

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 SEPTEMBER 2018

CURRENT PERFORMANCE

Report of Cath McEvoy, Executive Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Wayne Daley, Executive Member for Children's Services

Purpose of report

To consider current performance and the budgetary position for services within the Committee's terms of reference.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee notes the current performance and identifies any areas for further scrutiny.

Link to Corporate Plan

The performance management information covers services in Children's Social Care and Education and Skills and is available via the Council's website. The Council's performance management arrangements overall are particularly relevant to 'Developing the Organisation'.

Key issues

This report is for discussion.

Background

1. The Council approved its current Corporate Plan in February 2018. Each year, Service Directors prepare a Service Statement which sets out priorities for their service in delivering the Corporate Plan over the coming twelve months together with a performance framework covering past performance levels and future targets. The performance measures are captured on a web-enabled system and current performance is updated regularly so that the most recent information is available to Members, officers and the public. All performance information is available via the Council's website to promote openness and accountability.

2. The Appendices to this report show the current performance information for services within the Committee's terms of reference and is summarised briefly below. Members should note that this committee has recently received additional benchmarking information around children in need and child protection, is receiving a detailed report on care proceedings today, and the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Advisory Group receives bi-monthly performance reports on data relating to looked after children and care leavers.
3. **Education and Skills:** With reference to Appendix A, performance is good in relation to: all measures on primary school achievement (numbers 3-8) - update due in September's return; take up of early education entitlement (no. 1); permanent exclusions from school of Looked After Children [LAC] (no. 16); destinations of 16 and 17 year olds (no. 17 & 18); apprenticeship outcomes (no. 19 & 20); and timeliness of education and health care plans (no. 21). It is also significantly improved on the percentage of primary school pupils who attend a school judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding (no. 2). Indicators 17 - 20 all featured in June's highly successful inspection of the Council's Adult Learning service.

However, performance remains short of target in relation to: permanent exclusions from schools and the Council's ability to provide alternative provision in time scale (nos. 9, 14 and 15); and Ofsted inspections of secondary schools (no. 12). Outcomes for pupils at key stage 4 (nos. 10 & 11) have been a real concern and the 2017-18 unvalidated results will be reported in September's return.

Detailed comments, and the actions being taken for PIs that are short of target can be seen in Appendix A.

4. **Children's Social Care:** With reference to Appendix B, performance is good in relation to: placing children with NCC carers (no. 2); inspections of residential children's homes, all of which are judged to be good or better (no. 3); improved time scales within the adoption process (no. 4 & 5); more long term LAC who have been with the same carer for 2 years or more (no. 7) very timely referral decisions at the front door (no. 8); and fewer child protection plans needing to be in place for over 2 years (no. 9); reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system (no. 11); fewer young offenders in custody; all young offenders live in suitable accommodation; and more are in employment, education or training than was the case 18 months ago (nos. 13, 14 & 16).

However, performance remains short of target in relation to: caseloads of independent reviewing officers (no. 1), and there are still some pressures around caseloads for some social workers, although it is an improving picture (no. 20); duration of care proceedings remains the same (no. 6 - see Adele Wright's detailed

report to this meeting); re-offending rates are concerning the YOT Management Board [new definition (no. 12); the volume of early help assessments initiated is still low and is high on the agenda of the Safeguarding Children Board (no. 17); and there has been an increase in the volume of second or subsequent child protection plans (no. 10).

Detailed comments, and the actions being taken for PIs that are short of target can be seen in Appendix B. Members should note the re-profiling of the Supported Families targets that has taken place in the last quarter in line with our agreement with the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (nos. 18 & 19).

5. Finance position

5.1 Education & Skills

The Education and Skills service budget has received growth of £932k towards the SEN transport demand, which continues to grow in line with the demand for special school places. With additional special school places due to open at Hexham Priory and The Dales Special schools from September 2018, future growth has been built into the medium term financial plan and this will be reviewed annually.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) has carried forward a deficit of £2 million from 2017-18 and continues to face a significant challenge to balance the budget by 2020-21 when the National Funding Formula is implemented in full. There was a transfer of £1.8 million of the Schools block to the High Needs block for 2018-19 which was agreed by the Department of Education and will contribute to reducing the deficit, however the creation of additional special school places has also increased costs in the short term. The additional in house SEN places should reduce the longer term demand for places at Independent Special Schools which has been an area of growth in recent years.

The most significant pressure on the DSG budget has been the demand for SEN Top-ups, however a review of this area is expected to reduce costs as they become reviewed more regularly. There is an on-going review into the top-up band levels we currently pay as they have not been reviewed since implementation and this may bring additional financial cost pressures.

A review of all budgets, statutory responsibilities and staffing structures across the Education and Skills Division is being carried out. We are seeking efficiencies in those areas that are funded from both the core budget and the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The revenue position for Education and Skills at the end of June 2018 is as follows:
Final Out-turn (£000) Education and Skills £104k underspend.

Position: This mainly relates to an underspend on staffing due to vacant posts across various teams.

5.2 Children's Social Care

The revenue position for Children's Social Care at the end of June 2018 is as follows:
Forecast Out-turn (£000) Children's Social Care 1,641 overspend.

Position: The forecast position is currently a £1.6 million overspend. This is largely due to the continuing cost pressures around external residential placements across a mixture of Independent Special Schools, Residential Homes and short term property rentals for young people. Previous benchmarking has shown that Northumberland is a comparatively low user of external placements (incl IFAs) compared to the rest of the region.

There has been growth of £3 million added to the Children's Social Care budget for 2018-19, this in addition to the £2.5 million of growth added in 2017-18. Around £2.2 million of the growth was used to meet existing cost pressures including the rising cost of external residential placements and special guardianship orders, whilst the remaining £0.8 million was used to create the social work academy and to support a staffing restructure across various teams.

The overall savings proposals from children's services over the 3 year period have been presented to informal cabinet.

The number of Looked after Children was 375 at the time of the June budget report, a decrease of 18 since the 1st April 2018 and this is the driver behind the continued financial pressures across the service.

As in 2017-18, the main areas of pressure are in the number of historical Special Guardianship/ Residence Order Allowance payments and the relatively high number of out of county residential placements. This is partly linked to a shortage of special school places in Northumberland, although the creation of additional special school places at Hexham Priory and The Dales Special Schools could potentially help to alleviate the situation. There are also plans to develop additional in-house residential homes however they are unlikely to be ready before 2019-20. There continues to be a reduction in the use of Independent Fostering Agencies.

There is a savings target for 2018-19 of £124k across The Northumberland Adolescent Service, which has undergone a restructure and this looks likely to be achieved. Further reviews of foster care allowances will be undertaken with the long term aim of increasing in house foster carers and reducing the need for Independent Fostering Agencies, whilst the current scheme for adoption allowances will also be subject to review.

Appendices - Scorecards for services within the Committee’s terms of reference:

- A. Education and Skills
- B. Children’s Social Care

Implications

Policy	n/a
Finance and value for money	Many of the measures included in the framework have a value for money component
Legal	The report refers to the time scales for care proceedings.
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	Having enough experienced social workers is essential for a high performing Children’s Social Care service.
Property	n/a
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No x N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	n/a
Risk Assessment	n/a
Crime & Disorder	The performance framework includes measures on offending.

Customer Consideration	The framework includes a number of measures relevant to providing services to customers
Carbon reduction	n/a
Wards	All

Background papers:

Details of the County Council's performance management arrangements including access to Service Statements and the Northumberland web-enabled performance system can be accessed at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Policy/Performance.aspx#corporateperformancemanagementarrangements>

Report sign off.

Finance Officer	Alison Elsdon
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a
I.T.	n/a
Executive Director	Cath McEvoy
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Wayne Daley

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