

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Monday 22 March 2021**

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Jarvis, Buckley, Clark, Fenwick-Green, Khan, Marriott and Simpson.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillor Beaumont.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

151. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

152. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the public or press.

153. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

154. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

155. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Strategic Director - Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director - Early Help, Family Engagement and Business Support, the Interim Assistant Director – Education, the Assistant Director - Children's social care and the Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion attended the meeting to provide an update on performance in Children and Young People's Services.

In introducing the report, the Strategic Director - Children and Young People's Services provided an overview of performance in the directorate over the first nine months of 2020/21, including:

- That the direction of travel for many performance indicators across had been positive.
- How since March 2020 the service had adapted to delivering services in innovative and creative ways.

- The HMIP Probation inspection of the Youth Offending Team that had taken place in September 2020 that had resulted in a judgement of “Requires Improvement”.
- The Focussed Assurance Visit undertaken by Ofsted in October 2020, had ended in no judgement, however it was noted that the inspectors were assured of service’s response to pandemic
- A review of performance reporting across the Directorate was underway that would include a review of existing scorecards with information on Education and Inclusion performance now being included.

The Assistant Director - Early Help, Family Engagement and Business Support provided an overview of areas of performance that were going well with regard to Early Help and Family Engagement, including:

- Customer satisfaction remaining consistently high, with 100% of respondents in December rating their overall experience as “good” or “excellent”.
- 85.1% of families being contacted within three working days of being referred to the Early Help Service.
- 92.9% of early help assessments that were in-scope being completed within 45 days during the month of December. This was higher than the previous quarter where 83.3% had been completed within 45 days.
- In December 24.2% of Early Help assessments had been completed by delivery partners, an increase from 22.3% completed in November 2020.
- That the Troubled Families (Families for Change) payment by result outcomes being ahead of the forecast schedule.
- The good progress that was continuing to be made against the HMIP inspection plan following the inspection of the Youth Offending Team, with over 50% of the identified actions having been completed.

The Assistant Director - Early Help, Family Engagement and Business Support provided an overview of areas for continued development with regard to Early Help and Family Engagement, including:

- Delivering, with partners the required improvements identified by the inspection of the Youth Offending Service.
- Maintaining a focus on the activities needed to continue achieving the combined NEET/Not Known performance.

- Continuing the work needed towards increasing Children's Centre registration rates for children living in the 30% most deprived areas of the Borough.

The Assistant Director - Early Help, Family Engagement and Business Support advised that he was pleased to report that the service had achieved a 100% completion rate for staff Personal Development Reviews and noted that this had been particularly important in the current year due to the amount of staff working at home in order to ensure that their personal development continued.

The Chair asked whether the service was monitoring levels of satisfaction with the service from families who had been engaged with Early Help and who had then been stepped up to Social care. The Assistant Director advised that these families were surveyed and that from April 2021 the information received would form part of the performance monitoring activity of the Early Help service. The Chair asked if there was any noticeable link between families being stepped up to Social Care and complaints being received. The Assistant Director advised that while there had been some complaints received assured the Chair that there was no evidence of the two issues being linked. The Chair queried the unusually high number of vacancies showing in the service. The Assistant Director advised that he would look into this further and provide members with clarification on this issue.

The Assistant Director – Children's social care provided an overview of areas of performance that were going well with regard to children's social care, including:

- The number of children subject to a child protection plan as of December was 462, a reduction of 14 children compared to October 2020
- Review Child Protection Conferences timeliness had remained consistent, and throughout December 100% of reviews had been completed on time.
- The number of Looked After Children during the pandemic had remained steady and that despite the challenges of the pandemic, up to the end of December 2020, 108 children had been discharged from the Council's care.
- Looked after reviews continued to be completed within target timescales. The move to virtual reviews had been a success during the pandemic and had enabled wider engagement with less travel for staff and families.
- Placement stability for Looked After Children had remained positive. In December, the number of children who had been in the

same placement for 2 or more years had increased to 68%. The Assistant Director noted that this was a significant achievement given the strain that all families had been under during the pandemic.

The Assistant Director – Children’s social care provided an overview of areas for continued development with regard to children’s social care, including:

- The number of Initial Child Protection Conferences that had been completed in the required timescales had been below target. The Assistant Director advised that the situation was improving but would continue to be an area of focus.
- The discharge of Looked After Children to permanence via Special Guardianship Orders had been low after previous year on year improvements. The Assistant Director advised that this would continue to be an area of focus as part of the Right child, Right Care programme of work
- The number of dental checks had declined greatly and was linked to the closure of dentists during the pandemic. As Dentists reopened this would be a key area of focus.

The Chair reaffirmed the comments she had made throughout the year on how well children’s social care and adapted to the challenges created by the pandemic.

Members asked for further information around figures regarding placement stability and asked for further information on the reasons for a placement ending. The Assistant Director – Children’s social noted that a placement could end for many reasons, many being positive such as adoption of a child moving to a special guardianship arrangement. The Assistant Director noted that figures for adoptions and special guardianships were included on the performance scorecard but advised that further information on why placements ended could be provided if needed. The Assistant Director advised however that the performance indicator around placement stability was a key metric in showing how well the Council was supporting its Looked After Children.

The Chair asked for further information of the drop in performance surrounding the Pathway for Care Leavers programme. The Assistant Director acknowledged the drop in performance and assured the Chair that this area remained a key area of focus for improvement. The Assistant Director advised that on the Pathway it was essential that the plan was co-produced with the care leaver in order to ensure that a high quality plan was produced, however the focus on quality and co-production did mean, especially with the impact of the pandemic that plans could take time to create.

The Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion provided an overview of areas of performance that were going well with regard to inclusion that included:

- The issuing of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continued to improve with 100% completed on time in December.
- A significant number of children and young people had received ongoing support from Inclusion Services during recent school closures
- The majority of Year 6 transition reviews had been carried out within statutory timescales. (85% had been completed by statutory deadline, with 100% completion overall)
- The Disability Family Support Team had continued to meet their targets for timeliness of contacts and completion of initial assessments. (100% compliance).
- The Number of children with EHCPs in Rotherham had been stable for the past 6 months. The Joint Assistant Director advised however that with the return to school for all children the demand for these was projected to increase.

The Joint Assistant Director provided an overview of areas for continued development with regard to inclusion, that included:

- Understanding the impact of Covid on young people with SEND and potential increase in demand for services. The Joint Assistant Director noted the role that the Parent and Carer Forum had played during the pandemic in providing an understanding of the impact on young people with SEND.
- 40 children being in the assessment phase for SEMH needs and how this was becoming the highest service demand in Rotherham.
- Continuing to progress the Year 11 Transition Reviews that were not yet completed and were due by 31 March 2021.
- Continuing to progress Annual Review recovery plan and monitoring the efficacy of this (via reduction in Annual review backlog) including finalising the implementation of new case management system.
- Continuing to implement ISOS Review and SEND Sufficiency plans.
- Working with schools to look at bespoke support in mainstream schools rather than moving children straight to specialist provision.

The Chair asked that with the predicted increase in demand for ECHP's whether there was the capacity to cope with this. The Joint Assistant

Director assured the Chair that team that dealt with ECHP's was now at full capacity and would be able to cope with any increase in demand. The Chair asked how Rotherham compared other areas regards the number of children and young people with ECHP's. The Joint Assistant Director advised that the picture varied widely nationally and noted that while Rotherham had a comparatively high the number, the rate of increase had slowed and that numbers elsewhere were still increasing.

The Interim Assistant Director - Education provided an overview of areas of performance that were going well with regard to the Education service that included:

- The provision of all statutory functions had continued and where needed these methods of delivery had been adapted to be provided remotely.
- The leading role that the Education service had play in facilitating and chairing Covid 19 school/setting Incident Management Team meetings
- The successful management of the primary and secondary application processes
- Despite the impact of the Covid -19 pandemic and the number of bubble closures in school, attendance by Looked After Children in the Autumn Term had been 92.4%.

The Interim Assistant Director provided an overview of areas for continued development with regard to education, that included:

- Emergency Regulation arrangements for admissions appeal hearings had been extended to the end of September 2021 with the DfE indicating that this would be kept under review.
- Additional capacity was being provided for the Elective Home Education team whilst a review of the service was completed. The Interim Assistant Director advised that the growth in the numbers of children in receipt of EHE was a concern and that EHE would remain a key area of focus.
- Reviewing childcare sufficiency and parental demand post-Covid and working with existing and new providers to ensure sufficient capacity was provided.
- Developing the Virtual School team to include a SEN specialist in order to have a strategic oversight of the SEN cohort and those on reduced provision.

The Chair thanked the officers for the presentation and noted that the issues covered, including areas of success and concern were already known to the Improving Lives Select Commission due to the scrutiny work

that had been carried out throughout the year. The Chair thanked the officers for keeping the Commission so well informed throughout a very challenging year. The Strategic Director thanked the members of the Commission for the focus and scrutiny of the service and its performance that they had provided.

The Chair noted that in the future she would like to see a greater focus on the monitoring of outcomes of services that would show how services had positively made a difference to individuals. The Strategic Director agreed that in future there would be an increase of monitoring on the quality of performance and not just in quantitative targets.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Strategic Director - Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director - Early Help, Family Engagement and Business Support, the Interim Assistant Director – Education, the Assistant Director - Children's social care and the Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a review be conducted during 2021/22 by the Improving Lives Select Commission on how performance monitoring in the Children and Young People's Services Directorate could include a greater focus on outcomes and the quality of work taking place.
- 3) That a performance reports on all areas of the Children and Young People's Services Directorate be brought periodically to meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission, with a performance report on one area on the directorate presented at alternate meetings.

156. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

157. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked the members of the Commission for their work over what had been a very difficult year during the pandemic. The Chair noted how pleased she was that the Commission had been able to carry out a broad range of scrutiny work, based on its work programme in addition to scrutiny work related to the impact of the pandemic.

The Chair thanked Councillor Jarvis, the Vice-Chair for her work and support throughout the year.

The Chair thanked David McWilliams for his work as the link officer for commission and for implementing improvements to ways of working that had enabled the efficient operation of the Commission. The Chair also thanked Martin Elliott, Governance Advisor for his work in supporting the Commission and the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Tuesday 15 June 2021 at 5:30pm.