

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 30 July 2024

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Knight, Baggaley, Blackham, Bower, Brent, T. Collingham, Fisher, Foster, N Harper, Monk and Sutton.

Apologies for Absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Elliott, Hughes, Reynolds and Ryalls.

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

14. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 18th June 2024, be approved as a correct record of proceedings for signature by the Chair.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

17. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

18. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICE YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT

This item provided an update on the performance outturn for the reporting year of April 2023 to March 2024, for Children and Young People's Services.

The Chair invited Councillor Cusworth to introduce the report and the following was noted:

- Councillor Cusworth in introducing the report paid tribute to the emergency services who had responded to the tragic events in Southport where three children had unfortunately lost their lives. This incident had left everyone shocked and stunned with what had taken place.
- The report that formed part of the agenda pack highlighted areas that were working well and others that were presenting more of a challenge especially around the numbers of looked after children

coming into care. Whilst the numbers had slightly reduced the figure remained around the five hundred mark. In terms of numbers requiring child protection and child in need support, whilst also reducing in number, remained challenging ensuring assessments were undertaken in a timely manner.

- The Commission had also looked at Elective Home Education previously and this would need to be monitored as numbers were rising.

The Chair invited Anne Hawke, Head of Service for Performance and Quality, to provide an overview by way of a presentation on the Performance Report 2023/24 Outturn, particularly highlighting:

- Performance was considered against local targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rating tolerances. Reviewed annually and set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data and recent performance levels. It ensured focus on the effectiveness of services and achieving good outcomes for children and young people.
- Robust governance and accountability was in place, including monthly Performance Board and Quarterly Assurance Board in addition to service level performance clinics, Practice Learning Days and Quality Assurance processes.
- Links to the Council Plan, Year Ahead Delivery Plan, Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, Place Board.
- The Scorecard was circulated quarterly to Members of Improving Lives Select Commission, with an option to request officers to attend with any key areas of interest.

Breakdown of Measures and Indicators:

- There were 75 performance measures across the service:
 - 22 where performance was benchmarked against national, regional and statistical comparators (Benchmark).
 - 35 focusing on specific activities and/or demand (Activity).
 - 18 for Education; all of which were either termly or annual academic year and therefore not included in any summary statistics.
- Some of the measures have multiple components, 53 measures have targets set and 66 measure components have a 'good' direction of travel (DOT) identified.

Performance Measures 2023/2024 Graphical Progress Summary:

- Early Help and Family Engagement – what was working well:
 - Journey for families when engaging with an Early Help offer of support remained strong, with 91.3% of families contacted within three working days of allocation, an improvement on last year and significantly above the target of 75%.

- Continued with 90.1% of Early Help Assessments being completed within 45 days during the year (2.5% more than last year).
 - 27.5% of Early Help Assessments (EHA) were completed by partners during the year, a pleasing increase of 1.9% from last year and continued to meet the ambition of ensuring that appropriate help and support was provided at the earliest opportunity helping families to build resilience and prevent escalation.
 - 94.5% of children aged 0-5 living in the 30% most deprived areas were registered with one of our children's centres. This was an improvement of 2.5% from last year when performance reached 92%.
 - Those in the 30% most deprived areas accessing Children Centre activities increased from 78% to 80.6%.
 - Tracking the number of young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) during the whole year, however, the statutory measurement was an average calculated over a three-month period annually between December and February. Out-turn for the year was a pleasing 4.3%, within the 4.5% target (lower was better) and an improvement from last year.
 - The number of young people whose NEET status was Not Known (NK) was also significantly improved on the previous year at 0.64%.
 - Combined NEET/NK performance ended on 4.95% which was well within the 6% target and an improvement on the previous year.
 - The rate of young people who reoffended had reduced when compared with the last available data from 19.8 to 16.1 per 100k population, which evidenced the work that the Rotherham Youth Justice Service was doing improved outcomes for young people and victims of crime. This was significantly lower than the national average rate of 32.1.
- Early Help and Family Engagement – Impact:
 - Families experienced swift engagement from Early Help both in their initial contact and during their Assessment period. This meant many families received the right support at the right time, preventing further escalation.
 - Engaging children in Children's Centres reduced inequalities between families in greatest need with their peers. Outcomes for these families included improved child development, school readiness, parenting aspirations, and skills.
 - The help and support provided by the Early Help and Family Engagement Service, the wider Early Help System (universal services and partner agencies) and the Youth Justice Service was offered early, improved

outcomes for children, young people and their families, increasing resilience and where appropriate, prevents escalation to Children's Social Care.

- Early Help and Family Engagement – Areas for Continued Focus:
 - The data used to track, monitor and measure young people who were supported by the Rotherham Youth Justice Service was subject to national benchmarking. There was a significant data lag with this information and the latest data indicated First Time Entrant rate had increased during the period to 186 per 100k per population, when compared with 170 in the previous period and was slightly higher than statistical neighbours.
 - There was lots of work ongoing with partners to focus on prevention activity, including targeted programmes like Be Share Aware and a Hate Crime programme. The Turnaround programme (funded project) had been implemented which provides Youth Justice Service with additional support for both young people and their families at an early opportunity.

- Children's Social Care – What was working well:
 - Continued to ensure a safe and steady decline in numbers of Children in Need, Children on a Child Protection Plan and Children in Care.
 - Child in Need (CiN) – 316.8 rate per 10k population, reduced from 378.6 in 2022/2023.
 - Child Protection Plans (CPP) – 45.6 rate per 10k population, reduced from 70.4 in 2022/2023.
 - Children in Care (CiC) – 88.4 rate per 10k population, reduced from 96.7 in 2022/2023.

- A continuation to support the National Transfer Scheme for Separated Migrant Children (formerly known as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children). CiC cohort included 39/502 at the end of March 24. Calculations without the 39 would see the rate of Children in Care drop to 80.9 per 10k population.

- Young people supported by the Leaving Care service increased during 2023/2024 to 348 from 319. 45 of those young people were Separated Migrant Children.

- A peak was experienced in the number of re-referrals during the year. This was managed through performance clinics and focussed work was carried out to improve this resulting in significant improvements during Q4 achieving an out-turn in-line with the previous year (17.3%) which was well within the target of below 22%.

- S47's per 10k population continued to safely reduce during the year, ending the year at 194.8 (278.2 last year) which is just above the national average of 191.6.

- 95% of Children (with a CPP) had an up-to date Child Protection

Plan at the end of Q4, which was an improvement when compared with last year (88.7%) and met the target of 95%.

- Both Adoption measures count the number of days between various milestones in the process. Last year an improvement was seen across both. The cohort of children on an adoption plan was quite small, outliers could inflate the overall averages:-
 - Average number of days between a child coming into care and being placed with their prospective adopters – 387.2 (significant improvement on last year when the figure was 492.5).
 - Average number of days between a placement order being granted and a child matched to an adoptive family – 182.6 (improvement on 197.4 last year)

- Children's Social Care – Impact:
 - Reducing the number of re-referrals indicates that decision making and planning was robust and accurate and meant that when a child ceased to need our support, families have the resilience they needed to maintain positive outcomes.
 - Maintained overall caseload numbers, ensuring work with children and their families was not longer than needed and focus could be given to those families most in need.
 - The safe and steady reduction of all cohorts evidenced that children, young people and their families experienced successful outcomes, build resilience and remain safe.

- Children's Social Care – Areas for Continued Focus:
 - The percentage of contacts with a decision within one working day declined this year from 72.1% to 69.3. New monitoring processes were being developed to monitor MASH information sharing contacts separately to give deeper understanding of where delays were in returning the information. This would help to focus in on the cases that have a real delay, in turn improving timeliness through service improvement and working with partners.
 - If a child progressed from a S47 investigation to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), there was a timeliness measure in place to ensure rapid intervention. The target was to hold the ICPC within 15 days of the S47. Last year 84.8% were completed within the timescale, below the target of 90% but in-line or better than comparators. A new process was in place which would continue to improve performance.
 - Planning for children and young people was critical to ensure they were supported and working towards improving their outcomes. This was the same for CiN, CPP and CiC cohorts and included ensuring that plans were up-to-date,

reviewed within timescales and that plans were ceased at the earliest and safest opportunity, whether that was via a step down or re-unification. During the last year, some of the measures used to track this information have not met their targets. Efforts would continue to focus on improvements across these areas.

- The percentage of long-term children in care in stable placements of more than two years had remained the same as last year at 65.2% and below the target of 70%.
 - Work would continue on the placements sufficiency strategy to recruit more in-house foster carers, open residential provision and develop more homes for care leavers within Rotherham with a commitment to improve stability of placements that we are closer to home.
 - 75.3% of children were in family-based settings compared to 77% last year.
- Education – What was working well:
 - At the end of Term 2, 90.9% of 2-year-olds were taking up an education place, an improvement on 90% at outturn last year and exceeding the target of 85%. This was the highest level of take up achieved in Spring terms previously.
 - An important issue for children and their families was being allocated one of their three top preferred school places. 99.2% of primary children were allocated one of their three preferences on National Offer Day in 2024, slightly higher than in 2023.
 - 97.4% of secondary children were allocated one of their three preferences on National Offer Day in 2024, which was also an improvement on the 96% achieved in 2023.
 - Attainment outturn for the 2022/2023 academic outturn showed that more pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieved a good level of development at 67.3% when compared to 64.5% the previous year.
 - There was also an increase in the number of pupils passing their phonics screening in Year 1, with 79% compared with 75% in 2021/2022.
 - In KS2, 55% of pupils met the expected standard with 5% achieving the higher standard for reading, writing and maths. This showed a pleasing 1% improvement with 2021/2022.
 - All children in care should have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) each term. After a slight delay (due to Easter school holidays) in recording, performance data indicated that 99.7% of children had an up-to-date plan during term 2 against a target of 95%.

- Education – Impact
 - Collaborative work across the service and wider directorate had resulted in more of vulnerable 2-year-old children having taken up an early education place, improving the overall uptake. This was important in respect of giving children the best start in life impacting their future education, and overall potential involvement with the remaining CYPS services.
 - A preferred education setting was important for both children and their families in their everyday lives. It was positive that this had improved and remained above targets for both primary and secondary preference performance.
 - All of the above helped children achieve and this was evidenced in the increased number of pupils in Early Years, Foundation and KS2 achieving good levels of development.

- Education – Areas for Continued Focus:
 - At the end of term 2 there were 523 children Elective Home Educated (EHE), which was another significant increase on the 435 at the end of term 2 last year. The rise in EHE in Rotherham was part of a national increase and the total numbers were in line with the national average. Focus remained on ensuring families were supported who chose to educate children at home, and to understand the reasons for parents making EHE decisions. Focus would continue on early intervention to prevent children from becoming EHE and the enforcement pathway had been enhanced for children where EHE was deemed unsuitable.
 - At the end of term 2 there had been 11 permanent exclusions in primary schools and 73 in secondary schools. This was an increase on the same period last year with 6 and 60 respectively. Rising exclusions was a national issue. The exclusion team continued to support schools wherever possible and updated guidance had been produced, webinars introduced and the Secondary Inclusion Panel across the borough was being realigned. Re-alignment of exclusions officers' work had led to greater challenge and support to schools to promote alternatives to exclusion.
 - The number of KS4 pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in English and Maths reduced to 38.7% when compared with 44.7% the previous year. The Rotherham Loves Reading and Disadvantaged Pupils projects continued which helped to provide support and drive attainment.

- Inclusion – What was working well:

- The Education, Health and Care Plan target was measured across the calendar year from January to December. Performance against this important timeliness measure increased to 59.9% in 2023. This was above target of 58% and an increase on the previous year. However, there would be continued focus on this improving measure and indications on the first half of 2024 were positive with performance at 75.6% at the end of June.
 - For children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), both Primary and Secondary Transition Reviews were important indicators evidenced children were being supported at such important milestones in their school life. On statutory deadline dates 95.8% of primary reviews had been completed and 79.1% of secondary reviews, both exceeding their targets of 70%.
- Inclusion – Impact:
 - The increase in EHCP assessments being issued within the 20-week timescale meant that more children with SEND were being supported in a timely manner and receiving the right levels of support that they need.
 - Transition reviews being completed by the deadline would help children move between schools more easily, with the right support available to them.
 - Inclusion – Areas for Continued Focus:
 - There was another increase in children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) during the year, with 3360 at the end of March 2024 compared to 3056 at the end of March 2023.
 - Although an improving picture, the timeliness of EHCP's remained an area of continued focus.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and their input.

A discussion and a question/answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:

- Learning through best practice for exclusions and the support now in place with the realignment of the secondary inclusion into locality partnerships, to share good practice between schools and to offer some mutual support and challenge where children were at risk of exclusion.
- Visits to schools by the Cabinet Member and assurances of oversight on performance and early identification of need.
- The rate of re-offending for first time offenders and how the numbers identified were calculated. The intensity of the work in this area was already capturing the voice of young people that have been involved in that system through the Trans Group.

- Evolvement of the Children and People's Partnership Board to give young people a voice back into the executive decision makers with partners.
- Pressure on primary schools to improve in KS2 and having the right resources in the right place to make sure children have an enjoyable education.
- The direct correlation between SATS at KS2 and GCSE and how well children progress making sure that both gifted and those with SEND reach their full potential.
- Links with children's centres and working with partners through the family hub projects to make sure children were ready and able to learn and engage and what was the age range of use if this could be provided.
- With the increase in elective home education and exclusions what was available in the borough in terms of youth open access and how many social workers were also trained as youth workers.
- Commissioning of the voluntary and community sector to provide support across the borough and the investment through apprenticeships in the universal youth offer following the closure of youth centres by the previous Government.
- Current rate of Elective Home Education with Rotherham sitting below the regional and national rates.
- Encouraging involvement of Elected Members in local education.
- Funding lost from the Council budget during austerity for youth work and the need for greater partnership working with multi-academy trusts. There was a clear need to recognise the importance of youth work and for a collaboration on what was available and could be offered either by the voluntary and community sectors, within wards and in partnership with parish councils.
- The number of pressures on the health and dental check timeliness and how for dental how this was well below the 95% target. What were the challenges the service was facing and how could these children engage with their health and dental assessments.
- The lag in the data and problems in registering young people with a dentist.
- Ongoing concerns about Elective Home Education and the rising figures of 523, but what were the reasons for electing to educate at home and how was this being tackled.
- The scorecard and the various elements within it and how some areas did not have targets set against the measure.
- Benchmarking on the scorecard and how useful it would be to know who the statistical neighbouring authorities were.
- Use of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 data and for this to be broken down into cohorts of say elective home education and SEND and fair representation across the board.
- Post 16 learning and examples of suitable for progression to build on a skilled workforce locally.
- Involvement of the Council in grant funding from the Violence

Reduction Unit through the Combined Authority Elected Mayor's Office and consultation on local priorities in Rotherham.

The Chair acknowledged the level of information shared today and in doing so wished to place on record her thanks and appreciation to attending officers and to Elected Members on the level of questioning and the detail provided.

Resolved:- That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Accept the CYPS Annual Performance Report and accompanying scorecard for the outturn 2023/2024.
- 2) Request that the data relating to the age range for the use of Family Hubs be circulated to members.

19. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION LEAVING CARE PEER CHALLENGE FEEDBACK REPORT

This item provided an update on the outcome of the Local Government Association (LGA) Leaving Care Peer Challenge and the Feedback Report, that was received as a result of the Peer Challenge.

The Chair invited Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children's and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) to introduce the report and the following was noted:

- The Care Leavers Service was an area that required further focus and improvement.
- There had been an increase in care leavers, this was due to an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in the borough, who were very welcome in Rotherham.
- The service asked the LGA to peer review the leaving care service to identify any areas of strength and any areas that required further improvement. The peer review took place between 12-15 March 2024.
- Work was completed since the peer review in March, to date. An example was provided of the development of a Care Leavers Forum. There was an action plan in place as a result of the Peer Challenge.
- Some local authorities declared care leavers as a protected characteristic. The Council chose not to implement this in Rotherham, to ensure children would not be discriminated against in any way because they were leaving care. The service listened to the voice of care leavers who advised that they did not want leaving care to be a protected characteristic. Instead, the service developed a Care Leaver Offer. The offer ensured that the support in place for children leaving care would continue by preparing them for adulthood, providing opportunities for children to reach their full potential, providing wrap around support for housing and access to

skills and opportunities.

The Chair invited Monica Green, Assistant Director for CYPS to lead on the presentation and the following was noted:

- The Council had been judged by Ofsted as a Good local authority in an Ofsted Inspection in June 2022.
- In January 2023, a new judgement for Care Leavers was introduced to the Ofsted ILACS inspection framework, this was the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers. The new judgement focused on the things that mattered the most to care leavers lives and included the following:
 - Relationships and access to social and recreational opportunities.
 - ability to influence the services they are offered.
 - health and emotional well-being.
 - learning and employment opportunities.
- Inspections also considered whether local authorities were making good decisions for care leavers, and what they were doing to support them into adulthood.
- The LGA Peer Review took place between 12th to 15th March 2024. A care leaver was a young person aged 16-25 years old who had been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old and were in care on or after their 16th birthday. The service invited the LGA to complete a peer review as they felt that there were challenges in the level in demand and diversity of the group of young children becoming care leavers. The cohort consisted of migrant children from abroad and from Eastern Europe, the service wanted experts from outstanding local authorities to judge the service, to assist its journey in becoming an outstanding local authority. The scope of the review incorporated off-site and on-site activity, including case file auditing and interviews with staff, partners and young people.
- The key messages from the peer challenge were as follows:
 - A clear commitment of senior leaders and staff in children's services and local health and accommodation services.
 - A high level of passion and determination to meet the needs and improve outcomes for care leavers.
 - Services made a real difference to the lived experience of care leavers.
 - Performance measured against national indicators and were generally high.
 - Some variability in quality and consistency of pathways plans.
 - The range of accommodation services needed for care leavers in the borough was insufficient.
 - Comprehensive local offer for care leavers.
 - There was no health support post 19.
 - There was missed opportunities for coproduction with young

people in care and care leavers.

- The Peer Challenge Team developed the following recommendations:
 - Develop a dedicated leaving care strategy and update the sufficiency strategy to create a SMART delivery plan.
 - Develop a business case for the development of a dedicated 16 Plus Service.
 - Review the membership of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.
 - Consider the development of an integrated performance data dashboard.
 - Increase the number of young people allocated a personal advisor at age 16.
 - Improve the quality of pathway plans to ensure consistency.
 - Improve the effectiveness of engagement with care leavers.
- The service had developed an action plan which focused on implementing the recommendations. The progress of the action plan was discussed, and detail was provided to the Commission on where each action was at currently.
- In relation to the recommendation to develop a dedicated Leaving Care Strategy and update the Sufficiency Strategy to create a SMART delivery plan. The following progress had been made:
 - The identification project resource to drive development and delivery was complete.
 - The undertaking of a care leaver needs analysis was on-going.
 - The identification of appropriate actions to develop accommodation options was on-going.
 - The implementation of a joint accommodation working group was complete.
 - The engagement of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and wider stakeholders to inform the strategy was on-going.
- In relation to the recommendation to develop a business case, for the development of a dedicated 16 Plus Service, the following progress had been made:
 - This review of the current structure had been completed and was scheduled to be presented to the Directorate Leadership Team shortly.
 - The assessment of the need for additional capacity was complete and awaiting an outcome.
- In relation to the recommendation to review the membership of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, this was completed, and the new membership was in place.
- In relation to the recommendation to consider the development of an integrated performance data dashboard, this was on-going.
- The Cabinet Member for CYPS would ensure that the actions would be driven forward and that officers would be held to account.
- In relation to voice and influence and the improvement of the

effectiveness of engagement with care leavers, the following progress had been made:

- The agreement of a more impactful approach to coproduction was on-going and had been incorporated into a review of voice and influence activity.
- The development of a separate Care Leavers Forum was complete.
- The implementation of a dedicated participation resource was on-going and had been incorporated into the review of voice and influence activity.
- In relation to ensuring an increase in the number of young people that would be allocated a Personal Advisor at age 16, this was on-going.
- In relation to the improvement of the quality of pathway plans, the following progress had been made:
 - Personal Advisors would be provided with specific training on their role. This would include how to develop high quality and meaningful pathway plans. This was on-going, initial training sessions were held on the 10 May and 4 June 2024. This training was additional to the current training offer. Following evaluation of the training with Personal Advisors after the sessions had taken place, further training was planned.

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

- There were thirteen Personal Advisors in place, all cases would be allocated to Personal Advisors by September 2024.
- Health passports were a suite of documents provided to young people who were leaving care and ready to transition into adulthood. The documents enabled the young people to access GP services, dental practices and to understand their own health history.
- Did not have ability to accommodate all care leavers in Rotherham, there was now more accommodation in Rotherham and therefore more care leavers could be accommodated in the borough and enables them to have a connection to Rotherham.
- The Cabinet Member had visited the services accommodation Hallowgate and Roundabout young person's accommodation. Assurance was provided that the staff at the accommodation were committed to the young people and were available to support the residents 24 hours a day.

Resolved:- That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Note the outcomes of the peer challenge and the progress made on the recommendations.

20. WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Commission considered some of the detail of the Work Programme and the following was noted:-

- A scrutiny work programming session had been arranged for the 8th August 2024, for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Commissions.
- The work programme for 2024-2025 would return as a standard agenda item from September meeting onwards.
- It was proposed that at the next meeting in September an update on the SEND Strategy would be included. This would relate to the summary of the consultation period and the proposed strategy, with consultation amendments included.

Resolved:- That the Work Programme for the meeting in September 2024 be approved.

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

Consideration was given to the Scrutiny Review Report relating to Preparation for Adulthood, for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It was noted the report was a result of the review completed by Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission in February 2024 and the report outlined the proposed recommendations.

Resolved:- That recommendations 1 to 3, as listed within the report, be approved and the report be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and decision.

22. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.