

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 25 July 2023

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Cooksey, Z. Collingham, Griffin, Haleem, Hughes, McNeely, Monk, Wilson, Barley, Bennett-Sylvester and Mills.

Apologies for absence:- No apologies were received.

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

95. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON

Resolved: - That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 13 June 2023 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

97. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Minute 102 (Rotherham Youth Justice Service Progress Report) was part exempt from the press and public. The Chair moved the following resolution:-

That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual/financial information).

Resolved:- That members of the press and public be excluded for part of this item.

98. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

99. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair advised that all the items regarding communication were covered on the agenda.

100. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - UPDATE

The Corporate Parenting Panel met on 20 June 2023 and consideration was given to the following items during the meeting:

- An update was provided on the closure of the House Project, which included how many children the project had assisted to transition into independence and the next steps in the closure process.
- An update was provided on the outcome of the Staying Close funding bid and the feedback provided to the local authority by the Department of Education.
- An update was provided on the Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy, including the timescale for the revised strategy.
- An update was provided on the Regulation of Sixteen Plus and Dispersed Accommodation, including the relevant timescales, the next steps and potential challenges.
- An update was provided by the Looked After Children's Council, which included an overview of its activities, including the VIP summer festival.
- The Performance Monitoring Report was presented to the panel, which included trend data, graphical analysis and latest benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel was to be held on Tuesday 12th September 2023.

101. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND YEAR END PERFORMANCE

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to the meeting. The Cabinet Member outlined that the report gave an overview of the performance outturn for the reporting year April 2022 to March 2023, for Children and Young People's Services. It included areas of performance that were working well alongside other areas that required a continued focus.

The Chair invited to the meeting Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director of Commissioning and Performance, Anne Hawke, Head of Service for Performance, David McWilliams, Assistant Director of Early Help and Family Engagement, Nathan Heath, Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion and Monica Green, Assistant Director of Childrens Services. The Chair invited Helen Sweaton and Anne Hawke to give the presentation.

The presentation gave an overview of the following content:

- A brief overview of the report highlighted that performance measures were considered against local targets including targets based on benchmarking measures, which were in line with

statistical neighbours, national and regional colleagues and demand and activity.

- A review of existing measures was conducted throughout the last year to ensure a robust set of measures were in place. As a result of the review there was robust accountability and governance, such as monthly performance boards and quarterly quality assurance days.
- The report was the first Children's and Young Peoples Service Performance and Year End Performance Outturn Report since the new measures were put in place.
- The new format of the scorecard was discussed, an example was provided of the workshop held in March where the new format of the scorecard was provided in detail to members, to assist their understanding of the different iterations of performance.
- The new scorecard included 56 performance measures across the service, 22 of those targets could be benchmarked. Some measures were split into various indicators and had multiple components, which include a combination of a count, percentages and a family split.
- 34 of the performance measures focused on specific activities and/or demand activities. 23 of the measures focused on the education service. The education service measures were separate from the benchmarking and activity measures, due to the timeline of the academic year.
- Progress against targets was discussed, this included highlighting that 37% of the measures were below thresholds during the year. 32% of measures were within the amber tolerance range and 31% were above target.
- The fluctuation in travel direction was in line with national benchmarking data and reassurance was provided that the service was aware of the fluctuation in travel directions. This was monitored regularly, with oversight provided when required.
- The performance data for Early Help and family engagement was discussed, it was advised that there were areas that worked well during the year, an example was provided that 89.3% of families were contacted within 3 working days of allocation, with a target set of 75%.
- 87.6% of Early Help assessments were completed within 45 days during the year. It was noted that the service was working closely with colleagues nationally, to develop an agreed set of measures to ensure better future benchmarking. There was also a robust and embedded performance management framework within Early Help.
- Early Help assessments completed by partners was a key measure for the service, 25.6% of assessments were completed by partners, there was more work being completed to increase this figure.
- 92% of children aged 0-5 living in the 30% most deprived areas in Rotherham were registered with a children's centre during the year. This was an improvement on the previous year's performance of 87%. Engagement in children's centres activities had also

increased from 72% to 78%.

- One continued area of focus for the service was the step-down handover process from Social Care (duty and locality) to Early Help, the target was 14 working days for a joint visit to take place. Performance was showing below the target of 85%. This has since been addressed and the May figures showed this had now improved to 93% and 89% respectively.
- A key area of focus for the service was the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) category. Improvements were required last year and new targets had been set as a result. This involved an increase in targeted work with datasets to improve performance and quality.
- Within children's social care, the re-referral rate had significantly reduced, with a target of 22%. This highlighted the improvement of practise at the case closure stage, ensuring the families were resilient and successful.
- The rates of the Children in Need, Child Protection and Looked After Children (LAC) cohorts were on a steady decline. The children in care figures had also significantly reduced, this figure included 36 un-accompanied asylum-seeking children. This was an unforeseen cohort of children when the forecast and associated plan to reduce numbers was completed. The number of care leavers had increased throughout the year, with 92.6% of care leavers living in suitable accommodation.
- There was a significant improvement on initial child protection conferences completed within 15 days of a section 47 and this had reached 88.7%.
- There had been a reduction in overall caseload numbers and improvement in case closure timescales, this had enabled the service to focus on the children who needed help the most.
- Some term two information for education was available and was presented to members. It was advised that there was not an outturn report for education, due to no attainment information being available at the time of the presentation.
- At the end of term two 90% of two-year-olds were taking up an early education place, this was an improvement on last year and exceeded the target.
- 99% of primary children were allocated one of their three admission preferences on the recent national offer day, there had also been an increase in vulnerable children taking up an early education place. 96% of secondary school children were allocated one of their three admission preferences on the recent national offer day.
- At the end of term two, there was 435 children that were electively home educated, this was a significant increase on last year. This was a continued area of focus for the service.
- There were 253 suspensions in primary schools and 3254 in secondary schools. This was reflective of the challenges within Rotherham and aligned with regional and national trends.
- There had been significant changes and improvements within inclusion, following on from the Special Educational Needs and

Disabilities (SEND) inspection conducted in July 2021. The Department of Education and the National Health Service England marked the progress of the service via a support and challenge meeting conducted recently. The Department of Education provided assurance they were confident with the progress of the Written Statement of Action.

- The Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) team were now fully staffed following a significant recruitment drive. The numbers of children on an EHCP had increased with 3019 children on an EHCP by the end of March 2023.
- Transition reviews were an area of continued focus with 30.9% of transition reviews completed within the statutory deadline. A clear action plan was being developed across the service to improve the performance measure.
- The improvements made by the Children and Young People's Services had been made in difficult times, due to the pandemic, the national challenge of workforce, rising demand and reducing funding available.

The Chair thanked the officers for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- Significant increases in suspensions and permanent exclusions were a concern for the service, this was a regional and national challenge in the period of the return to school post pandemic. Rotherham had developed a collaborative approach and was two years into a three-year plan to develop an inclusion partnership, this was being led by academy leaders, primary and secondary inclusion panels had also been developed.
- The statistics for suspensions and permanent exclusions were numbers of suspensions and exclusions issued, the scorecard statistics included the statutory return provided to the Department of Education. The number of pupils and school days lost were also calculated, this information would be provided on a one-page overview to give a breakdown of the data to members.
- The government had made changes in areas such as direction off site, this was a key challenge to the local authority as it allowed schools to direct a child off site for a fixed period to support their education and reintegration. This aligned with the risk of permanent exclusions and aligned with constituents where a child had been educated in one school where they have been at risk of permanent exclusion and the school had made a supportive decision to break the cycle of behaviour.
- The local authority had a statutory obligation to provide pupils excluded from school with education on day 6 of the permanent exclusion. This was provided through support by the Aspire Pupil Referral Unit. Managed moves were completed in certain situations, such as one-off incidents or if there were complicated factors that had driven the actions towards permanent exclusion.
- Children with a recognised SEND need were aligned closely to the

statutory element and in cases of this nature an emergency review was held, often before the child had reached the permanent exclusion threshold. This would then be followed up with a statutory consultation alongside additional support provisions provided to the child by utilising the Pupil Referral Unit.

- The increase in NEETS was a national issue and the Local Government Association was requesting the development of a register of children that were being electively home educated, to enable more rights for local authorities around safeguarding.
- The levels of NEET young people in Rotherham included 'not known' young people, whose statuses were unknown to the service. For example, at the beginning of the week there was more than 6200 sixteen- to seventeen-year-olds in Rotherham, 299 of these individuals fell into the NEET Category. This figure included young people who were yet to decide what to do in September and 85 of these individuals were yet to be contacted.
- Derbyshire had a good approach to NEETs and benchmarking had been conducted by the service, this had resulted in the development of a new action plan, which included additional items to improve on last year's performance data.
- Career education was an area of primary focus in secondary Ofsted inspections and the emphasis from the inspection would lead to significant improvements in career education provision and would enhance the inclusive economy agenda.
- In respect of elective home education, parents had a legal entitlement to remove a child from school. It was outlined that there were significant concerns about this process and lack of statutory guidance. In Rotherham there was a collaborative approach where schools were asked to provide the service with information, if there was any indication that a parent may choose to electively home educate. There was a quick escalation process when there was a significant area of concern, and all challenges were assessed. More frequent audits were also completed and practise examples were provided to schools.
- The role of the virtual school had been extended to cover 16- to 19-year-olds, this was an area of continuing development. Alternative provision post-16 had been assessed, in order to ensure the services met all needs and continued to build provision around young people with SEND needs.
- The work completed on the High Need Safety Valve had a focus on improving transition data for children on ECH plans, to ensure good tracking and performance data. Case studies were also an area of focus to ensure context and impact was captured.
- There had been an uptake in places at children's centres in deprived areas and increased engagement post-pandemic, the primary reason for the increase in engagement was the re-introduction of face-to-face visits. The Family Hubs Programme was part of a national programme and was intended to build on the existing mechanisms available around children's centres.

- There were workforce challenges regarding the level of caseloads of social workers in key safeguarding teams as this had increased. To mitigate this there was a clear Workforce Strategy in place and there had been increased recruitment within the team. There were now placements offered to social work students through the Learning Academy. The service had increased its capacity to develop existing employees through development opportunities such as apprenticeships who wanted to enter the social work profession.
- There was a high level of oversight and scrutiny to Section 47 activity. The Section 47's were sampled with a panel monthly, to provide assurance that they met the prescribed threshold.
- The Department of Education had recognised that there were significant gaps in the SEND system nationally and it was one of the only government departments that had placed itself on an internal improvement plan, all local authorities would be required to respond and develop their plans in line with the improvement plan.
- There were mitigations in the system such as a focus on supporting schools to be inclusive, ensuring an emphasis on inclusive practise and ensuring good quality provision throughout the Borough.
- The inclusion plan was focused on supporting SEND children back into mainstream education, the development of the inclusion pathways and alternative provision plan, would be focused on providing schools with the capacity to support more children back into mainstream education.

Resolved:- That

- Members consider and accept the CYPS Annual Performance Report and accompanying scorecard for the outturn 2022/2023.
- The Assistant Director for Education and Skills provides:-
 - a one-page overview of the breakdown of statistics for suspensions and permanent exclusions.
 - a briefing outlining the Rotherham career options offer.
- The Early Years Strategy is submitted to this Commission for pre-decision scrutiny.
- That further scoping is undertaken to formulate the Commission's scrutiny of Elective Home.
- The presentation slides be circulated to all members of the Commission.

102. ROTHERHAM YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT

The Chair advised that as the item contained restricted information and as resolved in Minute 97, that the Panel would go into private session for the consideration of this item.

The Chair welcomed the service user and support worker to the meeting. The Chair invited the support worker to introduce the service user and discuss their journey within the Youth Justice Service.

The support worker outlined the circumstances that led to the nine-month referral order being applied. It was advised that the service user had engaged well with the service and completed all required offence specific work. There was a good working relationship between the service user and support worker. The service user had made great achievements since beginning the referral order, such as sitting their GCSE examinations and applying for further education.

The Chair thanked the service user and support worker for attending and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- The CHANCE Group had been established with the aim of making services friendlier for children and young people.
- The Youth Justice Service were hopeful that the service user present would work with the service to help them share experiences and provide suggested areas for improvement.

The Chair reconvened the meeting in open session.

This report provided a summary of progress made by Rotherham Youth Justice Service against the following:

- The Action Plan submitted to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in January 2021 following the HMIP Inspection in September 2020.
- Progress against the 'Areas for Consideration,' from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Sector Led Improvement Peer Review, undertaken in March 2022.
- An update on the actions within the Youth Justice Service Plan 2022-23 Action Plan.
- Key Priorities for the Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024.

The Chair invited David McWilliams, Assistant Director of Early Help and Family Engagement and Chair of the Rotherham Youth Justice Partnership Board, Zulfiqar Shaffi, Youth Justice Service Manager and Abigail Henser, Senior Family Support Worker and Programme Facilitator to introduce the report and give the presentation.

The presentation gave an overview of the following content:

- The three action plans provided showed that all 81 actions had been completed, with robust evidence and scrutiny provided such as the Evidence Challenge Panel, CYPS Performance Assurance Board and the Safer Rotherham Partnership. The Challenge Panel was multi-agency. The Evidence Challenge Panel was multi-agency and provided scrutiny by challenging the action plans. The outcomes of the Evidence Challenge Panel were provided to the Children's Services Performance Management Board where the evidence and progress was scrutinised. The service also reported

to the Safer Rotherham Partnership on a quarterly basis where progress to the action plans was discussed.

- The first-time entrance (FTE) was defined as young people who received a youth conditional caution or court order. Rotherham had a reduction of 21% percent, compared to the same period in 2021. Rotherham's FTE was lower than the national and regional Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) area, and the youth justice family average.
- The reduction coincided with the development and implementation of the Out of Court Panel, which was a multi-agency panel that provided scrutiny and decision making, in relation to the process of referrals received by the service from the police.
- Rotherham's re-offending rate was the second lowest in comparison to other districts and included the average number of re-offences committed per child. The re-offending rate was tracked via the police national computer (PNC) and there was an eighteen-month delay on the data due to a combination of a twelve-month wait to see if a young person re-offended and a six month wait to incorporate criminal proceedings.
- There was also a binary re-offending rate that was based on the proportion of children who offended more than once. Rotherham was under half of the national average.
- In terms of scrutiny, the service was monitored against the rates of serious youth violence, which was based on convictions and associated sentences. In 2022 there was no serious youth violence and as of the 24th of July 2023 there was one young person sentenced for serious youth violence.
- There were different types of orders within the Youth Justice Service, including preventions. There was a lot of on-going prevention work taking place such as the 'Be Share Aware Programme'. The aim was to complete early intervention with young people who had not yet offended but were high risk of potential offending, at the earliest possible stage.
- There was a development area within the service that was focused on the breakdown of each out of court disposal offered to children and young people, to provide additional scrutiny and to ensure the right out of court disposal was given to the child or young person.
- The service had started to break down definitions of ethnicities, for example rather than only having 'White' as a definition, there was now multiple options such as 'White European' and 'White British' This was an on-going piece of work to tackle disproportionality and un-conscious bias.
- The key priorities of the service for the period of 2023 to 2024 was to focus on early interventions and prevention, health and wellbeing, education, training and employment and quality of practise.
- In relation to early interventions and preventions, the service would focus on the following:
 - Continuing to develop and strengthen the board oversight of the effectiveness of Out of Court Disposals and the Breach

- of Statutory Orders decision making across the partnership.
 - Working across the partnership to improve and strengthen the Youth Justice Service and Early Help 'Prevention' Offer.
 - Continuing to better understand diverse children and young people in the youth justice system and respond to any over representation of groups.
 - Focusing on developing and co-producing a South Yorkshire Police & Youth Justice Service approach to the Out of Court offer & the Serious Violence Strategy.
- In relation to health and wellbeing, the service would focus on the following:
 - Ensuring all children entering the Youth Justice System had full Health Assessments to address any unmet needs at the earliest possible stage to inform the assessment.
 - Aiming to offer Speech and language Screening/Assessments to all children open to the YJS. These assessments would inform the developmental approach to support young people's understanding of their interventions.
 - Strengthening the relationship with mental health services and to increase wider provision across the Youth Justice Service
- In relation to education, training and employment, the service would focus on the following:
 - Developing and strengthening the Youth Justice SEND offer to assist children to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential.
 - Understanding and responding to NEET children in the Youth Justice System and to develop support pathways into education, training, and employment.
 - Supporting children to be 'ready' and prepared for Education, training, and employment through new and existing partnerships.
- In relation to quality of practise, the service would focus on the following:
 - Delivering innovative and creative evidence-based programmes that would engage children and young people.
 - Focusing on the Partnership Boards continuing development a problem-solving approach to issues and challenges.
 - Strengthening and broadening the Youth Justice audit framework as well as undertaking thematic audits and closing the learning loop.
- The 'Be Share Aware' Programme was focused on educating children and young people on the consequences of sharing and receiving indecent images online. The programme was delivered on a one-to-one basis with children and young people within schools who had shared, received, or sent indecent images.
- The programme was based on research, information available regarding online safety and the relevant legislation.

- There were certain areas throughout the Borough that had higher referral rates into the programme, therefore targeted work with schools within those areas was completed. As a result of this, the programme was extended to all children and young people within school settings, who had not committed any offences regarding indecent images.
- The programme included a role play scenario, a video shared on 'think before you share' and a discussion around social media and cyber bullying.
- The service had good links with the Community Safety Team and any concerns regarding specific websites were shared with the Team. As a response, the Community Safety Team developed bulletins that were shared with schools, Social Care and Early Help.
- The 'Be Share Aware' Programme was adapted on a regular basis to include any new concerning websites. Omegle was an example of a concerning website that was popular amongst young people, the website was designed to talk to strangers and this posed a high risk to children and young people.
- The outcomes of the sessions were captured and evidenced via an evaluation form completed by the attendees. The evaluation form included three questions, scored between 0-10, the questions were signs of safety led and focused on knowing the law around sharing indecent images, sending indecent images and feeling safer online.

Resolved: That

- Members note the contents of the report and the progress of the Youth Justice Service in completing the three accompanying action plans.
- Members note the offer to engage with the CHANCE Group and the offer to visit and observe aspects of the Rotherham Youth Justice Service duties.
- That the 'Be Share Aware' Programme resources are distributed to members.
- That the presentation be circulated to the Commission.

103. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme and the chair provided the following update:

- The Work Programme was circulated to members for comment and was considered at Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- The item on Domestic Abuse was yet to be scheduled on the work programme.
- The Work Programme would be added to the agenda for each meeting for comment and refinement.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be approved.

104. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair advised that there were no updates to provide.

105. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there was no urgent business.

106. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on 12th September 2023 commencing at 10am in Rotherham Town Hall.

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on 12th September 2023 commencing at 10am in Rotherham Town Hall.