspension rates fell across the country. Suspension rates in primary schools are higher than national average. Birmingham secondary schools continue to outperform the national average for suspensions.

Year	Suspensions (all schools)		Suspensions (primary schools)		Suspensions (secondary schools)	
	Birmingham	England	Birmingham	England	Birmingham	England
2019/20	3.05%	3.76%	1.10%	1%	5.48%	7.43%
2018-19	4.22%	5.36%	1.58%	1.41%	7.61%	10.75%
2017-18	4.24%	5.08%	1.82%	1.40%	7.44%	10.13%
2016-17	4.29%	4.76%	1.95%	1.37%	7.51%	9.40%

Officers continue to work with schools, teachers and partners (for example West Midlands Police and Birmingham Children's Trust's youth offending team) to offer support to keep children and young people in school. This includes direct support to teachers, developing support for children and families directly and working together in local networks to provide a fuller range of help to solve the issues that are leading to children being excluded.

### Admissions

Two successful school place offer days took place earlier this year for admission to school in September 2022. The team now has a well-established process for online applications and in recent years has improved communication with parents about applying for school places.

For September 2022 entry to secondary school, 94.93% of Birmingham applicants were offered one of their preferred schools compared to 95.8% nationally. 70.80% of Birmingham applicants were offered their first preference, compared to 83.3% nationally. In Birmingham families are able to list up to six preferences, including grammar schools.

For entry to reception class in September 2022, 99% of Birmingham applicants were offered a place at one of their preferred schools compared to 98.4% nationally. 90.99% of Birmingham applicants were offered their first preference, compared to 92.2% nationally.

Applications for secondary school places for September 2023 will open at the start of September 2022 with the closing date of 31 October 2022.

The Admissions team has worked with colleagues and partners to support the admission to Birmingham schools of 131 Ukrainian children who have arrived in the city through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Additional support and guidance has

been provided to schools, as was the case with previous arrivals under similar resettlement schemes.

## **6.6 Youth Engagement and the Youth Service**

### **Birmingham Youth Service**

Youth work is based on a youth worker building a positive relationship with a young person which is based on trust and mutual respect and then using that relationship to support and develop the learning experiences and personal development of the young person.

Birmingham Youth Service supports around 18,300 young people each year. It is an open access service available to all young people with most of its 16 centres based in areas of greatest need within the city. Within this open access service, it delivers targeted work to respond to local need (youth violence, exploitation, employment, preventing violent extremism, health and wellbeing, sexual health to different groups of young people). The Youth Service offers a broad range of opportunities, experiences, and activities relevant to the needs of young people. Each Birmingham Youth Centre offers:

- information, advice, and support to young people by a qualified youth worker
- a safe place for young people – somewhere they can be emotionally and physically safe.
- a positive relationship with a “trusted adult” (the youth worker) which is built on honesty, respect and is non-judgemental.
- The Umbrella Scheme which provides sexual health programmes, STI testing and condom distribution.
- targeted programmes including PVE, youth violence, sexual health, health, activities, and employment
- opportunities for young people to get involved in activities including drama, sports, events, residential experiences.
- volunteering opportunities
- Youth Participation – an opportunity for young person's voices to be heard.
- intensive support for NEET young people
- Resilience 2 Resolve Youth Violence programme

### **Resilience 2 Resolve**

The role of youth work is recognised as crucial in supporting children and young people vulnerable to criminal exploitation and involvement in violent crime. The council identified a one-off investment of £1 million into the youth service to employ more youth workers to tackle youth violence.

This programme delivers on the youth violence agenda through early Intervention work, targeting focus areas, promoting, and leading on system change and promoting strategic alignment of services on this agenda. This will be achieved by building young people's resilience through developing their skills, abilities, self-worth, values, and identity.

The four key areas that are being invested in are:

- detached youth work
- early intervention programmes in schools focussing on Year 6

- working with partners to enhance the early intervention offer to young people.
- enhancing core delivery and branding our centres as safe spaces

### Youth City Board

The Youth City Board, a sub-group of the City Board, is a group of 45 active young people aged 11-18 from across the city. The role of the board is to ensure young people's voices are at the heart of policy and strategy. Elected members of UK Youth Parliament are part of the Youth City Board.

In the last 24 months, young people have led on several initiatives, including:

- "Education During the Pandemic" – the voice of 1100 young people
- Young people's Mental Health Survey
- Members on Public Health Professional Theme Groups
- Redevelopment and regeneration projects – City Centre/Perry Barr/Druids Heath
- Youth Covid Champions
- Commonwealth Games – young people operating a small grants award to other young people to improve their mental health (total funding for this is £50k) and advising on the development of the CWG youth programme.
- Chairing the young people's IAG with WMP
- Writing the Youth Violence Duty alongside the Community Safety Partnership

## **7. Birmingham Children's Trust and Corporate Parenting**

Our Birmingham Children's Trust continues to meet the needs of our children, young people, and their families. The enduring impact of the pandemic has seen an increase in the volume and complexity of the challenges faced by children and their families in Birmingham. Throughout the pandemic our Trust maintained face-to-face contact with children, young people, and families, and maintained leadership of 'system working' with partners in the Council, the Police, the NHS, and the voluntary sector.

Our residential care offer continued throughout the year and, following Ofsted visits, our homes were judged to have maintained their effectiveness. However, Camborne children's home received a full inspection in May which judged it to be Inadequate. But a subsequent monitoring visit on 20 July reviewed the progress made since the full inspection and confirmed that out of the 10 requirements made at the last inspection, four have been met and progress has been made in respect of the other requirements, and there is an action plan in place to address the outstanding areas for improvement. In August, Ofsted found our children's home Warwick House to be overall Good.

Despite the challenge we have maintained, again, strong performance in relation to the performance indicators captured in the contract, and across the broader sweep of children's performance indicators.

External regulation and inspection confirm the progress we are making. In August 2021 Ofsted inspected the Trust's independent fostering agency and concluded it provides effective services that meet the requirements for Good; in October 2021 Ofsted conducted a focused visit where they examined our offer to children in care.

The letter following the visit was published in December 2021 and is a positive reflection of the Trust's work. More recently, in August, we hosted Ofsted for two days to enable them to undertake a test of some new recording software, and in return gave us a view of how we are delivering our services to Care Leavers. This was valuable for us, and Ofsted have left us with a clear and mainly positive picture of where we are and of where we need to focus our energy and our attention now. We now anticipate a full inspection, leading to, we hope, an improved 'grade', within the next 12 months.

Our team-mates across the Children's Trust have been fantastic in the last year: committed, creative, determined, in enduring conditions of the pandemic, to support and to safeguard the most vulnerable, and to provide good care, support and opportunities to the children and young people in our care, and to our care-leavers to name a few.

### Progress

Appendix 1 sets out our Children's Trust's key priorities and progress. Notable continuous improvements in the service offer and the partnership working across the city include:

- establishing our Stronger Families programme, aligning, and investing in Trust and third sector services that support families to care for their children.
- developing the multi-agency EmpowerU Hub leading work on exploitation: supporting victims, tackling perpetrators, disrupting networks.
- initiating and developing the city's Early Help offer, again a multi-agency and multi-sector development supporting families earlier.
- working with Adult Services to develop the Preparation for Adulthood service, filling a gap in provision for young people becoming young adults and in need of advice and support.
- building and implementing our Practice Model for the Trust, built on the importance of relationship-based practice.
- introducing new multi-disciplinary capacity and support in our social work teams (domestic abuse, adult mental health) to enhance our skills and offer specialist support.
- reviewing and overhauling services to effect improvement: in the last year this includes our Disabled Children service and our Families Together service.
- building and leading partnership responses during the pandemic. We established, and still chair, the Partnership Operations Group, with 40 organisations represented, working together to support our most vulnerable children, young people, and families.
- completing the next phase of our capital investment in providing better space for child protection conference facilities in the south of the city.

### Performance

The Trust performed well, in 2021/22, in relation to the contractual performance indicators, appendix 2 provides a summary of performance.

The Trust's Annual QA and Performance Report provides a fuller account of performance and highlights areas of success and issues requiring attention.

As well as the performance measures, the Trust has a well-embedded Quality Assurance framework, overseen by the Practice Hub. This includes a wide range of performance audits, the learning from which feeds back into practice to drive improvement. Reports on our quality assurance work are shared with the Operational Commissioning Group.

The feedback we get from children, young people, and family members about the work we do is a key strand of how we 'measure' how we are doing. Our Rights and Participation service plays a significant role not only in advocating for our young people, but in ensuring their voices are heard clearly and continue to shape the services we offer.

Areas of particularly strong performance in the year have included placement stability for children in care, care leavers living in suitable accommodation, timely reviews for children in care and timeliness of initial child protection conferences.

Performance has been below target in the indicator measuring the number of agency social workers: this reflects a combination of the impact of the pandemic on sickness levels, compounding the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges. The average time between the Trust receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and deciding on a match has been slightly outside tolerance range – and while better than the average for statistical neighbours, performance is poorer than the national average. An ambitious target of 85 adoptions in the year was set for 2021/22. There were 73 adoptions in the year. This is due to the impact of the pandemic and delays in court for a number of children meaning that adoption orders that could have been granted in 2021/22 will now be granted in 2022/23. We are confident that the new Regional Adoption Agency will assist us in improving our performance.

In achieving our ambition in the coming year, we recognise we have some key dependencies: changes and ongoing improvements not directly in the gift of the Trust but critical to our ongoing improvement. These include:

- ongoing SEND improvement.
- school places, attendance, and exclusion as they impact on vulnerable children with whom we are working.
- service, support and care for children and young people with complex needs.
- deeper, stronger integration: early help; contextual safeguarding; Preparation for Adulthood etc.
- implementation of an effective commissioning model: which could offer the opportunity for integration with the NHS and council.
- the continuous need to build stronger collaborative working: West Midlands Police, NHS, Council, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council.

The Trust is working with partners, and across organisational boundaries, to drive improvement in these and other areas to further enhance the positive impact we can collectively make for the city's most vulnerable children and families.

### Corporate Parenting

A key area for me is our Corporate Parenting offer and I found the first Corporate Parenting Board meeting that I attended in July an inspiring meeting. This was the annual Take Over meeting where children and young people set the agenda and chair the meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Board has developed a new structure and governance, ensuring the Board is more accountable and impactful. The structure ensures children and young people's voices are central to the Board and the young people's successful Take-Over Board is now a permanent feature in the meeting cycle. There are plans in development to broaden the take-over sessions to include senior council leadership forums.

The key priorities of the Board, driven by the voice of young people, include:

- standards of accommodation – too much variation in quality of accommodation; some is excellent, some is not good enough.
- mental health and emotional wellbeing – access to mental health services is a concern as is the variation in how young people experience the quality of these services.
- digital poverty – everything is online, accessing jobs, training, finances, employment, training, and study. The cost of internet and access to devices is a growing issue for care leavers across the city.
- the support for young people taking on apprenticeships should level up with those on higher education pathways.

### Corporate Parenting Board Achievements

The Corporate Parenting Board and the associated team within Birmingham Children's Trust has overseen and delivered a range of activities over the last 12 months. The following achievements should be noted:

- the Corporate Parenting Team have delivered elected Member induction and plans for a full council focus have been diarised.
- the Bfriends charity is now officially registered by the Charity Commission and its first Trustee Board meeting took place on 9 February 2022. This includes young people, business, and organisations across the city, ranging from Aston Villa Foundation to Barclays Bank.
- the Holiday and Food Programme (HAF) hub model has been held up nationally as a good practice model for delivery and has impacted on thousands of children and young people across the city.
- the Birmingham Children's Trust apprenticeship programme has been developed and 14 Apprenticeships for Care Leavers across a wide range of opportunities are in post.
- our Participation Strategy now has an active working group and is making progress against the strategy to ensure that the voices of children, young people and our families are heard and are central to decision making.
- a Volunteer Recruitment Campaign was launched for Independent Visitors, who support children in care. This was opened by the then Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Muhammad Afzal. Over 70 key stakeholders, partners, community leaders and businesses from across the city attended. This has led to a 400% increase in volunteers.

- the 'Future You' film was premiered at a red-carpet event in Millennium Point - four care leavers took part in a 12-month programme to develop aspirational films that are being used to raise awareness and drive change. The Future You films are now part of a structured training programme for Members.
- our Commonwealth Games (CWG) Programme and events continue to take place and have delivered different CWG sports, events, and job/work experience opportunities. This includes the distribution of 5000 tickets to vulnerable children and children in care.
- development and consultation on the Care Leavers offer is underway both internally and in partnership with the West Midlands Participation Groups. This work is looking at what the best offer is nationally and regionally and then aligning our updated offer to this. A core component of this will be establishing a multi-disciplinary care leavers resource hub, ideally located in the city centre.

### Birmingham Children's Trust Resources

The proposed contract sum which will form the basis of the Trust's revenue budget for 2022/23 is £229.2m.

The Trust faces significant financial pressures in 2022/23 because of a combination of factors:

- projected, but unfunded, growth in numbers of children in care.
- unprecedented price increases across residential care and supported accommodation.
- a significant rise in the complexity of need of those in our care, for whom the market fails to provide placements and who require, as a result, bespoke high-cost care packages.
- minimal contributions to the costs of placements from Education and Health.

The Trust will work with the Council to share understanding of these pressures and agree a way forward.

### Risks and challenges

We know the coming year will bring challenges:

- demand for our services has returned to pre-pandemic levels and we know that there is much need in our communities.
- finding a good care placement for every child who needs one remains a challenge.
- the complexity of need we are encountering, including the compounding factor of the pandemic, is an emerging challenge.
- our resources, and those of partners, are, and will be, stretched.
- recruitment and retention are no easier with a regional and national shortage of social workers and a shortening 'shelf-life' for practitioners.
- we will feel the impact of the National Review into the circumstances of the death of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes in neighbouring Solihull.

The Children's Trust is well-placed to rise to these challenges and maintain the trajectory of improvement we have set hitherto.



## 8. Performance Management

Robust performance management is in place through corporate reporting with additional key performance indicators due to be set out in the Children and Young People's Plan.

In addition, the directorate's improvement journey is being monitored by the Children's Services Improvement Board.

The SEND Improvement Board monitors progress against the Accelerated Progress Plan.

## 9. Commissioning

The directorate commissions several services which support children and young people. The directorate spends circa £481m with providers for services for children, young people and families. the highest value contracts are those set out in the table below:

<b>Provider/Organisation</b>	<b>Contract purpose</b>
Birmingham Education Partnership	School improvement. BEP is commissioned by the council to deliver school improvement and development to schools.
Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	0-19 healthy child programme. BCHT provides health visiting, school nursing. Commissioners commission the healthy child programme with BCHT on behalf of public health.
Birmingham Children's Trust	BCT provides children's social care, early help and youth offending services for the council.
StreetGames	StreetGames are the lead organisation the council commission to co-ordinate (and provide some elements) of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. They subcontract with smaller organisations city wide to deliver the range of activities and food into local communities
Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	BCHT delivers a number of therapy services on behalf of the council. These include Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy Services. These support children and young people with SEND.

The focus of the directorate's commissioning work is with the two main providers of services for children and young people - Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) and Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHCT). These two organisations provide:

- Social care and social work, preventative family support and youth offending services - Birmingham Children's Trust
- Health visiting, school nursing and support to families with young children- Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHCT).

#### 0-19 healthy child programme

BCHCT currently delivers the 0-19 healthy child programme for all children and families in the city. On average per month over 69,000 children are engaged with the universal service e.g., Children's Centre offer such as Stay & Play

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacting the delivery model along with a national Health Visitor shortage, they have delivered key achievements since the contract commenced. Recent trends show a continued and significant improvement since 2020/21, as measured by 26 key indicators.

A contract improvement plan is under joint development to tackle progress in term of addressing 3 key areas: the workforce and staffing issues, data and management information and the financial reporting.

The Council has established a project to recommission the Healthy Child Programme and the current phase features work on an options appraisal for the future commission, which aims to inform the commissioning strategy and model by which Birmingham City Council will secure the future Healthy Child Programme 0-19 Service by September 2024.

#### Delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF)

The successful HAF programme in Birmingham is delivered by Streetgames and partners.

In 2021/22 (Easter, Summer, and Winter) 37,900 children and young people (16,517 of whom were eligible for free school meals) attended Bring It On Brum holiday clubs which offered engaging activities and meals for children and young people in the school holidays.

As the programme has evolved there has been a sharper focus on children and young people most in need, supported by marketing and promotion. At Easter 2022, 87% of all children attending were eligible for free school meals and those that weren't were felt to be in need by their schools or community supporters. The programme exceeded its target of 15,000 children attending at Easter.

Information on the delivery of the summer 2022 programme will be available in the autumn term.

#### Successful grant award to implement Family Hubs

Birmingham was awarded a grant from the DHSC/DfE to develop the Family Hub/Best Start for Life programme. This programme is centrally governed, with funding being allocated to deliver specific strands, there is an expectation that the following will be delivered:

- A small capital programme to provide or improve physical hubs

- A Family Hubs programme budget (core staffing)
- Perinatal mental health and parent- infant relationships
- Parenting support
- Infant feeding support
- Home learning environment support
- Publishing 'Start for Life' offers for every new parent
- Parent and Carer Panels

### Early Help Programme

The Early Help programme, which supports families with children of school age, was developed during Covid created a partnership approach with 10 voluntary sector organisations working jointly with 10 early help teams (80 early help professionals) employed by Birmingham Children's Trust – jointly leading the support for families in the 10 localities (constituency areas).

The Early Help Programme works very closely with Children Centres and Birmingham Forward Steps, who support families with children aged 0-5.

The heart of the work is helping families to find community, neighbourhood, and voluntary sector support local to them supported by evidence-based parenting programmes and interventions. The Early Help programme also implemented a multi-agency case management system, investment in mental health capacity, virtual mental health support for young people and free online parenting programmes for parents.

Over the last year more partnership services and professionals have linked and supported the 10 locality teams including early help police officers, some primary care services including GPs, STICK mental health support team, SEND pupil and school support staff, housing advice, Birmingham Forward Steps children's centres, school pastoral care and support staff, and many VCF sector organisations. Birmingham Children's Trust have also been able to reshape or recommission a number of 'Supporting People (Troubled Families) contracts to align with early help including housing support, autism support, domestic abuse and youth mentoring.

The structure of the early help programme, working with local partners has also been instrumental in the distribution of hardship funds, covid relief funding, the household support fund and winter food and fuel payments to individual families. Overall, some 30,000 families have been supported by the early help programme over the last 12 months, with a distribution of over £4m in funding through various funding streams.

The Early Help programme receives about 1000 family connect forms, asking for help for some 2500 individuals, a month. In March 2022 there was a detailed review of the progress in each locality, and the findings from those 10 meetings was overwhelmingly positive. Teams working across the partnership have increased their reach into each neighbourhood, school, community settings with a programme of training, outreach and surgeries. Good outcomes are noted for families receiving longer term support (more than a month) with progress measured on a distance travelled tool. There is also a lot of positive feedback from schools.

Quote from one school.

"I am a pastoral care manager for a two-form entry school. I can honestly say that since I have been able to ask for support for some of our families, my level of job satisfaction has increased significantly. The families I used to spend hours worrying about will get help from yourselves and the school together. The weekly network meetings are so useful."



**Cllr Karen McCarthy**  
**Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families**

**Appendix 1**  
**Birmingham Children's Trust – Strategic Priorities**

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
<b>Quality of Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remains a priority for the Trust</li> <li>• Maintained trajectory of improvement leading to better services, better outcomes, and an improved Ofsted judgement</li> <li>• Further refine and embed the Trust Practice Model and assuring its implementation</li> <li>• Continued focused work on improving the quality of practice in our work in and for the family courts, minimising delay, assuring case progression (Practice and Legal Service)</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress 2021/22:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit and Practice Evaluation evidence improving practice</li> <li>• Focused Visit October 2021 by Ofsted reported positively on quality of services and practice</li> </ul>
<b>Designing Trust Services to Improve the Child's Journey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaping Practice to minimise transfer points and maximise consistency</li> <li>• Ensuring the whole system operates effectively and efficiently</li> <li>• Shaping support services to maximise support to Practice and to front-line practitioners, embracing efficiency and innovation in our operating model</li> <li>• Using our new accommodation footprint to enhance the working environment, create productive and trauma-informed spaces, and spaces where children, young people and families are welcome</li> </ul>
<b>Stronger Families Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remains a priority for the Trust</li> <li>• More support to keep young people safely within their families</li> <li>• More children and young people cared for in their families rather than by 'stranger carers' when they cannot live with their parents</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress 2021/22:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families Together Plus service embedded</li> <li>• Edge of Care service hours extended to support Out of Hours activity to support children and families</li> <li>• Further increase in delivery of Family Group Conferences: 600+ in 2021/22 enabling effective family decision-making</li> <li>• Stronger Families targets achieved (Care admissions etc.) although challenges in relation to complexity of need/risk presenting</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain delivery of services and workforce wellbeing in the ongoing Covid pandemic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained strong business continuity arrangements</li> <li>• Services prioritised to deliver statutory accountabilities and ensure the most vulnerable are regularly seen and supported, working with partners across the system</li> </ul>
<b>Further improve Placement Sufficiency, and develop Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased placement choice and sufficiency</li> <li>• Improved offer for young people with complex needs, in partnership with the NHS (CAMH)</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
<b>Residential Care offer to children and young people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More foster carers recruited, assessed, and approved</li> <li>• More adopters recruited, assessed, and approved (through the new Regional Adoption Agency)</li> </ul>
<b>Support the establishment of Bfriends, the new charity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all proper governance arrangements are in place</li> <li>• Ensure the charity has necessary infrastructure support to enable it to start to deliver its priorities</li> <li>• Agree appropriate trustee arrangements are in place</li> <li>• Support fundraising/income generation in the charity</li> </ul>
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services delivered in ways, and by a workforce, at all tiers, that reflect the needs and experiences of the population we serve, equitably and fairly</li> <li>• Anti-racist practice embedded in our work</li> <li>• Staff feel equitably valued by the organisation in which they work; staff have the same opportunities for development and progression; HR activity reflects the workforce</li> <li>• Targeted work is undertaken to encourage support and progression for staff from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities</li> <li>• Bias and discrimination are unacceptable and is routinely addressed</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment and Retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust reputation and profile further enhanced and widely promoted (local, regional, national)</li> <li>• Improved pipeline of social workers joining the Trust</li> <li>• Improved retention and progression of social workers</li> <li>• (Linked to the 'Child's Journey' redesign priority)</li> </ul>
<b>Support to Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop 'communities of practice' across the Trust, enabling collaborative learning, learning and support</li> <li>• Continue to enhance our wellbeing offer and ensure it is understood and accessible</li> <li>• Explore new development and support models for leaders, managers, and front-line practitioners, with external partners</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic and Operational Financial Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement actions emerging from the CIPFA and C.Co reviews, jointly with the Council's Finance partners</li> <li>• Enhance financial management at all levels of the trust</li> <li>• Improve efficiency and value for money</li> <li>• Successful implementation of 1B (Oracle) and optimisation of Target Operating Models for HR, Finance and Business Support (and linked to Journey of the Child)</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and enhance Trust presence and contribution to all key partnerships across the city</li> <li>• Advocacy for the most vulnerable in these partnerships</li> <li>• Drive closer, more effective operational partnership working in all contexts: information-sharing; collaboration; trust and confidence</li> </ul>
<b>Participation and Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build the reach and scope of our engagement with children in care and care leavers</li> <li>• Establish routine engagement with other service user groups: children in the child protection system and their families; children in need etc.</li> <li>• Build greater co-production in our service development</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to focus on building engagement and connection with our staff through the Employee Forum, Wellbeing Forum, Equalities Forum, and our communications models</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Birmingham Children's Trust summary of performance 2021/22:

PI	Measure	Number of months where target met or within tolerances last 12 months	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 months
1	% of all referrals with a decision within 24 hours	12/12	100%
2	% of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months	12/12	100%
3	% assessments completed within 45 working days	10/12	83%
4	% Initial CP conferences held within 15 working days	12/12	100%
5	% of children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 2 years	12/12	100%
6	% of children (under 16 years) who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more, and in the same placement (or placed for adoption) continuously for 2 years or more	12/12	100%
7	% children experiencing 3 or more moves in a year	12/12	100%
8	% of children in care reviews held on time	12/12	100%
9	% of care leavers who are in education, employment, and training (EET)	12/12	100%
10	% of care leavers who are living in suitable accommodation (19-21)	12/12	100%
11	Average time between a child coming into care and being placed with an adoptive family (A2)	7/12	58%
12	Number of children who have been adopted in year or who leave care	N/A	73 against a target of 85
13	% of agency social workers (including team managers)	0/12	0%
14	Average caseload of qualified social workers	12/12	100%
15	% of social workers who have had supervision (in month)	12/12	100%