

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES'  
SERVICES  
12th February, 2014**

Present:- Councillor Lakin (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont and Roche.

Councillor Pickering was also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ahmed

**D91.       DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

**D92.       MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH AND 22ND  
JANUARY, 2014.**

The minutes of the previous meetings of the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2014, were considered.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meetings be agreed as a correct record.

**D93.       MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND  
FAMILIES' PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 15TH JANUARY, 2014.**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children, Young People and Families' Partnership were considered.

Resolved: - That the minutes be noted.

**D94.       WELCOME TO THE NEW STRATEGIC LEAD, JOINT HEALTH,  
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE.**

This item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet Member.

**D95.       CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES' SERVICES PERFORMANCE  
REPORT.**

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Performance and Quality Manager (Performance and Quality, Neighbourhood and Adult Services Directorate) that outlined performance of Children and Young People's Services at the end of Quarter Three of the 2013-2014 year. The report considered performance against targets, including the direction of travel against the previous year's performance, alongside comparisons with statistical neighbours and national data where it was available.

The report had been set-out in line with the proposed Corporate Plan Priorities, which showed the 'priority area', the 'outcome' and how performance would be 'measured'.

An update was provided to the Cabinet Member, and the following reporting areas were highlighted: -

- **Take up of Secondary School lunches (No. 10 / NI52b): -**

The take-up of lunches across both primary and secondary schools was subject to seasonal variation. Take-up of primary school lunches had increased on the previous year, however, take-up of secondary school lunches was below target at 37.2%, although this was up on the previous year by 1.6%.

Discussion ensued on this and it was noted that the data only included schools where the Rotherham Schools' Catering Service provided meals, schools that had chosen to use a different provider were not included in the statistics. The Rotherham Schools' Catering Service was continuing to monitor uptake of meals and the effectiveness of promotion and marketing.

The September, 2014, entitlement of Free School Meals for all Infant aged school children was noted.

- **Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 10 working days of referral (No.12 / NI59)**

At the end of December there were 1211 initial assessments completed in the year so far. Performance within the month was 60.4%. Combining the current data for completed and outstanding assessments the projected year end performance was 53%.

- **Percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement (No.13 / NI60): -**

At the end of December there were 1566 core assessments completed in the year so far. Performance within the month was 54%. The total year's performance at the end of the quarter had fallen to 65.5%. Performance at the end of Quarter Three was 17.8% lower than the same time last year (83.3%).

Discussion ensued in relation to the performance of NI59 and NI60. The reasons why the performance had decreased were discussed. It was noted that the process for duty cover for the Contact, Assessment and Referral Team meant that there was a social worker each week covering duty, leading to a negative impact on performance in completed Assessments within timescales. Furthermore, there had been an increase

in the number of assessments undertaken. Independent assessment of the Service had been undertaken by an independent social worker currently looking at performance and improvements and he had confirmed his assurance that children were safe; fieldwork and visits were taking place and risk assessments had been completed, however, the writing up process was not being completed within the timeframes required. Social Workers were receiving case-based supervision but were lacking in reflective supervision, which included training and development requirements. All Social Workers were being given access to 'The Big Picture', a software package that allowed social workers to plan and monitor their caseloads. The performance levels were not due to vacant posts or worker turnover in the teams.

The Cabinet Member expected the performance against NI 59 and 60 to be improved in future reports and asked that Senior Managers pursue this as a priority through supervisions and the PDR process. Whilst recognising that fieldwork and risk assessments were in place, and consequently that vulnerable children were safe, the Cabinet Member expected that the record of activities undertaken be up to date.

- **Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption (No.14 / NI61)**

At the end of December, 27 adoptions had been completed in-year representing an increase of 8 from the position this time last year. Sixteen of the 27 had been completed in timescale, giving a performance of 59.3% which, although still a 'Red' indicator, is an improvement on previous Quarters. At this point last year, performance was 47.4%.

Performance was rated as 'Red' because the Adoption Team had concentrated on family finding and matching for harder to place children. This concentration of efforts was in the best interests of the children involved.

The work of the Adoption Team was being bolstered by the Adoption Reform Grant, which was a time-limited additional source of funding. Further work needed to take place to avoid that, following the end of the Grant, the performance of the Adoption Team did not decrease.

- **Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more (No.17 / NI64): -**

This Quarter had seen a high number (104) of plans cease compared to other Quarters. 10 of these had been open for two-years or more, which was more than the rest of the year combined. This took the total number of plans ceasing to 270 of which 18 were over the two year threshold, making a performance of 6.7% and 'Red'. This was compared to the same time last year of 4%.

The continuing quality assurance work that was taking place was also considered.

Resolved: - That the report be received and its content noted.

#### **D96. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31ST DECEMBER, 2013.**

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Principal Finance Officer (Financial Services, Resources Directorate), which provided a financial forecast to 31st March, 2014, based on actual income and expenditure to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

Overall, the Directorate was projecting a £1.252million over-spend outturn position at the end of the 2013/2014 financial year. This overspend represented an increase of 2.7% on the total revenue budget allocation, which was an increase of £11,000 since the previous budget monitoring report.

The forecast overspend was largely due to the continuing pressures in Safeguarding Children and Families' Services due to the needs-led nature of the budget relating to out-of-authority residential and fostering placements. The report provided an update on the main areas of variance and outlined the main pressures and areas of under-spend and/or over-spend for each Service.

The management actions taken relating to the Services for Looked After Children included a drive to recruit more in-house foster carers, prevention and early intervention strategies including an increased use of Special Guardianship Orders, and the Invest to Save Programme in Fostering and Adoption Services.

Disability Services were projecting an over-spend of £52,000 due to staffing requirements in residential homes where agency staff could not be used, and also by an increase in Direct Payments. Although representing an over-spend, the additional charges incurred had avoided an out-of-authority payment, which was a better outcome for the individual child/young person and their family/carer/s. An out-of-authority placement would likely have also been at a greater cost than the direct payment.

A number of continuing budget management actions were being taken to avoid costs: -

- Prevention and early intervention strategies, including an increased use of Special Guardianship Orders and efforts concentrating investments in Fostering and Adoption Services;
- Proactive management actions continued to concentrate on avoiding costs relating to placements for looked after children, the fostering framework and through block commissioning and negotiation of placements. These efforts had achieved savings of £588,000;

- The Multi-Agency Support Panel was continuing to make efficient multi-agency management actions and decisions, and continuing to avoid costs wherever possible;
- Agency costs had increased compared to the same period in the previous year primarily as a result of covering vacant posts within Safeguarding Children and Families' Service, and covering sickness absence and maternity leave to ensure that safe staffing ratios were maintained. Recruitment was underway in relation to vacant posts to save on agency costs;
- Non-contractual overtime for Children and Young People's Services had increased compared to the same period in the previous year as a result of the need for fully trained staff to maintain cover in residential homes. Agency staff could not cover these posts due to training requirements;
- Consultancy costs had decreased compared to the same period in the previous year.

Discussion ensued with the following issue raised: -

- The continuing efforts that were taking place with Partner organisations regarding the residential placements and achieving an equitable charging structure.

Resolved: - That the latest financial projection against the budget for the year based on actual income and expenditure to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013, be noted.

**D97. ESUITE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - CONTINUATION OF SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE.**

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Childcare Sustainability Manager (Early Years and Childcare Strategy, School Effectiveness Service, Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young Peoples' Services Directorate) that outlined a proposal to exempt Standing Order 47 in relation to the eSuite Data Management System.

An existing contract was in place with Capita Children's Services for the provision of 'eSuite', which was the performance and activity monitoring software system used by Rotherham's 22 Children's Centres. The exemption from the provision of Standing Order 47.6.3 (the requirement to invite at least three written quotations for contracts valued between £20,000 - £50,000) was proposed as there were no alternative suppliers who could provide a compatible licence other than Capita Children's Services.

The licence related to the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2015, and was valued at £29,060.24, which would be met within existing budgets.

Discussion ensued on the proposal. The Cabinet Member questioned why the licence agreement was agreed annually and asked that the possibility be explored of signing a longer licence agreement.

Resolved: - That Exemption from Standing Order 47.6.3 (the requirement to invite at least three written quotations for contracts valued between £20,000 - £50,000) be agreed, and the eSuite Data Management System contract be awarded to Capita Children's Services for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2015, as set out in the submitted report.

**D98. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -**

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services take place on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2014, to start at 9.00 a.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.