

**SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 FEBRUARY 2018**

**REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS
COUNCILLOR CARL RICE**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out my portfolio priorities and provides an update report further to the report received by Schools, Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2017 from the former Cabinet Member Cllr Brigid Jones setting out the Education and Children's Social Care Improvement Journey.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

The City Council's Constitution clearly sets out the portfolio and areas of accountability. The portfolio covers educational, safeguarding, social and emotional needs of children and young people. Sustainable improvement of children's safeguarding is a major focus of this portfolio.

The needs of all children and young people, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their families and carers, will be realised through a partnership approach with schools, third sector educational providers and partner organisations.

Children's Services	Needs of all children and young people, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers. Political responsibility and accountability for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of children's services. This includes all responsibilities of the statutory Lead Member for Children role.
Safeguarding Children and Young People	With statutory partners, the safety and wellbeing of all children.
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.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY PRIORITIES

Over the last few months since taking on this role I have been learning a lot on the City's role in some key areas of this portfolio. This has shaped for me my priorities which could list so much more but I am keen that we make progress in the following areas:

- The establishment of the Children's Trust; and in particular ensuring that we continue to focus on improving the safeguarding of our children and young people. The Children's Trust will go live in April this year; and all senior appointments have been made. We are going through a testing period with the Service Delivery Contract to ensure it is robust in time for go-live date,

- Seeing through the Early Years Health and Wellbeing contract mobilisation and how we can improve the targeting of services for the children and parents who need our intervention; ensuring they receive timely target support locally via bringing together the health visiting service and children's centres.
- Birmingham's Strategy for Send and Inclusion 2017-2020; this is a huge, multi-faceted area of work that needs a great deal of focus so it is less complex and simplified. In particular making it clear for parents the interventions and support they can expect for their child in their journey to adulthood.
- Special Education Needs and education provision, I am keen to ensure that our children with special education needs are able to access schools locally within Birmingham that meet their needs with appropriate support.
- Travel Assist this is an area which has continually been brought to my attention and officers are working closely with our special schools and principal contractor ATG to see how this can be improved so that our children are not inconvenienced and do get to school in a timely manner.
- Childhood Sexual Exploitation this is an area of work that is everyone's responsibility we all need to be more vigilant and if we see or notice anything it all our responsibilities to report it. Social workers, the police, voluntary sector and our schools are doing some great work. Officers have recently drafted a briefing note that was sent out to all members on signs to look out for and for and who to report to if they have concerns on potential CSE.
- Educational Attainment; improving the educational opportunities and aspirations for all our young people and in particular improving education attainment and resilience of all our children. I have asked officers that I want the City to report on how we are doing on Progress 8. So that we can see how they have progressed from leaving primary to the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE; and how we compare nationally with pupils with similar attainment. I have attached a summary of pupil achievement in 2017; and the differences in attainment is what we need to focus on narrowing over forthcoming years.
- Domestic Abuse on the 13th February the City's Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy was presented for approval at Cabinet. 41,000 people in the City predominately women are victims of domestic abuse, tackling domestic violence has to be everyone's business. Every child deserves the best start in life. Yet one in six pregnant women will experience domestic violence. The impact of domestic abuse on the mental health of victims and their children is severe; dealing emotionally with the abuse and trauma they have experienced or witnessed often results in depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders. We need to do more in schools in order to prevent and reduce these crimes and our schools will play an important role. As part of the joint action plan set out in the strategy is the focus on changing attitudes and behaviours in order to prevent domestic abuse by challenging it. Through

developing up young people's expectation of health and positive relationships. Working with BEP and specialist services to agree a city-wide approach to domestic abuse through strengthening equality and respect.

4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We do need to work more closely with our partners and many of the priorities that I have highlighted above cannot be tackled in isolation. I am keen to work with our schools, voluntary sector, health, police, our families and all other partners to improve the opportunities for our children so they get the best start in life with aspirations which will see them succeed.

The City Council's contract to deliver its statutory duties under the Schools Causing Concern Guidance was given to the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) in September 2015 and it finishes in August 2018. BEP is a head teacher led organisation. During this time BEP has begun to demonstrate impact and overall school improvement arrangements are much stronger than in 2015 during the DfE intervention.

The current contract for school improvement runs out in August 2018 and we are now re-tendering a new contract to start in September 2018 for three years in line with procurement legislation. The outcome of the process will be known by April 2018.

Schools Forum is made of up representative school leaders and governors from all kinds of school in the city. It provides financial support for BCC education services and agrees the formula for distributing funds to schools.

Prevent Education officers contribute strongly to delivering Prevent effectively in schools. Birmingham works uniquely via the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award which produces resilient young people who understand how to avoid any extremist influences.

5 UPDATE ON KEY BUDGET ISSUES/KEY FUTURE BUDGET ISSUES

The directorate is projecting a forecast net deficit of £2.6m at the end of the financial year 2017/18, which is primarily attributable to a overspend in particular in Travel Assist.

The National Funding Formula for reception to year 11 provision will result in per pupil funding increases of approximately 0.5%. While welcome it is not sufficient to cover the increases in expected pay awards and inflation and means our schools continue to face real terms cuts in funding.

6 Challenges and Closing Summary

There are a handful of schools that have large deficits which Head Teachers the Schools senior leadership team and the Governing Bodies need to manage and

reduce. Senior Officers from the Directorate Leadership Team are working with these schools to ensure action is taken to control and manage down deficits.

The No Recourse to Public Funds social work team supports migrant families under section 17 of Children Act 1989 because children would otherwise be destitute. Families are not asylum seekers and generally have no right to remain in Britain. The Home Office funds councils to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and there are national schemes for adult asylum seekers, but there is no funding to local government for families with children who are NRPF. There are also a number of NRPF disabled adults supported by Councils through community care legislation. The current cost of supporting these families with accommodation and subsistence is some £3m (£700k Over budget).

Ofsted Inspection

In December last year we had a third visit by Ofsted which focused on examining the progress of children's services and I am very pleased to say that they found that the City is making continues progress and that the quality of social work has improved. Some key issues highlighted in the report included

- ✓ Sustained progress in reducing caseloads for staff
- ✓ Reduction in numbers of agency social worker staff – greater stability in workforce
- ✓ More stable relationships with families and children
- ✓ Child protection plans are focused and reviewed regularly
- ✓ Assessments for review conferences are generally completed in an appropriate timescale
- ✓ Regular management oversight is evident

However, they were also very clear that still had concerns around some child protection plans.

We have a long way to go and it is evident that there is more we need to do to ensure our practices and processes are such that we can aspire to ensure we do not fail any child.

There have been relentless cuts to public services over the past few years and these have been managed to impact the least on the essential statutory services provided to our children and families who need our services the most. However, the cuts have meant that we have to spend less on areas where we know that we should be investing more money in the intervention services which we will not realise for years to come; but which are essential to tackle the cycle of deprivation; inequality and demand for services that currently prevails,

I would like to end on a positive note to thank our hard working front line staff who work directly with children both in social care and in education. I have been out to visit some of our staff teams and visit some of our schools and I intend to continue to do this over the forthcoming months. It is inspiring going out meeting

staff and seeing their dedication and commitment in improving outcomes for our children.

It is going to be a challenging year but I am confident we are on the right track; our children are our future and we need to do all we can to provide the best possible start for them; protecting them and providing them with the opportunities to thrive and realise their potential

Councillor Carl Rice
Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools

Attachments

Quartet report to Council December 2017
ScoreCard December 2017
Childrens Trust report to Cabinet January 2018
Ofsted Letter – January 18
Education Delivery and Improvement Plan and
Education Attainment Statistics