

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
6th November, 2018

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Brookes, Clark, Ireland, Jarvis, Khan, Marles, Marriott, Pitchley, Price and Senior.

Also in attendance: Councillor Watson (Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services). Jon Stonehouse, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services; Pepe Di'lasio, Assistant Director – Education; Del Rew, Head of Education and Ian Walker, Head of Service (LAC, Care Leavers and Edge of Care Service)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beaumont, Elliot and Julie Turner.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Minute No. 34 (2018 Education Performance Outcomes), Councillor Cusworth declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Chair of Governors of Brookfield Junior Academy; Councillor Jarvis declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Governor of St Ann's Primary School and Councillor Pitchley declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Governor of Aughton Early Years Centre.

30. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

31. COMMUNICATIONS

Improving Lives Performance Sub-Group

The next meeting of the sub-group was to take place on Tuesday November 20, 2018. The outcomes from the meeting would be reported back to this Committee in December.

Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

Councillor Cusworth provided Members of the Select Commission with an update from the previous meeting of the CPP. A sub-group had been established to examine the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) process and its impact on foster carers. The outcomes of this would be reported back in due course.

Health Select Commission

Councillor Jarvis provided Members of the Committee with an update of the Health Select Commission meeting held on October 18, 2018 which considered reports on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and

Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) Strategy for children and young people.

In respect of SEMH provision, Councillor Jarvis reported on areas which were working well, namely: the reconfiguration of the Pupil Referral Unit provision; the improved quality of teaching and learning; well-established partnerships with a shared commitment to working together; good practice models in some areas and the joint work on the trailblazer bid. Areas for future work include the co-production of a strategy taking into account the progress on the CAMHS local transformation plan and five steps to collective responsibility.

Councillor Watson provided additional information about the “attachment friendly” initiative and the training which was being rolled out across the schools which would support the SEMH strategy. Take-up across the school sector had been very popular.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH SEPTEMBER 2018

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 18th September, 2018, and matters arising from those minutes.

Resolved:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on September 18, 2018, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair subject to the following corrections:

Inclusion of Councillor Pitchley’s apologies.

Minute 26, the following section should state

Early Help

Referrals – improvement in numbers coming from schools (39% of referrals) however, very few from the general health economy.

Further to Minute No. 22 (Domestic Abuse Update), the action plan and engagement time table will be circulated to Members of the Commission.

Further to Minute No. 23 (Children Missing Education), an evaluation of the Controlling Migration Fund would be scheduled as part of OSMB’s agenda in early 2019.

33. DEMAND MANAGEMENT AND PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY

Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, introduced the report outlining that the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) had increased significantly over the course of the past year by 116 (which equated to a 21% increase). Councillor Watson cited the historical failings of poor social practice;

complex abuse investigation and the National Crime Agency operations had contributed to the high numbers of children and young people in care and without these factors, qualified that there was an approximate 4% increase in numbers which was broadly in line with the national average.

The Head of Service (Looked After Children) stated that 2017 Ofsted Inspection 'dip-sampled' numerous cases and it concluded that no child was in care inappropriately. Whilst there was confidence that care decisions were robust, the increase in numbers was having an impact on placement sufficiency and related budget.

The numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) had increased from 488 at the end of 2016/17 and from 590 in January 2018 to 651 by the end of August 2018. Whilst this was reflective of a national trend of increasing numbers of children in care the rate of increase within Rotherham was even more marked.

As a result the provision of placements had not been able to keep pace with this increased demand and the reliance on commissioned placements (Independent Fostering Agencies/IFAs and Out of Authority Children's Homes/OoAs) had increased from 48.3% (293 of 607 children) in January to 52.2% (340 of 651 children) in August. Of more concern, this had increased from 43% at the end of 2016/17 when only 211 of 488 LAC were in commissioned placements.

Both the increase in LAC numbers and increased reliance on commissioned placements presented the most significant budget pressure currently being faced by CYPS. As at the 28th August 2018 the budget projection for OoAs was £12.3M for 62 placements at an overspend of £3m; and for IFAs was £11.5M for 278 placements at an overspend of £3.7M. As a result if current practice was perpetuated, the current £6.7M overspend was likely only to increase over the course of the lifetime of the Sufficiency Strategy.

The Head of Service suggested that there were grounds for cautious optimism that 'the tide is beginning to turn', based on the following evidence:-

- In the first 5 months of 2018 the average net monthly increase in LAC numbers was 9.4. In the following 4 months this had reduced to 3 (although large sibling groups being admitted to care can easily reverse this improving trend.)
- Over the same period the average age of admission of a child to care reduced from 8.8 years in the first 5 months of the year to 6.5 in the following 4 months. This is relevant as performance data evidences that the younger a child is admitted to care the shorter their time spent in care, the lower their average placement costs and the sooner they are likely to be supported to a permanence placement.

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- In 2017/18 the average number of care proceedings instigated per month was 19.5. Thus far in 2018/19 this has reduced to an average of 15.4.

The Service was taking a dual approach to achieve better placement sufficiency; which involved working strategically to safely reduce the numbers of LAC by reducing admissions and accelerating discharges from care (reduce demand); and work more forensically to increase the availability of in-house placements (increase supply).

In respect of managing the demand, a range of initiatives have been implemented which had had an impact. These include:

- Increase in senior management oversight
- Right child right care project
- Edge of Care panel
- Coming Home Project
- Placement Commissioning
- Increased In-House Foster Care Provision

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised:

Were face-to-face exit interviews undertaken with foster carers who chose to leave the service? If so, were there any common issues arising from these surveys?

- It was outlined that people decided to stop fostering for various reasons, including changing family circumstances; changes to long-term placements, bereavement etc. An issue that has been raised in the exit interview was the stress that foster carers experienced through the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) process. LADO was enacted if a foster carer (or professional) has had an allegation made against them, whereby an investigation would take place to clarify the validity of those allegations. As a result of exit feedback, a review of the support package to foster carers was to be undertaken, to enable foster carers to be re-engaged if allegations were addressed and resolved appropriately.

Has there been a change in the LADO process and has this been reflected in issues raised through exit feedback?

- The function was shared across the service rather than one specific officer who was the designated LADO. The Head of Service had co-opted himself onto the LADO process to retain oversight of the investigation of foster carers and to make sure the process is concluded in the most timely manner possible and communication is maintained. This sent an important message to foster carers that they were being supported and valued as professionals. Fortunately, there were relatively few LADO investigations so the Head of Service's involvement was sustainable.

- It was highlighted that other support was available including the Mockingbird Project. There are two current projects and a third was about to be launched. The project has had a positive impact and provides mutual support to foster carers. For the hub carer who does not have any full-time placement they had the capacity to support any carers facing an allegation or in an investigation.

Clarification was sought if there had been any resignation of foster carers who had been involved in the Mockingbird Project. The Officer committed to providing a written response to this query.

An update was requested on the marketing strategy, particularly in respect of respite foster carers and increasing numbers of BAME foster carers.

- The Head of Service responded that the suggestion that there is an option to respite carers rather than making a full-time commitment would be incorporated into the revised strategy. In terms of BAME carers, there are a growing number of looked after children of Muslim faith and the Council had a very limited number of Muslim foster carers. Positive links have been made to the Muslim community leaders and Mosques to develop the Muslim foster care project and engage with the wider community. Revisions have been made to policy and procedures as a result of these discussions. Councillor Khan affirmed that the work was positive and gave further examples of how awareness of this initiative was being raised across the borough.

Councillor Senior stated that Elected Members were there to assist and could publicise recruitment campaigns with constituents; family and friends. A request was made for publicity/ information to be circulated to Members

How many foster carers resigned in the first 12 – 18 months after recruitment? How does this compare with other Local Authorities?

- There have been a number of foster carers resigning in a relatively shortly after recruitment which was a concern. The Head of Service would provide a written update on numbers. There were no comparisons with any other local authorities. Processes have been reviewed to assure that assessments were sufficiently robust and foster carers were prepared for the challenges the role will bring. In addition, training and support have been examined to ensure that it is appropriate particularly in the first 12 months of the role. Placement matching has also been reviewed.
- Feedback from our foster carers was highly complementary about the support level that they received both from their supervising social workers but also from the children's social workers. A small number of

foster carers from the independent sector were transferring to the local authority because of the level of support.

Citing an example from the report, clarification was sought on the process of taking children into care and discharging them from care safely within a two week period.

- The children were taken into care under the Police Powers of Protection over the course of a weekend. Rather than pursuing an interim care order as would have been practice in the past, a seventy-two hour intensive assessment was undertaken with the family and extended support networks. As a result of this the children were returned home safely, subject to a child protection plan. The parents are fully engaged and the children are supported to live at home. Learning from this was shared with partners and symptomatic of how practice has changed, with social workers considering options and managing risks.

Clarification was sought about the numbers of children discharged from care as part of the Right Child Right Care who were not part of work-streams.

- As the scheme developed and became more established practice, team managers were able to identify children who could be considered as part of the project who were not in scope originally. On the basis of enhanced support, more foster carers were taking up Special Guardianship Orders or other routes, facilitating the safe discharge of children from care.

What role was the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in advocating permanency where this is in the best interests of the child?

- Previously, the whole service was slow to identify a permanence plan for children in care. IROs are part of this. Permanence is considered at a much earlier stage, both in and out of the care system. There are long term plans identified for 44 children.

An explanation of the status of Regulation 24 foster placements and what would happen if after review family members no longer wished to look after the child.

- The vast majority of those Regulation 24 placements were converted into Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)/ Child Arrangement Orders (CAO) or the children returned to the care of the birth parents over the course of the care proceedings. The conversion to SGO/CAOs achieved permanence for those children. The carers received the same level of financial support as they would receive had they been foster carers and that in line with the with the SGO regulations.

Clarification was sought about the status of the Sufficiency Strategy (2017-2021) and when this was last updated. It was noted that the cover report did not reference the eight action points raised in response to OFSTED recommendations.

- It was acknowledged that the Strategy did not reflect the progress made since its launch and a commitment was given for it to be refreshed and relaunched.

Given the additional investment of £12m, the Strategic Director was asked if sufficient progress had been made by the service.

- The Strategic Director gave assurance of his confidence in the rapid progress/improvements that had taken place as reflected in the OFSTED judgement. The challenge was to make impact at the pace required, however he was confident that the service was moving in right direction.

The Chair stated that that progress and improvement had been made across the service, however she recognised that the service was still judged by OFSTED as “requiring improvement” and expressed concerns about the challenges of managing future demand, improving outcomes for looked after children and the pace at which this was to be achieved.

RESOLVED: (1) That Improving Lives Select Committee notes the contents of the report.

(2) That the refreshed Sufficiency Strategy is submitted to Improving Lives Select Commission in March 2019, with specific reference to the eight OFSTED action points for improvement.

34. 2018 EDUCATION PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, introduced the report, highlighting to Members that the reports were unvalidated so may be subject to minor changes. In most instances, Rotherham pupils performed better than the national average. There were still concerns about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GRT) communities as outlined.

It was reported that the influence of the Local Authority was limited as the majority of schools in Rotherham are now academies. However, since the appointment of the Assistant Director in the summer, the Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership has been established. This has brought together the local authority, multi-academy trusts, special schools, teaching alliances, sixth form and further education colleges and the university campus to identify synergies and areas of mutual support.

The reports outlined areas of concerns; which included the new performance measures in Mathematics and English, which had not met expectations. This was a pattern that had been noted in other local authorities. Further reference was made of progress scores and future prediction of results based on Key Stage 2 performance.

The proportion of pupils attending a good or better Rotherham school was 78% as at July 2018 compared to 66% in August 2012. The proportion of Rotherham schools judged as good or better was 81% as at July 2018 compared to 66% in August 2012; this compared to the national average of 86% as at July 2018. The gap to the national average is 5%.

OFSTED have introduced changes to the statistical reporting of inspection outcomes from June 2018. This has resulted in our proportion of good or better schools decreasing by 2% which is in line with the national average decrease.

Performance at Key Stages was summarised as follows:

- Performance in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) for a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) has continued to rise and was, again, above the national average (by 1.4% in 2018).
- In Phonics, the percentage of pupils passing the phonics screening check in year 1 increased by 2% to 81% in 2018.
- In KS1, 65% of pupils met the expected standard (EXS+) in reading, writing and mathematics (R,W&M) combined in 2018, compared to 64% in 2017. Rotherham has improved by 1% and was in line with the national average at 65.4%.
- In KS2, 61.5% of pupils met the EXS+ in R,W&M combined in 2018, compared to 60.8% in 2017. Rotherham improved by 0.7% and is 2.5% below the national average. In the higher standard (HS) for R,W&M combined at KS2, Rotherham improved by 1.1% to 8.2%; this was 1.7% below the national average at 9.9%.
- In 2018, the average KS1-KS2 progress score for Rotherham LA in reading was -0.6 (sig-), in writing was +0.7 (sig+) and in maths was +0.0. The progress measure in reading was identified as significantly below the national average; the progress in writing was identified as significantly above the national average.
- At KS4, the average Attainment 8 score per pupil decreased by 1.7 points to 43.3 in 2018. The national average increased by 0.1 points to 46.5 (state funded i.e. LA maintained schools, academies and free schools) and decreased by 0.3 points to 44.3 (all schools including the independent sector). The LA average is 3.2 points below the national average (state-funded schools) and 1.0 point below the national average (all schools).

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised:-

What plans were in place to address the under-attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GRT) Pupils and how would progress be measured?

- Using the Virtual School model, advisors would work with the relatively small number of schools with the highest proportion of GRT pupils to develop personal education plans with smart targets.
- As part of the Eastwood Deal, partners were seeking focussed improvements for GRT pupils. A number of schools have met and a strategic plan was being developed. Best practice has been examined including those authorities which have had much better performance in this area.
- The Cabinet Member was confident that there was capacity within the Virtual School to undertake this work without compromising its focus on looked after children. It was highlighted that progress would be measured through academic performance and the SMART targets in personal education plans, and evidenced within the annual reporting of results.

Were productive partnerships in place with Multi- Academy Trusts (MATs)–

- The Assistant Director outlined that MATs are changing entities, with partnerships evolving accordingly. The challenge was to work MATs, who are not statutorily obliged to co-operate with the Local Authority, to encourage them to partake in support as appropriate. The Strategic Director and Assistant Director were to meet with the Regional School Commissioner (RSC), who has statutory powers to work with MATs, to discuss how the LA and MATs can work more collaboratively. Examples were given of partnership working in primary schools to share good practice, with evidence of improvements as a result of these interventions.

What steps would be taken to support an academy trust school which was judged to be inadequate?

- When an academy trust school is deemed to be failing, the RSC would investigate and formulate an action plan as appropriate. If the school was part of a MAT, the MAT were obliged to support improvement. The academy could determine where it sought support, with reference to the RSC. Whilst not statutorily obliged to provide support, the LA would seek to maintain influence and work to support wherever possible. Assurance was given of the willingness of headteachers and Trust Chief Executives to work with the LA to achieve the best outcomes for Rotherham children and address under performance.

What work was underway to boost the performance of more able pupils?

- It was highlighted that not enough of Rotherham's high performing students were attending elite universities (which was also reflected regionally). Social and economic reasons were cited, along with lower aspirations of young people and families. Focussed work had been undertaken to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils over the past five years, however the service had examined the attainment of different cohorts, including higher performing students to ensure that the pathways were in place to access high level apprenticeships or university education.

How will the new University Campus Rotherham (UCR) be linked to the Skills Plan and the education sector as a whole and how will the results be monitored?

- The courses offered are linked to the local employment and skills agenda. The University College have links to local business organisations; the Advanced Manufacturing Park and larger employers and schools.
- Work was also underway via the Virtual School to ensure that looked after children had access to these opportunities. Two local employers are sponsoring care leavers through university and there are plans to widen this initiative should it be proved to be successful.

In respect of the bullet points listed under the section "What needs to happen", further details were asked of the actions underpinning each of the following key points:

- The need for the LA to continue to endeavour to maintain or re-establish positive links and effective communication with all of Rotherham's educational providers so that all schools retain a sense of belonging to a Rotherham-wide learning community
- To increase the number of pupils attending (Ofsted) good or outstanding schools and increase the number of good or outstanding schools in Rotherham
- Reducing the gap between the achievement of Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) and disadvantaged pupils when compared to other pupils needs to be improved in all phases of education.
- In KS1 and KS2, pupils need to secure further gains in reading at both EXS+ and HS in order to close the gap to the national average.
- Ensure that libraries (through Culture, Sport and Tourism) link into education to help improve reading across the authority
- Make significant improvements in Key Stage 2 mathematics in order to address the decline at both the expected and higher standard in 2018.
- Boosting the performance of our more able pupils must continue to be a high priority.

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- Improve the performance in new key measures at KS4 in particular in English and mathematics
- Ensure we link University College Rotherham (UCR - the new HE campus) to the skills plan and education sector more closely.

A commitment was given to providing a detailed action plan for a future meeting.

What were the plans for other cohort of disadvantaged pupils and to monitor pupil premium spend?

- Each school reports its spend in relation to pupil premium and this information is published on school websites. Spend in relation to Pupil Premium Plus was reported through the Annual Report of the Virtual School.
- In relation to other cohorts, disadvantaged boys particularly those in receipt of free school meals, were a priority for many schools. However the LA could not place schools under an obligation to produce action plans to improve performance in this area.
- An evaluation would be undertaken of the initiatives to close the gap amongst disadvantaged students. Reference was made to the Key Actions in Response to Identified Priorities for Improvement (Closing the Gap) listed in Appendix 3 and a commitment was given to provide a further report

RESOLVED: (1) That Improving Lives Select Committee notes the recommendations to Cabinet that the contents of the report are noted to ensure that Cabinet is fully informed of the latest provisional un-validated education outcomes in Rotherham for 2018.

(2) That a further report is submitted in six months' time, with detailed analyses of:

- actions taken to “Close the Gap”;
- action plans underpinning the section “What needs to happen” and how progress against these actions is monitored;
- actions to boost the progress of more able pupils and how this is monitored.

(3) That the Regional Schools Commissioner is invited to a future meeting of this Committee.

(4) That the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services and Neighbourhood Working be requested to organise a visit to University College Rotherham for Members of this Committee.

35. WORK PROGRAMME AND PRIORITISATION

The Senior Adviser (Scrutiny and Member Development) gave a verbal update on the work programme and prioritisation.

In respect of the meeting to be held on December 4, 2018, the Committee was to consider the following reports:

- Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report
- Rotherham Safeguarding Adult Board Annual Reports
- Update Missing from Education

The Senior Adviser was to circulate guidance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny to inform Members' lines of enquiry.

In reference to the meeting to be held on January 15, 2019, the following items would be considered:

- Lifestyle Survey
- Update on Post Abuse Services and Barnardos ReachOut
- Update on Domestic Abuse.

The Chair suggested two areas of work for in-depth scrutiny:

- Prevent (to be undertaken as a spotlight review)
- Holiday Hunger

The Senior Advisor would contact the Committee to seek expressions of interest for the work on Holiday Hunger.

RESOLVED:- That Improving Lives Select Committee notes the update.

36. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 4th December, 2018, commencing at 5.30 p.m.