

REPORT OF THE IMPROVEMENT QUARTET: LEADER, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION: IMPROVEMENT AND CHALLENGES

The motion:

The Council welcomes and notes progress in children's social care and in education, and notes progress on the voluntary trust arrangement for children's services.

1. Introduction

At the meeting of the Council on 1 December 2015 it was agreed that there would be a six-monthly report to Council on progress in children's social care and in education. This is the fourth of these reports. Council is asked to note that the improvement journeys in both children's social care and education continue with a clear evidence trail.

2. Leadership of Children and Young People's Services

In April 2017, a Director of Children's Services – Colin Diamond – was appointed to continue the improvement journeys for children's social care and education. In August 2017 a new Chief Executive of the Children's Trust – Andy Couldrick – took up post.

3. Children's Social Care

3.1 Background

Long term difficulties and underperformance in children's social care led to significant investment and savings plans for the service, a clear and consistent operational model, the establishment of clear lines of accountability through the "Quartet", and changes to partnership approaches.

Cabinet agreed in January 2017 to set up a Children's Trust to develop and sustain good practice with a single focus on improving outcomes for Birmingham's most disadvantaged children and families against a backdrop of financial pressures. The Trust is seen as a vehicle to be able to attract and retain social workers, offer a career progression pathway, and ensure good working conditions where staff are well managed and supported.

The service now has a clear and consistent structure, a stable management group and reduced staff turnover. It responded well to the Ofsted full inspection in September 2016 without service disruption, and there is growing confidence in and evidence of purposeful direct work with children and families.

3.2 Ofsted inspection 2016

Ofsted conducted a full inspection of Birmingham children's social care in September/October 2016. Ofsted judged that the Council remained 'inadequate' overall but with three areas rated as 'requires improvement' (looked after children, care leavers, and adoption). Ofsted could see improvement but there was often delay (some historic) in cases getting through the front door. In response to the inspection there has been continued development, with partners, of the front door to make referral easier and to be more responsive, and a drive to improve our work with partners for children at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and who go missing from home or care.

3.3 Ofsted monitoring visits 2017

Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit in May focusing on our front door and on CSE and missing children. They found:

- Birmingham children's services have made steady progress;
- although substantial further progress is required before services are consistently good, in a number of key areas children in Birmingham are receiving better and timelier services and this represents notable progress;
- from a low base, focused efforts by the Council and its partners have improved the quality of services for young people at risk of sexual exploitation or who go missing; and
- good morale amongst the staff they met with.

The second monitoring visit in September focused on the service for children with disabilities and on child in need cases in safeguarding teams. The visit found:

- visible improvement since the full inspection a year ago;
- a more stable workforce, manageable caseloads, more evidence of direct work with families;
- children regularly visited and seen and social workers building relationships with them;
- management oversight was evident at the start and sign off of assessments but not always sufficiently challenging or reflective;
- in most cases seen there was evidence of appropriate multiagency work and relationships, but not consistently evident and effective; and
- social workers were positive about training and tools available to them.

In summary, there has been good progress: social workers have a child focus, they are reviewing and moving plans on, seeing children regularly, and there were no unallocated cases. Ofsted saw confident and engaged social workers.

3.4 Children's Trust

In January 2017 the Council's Cabinet formally agreed the establishment of a Trust as a wholly owned company. Since then:

- there has been engagement with staff, trade unions and partners, and work on clarifying Trust scope and funding requirements;

- Andrew Christie has been appointed Trust Chair in accordance with the all-party appointments procedures of the Council;
- the Trust Chief Executive has been recruited and started on 14 August 2017;
- six non-executive directors have been appointed, one of whom is a Council-appointee; and
- governance, accountability and assurance arrangements have been prepared. Subject to testing and refinement during the shadow period, these will form the basis of a Service Delivery Contract between the Council and the Trust.

Partners have indicated support for the Trust as an opportunity for better integration and collaborative working. Recognising that the Trust would be part of a wider system of agencies and partners which share the aim of securing better outcomes for children and young people, there is a commitment to building stronger relationships and behaviours around a shared vision, values, and leadership of the system. This will include the work to establish a Children and Young People Partnership to enable a more effective system-wide approach to issues that require combined and coordinated responses from all partners.

3.5 Workforce

Throughout this process there has been recognition of the importance of staff and managers delivering the service not being destabilised or distracted. The service has remained calm and stable during Children's Trust discussions and it has responded well to Ofsted scrutiny. Staff remain enthusiastic and committed.

Recruitment and retention remains a key issue including improving the quality and capacity of the workforce. Agency staff numbers have fallen by about 40 to 20% in the last 6 months, but it is still proving difficult to recruit and retain experienced social workers because of the limitations of the Council's current pay scheme. It is intended that the Children's Trust will enable greater focus and flexibility in workforce matters.

4. Education

4.1 Background

In September 2014, the Secretary of State appointed Sir Mike Tomlinson as Education Commissioner in response to the issues that emerged following publication of the Trojan Horse letter and 21 Ofsted inspections of academies and schools. From September 2014 until July 2016, the Education Quartet met fortnightly and Sir Mike was able to report to the Secretary of State and the Council's Chief Executive that there had been rapid progress alongside the capacity to improve further. The Education Commissioner's tenure was ended by the Secretary of State in July 2016.

At the heart of the recovery journey has been the establishment of effective partnerships following the isolation and fractured working relationships that were a feature of the Trojan Horse years. The Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), a headteacher-led organisation, now works with the Council to deliver its school improvement duties via a 3 year contract. The Council now knows all schools in the city much better and the quality of targeted intervention in vulnerable schools has improved strongly.

Schools are no longer isolated and vulnerable to pressures from non-violent extremism. Headteachers are well supported by officers to ensure that pressures to alter the curriculum

or introduce socially conservative practices are dealt with effectively. The Birmingham Curriculum Statement is clear that all pupils in the city must receive the full curriculum offer. The Council meets monthly with BEP, DfE/Regional Schools Commissioner, and Ofsted to ensure a joined up approach to working with maintained schools, academies/free schools, and independent schools.

Communications with schools have improved significantly: the weekly Schools Noticeboard is published every Thursday during term time. It is the principal single point of contact every week and typically contains over 40 pages of information with a weekly message from the Director. Red Noticeboards are sent to schools when we need to share information urgently such as following terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. Termly Headteacher meetings have improved with greater numbers of schools attending and positive evaluations. Schools are clear about the role of Birmingham City Council via the Core Offer for education.

4.2 Current Ofsted position

A key element of the BEP contract is to support schools in raising standards and securing positive judgements following an inspection.

LA Maintained

Phase	Total Schools	Outstanding		Good		Requires Improvement		Inadequate		Good/Outstanding		Special Measures	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Nursery	27	14	52%	13	48%	0	0%	0	0%	27	100%	0	0%
Primary	189	38	20%	125	66%	19	10%	7	4%	163	86%	7	4%
Secondary	26	7	27%	12	46%	3	12%	4	15%	19	73%	4	15%
All Through	2	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	1	50%
Special	24	12	50%	8	33%	3	13%	1	4%	20	83%	1	4%
PRU / Alternate Provision	1	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
Total	269	72	27%	159	59%	25	9%	13	5%	231	86%	13	5%

All Academies (including Free schools)

Phase	Total Schools	Outstanding		Good		Requires Improvement		Inadequate		Good/Outstanding		Special Measures	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Nursery	0	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Primary	109	18	17%	58	53%	27	25%	6	6%	76	70%	6	6%
Secondary	52	20	38%	22	42%	6	12%	4	8%	42	81%	2	4%
All Through	2	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	1	50%
Special	3	1	33%	1	33%	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	1	33%
PRU / Alternate Provision	4	0	0%	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%	3	75%	1	25%
Total	170	40	24%	84	49%	33	19%	13	8%	124	73%	11	6%

The above table includes all open schools within Birmingham which have had an Ofsted inspection up to 8 November 2017. Where an establishment has not been inspected since becoming an academy, the inspection of the previous establishment is used.

4.3 Academic performance 2016/17

For primary assessment in 2017, Birmingham's progress and attainment still trails England. The key measures across the Early Years Foundation Stage and KS1 have improved, however, and the gaps with national performance have decreased between 2016 and 2017. At KS2, both progress and attainment have improved with a reduction in the gap between Birmingham and England.

For secondary at KS4, Birmingham pupils are, on average, making the same progress as pupils nationally with a similar starting point.

A full report on academic performance is being produced which will provide further detail behind these headline figures.

4.4 Safeguarding in education

Safeguarding in education is now co-ordinated by a dedicated Assistant Director. There are senior education professionals embedded in the children's social care front door, leading to better management of referrals from schools.

Our Schools CSE strategy for 2017/18 has involved training all Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools in the use of the new CSE screening tool. In March 2018 we will host a CSE awareness day which is open to all schools in the city.

Capacity has also been increased to strengthen support for children educated at home (EHE – elective home education). We now know much more about this group, their motives for EHE and keeping them visible via safe and well checks. We have now set up a virtual school for EHE to build in wider curriculum opportunities as well as resources. We are working in conjunction with Bournville College to provide a 14-16 offer for EHE students. Our collaborative work with the EHE community, the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service (SENAR) and children with SEN will benefit the educational offer children are receiving.

All children out of school now receive some form of education, normally one-to-one or small group tuition, whilst their long-term placement is secured. The innovation this year of establishing the Birmingham Online School complements this process.

In July over 700 pupils and students from 23 schools gathered and performed at the Birmingham REP to celebrate their work on the UNICEF Rights Respecting Agenda. It showcased the breadth of the work and talent of Birmingham's young people earning the praise of UNICEF and the DfE with schools being invited to perform at UNICEF's national event.

4.5 Inclusion

During the Summer Term there was a full public consultation on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inclusion strategy receiving over 700 responses. There was strong agreement with the Vision, Mission and Priorities alongside concerns about the deliverability of the outcomes and our ability to work effectively in partnership with Health and social care. In response, the strategy was amended and has now been finalised and submitted for Cabinet approval in December 2017. The Inclusion Commission has now been dissolved and replaced with a new smaller steering group chaired by the Corporate Director for CYP.

4.6 Schools Transport

September 2017 saw a much more efficient start to the new academic year. Complaints decreased significantly and relationships with key stakeholders, including schools, have improved notably.

But considerable challenges remain. The number of children eligible for transport continues to rise and is now over 4,200 young people, with more than 600 guides needed to support

and safeguard the children. The service is due to undergo a new transport procurement process.

The service is working with Headteachers to identify potential improvements, building on those made to communications and in the handling of enquiries.

4.7 Fair Access and In-Year Admissions

The new Fair Access Protocol for January 2018 has been designed with schools to ensure that outside the normal admissions round we place all vulnerable and challenging children as soon as possible and ensure an equitable distribution of children across all schools irrespective of status or circumstances.

The Protocol's transparent and collaborative approach will minimise children's time out of education and ensure that schools are held to account for complying with decisions under the Protocol to admit children without delay.

4.8 Early Years Health and Wellbeing Offer

Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHT) has been awarded the contract to deliver the new Early Years Health and Wellbeing offer commencing in January 2018. This brings into a single system services currently delivered by health visitors, children's centres and various parenting support services.

Considerable work has been undertaken to support the creation of an integrated workforce, via TUPE, drawing together around 1,000 staff members from 76 services.

4.9 14-19 Agenda

Regular meetings with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) discuss matters of strategic importance to the city, including the quality of FE provision and gaps in delivery. Further conversations on devolution and the skills/economic agenda are planned with both the ESFA and Ofsted.

The Post-16 Forum has mental health, modern foreign languages and the tracking of young people high on its agenda.

Our "not in education, employment or training (NEET)" figures have improved but young people whose circumstances are not known remain a challenge.

Working with BEP and the Careers and Enterprise Company, the Council is delivering a Careers Project in secondary schools. The intention is to have made contact with all eligible schools by the end of the academic year. Options for a version for primary schools are currently being explored.

4.10 School places

Birth rates are on the downward trend for the next three years but net migration continues to grow. We are monitoring pressure points across KS1 to KS4. Demand for secondary places is growing and will continue until 2023. Four secondary Free Schools have been

approved by the DfE and they are due to open from 2018-2020 and will go some way to meet the need for secondary places.

5. Summary

- 5.1 There are still significant challenges ahead for children's social care. For example:
- professional curiosity, purposeful visits, good analysis and clear plans need to become the norm everywhere;
 - management oversight needs to be evident on the record and consistently offering reflection, insight and direction;
 - we must help partners understand that the child in need process is as important as the child protection process; and
 - we need to have clear routes to challenge partners and escalate concerns (eg. when a child is not receiving education or where mental health services are needed).
- 5.2 But the improvements cited in the Ofsted inspection report and monitoring visits demonstrate that the Council is on track to moving out of inadequate. Over the last two years solid foundations have been secured and improvements are being realised. This administration is not complacent and it is recognised that improvement like this takes time and tenacity. The voluntary Children's Trust arrangements, with Andrew Christie as the Chair and a full Board in support, will provide confidence in this improvement continuing. Our focus in coming months will be on ensuring that good practice is fully embedded and the improvements made are further developed and consolidated.
- 5.3 Building on the above education improvements the long-term challenges include securing social cohesion in this diverse city and harnessing the voices of children and young people when planning for the Birmingham of the future. The direction of travel on education attainment and progression into secure adulthood, as illustrated by the figures above, must inform radical planning horizons for the future.
- 5.4 More widely we must provide every child in Birmingham with an environment in which they can grow and develop, safe and happy, with the best possible start in life. That will need all agencies including the newly created Children's Trust, schools, the police, the health and voluntary sector and other stakeholders to work collaboratively to ensure all children have the opportunity to realise their potential.