

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Friday 9 December 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor Laing, in the Chair.

Councillors Briars-Delve, Dr Cree, Cresswell, Harrison, Tippetts (substitute for Councillor Allen) and Tofan.

Also in attendance: Councillor Carlyle (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People), Sharon Muldoon (Director of Children's Services), Jane Anstis (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Jim Barnicott (Head of Education and Virtual School) Lucinda Ross (Education Improvement Officer), Isabelle Morgan (Service Manager for Inclusion and Welfare) Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk), Sarah Gooding (Policy and Intelligence Advisor), Paul Stephens (Performance Advisor) and Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Support Advisor).

The meeting started at 11.00 am and finished at 2.00 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.

110. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Laing	Personal	Governor for Horizon Multi-Academy Trust
Councillor Tippetts	Personal	Student at Plymouth University

111. Minutes

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendment:

- The meeting of the 14 September 2022 started at 13:00 and was then adjourned at 13:01

112. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of chairs urgent business.

113. Tracking Decisions

The Committee agreed to:

1. Add actions from the motion on notice for School Uniforms onto the Tracking Decisions log in order to review;
2. Note the tracking decisions log.

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

Sarah Gooding, Policy and Intelligence Advisor presented the report to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Schools Bill would not be going ahead in the current parliamentary period and although the government would be taking forward some of the proposals within it, that didn't require any additional legislation, the Bill itself would not be progressing;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) Exam Boards and OFQUAL had been consulting with relevant teachers in schools which had been the key mechanism for understanding the pressures schools had been under around changes to exam systems from the pandemic in which schools had gone from teacher assessed grades back to an exam style system. There could be some work undertaken with Youth Parliament to understand children and young people's mental health and wellbeing to understand how they felt during the run up to exams;
- b) Plymouth had 53 settings which had met the criteria to take part in the early maths, language and social development training with 17 practitioners and 15 settings having benefited from completing phase one of the early professional development programme;
- c) Plymouth had been allocated four places per term with three cohorts per year for the national rollout of expert mentors;
- d) Plymouth had partnered with SWIFT for the national professional qualification for early years leadership and council officers had been working with leading practitioners to run the programme which had a cohort of 24 practitioners with 16 from the city of Plymouth;
- e) Plymouth would have a stronger practice hub which would be led through Plymbridge nursery and day care, Ham Drive nursery school and day care, The Cabin and Becky's Tiny Teddies. Trauma informed training would be rolled out to all settings and would bring into Plymouth settings and early years, regionally, approximately £2 million;
- f) Tina Brinkworth, Head of Skills and Post 16 would provide information to the Committee on:
 1. Whether City College Plymouth had faced any challenges in relation to T-Level courses and the quality that they provided and if there had been challenges, what dialogue had taken place.

2. Challenges within the interim report mentioned the 45 day work experience aspect of the course and issues establishing corporate business partners. Is this something the Council could help with to offer high quality business placements?
 3. Provide information on whether any work had been completed with the University of Plymouth in respect of a mentoring programme for T-Level programmes.
- g) Teaching of reading for secondary school pupils had been a specific focus within the Place based plan and had been tasked with raising the basic standard of English and Maths to grade five and above. The place based plan would target the historic dip that had been seen in Year 7 pupils where children's progress started to plateau and potentially did not recover. Plymouth would be looking to address that in terms of the government announcement of £24 million to boost children's literacy and to work on the transitions between primary and secondary schools;

The Committee agreed to note the report.

115. **Plymouth Education Board**

Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the report to the Committee. Jim Barnicott, Head of Education and the Virtual School highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Plymouth Education Board provided a governance forum for the City's education improvement partnership which delivered one of the three priorities of the Children's Plan Bright Future – Aspire and Achieve;
- b) The work programme for the Plymouth Education Board included SEND Improvement Plan in preparation of a SEND inspection and the Inclusion Transformation and AP remodelling;
- c) The following actions were added to the tracking decisions log:
 1. A list of people on the Plymouth Education Board would be circulated to the committee with its Terms of Reference;
 2. Work to be undertaken with Youth Parliament in relation to exam readiness.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

116. **Inclusion Briefing: Children Missing out on Education**

Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the report to the Committee and noted the attendance and absenteeism levels in the city and the need to improve engagement and attainment

for children with SEND support in the city, those children and young people on reduced timetables and for Plymouth's care experienced children and young people outcomes.

Isabelle Morgan, Service Manager for Inclusion and Welfare presented the report to members of the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) There had been a slight reduction in the prevalence of children missing out on education at secondary and the number of children missing out on education with SEND support had remained stable;
- b) Children and young people with SEND they became less likely to need or require a reduced timetable as they went up the Key Stage levels, this had been reflected in the data which showed that as students with SEND support progressed in secondary school from KS3 to KS4 the numbers of pupils on a reduced timetable showed a slight drop;
- c) The City had seen an improvement of 36.7% on the numbers of children reported missing from education and further work would be undertaken with families to get children onto the school roll quickly;
- d) The numbers of children withdrawn to home address education who were known to children's social care had fallen by 9% between 1 April 2022 and 1 October 2022 compared to the previous academic year. It was thought that the results were down to the new multi-disciplinary working arrangements;
- e) The most pressing issues for the service had been the overall increase in the numbers of children missing out on education, the numbers of children in primary with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) and children at risk of exclusion had increased;
- f) Many of the children missing out on education had been known to Children's Social Care and officers were working with schools to support plans in respect of those children, to support plans by working as an integrated children's services team;
- g) As the key stage levels increased it had been found that the length of reduced timetables increased, this was recognised as a priority for the service and it was noted that the service were particularly interested in reduced timetables that had been implemented for 8 weeks or more;
- h) The number of statutory aged children being de-registered from schools to be electively home educated had continued to increase, the service had been increasingly worried about that trend which became a priority;
- i) There had been an increase in the number of school attendance orders being issued. The order had been there to support children missing from education back into school and it was expected this would continue to rise;

- j) The service continued to work in partnership with schools through the place-based plan and had also been working with Dorset County Council and Plymouth's link with the Department for Education (DFE) attendance advisor. The DFE had published its attendance guidance which would ensure attendance was 'everybody's business' with the framework to work together in ensuring everyone was working with families and supporting children to remove barriers for attendance. The published guidance had resulted in the service developing an attendance strategy which would be in place by January 2023;
- k) Through discussions with headteachers in the City it was recognised that Plymouth City Council needed to be better with Early Help. From January 2023 people would be able to pre-book onto an Early helpline to have conversations with practitioners;

In response to questions raised it was reported:

- a) Sharon Muldoon would provide figures for children going down the route for an Education Health Care Plan and would provide figures of 6 week decision progress and 20 week production of the plan deadline.
- b) There had been a SEND improvement plan in place which focussed on timeliness of EHC plans which had been significantly improving, however it was acknowledged that whilst the number for children and young people requiring an EHC plan was on the increase, the number of educational psychologists hadn't and there would be budgetary implications in order to meet that demand;
- c) Plymouth City Council had been confident in tracking children that were missing from education. The service captured all live birth data which would come through to Plymouth's education system and from that point onwards children were tracked through early years and when they became of statutory school age the service would monitor to see whether children were registered at a school and if not would make enquiries to establish what education was being provided. Other local authorities had a similar system and should families move area, authorities would communicate with one another to find a successful resolution. Plymouth city council had a team of officers that could knock on the doors to locate children and work was being undertaken to work across a multi-agency platform to track children should they leave the city. It was acknowledged that the team would be able to identify where families were claiming child benefit;
- d) Plymouth had undertaken a large amount of work in respect of electively home educated children and young people and the service undertook a rapid review with the Plymouth Safeguarding Partnership and different organisations across the city to ensure everyone had been taking responsibility and ensuring oversight of children and young people who could be moving out of school into home

education. If children did become home educated, work would be done to understand their vulnerabilities and keep them in education;

- e) Plymouth had made a bid to the Department for Education around the Family Hubs programme for a total of £3.3 million to engage young children in the city at the earliest intervention point;

The Committee agreed to:

1. Add to the work programme Children missing education, which would see more a more detailed report following analysis of the data;
2. Note the report.

117. **Plymouth Education Improvement**

Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the report to the Committee. Jim Barnicott, Head of Education and Virtual School presented the report to the committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The place based work began with a sharp focus on the secondary sector particularly secondary outcomes as that was seen as a priority when the project first started. The second phase moved to include primary, special and early years.
- b) There had been five strands to the plan which included; system and infrastructure, leadership, curriculum, Teaching and learning and Inclusion/SEND priority;
- c) The inclusion scorecard had been an innovative piece of work for the city which had been in a test and development phase. This would underpin the inclusion strand part of the improvement plan.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) OFSTED had as part of the framework, character curriculum which would provide students opportunities to develop their interests and themselves. This had been a goal within the curriculum strand to explore models to extend the school day in order to provide a wider curriculum entitlement to all learners;
- b) Plymouths place based approach was unique to Plymouth to respond to the education needs of children and young people in Plymouth which would not be imposed on the city or given to the city as a set of pre-existing priorities;

The Committee agreed to note the report.

118. **School Attainment**

Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the report to the Committee. Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer presented the report to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) For children in Plymouth at the end of KS2, the combined average of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths was 65% which was 1% above the national average and had been a first for Plymouth to get above the national average. Data also showed Plymouth was 2% higher than the southwest regional average;
- b) 74% of children achieved the expected standard in English reading, 70% in writing and 71% in maths. English writing came in lower at 70% which could be attributed to less writing undertaken due to the two years of the COVID pandemic;
- c) Writing had been identified as an area of recovery as part of the place based plan particularly amongst boys and writing at KSI which had historically been areas of weakness in Plymouth;
- d) For KS4 results, work undertaken through the place based evaluation showed that 67% of Plymouth's secondary schools had improved their progress at eight score, 87% improved their attainment 8 score, and 88% had seen an improvement in their basics in English and maths. In relation to achievement of grade 5 or better in English and maths Plymouth stood at 45.9% compared to a national average of 49.8%, this gap had been closing rapidly.

For progress 8 there had been a slight variance in the figure but Plymouth stood at -0.2 compared to national 0.03 which was against Plymouth's -0.29 in 2019 for the previous comparison. Attainment 8 figures showed Plymouth had 47.5% compared to the national figure of 48.8% which showed an improvement in closing the gap and also an improvement on 2019 figures.

- e) KS4 figures for staying in education or entering employment figures stood at 94% which correlated with national figures;

In response to questions it was reported:

- a) When the Department for Education published the final validated data this would come back to the Committee to report on disadvantaged groups and also KSI and end of KSI attainment data and Year 1 phonics. The Education team would also provide an update for KS4;
- b) Plymouth City Council had a data sharing agreement with schools which allowed the team to share provisional data. It was acknowledged that one of the downsides of the provisional data is that the data kept

changing;

- c) Although there had been a gap between Plymouth's children, the service were assured that the gap would continue to close and it remained focussed to close the gap rapidly to provide the best outcomes for children in the city;
- d) When data had been finalised, the service could look at attainment and progress in particular localities in the city and where identified where there had been high deprivation, low attainment and then through the place based plan talk to CEO's of trusts and headteachers of maintained schools to find out what additional support they required. The service would also challenge schools where there had been a gap to provide a combination of challenge and support;
- e) Plymouth City Council had worked with schools in the city on the Pupil Premium strategy to understand how this was used by schools. The Education Endowment Fund regularly published strategies which worked well to support children to catch up particularly in English and maths.

The Committee agreed to:

- 1. Note the report
- 2. Add validated data of disadvantaged groups onto the work programme

119. **Regional Schools Commissioner**

Sharon Muldoon, Director of Childrens Services presented a verbal report to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Regional Schools Commissioner had a new title which changed to the Regional Director. There had also been a change within the Department for Education which brought together social care and education to enable Plymouth to have one link;
- b) The team from the Department for Education would be focussing on children who were either vulnerable learners or known to social care. They continued to work with Plymouth and were aware of the improvement work that had been underway in the city. Dorset County Council had been working with Plymouth City Council to benchmark areas of improvement, they had met with Plymouth on a termly basis to go through performance data;

The Committee agreed to:

- 1. Add to the Tracking Decisions Log, an invitation to be sent to the Regional Director for Education to attend a Scrutiny Committee;
- 2. To note the report.

120. **Performance Scorecard**

Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the report and highlighted referrals to Children, Young People and Families service were down 30% for 2022/23 and that the number of children on Child Protection Plans had dropped significantly. Sharon Muldoon, Director for Children's Services presented the report to members of the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) Although Child Protections Plans had decreased, the number of repeat plans had increased. It was recognised that this could be due to small numbers of large sibling groups that would drive the percentage numbers up;
- b) Numbers of children in the care of the Authority had stabilised following continued increases since the pandemic, this was now in line with statistical neighbours. It was recognised that Plymouth had seen an increase over the course of two years in the number of adolescents in the care of the local authority which had been above statistical neighbours;
- c) Plymouth had been and would be working to increase the numbers of children and young people in education, employment or training and had a number of strategies in development which included an attendance strategy as well as a neglect strategy. The service continued to have a focus and aspiration on Plymouth's Care leavers as too many were not in education, employment or training;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) The decreasing trends had been down to Plymouth working restoratively and collaboratively with families following the pandemic and to provide intervention at an earlier stage which was impacted during the pandemic;
- b) Data would be provided which would compare Plymouth care experienced young people aged 18-20 with the rest of the Plymouth's 18-20 years old population to understand whether those not in education employment or training showed a correlation of the impact from the pandemic and had been due to other factors;
- c) Councillor Carlyle encouraged businesses across the city to sign up to the Care Leavers covenant to provide more workplace opportunities which would help Plymouth's care leavers to have better outcomes and reduce the 'worrying statistic' of almost half of Plymouth's care leavers aged 18-20 not being in education, employment or training;
- d) The Committee requested that officers continue the push to provide care leavers with education, employment or training and to make use of the City's Freeport status.

The Committee agreed to:

1. Be provided with data on how many care experienced children and young people had been attending good or outstanding school settings, this would also include number of children attending early years settings.
2. To note the report

121. **Financial Monitoring Report - Month 7**

The Committee were made aware that the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee met and highlighted the following areas of consideration for the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Mitigation and weaknesses surrounding partner income of £500,000
2. Action plan to reduce agency spend
3. Housing pressures and what was being done to ensure housing was provided
4. Bespoke arrangements
5. Home to school transport
6. Action plan for the red rag performance rating associated with children that had multiple child protection plans

David Northey, Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the report and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Children's directorate had a gross overspend of £4.401 million with mitigations of £2.204 million which led to a net variance of £2.217 million;
- b) Overspend of £4.4 million had been £1.8 million from placements and additional costs, £1 million of non-placement costs including pressures for legal costs. There had also been pressures on SEND short breaks and school transport;
- c) There had been a plan to reduce the spend on the children in care placements budget however it was recognised that the service was a demand led service and some children had required care packages due to their complex needs;
- d) Pressures in the Children's budget for 2022/23 had either been due to high cost placements for children with either complex disabilities or specific needs which required a bespoke package. For those placements, officers met on a weekly basis to look at placement availability and to ensure assurances that the package was right;
- e) It was reported that for every one placement there would be 100 local authorities bidding for the same placement;

- f) There had been pressures on the Education, Participation and Skills budget linked to home to school transport for SEN children which was a statutory service. It was reported that although the demand had been static with the same number of miles the increase in costs had been due to the cost of fuel and increase from service providers from the decrease in drivers;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) Mitigations of £500,000 on the Children's budget from the Integrated Care Boards (ICB) had previously been awarded by the Local Commissioning Group. Conversations had taken place over a number of months and on a regular basis to try and resolve the issue;
- b) A full review of Section 75 agreements with the NHS would be undertaken to review key areas of joint funding and included how the NHS and Plymouth City Council worked better to support Children's services;
- c) Plymouth had been below the national average for the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers, it was acknowledged however the costs of care packages and costs of services for those children and young people were not covered by the funding provided by government;
- d) Plymouth City Council did employ a number of agency workers as social workers, but this had not been to the volume that other local authorities had been experiencing. Plymouth had been in the process of recruiting international social workers and they would begin to join the service in February 2023. Officers had been working on a new recruitment and retention strategy for the service;

The committee agreed to:

- I. Note the forecast revenue monitoring position at period 7 as set out in the report in the sum of £4.104 million

122. **Risk Management Monitoring Report**

Ross Jago, Head of Governance, Performance and Risk presented the report to the Committee and highlighted the following key point:

There had been 5 red risks on the risk register with one being pertinent to the Education and Children's Social Care Committee relating to the possible failure to meet statutory duties due to growing volume and complexity in the demand for Children's Social Care;

The Committee agreed to note the report.

123. **School Uniform - Presented by Plymouth's Youth Parliament (To Follow)**

Scarlett, representative from Plymouth's Youth Parliament presented the report to the committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) Pupils had commented that schools had been too strict with their dress code and a more relaxed approach would suit most pupils;
- b) Scarlett's campaign showed what schools could do to change their policies in order to allow more freedom with their uniforms. If implemented this would improve mental health of students across the city;
- c) Scarlett's campaign had 24 responses from teachers stating that they had been concerned about their responses and how their responses would be implemented at the schools;
- d) There were concerns about the cost of living crisis and how this had been affecting families. The campaign had been attempting to raise awareness of the school uniform shop and would be encouraging families to donate school uniforms;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) Councillor Carlyle would provide a response on the Motion on Notice that had been passed at full Council on 21 November 2022 on School Uniform;
- b) It was requested by Youth parliament that should a student not adhere to school uniform policy, to be more understanding and to attempt to rectify the situation by other means rather than 'shouting' or being sent to 'isolation'.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

124. **Work Programme**

The Committee agreed to add the following to the work programme:

- School Attainment data, this would include more detailed analysis of the final data
- Recruitment and retention
- Early Years and Primary Phase from the Plymouth Education Board