

## **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**16 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 6.00 PM AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE**

<b>Committee Members present</b>	Councillor C. Towe (Chair) Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair) Councillor D. Barker Councillor A. Ditta Councillor M. Follows Councillor E. Hazell Councillor E. Russell Councillor M. Ward Councillor T. Wilson
<b>Portfolio Holders present</b>	Councillor S. Coughlan - Leader of the Council Councillor I. Shires - Agenda for Change
<b>Non-elected voting Members present</b>	Ms M. Wollaston (Parent Governor) Ms T. Tunnell (Parent Governor)
<b>Non-elected non-voting Members present</b>	Ms P. Welter (Secondary Teacher Representative)
<b>Officers present</b>	Mr D. Haley - Executive Director (Children's Services) Ms D. Carter - Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) Mr R. Hutchinson - Lead Accountant Mr M. Lavender - Head of Programme Management Ms K. Wootton - Children's Commissioning Manager Ms J. Kaur-Gill - Regeneration Employment and Skills Manager Ms C. Wills - Programme Management Officer Ms I. Vanderheeren - Strategic Lead (Early Help) Ms J. Bonner - Head of Educational Standards and School Improvement Mr N. Perks - Principal Information Manager Dr P. Fantom - Democratic Services Officer
<b>In attendance</b>	Ms M. Ingram - Acting Director of Operations, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Ms Z. Gilbert - Project Co-ordinator for CAMHS in Walsall, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust Ms A. Wood - Senior Commissioning Officer, Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

### **19/17 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R. Burley, N. Gultasib and A. Kudhail, and from Mr R. Bragger.

The Chair informed the Committee of the sad news that Councillor Burley's sister had recently passed away and Members conveyed their sincere condolences to Councillor Burley on her loss.

#### 20/17 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

#### 21/17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillors S. Coughlan and A. Ditta declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9 – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

#### 22/17 **MINUTES**

Further to Minute 7/17, the Executive Director (Children's Services) would ensure that the flow diagram and the anonymised completed Education, Health and Care Plan were circulated to the Members of the Committee.

Further to Minute 9/17, the Executive Director (Children's Services) stated that having regard to phase 3 of the Mosaic implementation, he would arrange for a briefing note to be circulated to the Members of the Committee.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2017, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the amendment of Minute No. 1/17 to reflect that Ms T. Tunnell gave an apology for her absence.**

#### 23/17 **CORPORATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2016/17**

A report was submitted [annexed] which summarised the 2016/17 forecast revenue and capital position as at Quarter 3 for the services within the Committee's remit.

It was highlighted that Children's Services continued to experience financial pressures relating to further increases in the placement costs of looked after children (LAC), and 639 children were currently being looked after. This had an impact not only on the existing LAC budget but also the ability to deliver savings associated with reducing LAC costs. Furthermore, a review of caseloads across the service had identified the need for an additional 25 social workers to meet the Council's caseload promise of 15 cases per social worker, which would ensure even better support and successful outcomes for children.

The Lead Accountant reported that the current forecast overspend was £5.144m, which was offset by in-year actions, including the use of corporate reserves totalling £3.438m, resulting in a remaining forecast overspend of £1.706m. The Directorate's capital programme totalled £13.197m in 2016/17, with a carry forward of £3.743m being proposed to provide for the re-profiling of schemes for individual schools and pupil place planning needs in 2017/18.

Further to a question from the Chair concerning communication with the courts, the Executive Director (Children's Services) provided feedback on a recent meeting with the lead Circuit Judge, Her Honour Judge Hughes. During this productive meeting, it was confirmed that Walsall Council's performance in the court arena on matters including in pre-proceedings work was good. It was also noted that the Council now employed a full-time case progression officer who was working with Judge Hughes's assistant on the progression of care orders at home, guardianship orders, and the prompt discharge of children who did not need to be looked after or placed in care. The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) also updated Members on the number of applications filed with the court in respect of care orders and the steps being taken to work proactively with families to encourage their application for special guardianship orders. During the discussion, reference was made to two recent cases where there were babies who had sustained serious injuries and the actions taken by the Council to prevent them being at risk of further harm were explained.

In response to questions from Members on the challenges of recruiting people willing to adopt, the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) reported on the measures pursued by the regional adoption arrangements to increase the number of prospective adopters in future but acknowledged that the numbers recruited locally this year needed to increase. It was noted that there had been a higher demand for the adoption of younger babies and that these children would be able to be placed with adoptive parents quickly. There was a further question on the setting aside of funds for future help for adopted children whose natural parents had an alcohol or drug dependency resulting in, for example, a child suffering from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) confirmed that if identified by the medical assessment, there would be an open dialogue with the adoptive parents and financial provision made for any specialist support.

The Lead Accountant, in responding to Members' questions on SEN transport and the £352k over spend, stated that two rounds of consultation had been undertaken and a revised transport policy implemented. The budget contained a saving proposal of £250k; however, it was noted that the number of children now requiring the service had increased and the provider costs had risen. Operational efficiencies were being sought and an action plan had been introduced with the intention of bring the service back to a balanced financial position.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the revenue forecast for the 2016/17 year end financial position for services under the remit of the Children's Services Directorate Management Team be noted.**

- 2. That the capital forecast for the 2016/17 year end financial position for services under the remit of the Children's Services Directorate Management Team be noted.**
- 3. That the actions taken to address the areas of over spend be noted.**
- 4. That further information on the costs and savings to be achieved in respect of SEN transport be made available to the Committee.**

#### **24/17 EARLY HELP 0-19 LOCALITY DELIVERY MODEL**

A report was submitted [annexed] that provided an overview of the current early help offer and the proposed future 0-19 locality integrated delivery model, including the delivery of youth provision. The model would improve the alignment of services on a locality basis, improving the coherence and co-ordination of agencies' work with families, and would utilise the four children centre areas with teams being based at Birchills, Blakenall, Darlaston and Palfrey.

The Chair having enquired about the origins of the model, the Strategic Lead (Early Help) confirmed that whilst it was not a national initiative there were other local authorities operating with integrated teams that provided services in a similar manner. In Walsall, the early help provision was carried out in conjunction with other services including offering advice and guidance to the public and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Four locality partner panels had been established and a number of agencies participated in their weekly meetings.

During discussion of the location of services, Members raised the question of the accessibility of the four sites, particularly given the availability and frequency of public transport services. The Strategic Lead (Early Help) informed the Committee that the location of the children's centres had been based to take account of the density of population of young children aged between 0 and 5 years. However, the flexible nature of the service was emphasised, with outreach work being undertaken to support those families who were unable to come to the children's centres.

A Member drew attention to the data provided in Appendix 1 [annexed], reporting that 18.6 per cent of cases were closed due to parent or child disengagement. It was pointed out by the Strategic Lead (Early Help) that the referrals to the service in respect of families needing help were made by a number of agencies, including schools, health services, the police and other community members. Typically, there were several reasons why disengagement might occur, however, including issues of consent, expectations not being met or negative prior experience. The Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that in situations where parents had disengaged from the service, there was a referral back to the statutory social care service for assessment of risk. If a risk was identified, the case would be managed at the appropriate levels requiring parents to engage if necessary.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the contents of the report be noted**

## 25/17 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2016

A report was submitted [annexed] which, the primary and secondary school results having been validated and published, demonstrated how Walsall's children and young people had performed when compared with their statistical neighbours and the national averages.

In responding to a question from the Chair, the Head of Educational Standards and School Improvement referred to the challenges encountered due to major changes in the assessment criteria that had impeded comparison of the 2016 results with previous years. This meant that it could be difficult for parents and teachers to appreciate fully the true significance of any variations in performance. There had been improvements in outcomes for Year 1 phonics (although looked after children and children with Special Educational Needs had performed less well than their peers), Key Stage 2 writing and Key Stage 5 applied and technical qualifications; there were gaps in achievement for pupils with Special Educational Needs, looked after children and pupils eligible for free school meals.

In terms of Ofsted outcomes, whilst Walsall remained behind the national average, there were positive improvements in, for example, leadership grades from inspection. Members queried the position with regard to academies, the steps necessary to ensure that improvement in all schools was comparable with that in equivalent local authorities and the level of confidence in school leadership.

The Head of Educational Standards and School Improvement emphasised that whilst the Council was accountable for academies' results, and worked with eleven sponsors, its sphere of influence was limited. There were regular meetings with the Department for Education (DfE) where concerns could be raised, and it was pointed out that this had resulted in the sponsors of two academies being removed and replaced. The importance of the leadership model in schools and of the School Improvement Team's work was also highlighted. Fortnightly meetings chaired by the Executive Director (Children's Services) monitored improvement and progress in all schools, with warning notices that could be escalated to Ofsted and the DfE being issued in cases of serious concern. The Principal Information Manager indicated that in 2012/13, ten schools had been given inadequate grade 4 ratings, and that improvements had subsequently been made. Over 80 per cent of Walsall schools have now been judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted.

The Chair reminded the Committee that it was the intention for all Walsall schools to have attained the national average by 2018. The Executive Director (Children's Services) highlighted that a Head teacher was working with Children's Services for one day per week, assisting in the systematic dissemination of good practice to ensure that curriculum and teaching and learning was well adapted to meet the needs of children in all schools.

### **Resolved:**

**That the Principal Information Officer provide comparative data from 2015 for circulation to the Committee on the performance of looked after children and children with Special Educational Needs who studied Year 1 Phonetics.**

## 26/17 CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE (CAMHS)

The Committee received a report on the Walsall Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing – One Year Later 2015-20 [annexed]. In addition to this, a CAMHS CQC update, the Face Risk profile and a protocol/procedure for a home visit in CAMHS had been circulated to the Committee [annexed].

The Chair welcomed the representatives of the partner organisations who were in attendance and explained the reason for their invitation to attend the meeting. He noted that several questions on CAMHS had been submitted to the organisations and invited the representatives to respond to these.

The Chair sought confirmation on the referral levels and the waiting times in respect of CAMHS. In responding to this, Ms Gilbert (Project Co-ordinator for CAMHS in Walsall, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust) highlighted the actions taken subsequent to the CQC inspection, noting that this had identified only four areas requiring improvement. In terms of referrals, these were currently between 140 and 180 per month, recognising that there were some variations allowing for school holidays. When compared with the previous year, there had been an improvement in waiting times. Currently, these were at 12 weeks and it was anticipated that this would reduce to eight weeks by the end of March. Use was being made of the NHS's Choice and Partnership Approach (CAPA) model with the intention of appointments being made at first contact. Funding was being provided for more staff, including five locum practitioners, so that waiting lists could be reduced further. There were currently 223 children on the waiting list for CAMHS.

The safety of staff was an area for improvement raised by the CQC inspection and Ms Gilbert confirmed that personal alarms, safety protocols and training had been introduced, so that all staff knew what to do if a child was identified as being at high risk. In Walsall, a psychiatrist had been recruited to work with intensive cases through the iCAMHS service. The consistency of risk assessments and care plans had been strengthened, with use being made of a new national tool that combined both elements within a single document.

Ms Wood (Senior Commissioning Officer, Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group) advised the Committee of the CCG's responsibilities in respect of CAMHS. Where there were gaps in provision, which were identified by feedback from clients and partners, account of this would be taken in terms of funding, planning and strategy. An example was the FLASH intensive support service (Foster Care and Looked After Children Support Hub). Further to a question from a Member on young people aged between 16 and 18 years, Ms Gilbert referred to the commissioning of services up to 17 years of age, with those aged 18 to 25 years being transitional into adulthood.

A Member raised the issue of access to the CAMHS services for those children who had been placed for adoption outside of the Borough. Ms Gilbert confirmed that CAMHS operated on a 20 mile radius; beyond that point, responsibility for the provision of care was held by the agency for the area in which the child was resident.

The Committee was advised that if an out of hours referral had to be made, when the CAMHS service was not available, then young people could also be referred to the crisis team for adults. Ms Wood confirmed that the crisis team were trained to respond to young people and stated that in accordance with National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines, general practitioners would make referrals on the same day and the iCAMHS service would then conduct the assessment.

In response to further questions on waiting times, Ms Gilbert acknowledged that there was no national target for young people and children but referred to the 18 week target for initial appointments, adding that waiting times in Dudley and Walsall were amongst the best in the country. Ms Wood advised that online counselling was operational between 12 noon and midnight and that to ensure continuation of this service, it was to be put out to competitive tender next year.

Further to a question from the Chair on MASH, and the determination of arrangements for mental health workers, Ms Wood indicated that there were ongoing discussions with respect to data sharing, information technology and safeguarding.

The Leader of the Council informed the Committee that he had recently attended an open day and would encourage attendance by Members at similar events. This had demonstrated the progress being made, but there was much that remained to be done in terms of locality working and providing joined up services for young people.

A Member sought clarification on whether it was necessary for a new diagnosis to be made for those young people who had received an earlier diagnosis from CAMHS and were now progressing from school into either further or higher education, particularly where the original diagnosis was now deemed to be outdated. Ms Wood indicated that it was important for a young person's diagnosis to be updated in terms of appropriate treatment and that this would also entail involvement by the young person's general practitioner. In the course of the discussion, Ms Gilbert advised that there was a schools links pilot that was working with secondary school staff, so that such considerations could be identified and resolved.

The Chair thanked the representatives of the partner organisations for their attendance and the responses provided to Members' questions and they left the meeting at this point.

## **27/17 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (IMPACT) AND WALSALL WORKS APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME UPDATE**

A report was submitted [annexed] providing information on the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) IMPACT and Walsall Works Apprenticeship programme, with particular regard to the engagement in the programme of and the undertaking of apprenticeships by looked after children. With total funding of £51m, there had been £17m of match funding that had attracted a further £34m (including EU funding) and the aim of the programme was to support those young people aged between 16 and 29 years who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Having commenced in 2016, the programme would conclude in 2018, but a one-year extension was currently being sought.

Further to a question from the Chair on the participation of young people, whilst noting that there no sanctions that could be imposed for non-attendance, the Children's Commissioning Manager outlined the approaches followed for overcoming barriers to engagement and to market the programme. Reference was made to the difficulties being encountered by young people aged 19 years and above, who now had to take out student loans to study for courses in the further education sector.

In responding to a question from a Member on the specific arrangement in the programme for looked after children, it was reported that information, advice and guidance (IAG) counsellors were working to offer practical measures that would lead to better outcomes for these young people. The Executive Director (Children's Services) requested that any Members or officers that were able to help the programme by offering volunteering experiences to such young people should contact either the Head of Programme Management or the Children's Commissioning Manager directly.

A Member having enquired about the opportunities for children with disabilities, it was stated that the programme was not intended to replace any of the statutory services or the care plans and funding arrangements that were in place. However, there had been work with a number of agencies, including Walsall Adult Community College (WACC) to support these children.

The Leader of the Council informed the Committee of his experience in meeting a range of young people participating in the programme and gave examples of some of the successes that had been achieved. He confirmed that the Council would be introducing arrangements to ensure that children leaving care would not have to pay Council Tax until they had reached 25 years of age.

An overview was provided of the Walsall Works programme, which sought to increase the number of apprenticeships being taken up by young people aged between 16 and 24 years of age. The Committee received a summary of the measures introduced to close the gap in abilities and skills, the engagement with employers and the successes attained since this programme's introduction in 2012.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the contents of the report be noted.**
- 2. That data on the number of apprenticeships provided in leisure centres be provided for circulation to the Committee.**

**28/17 CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORTING – END OF QUARTER 3 (APRIL TO DECEMBER 2016)**

A report was submitted [see annexed] detailing the performance of Children's Services to the end of Quarter 3 (April to December 2016). This included information regarding key indicators, areas of good performance and areas for improvement.



The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) reported that in terms of the front door performance, the rate of referrals had stabilised and that the number of re-referrals was continuing to reduce. There had been improvements in terms of reduction of the number of children subject to child protection plans and in ensuring appropriateness for children made the subject of a child protection plan. The number of looked after children remained high, whilst there has been some decline in placement stability. Reducing the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training was a significant priority and a review of the care leaving service was underway. Feedback from young people indicated that a more flexible service was required.

Further to Members' questions on staffing, the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) referred to the actions being taken to recruit and retain high quality social workers. This included the appointment of 27 newly-qualified social workers, five students who were undertaking placements and training via the 'Step up to Social Work' programme and two consultant social workers to support the forthcoming 'Frontline' initiative. Consistency of practice across the service was a key priority and a practise uplift would be undertaken over the next three to six months. In addition, the team management arrangements were being streamlined and the role of senior practitioner was being introduced to reinforce and support the quality of practice and to retain expertise.

There was an enquiry relating to the new 'grow your own' scheme, where employees could be sponsored to complete their social work training with the Open University. Clarification was provided to the Committee that the scheme was open to all staff within the Council, included those facing redundancy. The Executive Director (Children's Services) emphasised the openness of the process, whilst noting that prospective applicants had to possess the requisite abilities, experience and skills. It was added that 40 people from across the Council's service areas had indicated their intention to attend a forthcoming briefing on the recruitment of social workers.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the contents of the report, together with the strengths, areas of improvement and actions being taken to address them, be noted.**
- 2. That information on the number of care leavers who were not in education, employment or training to be provided to the Committee.**

**29/17 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLANS**

Members considered the work programme and forward plans. Having regard to the visits to children's homes by Members, this would be progressed to ensure that verbal reports could be made to the next meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the work programme be updated to include the following items, which would be considered at the meeting on 4 April 2017:**
  - **Corporate Parenting Board**
  - **Looked after children and care leavers**
  
- 2. That the forward plans be noted.**

**30/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was 4 April 2017.

The meeting terminated at 9.02 pm.

Chair:.....

Date:.....