

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 15 June 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor Laing, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Pengelly, Vice Chair.

Councillors Briars-Delve, Cree, Cresswell, Harrison, Hulme, Loveridge, Partridge, Poyser and Tippetts (Substituting for Councillor Allen).

Also in attendance: Sharon Muldoon (Director for Children's Services) Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Ming Zhang (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Caroline Marr (Senior Policy Advisor), Paul Stephens (Performance Advisor) and Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 4.40 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

86. **To note the appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2022 - 2023**

The Committee noted the appointments of Councillor Laing as Chair and Councillor Mrs Pengelly as Vice-Chair of the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022 – 2023.

87. **Declarations of Interest**

Name	Minute Number	Reason
Councillor Laing	93 – Overview of Children's Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills	Governor for Horizon Multi-academy Trust
Councillor Poyser	93 – Overview of Children's Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills	Employed by City College Plymouth

Councillor Harrison	95 – Kickstart Update	Works for an organisation that had provided courses for Kickstart
Councillor Tippetts	93 – Overview of Children’s Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills	Student at the University of Plymouth
Councillor Hulme	93 – Overview of Children’s Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills	Governor at All Saints Academy Plymouth
Councillor Partridge	93 – Overview of Children’s Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills	Governor at Knowle Primary School

88. **Minutes**

The minutes of 16 February 2022 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record.

89. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

90. **Education and Children's Social Care OSC Terms of Reference**

The Committee noted the terms of reference for the Committee.

91. **Education and Children's Social Care Policy Brief**

Caroline Marr, Senior Policy Advisor presented this item to members of the Committee.

Members discussed:

- a) Caroline Marr to produce a briefing/summary for Councillors on the Schools white paper. Caroline to also include a briefing/Summary on the SEND and AP green paper. Members required a focus on the ‘strengthened role for local authorities within the white paper’. Following a briefing/summary, members would advise the Chair which items should be put onto the work programme for future meetings;

- b) Ming Zhang would respond to Members of the Education and Children's Social Care Committee in relation to the questions: How much money had been outsourced on private therapy to meet EHCP requirements? What portion of the budget had been going to Early Years Provision in the SEND review;
- c) Ming Zhang would issue a request on behalf of the Committee to Multi-Academy Trusts in Plymouth to request data in relation to the National Tutoring Programme in order for the Committee to understand the impact on Plymouth and its children;
- d) The Education, Participation and Skills service had been driving an inclusion programme with Plymouth City Council collecting live data. It had been hoped that all schools in the City would sign up to a data sharing agreement to develop an inclusion scorecard;
- e) Families would not be fined if children and young people did not have 100% attendance and this would be reviewed on a case by case basis;
- f) Members were concerned at the impacts of long COVID on children and young people in Plymouth and this would be added to the work programme for future review;
- g) Plymouth had been welcoming to Ukrainian refugees and had been included within their school settings;

92. **Overview of Children's Social Care & Education, Participation and Skills Service**

Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced this item to the Committee.

Jean Kelly, Service Director for Children, Young People and Families provided an overview of the Children's Social Care Service to members of the Committee.

Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills provided an overview of the service to members of the Committee.

Members discussed:

- a) It was acknowledged that Plymouth had been consistently below the national average for outcomes in the KS4 cohorts and the potential reason for the increase in outcomes may have been due to a differing way in which the data had been collected. Normal data collection for this KPI would resume this year and would be reported back to the Committee at the earliest opportunity;
- b) Plymouth City Council had been in regular conversations with OFSTED and the Department for Education in relation to the planned consultation on increasing the ratios of staff to two year olds in Early Years settings.

The proposed increase would take the current ratio of 1:4 to 1:5.

- c) The Plymouth Safeguarding Partnership met to consider the national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson and would provide an update in the next Committee. Members requested that this item would be put onto the work programme for review;
- d) Plymouth City Council did not have a high vacancy rate during the pandemic, however it had been acknowledged that the service had a high turnover of experienced staff which had been reflected regionally and nationally. The service continued to have a good pipeline of Newly Qualified Social Workers and would look to recruit social workers from overseas to add diversity and experience to the workforce. Plymouth City Council required the use of project teams and agency staff throughout the pandemic due to the increase in caseloads; Innovate, a project team used by Plymouth City Council would be leaving in August 2022 and work had commenced on the exit plan;

93. **Children's Services Provisional Financial Outturn Report 2021/22**

David Northey, Head of Integrated Finance presented the Children's Services Provisional Outturn report 2021 – 2022 to members of the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) There had been an overspend of £296,000 on a budget of £53 mil;
- b) There had been £9.44 mil spent on COVID costs which had been allocated to additional placement costs; additional social workers; increased legal costs; additional Adoption Transition Costs and lost income within the schools service.

Members discussed:

- a) COVID grants from national government had ceased. Members were concerned that there continued to be additional costs incurred to the Local Authority as a result of the pandemic through continued placement costs and delays in the Court process.

94. **Children's Services Scrutiny Performance Report (Q4 2021-22)**

Councillor Charlotte Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced this item to members of the Committee.

Jean Kelly, Service Director for Children, Young People and Families and Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills presented the Performance report to members.

Members discussed:

- a) Plymouth City Council's Children, Young People and Families service

received funding linked to the prevention of rough sleeping for young people aged 18 – 25 years. Members heard that there had been no Care Leavers between 18 – 25 years rough sleeping, however it had been acknowledged that some young people had chosen not to stay in contact with the Care Leavers service. Jean Kelly advised that should any Care Leavers come forward that had been rough sleeping, the service would provide information, support, advice and intervention if required;

- b) The service had been piloting a Child in Need prevention team where the service would offer short but impactful interventions. Child in Need ‘cases’ had been a consent based intervention, families could withdraw their consent for the service at any time;
- c) The definition of suitable accommodation had been provided by the Department for Education, however it had been acknowledged that this would be much more complex and depended on an individual basis. The service would ascertain whether the situation would be sustainable and that there had been alternatives accommodation options available;
- d) Jean Kelly would provide an update to members on how many children had stepped up from a Child in Need plan to a Child Protection Plan and would also provide data as to how many children successfully stepped down from a Child in Need plan;
- e) Schools in the city of Plymouth had been working in partnership and all had agreed to a self-evaluation and peer support model in order to identify areas that required improvement within their schools. In the previous two months there had been three secondary schools that had changed from ‘required improvement’ to ‘good’ and it had been the opinion of the service director that the model had led to this change. Common themes for improvement had been leadership and curriculum design, delivery and impact. Plymouth had been operating a ‘school causing concern’ system where the service would gather information from different agencies. If a school had been escalated to ‘at risk’ for maintained schools the Local Authority would intervene. Alternatively for Academies, information would be provided to the Department for Education in order for them to intervene.

95. **Kickstart Update**

Councillor Charlotte Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the item to members of the Committee.

Tina Brinkworth, Head of Skills and Post-16 presented the item to members of the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) 60% of young people that had taken part in the Kickstart programme had gone on full time employment;
- b) There had been two key gateway organisations that supported 400

placements with a 60% transition rate, full detailed figures would be released in September 2022 following the conclusion of the scheme;

- c) Between March 2021 and March 2022, Universal Claimants between the ages of 18 and 25 had seen a 20% reduction, the figure had been 4,900 and this had reduced to 3900.

Members discussed:

- a) Of the 40% that had not progressed into full time employment, young people were being engaged by the Skills Launchpad through action plans to get them into employment or training; Some young people had made the decision not to engage however where young people wanted engagement Skills Launchpad had been working closely with local employers and key partners to transition into work;
- b) Following the Kickstart programmes conclusion in December 2022, young people and the programme itself would operate under the Skills Launchpad. It was recognised that Kickstart in Plymouth had been more successful when compared nationally and the Launchpad would be looking to work with employers in the City to develop paid placements. Plymouth had 3,000 vacancies and there had been recruitment issues, to combat this the city required a different way to recruit people and it is hoped that the Launchpad could provide a system for the benefit of young people and the City;
- c) The Committee requested this item to be brought to the Committee in February 2023 with a final and detailed breakdown of the scheme.

96. **City Wide Youth Service Provision**

Councillor Charlotte Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced this item to the Committee.

Dave Ryland, Community Connections Strategic Manager and Martine Aquilina, Acting Head of Service Youth Justice and Targeted Support Service presented the report to the Committee.

Members discussed:

- a) Family breakdowns had been an issue for families in Plymouth and the 'cost of living crisis' would affect families in the coming months. The COVID pandemic had been a huge impact and the increase of teenagers coming into care could be linked to families being in close proximity with one another over an extended period of time. Services had also decreased support during the time of the pandemic which had been required by families. Finally the impact of the pandemic on young peoples mental health increased conflict within the home, the service had been seeing the impact of this in recent months;

- b) Residents of Plymouth could find out what youth resource is in the city through the Plymouth Online Directory (POD). The service continued to engage partners across the city to build resilience in the Early Help system. The Targeted Support Service had worked hard to develop a bespoke directory of services and had been planning how to circulate this to partners;
- c) The Community Connections service continued to try and engage young people through social media programmes. Funding had been secured to improve the way in which young people are targeted by the service;
- d) A youth cohort in Keyham had been sourced and programmes would be funded for them;
- e) Community Connections had a digital offer to young people in order to engage with professional youth workers but there had also been detached workers on the street;
- f) The Family hub development had been in a planning phase, Early Help Partnership had been in consultation to plan the scope and location of key family hubs. An Early Help executive had been considered as part of that mapping and scoping would come out over time;
- g) Following recruitment to a position within Plymouth City Council, there would be greater engagement with schools and the package of support would be presented to every school in Plymouth;
- h) The Out Youth Group provided a safe, friendly and welcoming environment for the LGBTQ+ community in Plymouth and the surrounding area. Youth workers would work closely in supporting young people to attend with them and could transport them to and from the venue. 1:1 sessions prior to attending could also take place to ensure they are confident in attending;

The Committee made a recommendation to Scrutiny Management Board:

The Committee agreed to:- Dave Ryland (Community Connections Strategic Manager) and Martine Aquilina (Acting Head of Service for Youth Justice and Targeted Support Service) to endeavour to produce an app for the Young People in the city of Plymouth to access which would advise them of youth services they could access.

97. **Work Programme**

Members discussed the work programme and added:

- Josh MacAlisters Independent Children's Social Care Review
- National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson