



Oversight and Governance

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 14 November 2024
11.00 am
Warspite Room, Council House

Members:

Councillor Reilly, Chair

Councillor Wood, Vice Chair

Councillors Mrs Beer, Gilmour, Krizanac, McLay, McNamara, Simpson, Steel, Stephens and Tippetts.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf. This meeting will be webcast and available on-line after the meeting. By entering the Warspite Room, Councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

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Tracey Lee
Chief Executive

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect to items on the agenda.

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 14)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 October 2024.

4. Chair's Urgent Business

To receive reports on business which in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

5. 2023/2024 Education Attainment in Plymouth: (Pages 15 - 32)

6. Educational Attendance in Plymouth: (To Follow)

7. Alternative Provision Assurance Report: (To Follow)

8. Q2 2024/25 CYPF and EPS Performance Report: (Pages 33 - 50)

9. Children, Young People and Families Service Quarterly Improvement Update: (Pages 51 - 58)

10. Child Exploitation and the Philomena Protocol: (To Follow)

11. Tracking Decisions: (Pages 59 - 60)

12. Work Programme: (Pages 61 - 64)

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 10 October 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Reilly, in the Chair.

Councillor Wood, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Gilmour, Krizanac, McLay, McNamara, Simpson, Steel, Stephens and Tippetts.

Also in attendance: David Haley (Director of Children's Services), Temilola Salimon (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Lisa Linscott (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Jim Barnicott (Head of Education and Virtual School), Martine Aquilina (Head of Service, CYPF), Isabelle Kolinsky (Service Manager Inclusion and Welfare), Siobhan Logue (Safeguarding Business Manager), Rob Williams (Tedd Wragg Trust), Scott Simpson-Horne (All Saints Academy), Anita Frier (Stoke Damerel Community College), Shaun Nichols (Widley Court Primary School), Peter Lewis-Cole (Lipson Vale Primary School) Councillor Victoria Cusworth (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council) and Elliot Wearne-Gould (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.02 pm and finished at 5.02 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.

64. **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

65. **To note the appointment of Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 Municipal Year**

The Panel agreed to note the appointment of Councillor Wood as Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 municipal year.

66. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Gilmour declared a personal interest and was employed by NASUWT union.

67. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 18 July 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

68. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chairs urgent business.

69. **Inclusive Practice to address exclusions and suspensions in Plymouth**

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) introduced the item to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) There was a significant rise in the rate of permanent exclusion and suspensions in Plymouth, and although rising nationally, Plymouth's permanent exclusions was above national and regional benchmarking;
- b) Plymouth was working collaboratively to develop the conditions for success and inclusion in its schools;
- c) More than 80% of children and young people who were permanently excluded in Plymouth schools were known to children's social care in the previous six years;
- d) More than 50% of children and young people who were excluded or suspended from school had low rates of school attendance, special educational needs and disabilities or were eligible for free school meals or Pupil Premium;
- e) Children were at a greater risk of being suspended or permanently excluded when they made the transition to secondary school from primary school;
- f) Secondary school children who were permanently excluded were more likely to live in areas of the city with high levels of deprivation;
- g) 43 exclusions were prevented in 2023/24 through partnership work with schools in the city;
- h) There was a robust primary school escalation process in relation to permanent exclusions and since summer 2024, there have been no permanent exclusions for primary school children;
- i) Since April 2024, there were no permanent exclusions for vaping of substances controlled under the misuse of drugs act;
- j) The combination of system change projects would look to drive the city's collective ambition to reduce the rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions in the city;
- k) The early language acquisition project was a highlight of the on-going work which would support the development of children's language so they were better able to communicate within their setting, reducing behaviours that could increase the risk of exclusions;
- l) A new vulnerable pupils panel was a partnership between Education, Health, Police and children's social care providing early help and prevention to

support children and remove barriers to their access and engagement;

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- m) There was a citywide commitment to Trauma Informed training for all school staff. Most schools made adaptations to their behaviour policies or behaviour and relationship policies to ensure all children were supported with trauma informed practice;
- n) Practices within schools ensured children were supported in a therapeutic way. Practice had moved to establish secure relationships with all children in schools;
- o) The Panel heard from Lipson Vale Primary school that they introduced a powerful tool called 'the window of tolerance' which educated children from reception that everybody had a window of tolerance but this changed based on the experiences in and outside of school. The school also taught its pupils how to communicate with their trusted adult/s when they were feeling outside of their window;
- p) The Panel heard that children in the city were being provided language to best describe their wishes, feelings and emotions as well as restorative approaches in school. Children were being taught consequences and how negative actions would result in negative consequences;
- q) The trauma informed approach within schools was seen as a long term gain in order to develop secure attachments with children to ensure they can trust their trusted adult;
- r) Issues of permanent exclusions and suspensions were often intergenerational and All Saints Academy had set up a community hub to enable happy communities;
- s) Flexibility in the curriculum and flexibility in arrangements within primary schools was seen as a contributing factor to low rates of permanent exclusion in those schools;
- t) Secondary schools in the city were seeing children and young people presenting with trauma over a number of years. Secondary schools were able to provide some levels of therapeutic support, but often these children and young people required more intense levels of support which was difficult to provide due to decreasing budgets;
- u) Children and young people required quicker responses from CAMHS and other medical support to enable them to attend school in relation to mental health difficulties due to attachment issues. Secondary schools often provided a range of welfare support for children and young people such as learning mentors and counsellors;
- v) A secondary school was providing a minibus in the morning to enable

relationship building and the requirement to be a friendly face in the morning. There was also an outreach worker who built relationships with children in the home, so when they did return to school, there was a friendly and recognisable person to who they could go to;

- w) Some secondary schools had already implemented their own Alternative Provision (AP), or were looking to establish one within their settings. AP would run different curriculums and could include English, Maths and Forest school. They could also run at different points in the day in a smaller class size environment;
- x) There was an on-going training programme within schools across the city to improve attendance;
- y) The Vulnerable Pupil Panel looked to find appropriate solutions for children and young people and to get them back into school as quickly as possible, in a place where they would succeed;
- z) Although the data suggested that the issues of exclusions and suspensions were concentrated at secondary school, much of the issues faced, although at lower levels, presented at primary schools;
- aa) Schools in the north and west of the city, with the highest levels of deprivation, had the highest levels of exclusions, suspensions and elective home education. Schools in the north and west were investing to make the difference with those young people. It was reported to the Panel that during the lockdown period, there was a fracturing of connection and belonging between children, communities and schools. The Place Based Working Group were looking at strategies to address some of the underlying contributing factors for permanent exclusions and suspensions;
- bb) Plymouth was working with the University of Plymouth and Plymouth Marjons to look at some of the research that had taken place around the country where local authorities, schools and Trusts had been successful;
- cc) Schools were building high quality tier two support for its most vulnerable children;
- dd) Schools were ensuring enhanced transitions throughout of key stage transitions;
- ee) It was reported to the Panel, that for some students all the offers might not work for them, but schools needed to provide an offer which focussed on core subjects as well as providing a vocational offer;
- ff) The Place Based Working Group would be looking at cross phased, cross setting work with other agencies to begin to work across the system rather than focussing on just secondary schools;
- gg) It was reported to the Panel that schools in the city were not suspending

children from schools due to breaching the uniform policy. It was suggested that suspensions may have occurred due to the response of being challenged;

- hh) It was reported that schools in the city had a significant and sudden issue around Vaping and the use of illicit substances including THC and spice, which caused a number of significant medical responses. Public Health did respond to the request to investigate and schools in the city sent the same letter to all parents and carers to make them aware of the sudden and significant issue that developed within the city. Police were checking vapes that were confiscated but had also provided education via assemblies across Plymouth
- ii) SHARP were commissioned by Public Health to work with those young people using those substances in vapes;

Action: Further data would be provided under appendices one and two of the report and would provide ten years worth of data and include comparisons with Portsmouth and Exeter.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

70. **Elective Home Education in Plymouth**

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) Elective home education could be a rewarding experience, but provided a number of challenges and families in Plymouth needed to make an informed choice;
- b) Plymouth had seen an increasing number of children being registered as home educated which was reflected nationally;
- c) The rise in the number of children being withdrawn from school to be home educated was a concern in Plymouth particularly for those in their secondary phase of education;
- d) The causal factors were wide ranging and complex and to fix, required collaboration across the multi-agency partnership to hold families and outcomes for children at the centre;
- e) There was a significant rise in the numbers of children with special educational needs being withdrawn from schools for home education. Rises were also seen with children with mental health difficulties where parents had a lack of confidence in how schools were supporting their child;
- f) The majority of children in who were home educated in KS4 attended the Plymouth City College provision which provided an alternative to the formal national curriculum offer of mainstream secondary school;

- g) 90% of children who were home educated were either severely absent or persistently absent from school before being home educated and 37.4% of those home educated were known to children's social care within the previous six years;
- h) Plymouth worked collaboratively with families and monitored children who were home educated. The partnership supported children who were missing education to return to school as a result of the relational approach. 153 children were supported to return to their school provision in 2023/24;
- i) The Council continued to strengthen the partnership to support vulnerable children to remain in school and was working in partnership with the three Plymouth universities to undertake a research project in home education. The learning would create a preventative system to support children while they were in school;
- j) A robust plan approved by the Plymouth Education Board measured the city's progress against key performance indicators on a monthly basis;
- k) The Place Based Working Group was developing a three tier alternative provision strategy;
- l) All schools were in contact with their link early help worker and allocated access and attendance officers, to develop plans for children who had barriers to school attendance.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- m) The number of children that were being home educated and part of groups was a small number;
- n) The local authority was responsible in ensuring that there were no children in the City's boundaries missing education. It was not a requirement for families to provide evidence of their child's home learning, but the authority would be minded to consider that child might not be receiving any education;
- o) Where there was intent of the parent/carer has decided to home educate their child, the local authority would reach out to those parents/carers to talk through the decision to ensure it was a positive and informed choice. An initial monitoring check would take place after three months to understand the families plan for educating their child at home. If the evidence of education was suitable, monitoring would take place annually;
- p) The Council was hosting information and guidance sessions where families were positively engaging;
- q) The relational practice undertaken in the city was having a much more positive impact compared to the more punitive measures such as school attendance orders;

- r) Due to the limitations of legislation, it was difficult for the local authority to see what was happening in terms of education for those children. The Department for Education guidance advises that home educators were able to educate their children at home in whichever way they saw fit which included 'unschooling' where the child was enabled to fully break from any form of education and when ready, they could then engage in a form of education in the home;
- s) Prior to the Covid pandemic, the more traditional home educators, were also home educated as a child. Since then, parents/carers have advised that they did not believe in what the schools had to offer or they were struggling themselves to navigate the complexities of their child's mental health;
- t) Officers were confident that the local authority was operating within the government guidance for elective home education and the safeguarding surrounding that which was represented in the ILACS inspection.

Action: A Councillor briefing session on Home education would be arranged.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

71. **Children, Young People and Families Service Improvement Plan 2024-25: QI Progress and Impact Report**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced the report with additions from Temilola Salimon (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) to the Panel and highlighted the following:

- a) The Improvement Plan aligned with the strategic priorities of the Achieving Excellence Plan for 2024 – 2027;
- b) The plan enhanced the timeliness and outcomes of children's social care services in Plymouth and outlined the key achievements, challenges and priorities for Q2;
- c) There were on-going efforts to stabilise and improve services with a strong emphasis on partnership working, quality assurance and continuous improvement to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people in Plymouth;
- d) Support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) improved, with quality interventions ensuring they received a good level of service following increased levels of trauma;
- e) Social work assessment quality had improved substantially and took into account all factors within the family;
- f) The Out of Hours service received strengthening and was a critical area of the service;

- g) Plymouth needed to stabilise its workforce to ensure all the positive work undertaken was maintained;
- h) Plymouth needed to continue the timeliness of quality of supervisions.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- i) Targeted recruitment of foster carers would be able to support children with complex needs;
- j) If Plymouth followed agreed quotas, it would expect the population of UASC to rise by 53, equating to 0.1% of the children population in Plymouth. The service was expecting a rise in the numbers of UASC coming to Plymouth which would reflect the trends seen nationally;
- k) Plymouth had struggled to recruit to the out of hours service which was reflected across many other local authorities due to its niche working patterns. Plymouth was not successful in recruiting to the permanent position of Team Manager and was relying heavily on locum practitioners. Plymouth was investigating and trying to find new ways to advertise those positions to ensure a bigger reach and visibility;
- l) There would be government changes to agency workers and Plymouth had begun the conversation with current agency workers to try and bring them into the fold of the more permanent workforce.

72. **Family Homes for Plymouth Children**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) presented the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The report outlines the progress and strategic initiatives undertaken by Children's Social Care to transform practice for children at risk of entering care;
- b) The report emphasised the importance of improving placement sufficiency and outcomes for children and young people, ensuring that they were looked after in family homes in and close to Plymouth;
- c) This programme of work addressed the local authorities sufficiency aim to provide the right number and types of placements to meet the needs of children in care;
- d) The report highlighted the increased demand for services due to generational neglect, mental health issues and substance misuse. The report outlined steps taken to enhance foster care recruitment support for complex needs and market development for residential care;

- e) Key objectives included keeping children within their family networks where possible and increasing the number of in house foster carers, reducing the reliance on high cost residential placements;
- f) The programme focussed on ensuring value for money and improving outcomes for children by providing stable family based care settings;
- g) The local authority would be implementing the Mockingbird model in relation to its in house foster care offer.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- h) The Council was beginning to pursue its own residential care as an option. Not only was it expected to provide a cost benefit, but most importantly, it would allow children and young people that came into the care of the local authority to remain in Plymouth and to maintain their own networks and identity;
- i) The council were trying to engage families that were already in kinship arrangements to ensure they had the right support available to them;
- j) Future reports would include case studies within reports;
- k) Plymouth continued to drive its recruitment of foster carers;
- l) Funding was received from national government for the cohort of UASC in Plymouth's care but was also covered by the council's own budget;
- m) The Virtual School also received funding for UASC as part of Pupil Premium funding plus for their education;
- n) The issues around placement's required a national discussion with government. It was felt that although Plymouth had attempted to reduce costs, the council had gone as far as it could within the national frameworks and legislation and government needed to address the issues faced by many local authorities including Plymouth;
- o) Increases in the cared for children population in Plymouth was multi-factorial including COVID, generational neglect, continued patterns of social care involvement which were never resolved despite interventions, cost of living and poverty;
- p) Early Help, preventative interventions for teenagers undertaken by the local authority was having a significant impact in preventing those young people entering care;
- q) Plymouth had seen a significant increase in the number of families in care proceedings over 26 weeks and conversations were happening with the judiciary in Plymouth. It was recognised to be a national situation with the delays due to the COVID pandemic;

- r) The Council employed a court progression officer who monitored all court cases undertaken by the local authority, to help bring the number of families in court proceedings over 26 weeks down to appropriate levels.

The Panel agreed to:

1. Recommend that Plymouth City Council collaborates with Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in the delivery of in house residential provision;
2. For the Fostering service to provide information on the recruitment of foster carers and to encourage them to be champions of Fostering.

73. **QI 2024/25 Performance Report**

Paul Stephens (Performance Advisor) and Susan London (Performance Advisor) presented the report to the Board and in response to questions raised it was reported that:

- a) LGA inform would provide councillors with data, over a number of years and councillors would be signposted to this.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

74. **Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023-2024**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership consisted of statutory partners such as the Police, Health, Children's services and Education alongside other non-statutory partners;
- b) In December 2023 Working Together to Safeguard Children, the national guidance informing partner agencies how they were required to keep children safe was refreshed and published;
- c) The new guidance have direction for how the annual report for the partnership would be published each year in September and it would be representative of the previous financial year;
- d) The report would be further supported by the publication of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in December, which would describe the responsibilities of each agency in respect of safeguarding children;
- e) The report identified the need for more partnership data and analysis as well as further work required in embedding new tools for practitioners in some agencies.

The Panel agreed a recommendation for:

- I. The Chair of the Plymouth Children's Safeguarding Board to write to faith groups in the city to be part of the Board.

75. **Early Help**

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) In 2021, the multi-agency vision for Plymouth 'A Bright Future' 2021 – 2026 was published which outlined how local partners supported the best outcomes for all children;
- b) Plymouth's Early Help vision was to ensure that every child and their family could access and receive timely and effective support from trusted sources with the aim to build supportive trusted relationships around families and communities, addressing diversity and equality. This would provide equal life chances for all children in the city of Plymouth;
- c) The delivery of early help and prevention was a fundamental project in the One Children's Service Programme, which aimed to, in collaboration with key city partners build on the existing early help offer and delivery of Family Hubs.

In response to questions raised it was reported:

- d) There were nine family hubs open in the city with another due to be opened by December 2024;
- e) Training would be on-going to help practitioners in the city to open up conversations around domestic abuse in order to address it appropriately;
- f) Undergraduate social workers were linking in to Family Hubs and the Early Help service, which was providing a good positive learning experience for them as they progressed through their social worker journeys;
- g) The service was asset mapping across the city to determine where there was further need in the city for early help provision.

The Panel agreed recommend:

- I. That a whole council briefing on early help be arranged which would contain information on what was available within Plymouth's communities.

76. Youth Justice Service

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications) introduced the report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- a) Plymouth's Youth Justice service was a multi-disciplinary team that was funded through contributions from the Youth Justice Board, Plymouth City Council, Police, Health services and Probation;
- b) Plymouth Youth Justice service was aligned to the core principles set out in a Bright Future, for Plymouth children to be safe, happy and to achieve and aspire;
- c) There were significant achievements in 2024 in relation to improving outcomes for children in the city, including low numbers of children in custody, fewer children and young people entering the youth justice system, a reduction in children re-offending and those accessing education, employment and training remained high when compared to the national average;
- d) Working in partnership with the police, children's social care, education and community youth, the diversion scheme was preventing children and young people entering the criminal justice system;
- e) The HMIP inspected Plymouth's youth justice service in 2022 and was impressed by the progress made who in turn provided an overall rating of good. A visit by the CEO of the youth justice board highlighted strong partnership working amongst other things.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- f) Around 41% of young people involved with the Plymouth Youth Justice service were exploited. The response had been positive, with Police colleagues working hard over a two year period to ensure that those young people being exploited were victims and not perpetrators;
- g) Partners across the city were attending daily intelligence briefings which was well attended and very child centred;
- h) Plymouth did not follow the national trend in rising knife crime and this was monitored six monthly with the Police;
- i) There had been a regional rise in female violence with Plymouth seeing a 20-22% rise and work was on-going to understand the reasons behind that. There is evidence to suggest that there were females gangs targeting, assaulting and videoing attacks on lone males and females;
- j) The service was in the process of developing a programme for females that were violent as there were none in the country.

Action: Councillors of the Panel would be invited to be introduced to the detached youth service team, before receiving a briefing and then having the opportunity to go out with them and be part of some of the work undertaken.

Action: Female violence programme added to the work programme.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

77. **Work Programme**

Councillors added the following to the work programme:

- School uniform policy
- Free School Meals eligibility

The provision of play equipment and the availability of sites to play would be put forward to the Scrutiny Management Board.

78. **Tracking Decisions**

Councillors were provided with an update in relation to the action log contained within the report.

79. **Exempt Business**

The Panel did not enter part II discussions.

80. **Confidential Minutes**

The confidential minutes of the meeting that took place on 18 July 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	14 November 2024
Title of Report:	Education attainment report
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Jim Barnicott
Contact Email:	Jim.barnicott@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	JB
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel with early unvalidated information with regard to outcomes for children and young people at the early years foundation stage, key stage 2, key stage 4, key stage 5 and looked after children.

Recommendations and Reasons

- I. For the Children, Young People and Families Panel to note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- I. N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The ambition of Plymouth's 'Bright Future' plan is for all our children to live full and happy lives. The plan recognises the importance of the local area partnership working together to ensure that children are supported by a system which works seamlessly to spot difficulties early, responds quickly and effectively, and makes sure that help is there for as long as it is needed. The learning from this paper is being used across the local area partnership to plan and deliver collaborative, evidenced based approaches and support our collective ambition for children.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

N/A

Financial Risks

N/A

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

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Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	Click here to enter text.	Leg	Click here to enter text.	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Lisa Linscott, Service Director for EPS											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes 01/10/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Creswell approved via email Date approved: 27/09/2024											

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Initial school attainment Report

Early Years, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4, Key Stage 5 and children in care

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Education, Participation and Skills Service has responsibility within the Council for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on standards of attainment and achievement, inclusive practice and safeguarding in all Plymouth schools. In Plymouth, many children achieve excellent outcomes, there are examples of great successes happening every day in our schools. However, this is not consistent across all schools or within individual schools for all pupil groups. It is incumbent on all involved within education in the city to do more to ensure that all schools offer high quality learning opportunities, for all pupils.

There are established and strong partnership arrangements in place through the city's 'place-based approach', which are utilised to enable collaboration and working together to support parents and children which is crucial to really making a difference. The collation of headline GCSE results, through the Ted Wragg Trust, is a good example of partners working together to understand strengths and areas for development in the city education landscape in advance of lagged statistical release information.

SECTION 1: EARLY YEARS & PRIMARY PHASE

This section provides an initial picture of the collective performance of primary schools in the city for academic year 2023-24. The KS2 data is early/unvalidated and therefore subject to change during the autumn checking exercise in schools. National comparators from the Department of Education (DfE) are not available for KS2 outcomes at the time of writing and so it is not possible to provide fine analysis of the attainment of groups or hypothesise about trends for groups of pupils; a more detailed report will be produced early in the new year based upon DfE final validated data for this phase.

Key Stage 2 attainment statistical release timetable

Release	Date
Key Stage 2 early/unvalidated results release	September 2024
Key stage 2 validated/full results release	December 2024 (date to be confirmed)

Cohort level analysis in relation to gender, special educational needs and disadvantage will be available from the December validated data release. National benchmark data will be available following the statistical release in late 2024 - early 2025.

Key Measures

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a statutory data collection. Each child's records are combined at local authority and national level to produce a National Statistics publication. The EYFSP measures the achievement of children (at emerging or expected standards) across 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) within 7 overarching areas of development: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design. Attainment of children in the EYFSP provides us useful information showing the starting point of children in different schools and localities.

Year 1 phonics screening check is a statutory assessment designed to confirm whether pupils have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard (represented by a score of 32). It identifies pupils who need extra help to improve their decoding skills and is a useful measure in identifying early progress in both reading and writing. Outcomes are published annually showing the average achievement of each primary school.

End of Key Stage 2 national curriculum assessments are statutory measures of primary pupils' progress and attainment in English, maths and science. Formal tests (SATs) measure attainment at expected or higher standard in English reading and maths, and teacher judgements made against the DfE KS2 Teacher Assessment Frameworks measure achievement of pupils working towards/at expected standard/at greater depth within the standard (WTS/EXS/GDS) in English and at EXS in science.

School results are published in national performance tables (known as league tables) allowing for comparison between schools and across localities. The national Floor Standard and national progress measures used to identify schools giving cause for concern (i.e. schools with the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard below 65%; and with progress in any one of three progress measures below a certain standard based on annual national average in reading, writing and maths) have been suspended until 2025.

Plymouth schools by grouping

Trust	Number of Plymouth primary schools
Learning Academies Trust	18
West Country Schools Trust	8
Ted Wragg Trust	1
Reach South Academy Trust	8
Plymouth CAST	6
Greenshaw Learning Trust	1
The Inspire Multi-Academy Trust	2
CONNECT	5
Discovery	3
St Christopher's CE Trust	4
ACE schools	2 (0% pupils registered for assessments)
LA Maintained	9

Overall headlines:

- Overall, KS2 early results for 2024 show considerable variance across the city, with combined averages affected by significant difference in cohort sizes (NB: school level early data has been shared within PCC*).
- Early Years outcomes for 2024 are slightly improved on the previous year with 66.7% of children achieving an overall good level of development (GLD) moving closer to national average of 68% GLD.
- Year 1 phonics screening check outcomes remain strong (81.2% achieving the standard score) above 2024 national average of 80% and previous year (city 80%, national 79%).
- Early end of Key Stage 2 (KS2), overall results for reading, writing and maths combined are improved on the previous year, and typically show significant variation in terms of individual schools (variance linked to numbers on roll), and outcomes not always linked to social challenge (published data will identify those schools and Trusts with excellent practice to share). Whilst overall city average is slightly improved, approximately 28 schools present early attainment outcomes below KS2 2024 combined average of 61%, indicating that whilst standards at the end of KS2 have improved, there is continued need for further improvement.

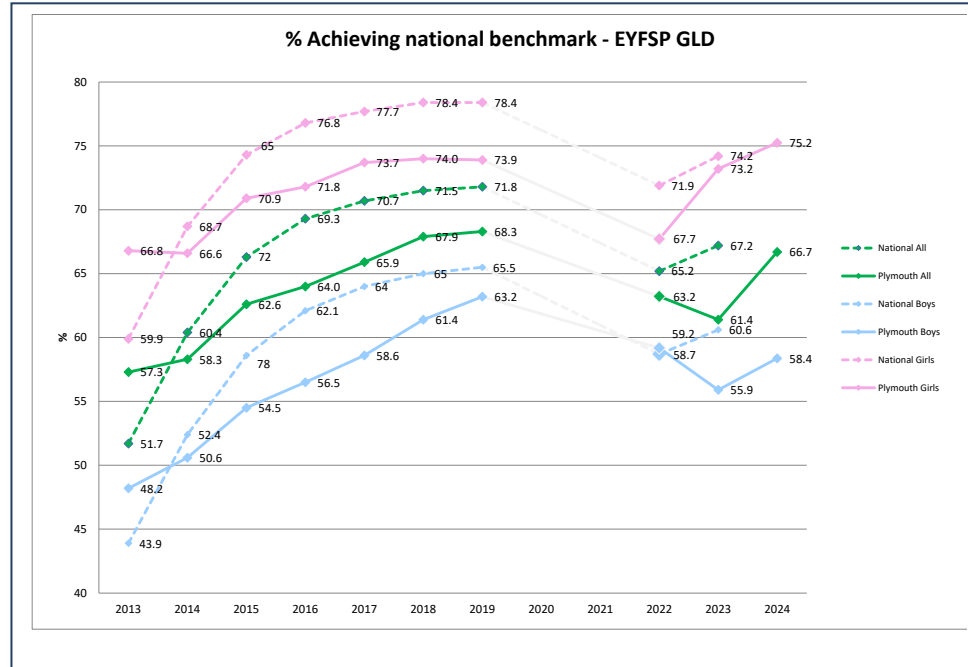
Data headlines by phase

Early Years:

- 66.7% of children achieved a GLD at the end of their Reception year, an improvement on the previous year average 64.2%
- Children attained highest in Early Learning Goals (ELGs) Expressive Art & Design 85.9%, Physical Development 83.4%, and PSE 82%, and achieved least well in ELGs Literacy 69.1% and maths 77.6%. In addition, 79.1% of children met the expected level of development in Communication and Language, a key area of focus for the 2024/25 place-based plan.
- Outcomes below show percentage of children achieving overall GLD at national and city level by gender with green indicating an upward trajectory of city attainment, As we see, nationally and locally boys do less well in Early Years, highlighting the priority of early focus in terms of curriculum planning and pedagogy in schools, to address this gap.

	National All	Plymouth All	National Girls	Plymouth Girls	National Boys	Plymouth Boys
2013	51.7	57.3	59.9	66.8	43.9	48.2
2014	60.4	58.3	68.7	66.6	52.4	50.6
2015	66.3	62.6	74.3	70.9	58.6	54.5
2016	69.3	64.0	76.8	71.8	62.1	56.5
2017	70.7	65.9	77.7	73.7	64	58.6
2018	71.5	67.9	78.4	74.0	65	61.4
2019	71.8	68.3	78.4	73.9	65.5	63.2
2020						
2021						
2022	65.2	63.2	71.9	67.7	58.7	59.2
2023	67.2	61.4	74.2	73.2	60.6	55.9
2024		66.7		75.2		58.4

- Available 2024 data shows that 54.4% of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) (43.1% FSM boys, 65.7% FSM girls) achieved an overall GLD indicating a 15 percent point gap for disadvantaged children.
- The chart below shows 2024 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) GLD outcomes by all pupils and by gender in comparison to previous years' national average, and previous Plymouth attainment. This demonstrates ongoing improvement to outcomes.



Year 1 Phonics screening check

- 81.2% of Year 1 pupils achieved the required standard in Phonics (an improvement on previous year: city 80%, national 79%)
- Positive outcomes in this area reflect the ongoing benefits of the Plymouth Oracy project and generally strong practice in the teaching of early phonics. These strong skills in early reading should be reflected in equally positive reading and writing outcomes as children move KS2.

Key Stage 2 Assessments:

Overall attainment - early indicators for children working at expected standard (EXS) or at greater depth (GDS)

- 61.6% of pupils achieved EXS in reading, writing and maths combined (6.8% at GDS) an increase on 2023: city /national 59%)
- 73% of pupils achieved EXS in reading (27.6% at GDS) in line with 2023 national average 73%
- 72.6% of pupils achieved EXS in writing with 10.7% GDS (previous EXS 72%) above 2023 national average 71%
- 72.8% of pupils achieved EXS in maths with 23% GDS (previous EXS 72%) approaching 2023 national average 73%

Attainment of groups – as noted above, early, unvalidated data does not allow for finer level analysis of progress/achievement of pupil groups, and it would be unreliable to hypothesise about trends and priorities of groups from this early data.

- 65.3% of girls achieved EXS in reading, writing maths combined, compared to 57.8% of boys (2023 boys 56% and girls 63%)
- 46.5% of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieved EXS in reading, writing maths combined (2023 44%)
- 27.1% Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support achieved EXS in reading, writing maths combined (2023 23%)
- 8.3% of children with an Education, Health & Care plan (EHCP) achieved EXS in reading, writing maths combined (2023 5%)
- 57.9% children with English as an additional language (EAL) achieved EXS in reading, writing maths combined (2022/23 60%)

Summary

- Overall KS2 combined average (unvalidated) represents a slight increase of 1.6% on previous year city and national averages.
- Girls continue to achieve higher than boys in combined reading, writing and maths by 7.5%, a gap which progresses from EYFS to the end of KS2.
- Children eligible for FSM, those with special educational needs (SEN) and those learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) continue to achieve less well than others.
- To close the gap in attainment for those children who are disadvantaged and/or have an SEN, additional strategies to accelerate progress will be developed through the two strands of the place-based plan: the development of early language acquisition, and the development of enhanced transition from Early Years into Key Stage 1. This will be through sharing best practice models of what works well to accelerate progress.

NB: The validated data release (December 2024) will provide greater, more reliable opportunities for analysis of pupil groups and multi-academy trusts and locality trends. The validated report will identify attainment in each phase of pupils by gender, EAL, FSM, and SEN with city and national benchmarking.

SECTION 2: KEY STAGE 4

This section provides an initial picture of the collective performance of secondary schools in the city for academic year 2023-24. The data is early/unvalidated and provided on a voluntary basis by schools. Therefore, data is subject to change during the autumn checking exercise in schools. National comparators from the Department of Education (DfE) are not available at the time of writing and so it is not possible to provide fine analysis of the attainment of groups or hypothesise about trends for groups of pupils; a more detailed report will be produced early in the new year based upon DfE final validated data.

Cohort level analysis in relation to gender, special educational needs and disadvantage will be available from the October statistical release. National benchmark data will be available following the statistical release in early 2025. Data in this section of the report is provided by schools to the Place-Based Co-ordinator on a voluntary basis.

Release	Date
Key Stage 4 results release	24 October 2024
Revised Key stage 4 revised results release	January – February 2025 (date TBC)

Key measures

Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list. Each individual grade a pupil achieves is assigned a point score, which is then used to calculate a pupil's Attainment 8 score

Progress 8 is a measure published annually showing the average academic performance of a secondary school. It is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight government approved school subjects. While these numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score.

The Basics measure provides the percentage of children achieving either grades 4 – 9 or grades 5 – 9 in both English and maths. A pass at grade 4 is considered a standard pass, a pass at grade 5 is considered a strong pass. Basics 5 – 9 is reported as a national benchmark measure.

Plymouth trusts

Trust	Number of schools
Thinking schools Academy Trust	2
West Country Schools Trust	4
Ted Wragg Trust	4
Reach South Academy Trust	2
CAST	2
Greenshaw	2
Maintained	1

Single academy trust	2
TOTAL	19

Plymouth mainstream overall outcomes 2024 (Draft and unvalidated)

	2023	2024	Difference +/-
Progress 8 (All)	-0.17	-0.10	+0.07
Progress 8 (Disadvantaged)	-0.53	-0.49	+0.04
English Progress 8	-0.06	0.06	+0.12
Maths Progress 8	-0.15	-0.04	+0.11
EBacc Progress 8	-0.17	-0.01	+0.16
Open Progress 8	0.02	-0.10	-0.08
English and Maths 5+ (All)	42%	46%	+4%
English and Maths 5+ (Disadvantaged)	32%	33%	+1%
EBacc 5+ (All)	15%	18%	+3%
A Level Academic APS	25.8	27.3	+1.5
A Level Applied APS	31.6	26.6	-5.0

Please note:

- The data in grey represents all mainstream Plymouth secondaries.
- The data sets in blue reflect 17 out of 19 mainstream secondary schools in Plymouth.
- The data in the blue lines on the table are a direct comparison of the 17 schools in 2023 against the same 17 in 2024, so the trends are still valid.
- The data sets do not include remarks and grade changes – these are ongoing. Consequently, attainment is likely to rise.
- Likewise, we are expecting a small increase in progress scores nationally (max of +0.1) when the DfE release the unvalidated data in early October – therefore progress gains are likely to increase slightly.

Plymouth mainstream secondary outcome comparison 2019 vs 2024**Plymouth Overall (inc. Grammar Schools)**

Measure	2019	2024 (Unvalidated)	Difference +/-
P8 (All)	-0.30	-0.10	+0.20
P8 (DS)	-0.70	-0.49	+0.21
Basics 5+ (All)	38%	46%	+8%
Basics 5+ (Disadvantaged)	29%	33%	+4%

The following locality tables exclude the Grammar School data (for locality breakdown see Appendix 1.1)

West (Highest deprivation)

Measure	2019	2024 (Unvalidated)	Difference +/-
---------	------	--------------------	----------------

P8 (All)	-0.96	-0.30	+0.66
P8 (DS)	-1.3	-0.65	+0.65
Basics 5+ (All)	14%	30%	+16%
Basics 5+ (Disadvantaged)	8%	21%	+13%

North

Measure	2019	2024 (Unvalidated)	Difference +/-
P8 (All)	-0.37	-0.2	+0.17
P8 (DS)	-0.6	-0.67	-0.07
Basics 5+ (All)	24%	35%	+11%
Basics 5+ (Disadvantaged)	14%	21%	+7%

South

Measure	2019	2024 (Unvalidated)	Difference +/-
P8 (All)	-0.15	+0.31	+0.46
P8 (DS)	-0.35	-0.07	+0.28
Basics 5+ (All)	28%	51%	+23%
Basics 5+ (Disadvantaged)	20%	39%	+19%

East (Lowest deprivation)

Measure	2019	2024 (Unvalidated)	Difference +/-
P8 (All)	0.0	-0.14	-0.14
P8 (DS)	-0.43	-0.61	-0.18
Basics 5+ (All)	39%	45%	+6%
Basics 5+ (Disadvantaged)	24%	25%	+1%

Key points

- The data shows that gains continue to be made in the progress and attainment of young people in Plymouth at 16.
- Potentially, for the first time ever, Plymouth may have an overall progress score close to 0.0, as well as being at the national average for Basics 5+, which has not previously happened.
- The green shoots we saw in 2022 and 2023 have continued to grow in 2024.
- School leaders and their teams have had real impact and should be commended.
- Most notably, significant gains have been in the West locality of Plymouth (highest level of deprivation).

Summary

Early indications are that the performance of schools have improved year on year across all key benchmarks. Whilst this represents a positive picture of improvement for the city, both the progress and attainment of children who experience disadvantage requires further improvement so that more children achieve key gateway qualifications in English and maths.

Disadvantaged children make up a significant percentage of the cohort in most of our mainstream schools; of the schools sharing data, nine had a year 11 cohort where in excess of 25% were entitled to free school meals: at All Saints Academy this was 50%. Without further improvements for disadvantaged children across key measures it is less likely that key benchmarks in Plymouth will draw level with national indicators.

Across benchmarks, schools that have performed well in the city are not limited to a particular trust or geographical area. This suggests that building consistency of practice in order to meet the needs of disadvantaged children is still being worked towards. This is embedded into the implementation approach of the 2024/25 place-based plan.

Potential best practice examples

Area of practice	Schools
Accelerating the progress of all children from their starting points	Coombe Dean, DHSB, DHSG, Lipson Co-operative Academy, PHSG, SMHCC.
Accelerating the progress of disadvantaged children from their starting points	DHSB, DHSG, SMHCC
All children achieving the Basics	Coombe Dean, DHSB, DHSG, Lipson Co-operative Academy, PHSG, Plymstock School, Tor Bridge High , SMHCC
Children who are disadvantaged achieving the Basics	DHSB, DHSG, Lipson Co-operative Academy, Hele's School, Sir John Hunt, Tor Bridge High, SMHCC
The attainment of all children	Coombe Dean, DHSB, DHSG, Hele's School, Lipson Co-operative Academy, PHSG, SMHCC

SECTION 3: KEY STAGE 5

This section provides an initial picture of the collective performance of secondary schools in the city for academic year 2023-24. The data is early/unvalidated and provided on a voluntary basis by schools. Therefore, data is subject to change during the autumn checking exercise in schools. National comparators

from the Department of Education (DfE) are not available at the time of writing and so it is not possible to provide fine analysis of the attainment of groups or hypothesise about trends for groups of pupils; a more detailed report will be produced early in the new year based upon DfE final validated data.

Cohort level analysis in relation to gender, special educational needs and disadvantage will be available from the October statistical release. National benchmark data will be available following the statistical release in early 2025. Data in this section of the report is provided by schools to the Place-Based Co-ordinator on a voluntary basis.

Release	Date
Key Stage 5 results release	24 October 2024
Revised Key Stage 5 revised results release	January – February 2024 (date TBC)

Key measures/terms

Average point score (APS)

The average point score (APS) that students achieved per entry,

A Level academic

A Level qualifications

A Level applied

Level 3 qualifications with a vocational focus, for example, T Levels.

The national picture

Nationally more than 800,000 A level results were issued to student in England, with grades determined by their performance in their exams and assessments. Overall, the A level results across England were similar to 2023. For As and A*'s 27.6% of entries gained the two highest grades, compared to 26.5% in 2023 and 25.2% in 2019.

Nationally the gap has widened with 49.4% private schools and 41% of grammar schools achieving A or A* grades, compared to 26.5% academies, 23.8% sixth form colleges, 22.3% comprehensive and 14.8% at further education settings.

Maths A levels has also grown nationally by 20% in year with over 100,000 entries and 17,000 entries in further maths. There was also an increase in Physics, computing, and other sciences. With a decline in Sociology, Geography, Psychology and History. The proportion of entries nationally for Applied A Level courses reduced by approx. 5% in 2024.

82% of applications to university have resulted in the students getting their first choice.

The Plymouth picture

	2023	2024	Difference +/-
A Level Academic APS	25.8	27.3	+1.5
A Level Applied APS	31.6	26.6	-5.0

Across the city the average point score (APS) for A Level grades has remained broadly stable year on year, with a slight increase of 1.5 points. However, the APS for young people taking applied courses has reduced by 5 points. It is important to note that the number of entries for Applied A Levels is generally small within our schools, and thus can lead to swings in outcomes between cohorts. Additionally, the majority of young people in Plymouth studying Applied or Vocational courses, do so at City College Plymouth. In future years we will gather City College data at this early stage.

SECTION 4: LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

This section outlines the performance of looked after children at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. This headline data is unvalidated and subject to change against the timetable outlined in sections 1 and 2 of this report.

Key Stage 2

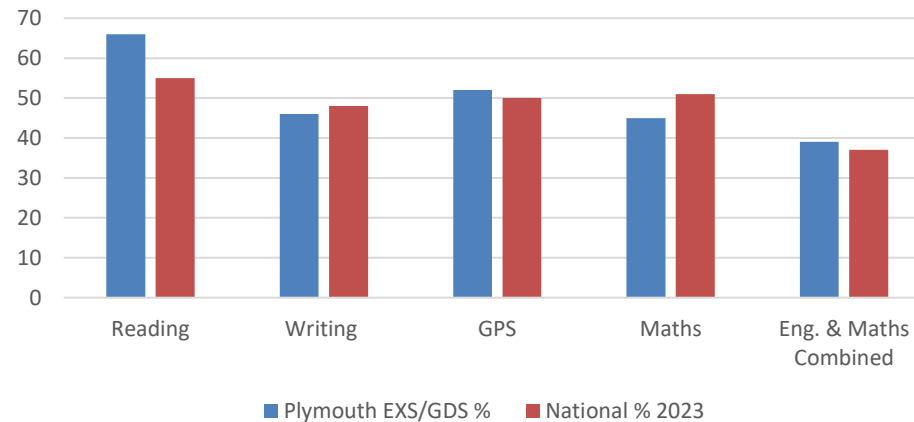
This children in care (CiC) cohort of 33 children is boy heavy with 19 (58%) and 14 (42% females. 14 children 42% live out of area (OOA) whilst 19 (58%) live in Plymouth. 7 (21%) pupils have special educational needs identified and have an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP).

Key Stage 2 SATS Results 2024							
	All <small>(national CiC figures 2023)</small>	Boys	Girls	EHCP	No EHCP	In area	Out of area
Reading	22/33 66% (55%)	12/19 63%	9/14 64%	4/7 57%	18/27 67%	12/19 63%	10/14 71%
Grammar Punctuation and Spelling	17/33 52% (50%)	10/19 53%	7/14 50%	4/7 57%	13/27 48%	8/19 42%	9/14 64%

Writing	15/33 46% (48%)	9/19 47%	6/14 43%	3/7 43%	12/27 44%	9/19 47%	6/14 43%
Maths	15/33 45% (51%)	8/19 42%	7/14 50%	3/7 43%	12/27 44%	9/19 47%	6/14 43%
English and Maths Combined	13/33 39% (37%)	7/19 37%	7/14 50%	3/7 43%	10/27 37%	8/19 42%	5/14 36%

The following **national** figures for children in care have been taken from the 2023 reporting tables as the 2024 tables are not yet published. The national numbers used are representative of CiC for 12 months or more- these figures are on average 5% higher than those for CiC for less than 12 months. The Plymouth Cohort has not been split into two categories of more or less than 12 months so the figures will be slightly lower than the national averages given this.

Comparison of Key Stage 2 SATS
Plymouth V National



Headlines

- Combined reading writing and maths for the Plymouth CiC is 39% which is slightly above the national CiC cohort by 2%. This is significantly below the national average for **all** pupils reaching combined levels at 60% 2023 and 61% in 2024.

- Teacher assessed writing levels for Plymouth CiC is 46% which is 2% below national at 48%
- Plymouth CiC outperformed the national cohort in reading by 11%.
- In grammar, punctuation and spelling, the Plymouth CiC cohort is slightly above the national CiC average by 2%.
- The national CiC cohort outperformed the Plymouth CiC cohort by 6% in maths.

Key stage 4

The 2023/24 cohort is made up of 46 young people, twenty-six boys and twenty girls. Nearly half (43%) have significant Special Educational Needs or Disabilities requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Ten attended either a Plymouth special needs school or ACE. Fourteen were educated Out of Area (five in specialist provision). Six were classed as a Child Missing Education (CME) and had highly disrupted education journeys because of multiple care placement breakdowns/moves including into unregistered settings. This cohort also has two UASC boys who sit outside this data- one came into care at the end of June so was unable to go on roll, the other young man was educated Out of Area following a ESOL pathway.

Comparison to National data below is based on 2023 statistics for CIC as the 2024 statistics were not published at the time of writing.

Qualifications in English and maths

Qualification type	GCSE Strong Pass Basics	GCSE Standard Pass Basics	GCSE 1-3 or Entry Level qualification in English and Maths	No Qualification in English and maths
Number of pupils (46)	2 (4%)	4 (9%)	18 (39%)	22 (48%)

Headlines:

- 13% of the cohort achieved a standard or strong pass in English and Maths, compared to 18.7% nationally.
- 4% of the cohort achieved a strong pass in English and Maths, compared to 9.1% nationally.
- Of the 39% who achieved a qualification in English and Maths, but at lower grades, these were GCSE grades. Entry level qualifications were only sat by pupils in specialist provision.
- 7% of the cohort missed achieving the standard pass basics measure by one grade, achieving a Grade 4 in one and Grade 3 in another. A further 4% achieved a Grade 3 in both.

Qualifications in English

Qualification type	GCSE strong Pass	GCSE Standard Pass	GCSE 1-3 or Entry Level	No Qualification in English
Number of pupils (46)	4 (9%)	3 (7%)	18 (39%)	21 (46%)

Headlines:

- Performance in English is slightly weaker than last year, it dropped in both Literature (11% compared to 13% last year) and Language (13% compared to 15% last year).
- 16% achieved a standard pass or better.
- Of the 46% who achieved no qualification in English, 24% of these were in Out of Area specialist provision or were CME.
- 13% of the cohort missed a standard basic pass in English by 1 grade.

Qualifications in Maths

Qualification type	GCSE Strong Pass	GCSE Standard Pass	GCSE 1-3 or Entry Level	No Qualification in Maths
Number of pupils (46)	3 (7%)	6 (13%)	18 (39%)	19 (41%)

Headlines:

- 20% of the cohort achieved a standard or strong pass in Maths, compared to 15% last year.
- A greater percentage of pupils did not achieve a Maths qualification: 41% this year, up from 37% last year.
- 13% of the cohort achieved a Grade 3 and so missed achieving a standard basic pass in Maths by one grade.
- Pupils placed Out of Area in specialist provision and those who were CME represented 24% of the cohort who didn't achieve a Maths qualification.

NEXT STEPS

What	When	Who
Utilise feedback from the 2023/24 assessment outcomes to facilitate opportunities for those schools/Trusts identified as presenting best practice examples for accelerating the progress of children who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs, in the early years foundation stage and across the primary and secondary phases.	31 January 2025 (depending on the data release date)	Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer, Plymouth City Council
Carry out in-depth analysis of the disadvantaged cohort & children with SEND based on validated data at all key stages.	31 January 2025 (depending on the data release date)	Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer; Graham Roser, Education Improvement Partner and Tina Brinkworth, Head of Post-16 and Skills
Prepare a report for the Plymouth Education Board that identifies trends and next steps for improving the attainment of children who are disadvantaged or have SEND.	25 March 2025	Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer, Plymouth City Council, Jim Barnicott, Head of Education, Plymouth City Council & Rob Williams, Place-Based Co-ordinator

Plan the spring term Headteacher and Trust leader conference to include a focus on specific areas for development that are highlighted in the 2024 city-wide attainment data.	6 March 2025	Jim Barnicott, Head of Education, Plymouth City Council & Rob Williams, Place-Based Co-ordinator
Include themes identified in the 2024 city-wide attainment data in the multi-academy trust inclusion meeting agenda.	31 January 2025	Jim Barnicott, Head of Education, Plymouth City Council
Pupil underperformance to be specifically identified, recorded and tracked at all PEPS by the Virtual School team so that pupil premium funding can be targeted to early intervention	1 September 2025	Virtual School team, Plymouth City Council
Virtual School to support schools and trusts to develop a Functional Skills pathway for those pupils identified as not on track to achieve a standard pass in English and Maths.	13 January 2025	Simon Plunkett, Education Consultant, Plymouth Virtual School
Fortnightly meetings to be established to track Children missing education in order to move at pace to place in education provision.	31 October 2024	Lee Earnshaw, Head Teacher of Plymouth Virtual School; Joanna Burke Deputy Head Teacher of Plymouth Virtual School; Simon Plunkett, Education Consultant, Plymouth Virtual School
Explore digital intervention programs that can be used to support reading and related writing skills to support the children in care cohort across the primary and secondary phases.	20 December 2024	Joanna Burke, Deputy Head Teacher of Plymouth Virtual School

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	14 November 2024
Title of Report:	Q2 2024/25 Performance Report
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Paul Stephens & Susan London
Contact Email:	paul.stephens@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	PSCSS-2024/25(Q2)
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To share key performance data information related to Children Services (Children, Young People and Family Services and Education, Participation and Skills)

Recommendations and Reasons

To note the attached briefing paper for information and discussion

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not applicable

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Not applicable

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

For information

Financial Risks

Not applicable

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Not applicable

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	N/A	Leg	N/A	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 05/11/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Laing & Cllr Cresswell via email											
Date approved: 01/11/2024											

Q2 2024/25 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

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I. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY SERVICES

I.1. REFERRALS & RE-REFERRALS				Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q2 2024/25
1	Number of referrals received within the last 12 months	3,285	2,415	3,961	544.5 (2022/23)	739.1 (2022/23)	3,676
	Referrals received within the last 12 months - Rate per 10,000 children	616.4	467.7	762.4			707.5
2	Number of re-referrals within 12 months (last 12 months)	743	483	821	22.4% (2022/23)	24.3% (2022/23)	938
	% of re-referrals within 12 months (last 12 months)	22.6%	20.0%	20.7%			25.5%

In the 12 months to the end of quarter two, Plymouth progressed 3,676 referrals, this is 285 less than the 12 months to March 2023 but 1,261 more than the 12 months to March 2022. At a rate per 10,000 children (enabling comparisons against other authorities) Plymouth is reported at 707.5 at the end of quarter two. This is higher than Plymouth's published position for 2022/23 (467.7) and between the statistical neighbour average of 739.1, and the England average of 544.5.

The proportion of re-referrals received (where a referral had been received for the same child in the 12 months prior) has seen an increase (up 1.5pp) in the last quarter. The end of quarter two position was reported at 25.5%, up 5.5 percentage points from Plymouth's published figure for 2022/23. Plymouth is currently at a level higher than the 2022/23 published levels for both its statistical neighbours and the England average.

During the quarter under review, we have seen a decrease in the number of contacts progressing to assessment at the front door, attributed to the rigor and collaborative efforts with colleagues from Targeted Help and partner agencies within the MASH. Plans are in progress to involve more partner agencies in the MASH HUB, aiming for expedited and well-informed decision-making regarding contacts and ensuring timely intervention and support for children and their families. Though early in the process, we are pleased with the significant reduction in caseload and will continue to provide relevant training and workshops to enhance the skill set of MASH staff, ultimately leading to a safer and more effective service for children and families.

In the current quarter, we have observed a slight increase in re-referrals. To address this, we are conducting desktop exercises to evaluate previous assessments, interventions and support offered, ensuring they served their intended purpose. We are also assessing whether these families could have been directed to alternative services upon completing their assessments to consolidate and fully embed the changes and improvement intended. As indicated above, our current re-referral rate exceeds the published levels for our statistical neighbours and the national average for the 2022/23 period. As a service, we are dedicated to maintaining a low re-referral rate, which indicates that prior interventions have contributed to sustained positive changes and improvements for our families. As a learning organization, we will continue to review and monitor these cohorts, applying the appropriate thresholds and services. Furthermore, we aim to enhance our understanding of family histories and chronologies to better inform our assessments, planning, and interventions, while improving our targeted support offers for families.

1.2. CHILDREN IN NEED

1.2. CHILDREN IN NEED				Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q2 2024/25
3	Number of children subject to a Child In Need Plan (snapshot)	965	944	1,379	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	820
	Children subject to a Child In Need Plan - Rate per 10,000 children	181.1	177.1	265.4	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	157.8

Quarter two has seen a decrease in Plymouth's 'Child in Need' caseload (which does not include children subject to Children Protection Plans or Looked after Children) and was at a level lower than the last three year-end positions. We draw your attention to the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan or Child in Care Plan (next two sections) which are currently at a higher level than the previous two year-end positions, indicating that children are generally receiving the right level of support.

As a result of the practice improvement work across the department we have seen a decrease in the number of children open in the department under a Child in Need plan, this is as a result of the practice improvement work being undertaken and the close scrutiny of plans by senior management.

We know that children may need support and through early intervention could avoid coming into statutory services. There is a workstream that has been developed with partners to identify a clear pathway for families who can easily access early help and targeted early help without requiring social work intervention. We have started to see this in the volume of referral and subsequent assessments, which is really positive for families as we would want to ensure they receive the least intrusive interventions where possible.

The children social work service has four weekly Child in Need tracker meetings chaired by the service managers to enable reflective discussions and ensure there is no drift and delay around the support and intervention for families. The service continues to embed quality assurance work with specific focus on these four areas of improvement.

1. Assessment
2. Plans
3. Supervision
4. Visits

Training and development continues for all managers. There is a specific management programme which is underway for aspiring team managers, with Heads of Service supporting them to develop the skills and confidence to manage and lead teams. This is alongside the 'Leaders for Excellence' programme.

1.3. CHILDREN SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Ref	Indicator Name	Previous Year & Benchmarking					Current Period
		2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q2 2024/25
4	Number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (Snapshot)	326	230	296	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	306
	Children subject to a Child Protection Plan - Rate per 10,000 children	61.2	44.5	57.0	43.2 (2022/23)	55.9 (2022/23)	58.9
5	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Neglect	51.5% (168)	45.9% (107)	50.3% (149)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	54.9% (168)
	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Physical Abuse	7.7% (25)	6.4% (15)	8.4% (25)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	6.9% (21)
	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Sexual Abuse	3.7% (12)	4.3% (10)	8.4% (25)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	8.8% (27)
	Category of abuse for current Child Protection Plan: Emotional Abuse	37.1% (121)	43.3% (101)	32.8% (97)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	29.4% (90)
6	% of children subject to multiple child protection plans - Within lifetime of the child (new plans starting in last 12 months)	27.5% (103)	25.8% (65)	30.2% (112)	23.6% (2022/23)	24.7% (2022/23)	25.4% (112)

At the end of quarter two (30 September 2024) there were 306 children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan. This is a rate of 58.9 children per 10,000 children, which is higher than the published 2022/23 rate of 44.5 (230 children) and our provisional rate of 57.0 for 2023/24 (296 children). The rate per 10,000 children is currently 15.7 above the England average and 3.0 above our Statistical Neighbour average. We had previously advised the Scrutiny Committee (on 28 February) that we anticipated that the number of children on Child Protection Plans would increase over quarter four of 2023/24 as practice in this area continued to improve. The current level of 306 is reasonably close to the 285 to 295 children we predicted back in February.

The proportion of children who became subject to a Child Protection Plan within the 12 months up to the end of quarter two (October 2023 to September 2024), who have been on a previous Child Protection Plan in their lifetime was reported at 25.4% (down 4.6 percentage points on 31 March 2024). During the last 12 months, 112 children/young people have started repeated Child Protection Plans (within their lifetime), whilst this is a decrease on the end of 2023/24 position, it remains higher than the published 2022/23 statistical neighbours average of 24.7% and the England average of 23.6%.

There is a strong focus on requests for repeat Child Protection Plans with greater oversight by Service Managers. This provides more consistency and further opportunity to have reflective

discussions to ensure that the care plan is right for these children, or whether we can work differently with the family.

There is also a strong focus on Child Protection Plans over 12 months, with monthly meetings chaired by the Service Manager for safeguarding who is ensuring that there is grip and timely decisions for children.

The department is working with the Plymouth Safeguarding Partnership Board to roll out the 'NSPCC Neglect Graded Care Profile 2 Assessment Tool' to support all staff and volunteers working across the system to identify and improve support for children and young people who may experience neglect. We are working towards ensuring all staff undertaking assessments have been trained by the end of 2024.

As part of our improvement journey, we are equipping our social workers with a better understanding of the identification of sexual abuse and domestic abuse; this is visible in the information shown above with a shift in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for these reasons.

1.4. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (ALSO REFERRED TO AS CHILDREN IN CARE)

				Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q2 2024/25
7	Number of children subject to a Care Plan - Looked After Children (Snapshot)	490	500	515	71.0 (2022/23)	96.5 (2022/23)	517
	Children subject to a Care Plan - Looked After Children - Rate per 10,000 children	91.9	96.9	99.1			99.5
8	Number of Looked After Children in an unregistered placement (snapshot)	4	6	9	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	6
9	% of Looked After Children placed outside of the city of Plymouth (i.e., the placement is not within PL1 to PL7 or PL9)	38.0% (23% DfE – city boundary)	39.9% (25% DfE – city boundary)	42.7% (220)	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	42.7% (221)
10	Placement Type: Family Placement (fostering or connected carers)	325	339	368	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	356
	Placement Type: Children's Homes, Residential Care Homes & Residential Schools	56	57	57	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	54
	Placement Type: Hostels & other Supportive accommodation	33	48	47	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	50
	Placement Type: Lodgings or Independent living (16+)	16	x	x	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	x
	Placement Type: Other Placement	x	5	8	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	5
	Placement Type: Placed for Adoption	24	18	5	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	10
	Placement Type: Placed with Parents	28	32	26	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	36
	Placement Type: Other accommodation - NHS, Family Centres, Parent & Child	7	x	x	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	5
	Placement Type: Secure Units & Youth Offender Institutions	x	x	x	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	x

Please note: where the number of children is below five, the actual figure is suppressed and shows 'x'.

On 30 September 2024, there were 517 children/young people who are children in care. This is a net increase of 17 children/young people on the published figure for 2022/23 and two more than the provisional figure of 515 for 2023/24. The average month-end position for the last 12 months is calculated at 517 children/young people.

Following on from the Sector Lead Improvement Partnership (SLIP) work around children and young people's long-term matching for permanence, the Head of Service is now chairing a monthly oversight and tracking meeting to ensure timely progression of permanence for children. We will also be delivering a week of lunchtime workshops around safe and settled care arrangements for children in care in January 2025 to focus on permanence matching and stable care.

296 (57.7%) of children in care are placed within the city, the remaining 221 children (42.7%) placed outside of the city. This is reported at the same level as our provisional figure for 2023/24 but higher than 2021/22 and 2022/23 figures published by the DfE. This measure is simply based on the postcode of the child's placement address. Those not within PL1 to PL7 or PL9 are considered outside of the city. For example, PL12 refers to Saltash in Cornwall (potentially be less than a mile from a child's home address), but it is outside of Plymouth. Using provisional information, approximately 75.0% of children in care are placed within 20 miles of their home address (388 of 517). 42 children / young people (8.1%) were placed more than 125 miles from their home address.

Work to increase sufficiency to provide the right homes for children in or close to Plymouth and to progress plans for individual children continues to be monitored through Children's Resource Panel and our Family Homes for Plymouth's Children Board. Sufficiency of fostering homes for children and young people remains a challenge both locally and nationally. This has impacted the timeliness of young people stepping out of residential settings into family-based care.

We continue to work creatively through our Brokerage Team and using our STEPS program to identify family-based placements for the children and young people who are assessed as being ready to move into a family-based placement with careful preparation and matching. In addition, work continues to grow the number of in-house Foster Carers with increased recruitment activity both locally and via the Regional Fostering Hub. An increase in in-house foster carers has yielded a decrease on the reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies, and we have also seen an uplift in applications to foster this financial year.

Although not within quarter two, it is also of note that in October, Foster for Plymouth joined a growing partnership of Councils and Children's Trusts across the Country to produce a short film called '[Everything](#)' to promote local authority fostering. This was launched nationally with a premier on 17 October in Birmingham and then Foster for Plymouth hosted a premiere on 18 October. The formal launch of Mockingbird in Plymouth (a global award-winning programme led by The Fostering Network in the UK) took place on Friday 01 November, with a celebratory event with Foster Carers, Children and Young People.

The Special Guardianship Support Team was formally launched in Kinship Care Week (7-14 October 2024). Consultation sessions have taken place with Special Guardians which have informed the SGO Support Offer. This will clarify and increase the offer of support to promote stable care arrangements to prevent disruption of these family arrangements and enables prospective Special Guardians to feel confident in caring for a child under a Special Guardianship Order, which in turn should result in increased discharges from care.

1.5. CARE EXPERIENCED (ALSO REFERRED TO AS CARE LEAVERS)

Ref	Indicator Name	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2023/24 Provisional	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q2 2024/25
11	% of Care Experienced young people in Unsuitable Accommodation (Statutory Service (aged 18 to 20))	6.1% (11/181) (11% DfE)	4.1% (8/192) (12% DfE)	9.5% (19/201)	12.0% (2022/23 DfE)	11.2% (2022/23 DfE)	6.4% (13/203)
12	% of Care Experienced young people in Education, Employment and Training (Statutory Service (EET aged 18 to 20))	56.4% (102/181) (49% DfE)	50.0% (96/192) (47.0% DfE)	43.3% (87/201)	56.0% (2022/23 DfE)	55.3% (2022/23 DfE)	43.3% (88/203)

Plymouth's quarter two figures show that the proportion of Care Experienced young people in unsuitable accommodation (6.4%) was at a lower than both the England average and the statistical neighbour average (as published for 2022/23). The cohort of young people in unsuitable accommodation has improved on our provisional figure for 2023/24 and has returned to levels comparable to those published for 2021/22 and 2022/23. This cohort of young people is rigorously reviewed and reported via our internal reporting monthly.

The Housing and Preparation for Adulthood meeting continues to ensure that timely plans are in place for young people as they approach 18 and this is contributing to the improved suitability figures and a reduction in lengthy and costly extensions to children's placements post 18. Robust monitoring of those young people over 18 who are in unsuitable accommodation continues to focus on the support plans in place and joint working with community connections to move young people into suitable accommodation.

Those in Education, Employment and Training were reported at a level circa 12.0 to 12.7 percentage points lower than the 2022/23 published figures for our comparators.

We continue to focus on the cohort of young people recorded as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in targeted monthly review meetings and implementing an individualised action plan through the Skills Launchpad. A period of enhanced incentivisation for young people moving from NEET to into training or education, even if this is a part time or voluntary experience is being explored to assess whether this improves engagement.

Work continues within Plymouth City Council and across the business community to develop supported opportunities across the Council, our partners and the wider community for care experienced young people to access work shadowing, work experience, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities. The fostering recruitment activity with local businesses and communities will also enhance this work. Activity during care leavers week has focused on young people's feedback about positive work experience and university study will encourage employers to think further about their role.

Please note: The DfE calculation differs from our local figures. We include all care leavers (Qualifying, Relevant & Former Relevant) and use the latest information available for those aged under 21. However, the DfE only include Former Relevant care leavers and use information held around the young person's 19th, 20th or 21st birthday.

2. EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND SKILLS

2.1. OFSTED OUTCOMES

Ref	Indicator Name	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2022/23 Actual	England	South West	Q1 2024/25
1	% of all schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding	Inspections paused due to COVID	76.0%	77.6%	89.6% (pub. Dec 2023) 90.4% (End of August report)	86.9% (pub. Dec 2023) 86.6% (End of August report)	90.8% (89/98) End of August position
2	% of pupils attending Plymouth schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding	Inspections paused due to COVID	77.1%	81.0%	Not benchmarked	Not benchmarked	90.5% (32,201 / 35,576)

There are 98 state-funded schools in Plymouth and at the end of quarter two for 2024/25, 90.8% of schools are judged as Good or Outstanding.. When we break this figure down into the number of primary, secondary, and special schools judged as Good or better, we can see that there are:

- 2 out of 2 Nurseries (100% compared to 97.4% nationally)
- 65 out of 69 Primary Schools (94.2% compared to 91.6% nationally),
- 16 out of 19 Secondary Schools (84.2% compared to 83.8% nationally), and
- 5 out of 7 Special Schools (71.4% compared to 90.5% nationally).

As we have moved into a new academic year, based on local information on pupils on roll, at the end of September 90.5% of pupils are attending a school judged as good or outstanding in our city.

From September 2024, OFSTED no longer provides a one-word judgement on the overall effectiveness of a school. Therefore, the figure will remain static for future reporting until it can be established how OFSTED will be using inspection data for monitoring purposes.

2.2. ABSENCE MONITORING

Ref	Indicator Name	2020/21 Plymouth	2021/22 Plymouth	Current published data & Benchmarking			Current Period
				Plymouth	England	South West	Q2 2024/25
3	% of overall absence in all schools	4.9%	8.8%	8.2% (Academic Year 2022/23) 8.1% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	7.4% (Academic Year 2022/23) 6.9% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	7.6% (Academic Year 2022/23) 7.4% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	7.9% (Local data – 01/07/24 to 30/09/24)
4	% of persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) in all schools	12.9%	28.1%	24.1% (Academic Year 23/24) 23.2% (Autumn & Spring 23/24)	21.2% (Academic year 22/23) 19.2% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	21.3% (Academic year 22/23) 20.3% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	23.1% (Of which 3.6% were severely absent) (Local data – 01/07/24 to 30/09/24)

5	% of persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) of pupils with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs)	38.8%	45.0%	40.5% (Academic Year 22/23) 38.4% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	36.0% (Academic Year 22/23) 34.8% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	37.8% (Academic Year 22/23) 37.8% (Autumn & Spring 2023/24)	36.6% (632) (Of which 11.0% (190) were severely absent) (Local data 01/07/24 to 30/09/2024)
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The benchmark information provided above is provided from the Department for Education “Pupil absence in schools in England” collection. This is a statutory return completed on a termly basis. The best available report for the three indicators above is the 2022/23 academic year data. There is additional Autumn & Spring Term 2023/24 data now published for benchmarks and characteristic data and is also above.

Local unvalidated data for Q2 2024/25 (01/07/2024 to 30/09/2024) for those with an EHCP who are persistently absent currently sits at 36.6%.

As this quarter broaches the end of the previous academic year and the start of the new academic year, data for the full academic year 2023/24 and the first month of 2024/25, have been provided as follows:

Local unvalidated data from the Plymouth Inclusion Scorecard showed for the academic year 2023/24, that:

- Overall absence rate for the 2023/24 (01/09/2023 to 31/08/2024) was 8.2%
- The percentage of those persistently absent was 28.3%
- The percentage of those with an EHCP who were persistently absent was 40.5%.

Local unvalidated data from the Plymouth Inclusion Scorecard showed for the month of September 2024/25, that:

- Overall absence rate was 6.1%.
- The percentage of those persistently absent was 18.2%
- The percentage of those with an EHCP who were persistently absent was 25.8%.

The ‘Strong Start to September’ campaign was run in the first month of the academic year to encourage attendance from the start of the academic year. Comparing this September’s data to last September’s data is showing a 0.8% improvement in attendance and in 12.1% decrease in persistent absence. Fortnightly contact between Attendance Support Team and schools has been established and Access and Attendance Officers will continue to monitor attendance on a fortnightly basis for each school in Plymouth.

The place-based approach to attendance begun in 2023/24, will continue into 2024/25, focusing on inclusion, mobility and those who experience disadvantage. The headteacher conference held in October 2024, has ratified the place-based action plan with this focus. The Health and Well-being Officer in Education is working with schools in a ‘Team Around the School’ focus on look at increasing suspension numbers, which often contribute and compound the issue of absence. Deep dive work into persistent and severe absence, children moving to Elective Home Education, and suspensions and permanent exclusions will continue to drive attendance strategies.

2.3. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

2.3. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING				Previous Year & Benchmarking			Current Period
Ref	Indicator Name	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	England	Statistical Neighbours	Q1 2024/25
6	% of 16- and 17-year-olds in Education, Employment and Training	92.1%	91.1%	90.4%	92.5% (Q4 2022/23)	Not benchmarked	93.3% (End of Academic year 2023/24)
7	% of 16- and 17-year-olds with SEND in Education, Employment and Training	83.1%	83.2%	81.4%	88.7% (Q4 2022/23)	Not benchmarked	86.1% (End of Academic year 2023/24)

As quarter two covers the end of the academic year 2023/24 and the beginning of the academic year 2024/25, the data above covers the end of the academic year 2023/24, where 93.3% of 16- and 17-year-olds were participating in Education, Employment, and/or Training (EET) and 86.1% of young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities were in education, training and/or employment. This is a slight reduction in both figures on the end of Q1, but this is an annual pattern seen as young people come to the end of courses in June and July.

It is important to note that Education, Employment and Training data is not recorded for September and October, to allow for the transition of young people leaving statutory education and those moving on from further education to employment. Continuing the positive engagement of 2023/24, the target for 16 & 17 year olds with SEND, being in Education, Employment and Training has been raised to 92% for the 2024/25 year.

Moving young people from not being in education, employment, and training (NEET) to seeking (SEET), education, employment, and training will continue to be the focus of the Participation and Skills Team. At the start of 2024/25, the team continue to widen their offer of extensive support to transition into employment, education or training to groups who may experience disadvantage, including (but not exclusive to) those in care, care leavers, young carers and young parents.

Positive updates at the start of 2024/25 include:

- More than 50 young people with EHCP's on supported internships
- Over 120 young people accessing the SEND Innovation and Progression Funds
- 80 skills action plans created with the Skills Launchpad Team
- The continuation of young people successfully completing the 'Your Future' programme and progressing to positive next steps, that began in 2023/24

2.4. KEY STAGE 4 OUTCOMES

Ref	Indicator Name	2020/21 Plymouth	2021/22 Plymouth	Current published data & Benchmarking			Current Period
				2022/23 Plymouth	2022/23 England	2022/23 Statistical Neighbours	2023/24 Plymouth
8	Key Stage 4 - % of pupils achieving 5+ in English and Maths	51.9%	46.0%	41.7% (1,214/ 2,912)	45.5% (22/23 revised)	43.2% (22/23 revised)	46.0% (School reported data)
9	Key Stage 4 - Average Attainment 8 score	50.5 points	47.6 points	44.9 Points (Average score for 2,912 pupils)	46.4 points (22/23 revised)	45.0 points (22/23 revised)	Not yet available

Outcomes for the end of Key Stage 4 (the point at which the majority of 15- & 16-year-olds complete GCSE's at the end of their statutory education) are measured primarily through numerical values assigned per GCSE subject (or an equivalent value for a non-numerical qualification outcome such as a 'pass' at BTEC).

For each pupil, for each GCSE subject completed and assessed, a value will be provided between one and nine (nine being the highest achieved level). A 'level 4' is considered to be a 'standard' pass, a 'level 5' is considered to be a 'strong' pass. Attainment 8 is the sum of the eight highest achieved passes by a student; these figures are then averaged per school, per Local Authority and nationally to create performance measures. Further information can be found in Annex 1 – Indicator Definitions

The pupil level results used to calculate performance measures, will be directly available to the LA in October 2024 (after the checking and appeals process), along with national, regional and statistical neighbour comparators.

Early reported data from schools for 2023/24 is suggesting that 46.0% of all KS4 pupils will achieve a strong pass in English and Maths at Key Stage Four. This is an increase by 4.3pp from 41.7% in 2022/23.

In 2022/23, 41.7% of pupils achieved the 'basics' (5+ in English and Maths). This sits below National (45.5%) and statistical neighbour (43.2%) averages. Performance in Plymouth is 4.3 percentage points lower than the previous academic year, which is just below the decrease seen nationally from 50.0% to 45.5% (4.5pp reduction).

In 2022/23, the average Attainment 8 score was 44.9 points. This is below the national (46.4 points) and statistical neighbour (45.0 points) averages.

18.5% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieved 'the basics' (5+ in English and Maths). This is below the national average for FSM pupils at 25.0%.

8.2% of pupils with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) and 18.7% of pupils receiving SEN (Special Educational Needs) Support achieved 'the Basics'. This is above the national average of 6.9% for EHCP pupils and below the national average of 20.7% of pupils receiving SEN Support nationally.

3. ANNEX 1: INDICATOR DEFINITIONS

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY SERVICES
<p>Referrals & Re-Referrals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where concerns about a child have been raised to Children, Young People and Family Services, once the initial contact has been screened by our multi-agency hub, if appropriate, referrals will be accepted. The rate of referrals per 10,000 children is based on the number of referrals received in the 12-month period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities. A re-referral is where we receive a new referral for a child within 12 months of a previous referral. The indicator is based on a rolling 12-month period (e.g., 01 December to 30 November).
<p>Children In Need – CIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the purposes of this report, the number of children within the CIN cohort are those that have been assessed as being in need (but not CP or LAC) and the number of children who are in the process of being assessed to understand their level of need. The rate of CIN per 10,000 children is based on the number of CIN at the end of the period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities.
<p>Children subject to a Child Protection Plan - CP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Child Protection Plan should assess the likelihood of the child suffering harm and look at ways that the child can be protected. It should decide upon short and long term aims to reduce the likelihood of harm to the child and to protect the child's welfare, clarify people's responsibilities and actions to be taken; and outline ways of monitoring and evaluating progress. The rate of CP per 10,000 children is based on the number of CP at the end of the period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities. There are four categories for a Child Protection Plan; Neglect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Emotional Abuse. The table shows the number and proportion under each category. The % of children subject to multiple child protection plans is the proportion of new Child Protection Plan starting within the period, that are for a child who has had a previous Child Protection Plan at any time in the child's lifetime. The indicator is based on a rolling 12-month period (e.g., the proportion of new Child Protection Plans that started in the period 01 December to 30 November).
<p>Looked After Children (also referred to as Children in Care) - LAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The table shows the number of Looked After Children at the end of the reporting period. The rate of LAC per 10,000 children is based on the number of LAC at the end of the period divided by the number of children aged 0 to 17 in the city (ONS estimate this at 53,291 for Mid-2021) multiplied by 10,000. This gives a rate that can be benchmarked against other authorities. The proportion of placements outside of the city is simply based on the postcode of the child's placement address. Those not within PL1 to PL7 or PL9 are considered outside of the city. For example, PL12 refers to Saltash in Cornwall, which could potentially be less than a mile from a child's home address, but it is outside of Plymouth. The figures provided for the placement types follow the Department for Education and Ofsted definitions, grouping multiple types into nine groups (for example, Family Placements contains six different placement types).
<p>Care Experienced (also referred to as Care Leavers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is deemed as 'Unsuitable' accommodation has been defined by the Department for Education. The following are examples of unsuitable accommodation: Bed and Breakfast / Emergency Accommodation, Prison, Temporary/No fixed abode/Street Homeless, Unknown/Not in Touch. The proportion of Care Experienced young people in Education, Employment and Training is based on our statutory service and therefore covers those young people ages 18 to 20. Whilst we work with Care Experienced young people aged 21 to 24, support is optional for the young person. Please note: The figures are likely to be different to the published Department for Education figures as they look at the age of the young person during the year at the period around their birthday and not at a specific snapshot.

EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND SKILLS**Ofsted Outcomes**

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting schools and other social care services for children. There are four possible Ofsted ratings that a school can receive; Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate. These Ofsted grades are based on inspectors' judgements across four Ofsted categories – quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development of pupils, leadership and management as set out under the [Ofsted framework 2019](#).

Absence Monitoring

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance as set out in [Working together to improve school attendance](#).

Education, Employment or Training

The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday, although in practice the vast majority of young people continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. The responsibility and accountability for young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) lies with the local authority and is set out in [Participation Statutory Guidance](#). The Department for Education (DfE) monitors the performance of local authorities in delivering their duties, and specifically in their tracking and supporting of 16 and 17 year olds.

Key Stage Four Outcomes

Key Stage 4 (KS4) is the legal term for the two years of school education which incorporate GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education). During this time, pupils must follow relevant programmes of study from the National Curriculum. At the end of this stage, pupils are entered for a range of external examinations. Following a phased introduction since 2017, GCSEs taken in 2020 and 2021 are all reformed GCSEs graded on a 9-1 scale. Two particular measures are commonly reported on at key stage four:

- percentage pupils achieving 5-9s at English and Maths GCSE in the city, and
- average Attainment 8 scores achieved by schools across the city.

Attainment 8 is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight government approved school subjects. While these numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score. The eight subjects are divided into three categories, called "buckets":

- Bucket 1 - English and maths, which are worth double marks, but English will only count for double marks if both English literature and English (i.e., English language) are taken. The higher grade of the two is used;
- Bucket 2 – The top three scores from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects taken, i.e. sciences, computer science, history, geography and languages;
- Bucket 3 – The top three scores from remaining EBacc subjects or other government approved qualifications (e.g., other GCSEs or Level 2 Certificates in some technical subjects).

The grades are converted into points, put through a formula and finally out comes the school's Attainment 8 score.

4. ANNEX 2: OTHER SOURCES OF PUBLISHED INFORMATION

<p>LG Inform</p> <p>The local area benchmarking tool from the Local Government Association</p>	<p>https://lginform.local.gov.uk/</p>
<p>GOV.UK - Explore education statistics</p> <p>Find related information and other statistical services provided by the Department for Education (DfE)</p>	<p>https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/</p>
<p>Children's Social Care - Outcomes and Enablers</p> <p>This dashboard displays data indicators to help both local and central government understand progress towards the outcomes and enablers set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework</p>	<p>https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/csc-outcomes-enablers/</p>

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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	14 November 2024
Title of Report:	Children, Young People and Families Service Quarterly Improvement Update
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Vivien Lines
Contact Email:	Vivien.lines@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide Scrutiny members with an update on improvements in the Children, Young People and Families Service in line with the milestones set out in our three year plan, Achieving Excellence, and in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in January 2024.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. To enable Scrutiny Board Members to scrutinise, challenge and question the report to assure themselves that progress is being made in line with the timescales expected and that outcomes for children and young people are being improved.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. None.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Keeping children and young people safe.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

A three year transformation plan is in place with improvements in the quality of social work practice linked to reducing financial pressures, particularly on the costs of agency social workers and residential placements for children in care.

Financial Risks

None.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

None.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council’s duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

Improved support to children and families ensures risks are managed effectively and has the potential to impact positively on child poverty.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	Click here to enter text.	Leg	Click here to enter text.	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Temilola Salimon											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 06/11/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Laing approved via email											
Date approved: 06/11/2024											

Introduction

This report provides an update on the progress of the plan to improve the quality, timeliness and outcomes of our children's social care services. This plan was developed following the ILACS and to take forward relevant priorities in Achieving Excellence, our strategic plan for Children's Services 2024-27.

1. Progress on priority areas identified in the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

The improvements put in place in priority areas following the ILACS (including to Out of Hours services and Local Authority Designated Officer response to allegations against professionals) set out in the last quarterly report was confirmed by our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) in their work presented to the September Improvement Board and as a result we have ended our accelerated Improvement Plans for the Out of Hours and the LADO services. Further improvement work is now set out as part of their service plans.

For the Out of Hours service this includes recruiting permanently to the staff team, which continues to be challenging despite ongoing activity, and taking forward options to redesign the service to strengthen alignment with daytime services, working closely with colleagues in Adults and Housing. Interviews are taking place for a permanent LADO on 5th November and the LADO Annual Report is now finalised confirming good progress in the service to strengthen decision making and recording.

2. Front Door

We continue to ensure the improvements put in place in the Front Door since the Ofsted focused visit in December 2023 with progress confirmed by both our Sector Led Improvement Partner (SLIP) Dorset and Ofsted during the ILACS in January, are sustained. Responses continue to be timely with 83% of MASH contact decisions being made within one working day during September. 87% of referral visits were made within 5 working days and 99% within 10 working days. 80% of strategy discussions were held within one working day.

A live learning approach is now in place in Targeted Help, MASH and the Initial Response Teams where managers are auditing key decisions to ensure families receive the right help at the right time. This is supported by auditing by the Operational MASH group. Whilst this confirms that decisions for strategy meetings are appropriate, we continue to identify opportunities for families to be supported outside of the statutory social work approach. As a result of refocusing the Targeted Help offer, progress continues to be made in increasing the number of families receiving Targeted Help and the number of referrals progressed by the MASH is being sustained at a lower level (263 in Sept compared to 443 in Jan 2024). In May, 235 families were receiving support from non-statutory services, 340 were in September.

However, we remain concerned that the rate of re-referral has increased again, from 16.4% in July to 36.9% in September although 25% of these were within 12 months of previous involvement. A plan of work is in place to ensure we improve the support families receive once statutory social work ends their involvement. This has included aligning our targeted Help offer with the MASH and Initial Response Teams to ensure support is in place at an early point, and strengthening the early engagement of early help services in work with families so that families remain well supported when statutory services are no longer involved. We continue to extend the use of family led decision making approaches including family network meetings and Family Group Conferencing (FGC) so that more families are offered a family led support plan when they first need help. Detailed practice guidance for Family Network Meetings is in place and briefings are being held for all teams, delivered by our Family and Community Solutions Team who deliver our FGC offer, to ensure that family capacity is fully utilised in all cases, particularly where there is a risk of the child coming into care.

Work has started to develop a more integrated front door across our children's service, building on the commitment to conversation-based approaches. A plan is in place setting out the work to progress this over the next 18 months.

Strategic and Operational MASH Boards continue to ensure strong partnership engagement and oversight of practice and in the analysis of and response to patterns of demand and performance and quality assurance that drives improvement priorities. This includes a programme of partnership dip sampling of priority areas including consent and strategy meetings which is finding appropriate decision making.

3. Timely and effective social work practice when it is needed which keeps children and young people safe and improves wider outcomes.

All children benefit from a timely and comprehensive assessment

Focused management attention to ensuring assessments are completed in time has improved performance to 83% completed in time in September from 63.9% in July. We are pleased that as a result of the assessment training programme the Academy have been delivering, the July and August audit cycle identified more 'good' and 'outstanding' elements in assessments, with 34% of audits found to be 'good' and 63% 'requires improvement' compared to 25% 'good' and 75% 'requires improvement' in June. One was judged to be 'inadequate' and the practice issues identified were addressed immediately.

Following the quality assurance work earlier in the year improving practice where there are concerns about child sexual abuse continues to be a service priority. Joint development work is taking place with the Initial Response and Children's Social Work Teams with the Quality Assurance Team over the summer, and joint service development away day taking place in November including attendance by the CSA Centre for Excellence. We are ensuring all staff are aware of and using the guidance and resources developed by the PSCP on neglect, child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and adolescent safety in their assessments and work with families.

A programme of work is in place to improve our multi-agency response to child exploitation including;

- Comparing the content of the recently completed Children's Society's missing children benchmarking tool with our own self-evaluation against the Ofsted Inspection criteria.
- Implementing the revised Adolescent Safety Framework.
- Delivering partnership training from the start of November.
- Updating tools and guidance on the PSCP website.

Quality assurance of our child exploitation practice is planned is being completed this month to evaluate progress and inform future learning.

Following learning from quality assurance earlier in the year, guidance has also been strengthened on assessment where there are concerns about unborn babies setting out expectations about how professionals work together to assess risks and ensure effective planning is in place for babies at birth.

All children and young people benefit from high quality planning

We continue to ensure all children have an up to date and high-quality plan, supported by mandatory training from the Academy which has been being delivered since September and all staff are attending. At the end of September 90% of children in need and 96% of children in care have an up-to-date plan. Whilst only 76% of children on a child protection plan have an up-to-date plan, this is due to a delay in getting the records of core groups onto Eclipse following the meetings. 100% of reviews of children on a child protection plan are on time.

To improve the quality of Pathway Plans for children leaving care we have worked with care experienced young people to agree a new format for the plan to ensure children's views and experiences are at the heart of planning and that the plan covers all key outcomes required in preparation for independence. The new Pathway Plan format is now being set up on Eclipse and will be available to practitioners from January 2025. In the meantime, practitioners are working with young people to review their plan and quality assurance activity of pathway plans and the experiences of care leavers is planned as part of a practice review week on the experience of care leavers planned in November.

At the end of September, 87.2% of young people over the age of 18 had an up-to-date Pathway Plan. This Plan reflects the assessment of needs for care experienced young people who have left care. Between the ages of 18-21 we have a duty to remain involved and offer support, however young people in this cohort can decline this offer.

At the end of September, 38.7% of those age between 15.5 and 18 have an up to date Pathway Plan. Whilst this appears a low number, these young people currently also have an assessment of need as a child in care, and a Care Plan. This also considers their independence skills, transitions and preparation to adulthood.

All children and young people benefit from purposeful direct work

There are a range of direct work approaches and tools for children and young people of different ages and developmental stages being utilised across the service. The Academy has started work to bring these together and develop a resource bank. Ensuring direct work and life story work is completed and recorded on Eclipse remains a focus and will be included in work on permanence planned with our SLIP with our own quality assurance planned in December.

Strengthened relationship-based practice

Caseloads across the service have been sustained within target levels and the reduction experienced in the Initial Response Service will impact on other service areas over coming months.

Service Area	Caseload average July	Range July	Caseloads average September	Range September
ALL CYPFS	18.4	1-91	18	1-87
Initial Response Service	18.2	2-27	14.8	4-22
Children's Social Work Service	17.6	2-27	17.5	9-24
Children's Disability Service	22.9	12-33	21.4	15-26
Permanence Service	16.5	6-22	18.3	7-23
Care Leavers	23.3	5-30	24	6-30
Fostering Service	18	6-35	18.6	2-33
Safeguarding Service (Independent Chairs)	77.8	55-91	65.7	6-87

Caseloads

Team Managers continue ensure children transfer between service areas in a timely way and we have made a number of changes to reduce the moves for families (e.g. for UASC and where pre-birth assessments are needed). The managed social work team, 'Innovate', put in place in the service as a result of the high volume of work in the service at the start of the year, was wound down at the end of October.

Despite efforts to recruit permanent social workers, we continue to experience high rates of social worker vacancies with 26% (56 posts) of posts covered by agency staff impacting on relationships with children and families. Eight newly qualified social workers joined the service in October to complete their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment programme delivered by the Academy. During November a range of recruitment activity is planned in response, including attending a national social work

recruitment event, holding an online recruitment event and events targeting agency social workers setting out the benefits of working for Plymouth permanently.

The recruitment of Team Managers has been more successful with four appointments being made to permanent posts in the Permanence Service during October and interviews planned in Children's Social Work in November. It is hoped that this will reduce the number of agency Team Managers in the service to three.

4. Good experiences and progress for all children in care

During October an improved approach to supporting Special Guardianship carers was launched, as part of kinship care week, led by our new Special Guardianship support team. This is part of our Family Homes for Plymouth Children programme, to support more carers to feel confident that they would be well supported as in Special Guardians to enable more children to leave care through this route.

A full update on the Family Homes for Plymouth Children Programme will be presented to Scrutiny in January but key areas of progress this quarter include improved approaches to the recruitment of in house foster carers and progress with business cases for Plymouth to consider becoming providers of residential children's homes.

Earlier permanence planning

The number of children in care continued to rise through last year but is now reducing steadily from 530 in May to 515 at the end of September. The increase in numbers of children coming into care has been compounded by a delay in final hearing dates for children subject to legal care proceedings. We continue to work closely with the local judiciary to get final hearing dates scheduled so that decisions (including adoption decisions) can be made for these children.

Since the ILACs, we have strengthened our internal tracking to ensure children in long term fostering are matched with their carers more quickly and are currently working with our SLIP to ensure all children benefit from appropriate and early permanence planning. This includes all children who are Placed with Parents and to identify where Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and reunification should be explored.

Plymouth managers from the Permanence service attended a learning event on permanence and stability held in Dorset in October and we are planning a similar event for our staff in January. Dip sampling of the IRO oversight of permanence has been completed by our SLIP and will be presented to the November Improvement Board.

Education and health outcomes for children in care

We continue to work closely with Health partners to ensure the physical, emotional and mental health needs of our children in care are well met. In March, as a result of an accelerated improvement plan agreed by health and social care with oversight from the Corporate Parenting Group, 83.3% of Initial Health Assessments were completed within 20 working days of the child coming into care. However, in September only four out of thirteen initial health assessment were completed on time and we are currently working closely with our Health colleagues to consistently achieve better performance. We have tightened up processes to ensure paperwork is sent to health partners immediately a child comes into care and Health are improving the availability of and access to short notice appointments when they are needed. Health colleagues are undertaking evaluation with young people to evaluate the impact and outcomes of health assessments to be presented to Corporate Parenting partners in November.

The Virtual School (VS) has a focused plan in place to improve the educational outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people. Three additional staff have been recruited as 4-16 Education Advocates to allow caseloads to reduce from nearly 200 to around 80. The PEP Officer has implemented a quality assurance system for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and training continues to be delivered to schools, social workers and carers to ensure that children in care have enhanced educational support from their carers and corporate parent.

Training is being undertaken with Designated Teachers where PEPs are not yet good. This will lead to an expected increase in the percentage of PEPs found to be 'outstanding' in the autumn term 2024.

We are tracking the attendance of children in care on a monthly basis and there is a specific focus on severe, persistent absence and the use of part-time timetables. In addition, the group of approximately eight (at any one time) children without an educational place remain the focus of regular planning in order to secure provision that meets need. We remain concerned about the children under 16 who have no school place, either because they have had multiple and rapid moves of care placement or because there is a lack of suitable SEND placements locally or nationally. We are addressing this in our placement and SEND sufficiency work.

5. Ambition for care leavers and good outcomes

Our Corporate Parenting arrangements have set out improved ambition and approaches for care leavers to be in education, employment and training. The Virtual School Funded Skills Launchpad have appointed an Outreach Officer to work with entrenched NEET since 1st April '24 who is now working closely with the cohort of 18 young people to engage them in appropriate opportunities including work placements, depending on their individual needs. Through partnership tracking of individual children, we have increased the proportion of 18+ care leavers who are now seeking education, employment and training and young people in Y12 and 13 in EET has increased by 3.7% since May 2024. 43.3% of care leavers were in education, employment and training at the end of September (88/203) an increase from 41.1% in August.

New approaches developed this year to improve outcomes for young people further includes;

- Plymouth City Council offering supported apprenticeships and work placements.
- Oncourse southwest developing a level 2 youth worker course.
- DWP offering paid internship ring fenced for care leavers (a 12 month placement with potential for permanent job role).
- DWP providing emotional support to young people with readiness for employment and training.
- Local opportunities within the civil service that are ring fenced for job centre applicants.
- Promoting police cadets with care experienced young people.
- Livewell employment programme includes apprenticeships and other opportunities for employment.
- Two young people have applied to Derriford hospital to do some voluntary work.
- We are now guaranteeing all young people an interview and work experience and have launched the Livewell employability pathway for all identified care leavers who are NEET.

6. Leadership and management

The leadership and management development programme for all of our managers and aspiring managers continues to progress well. Building on the people management short learning sessions for all managers at the start of the year, the longer-term Service Manager and Head of Service development programme involving coaching, action learning and group learning sessions, has now commenced and will be delivered over the next 12-18 months to develop manager's skills across operational and strategic management and to support the development of a high performing workforce in line with our 'High Expectation, High Support, High Challenge' culture.

To take this forward, a draft 'Values and Behaviours Framework' was launched at all staff events in October with good support from staff and managers and are now being implemented through supervision, team and service meetings.

Our Leaders for Excellence management development programme for all Team Managers and above in education and social care continues to be well attended with successful sessions held on SEND and on good supervision practices. Further sessions are planned throughout the autumn including financial management, use of data to drive improvement, change management and managing diversity.

Supervision performance remains steady at 85% but performance remains variable across the service and this continues to be a priority for service performance meetings in the Children's Disability Team and in the Permanence Service where supervision is not yet consistently recorded in a timely way for all children. Available technology that may help Team Managers record their supervisions in a more timely way is being considered. Quality assurance activity continues to focus on the quality of supervision and in the July/August audit cycle it was found that more supervisions evidenced reflective discussions than in previous months. In addition, most supervisions identified clear actions to be progressed.

Stabilising our senior leadership and management team continues to be a priority with active recruitment underway to key posts including Head of Service, Front Door and Service Manager, Children's Social Work.

Following the programme of support from our SLIP focusing on improvements arising from the ILACS which has now confirmed that progress has been made in priority areas, an updated list of priority work areas has been agreed with the SLIP for their support over the next quarter. This includes our priority transformation work areas; the front door, out of hours service and maximising the impact of family help, as well as key practice improvements including reducing repeat referrals and increasing reunifications.

7. Plans for the next quarter

Priorities include;

- Maintaining momentum on our focused practitioner development programme being delivered by the Academy with mandatory attendance by all practitioners (assessment, planning and direct work).
- Delivering our leadership and management development programme for service managers and heads of service to develop their skills and confidence in leading service improvement and a high performing workforce.
- Sustaining Team Manager development through the monthly Leaders for Excellence programme, including continued focus on supervision and management oversight and performance management
- Developing an integrated Front Door and refocused Targeted Help offer to ensure families get the right help at the right time, including decisions about locality models of delivery.
- Evidencing the impact of family led practice models, including Family Group Conferences and Family Network Meetings, on preventing family need from escalating.
- Implementing the preferred option to reshape our out of hours offer and recruiting the staff needed.
- Responding to findings from quality assurance, in particular to strengthen practice on child sexual abuse and child exploitation.
- Improving the quality and impact of Pathway Plans for care experienced young people.
- Improving care leavers engagement in education, employment and training initiatives through targeted initiatives.
- Implementing effective approaches to strengthen earlier permanence for children in care, learning from our Sector Led Improvement Partner.
- Continuing a strong focus on social work recruitment and retention.
- Continuing to work effectively with our SLIP on key improvement priority areas.

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel – Tracking Decisions 2024/25

	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
13)	Education officers would arrange through the Participation team analysis into issues of attendance and bullying of children and young people within the LGBTQ+ community.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress: Investigations were being undertaken from the schools surveyu to ascertain the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people. The Participation team would undertake some wider national research and from this would construct a further session to take to young people. A visit would be undertaken to 'Out Youth' to talk to young people directly about their experiences as to whether their experiences reflect any findings identified.</p> <p>A further report of progress would come to the next meeting of the Panel.</p> <p>Officer: Jim Barnicott/Stuart Hogg</p>
14)	Officers to revisit the attendance campaign work and spread wider	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress: Met with Newham Council to discuss their attendance campaign, in the process of working with PCC comms team to look at Plymouth campaign and share the learning from previous campaign with headteachers.</p> <p>Officer: Isabelle Morgan</p>
15)	EHCP and CAMHS waiting times would be provided to Councillor McLay.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress: The shortest wait for an EHCP was 19 weeks and the longest was 45 weeks. Awaiting an update from Health on CAMHS waiting times.</p> <p>Officer: Health</p>
16)	Councillors would be provided the policy on Free School Meals and Bus Pass entitlements.	<p>Date: November 2024</p> <p>Progress: Free School Meals was added to the work programme.</p> <p>Officer: Amanda Paddison</p>
17)	A Councillor briefing session on home education would be arranged	<p>Date: November/December 2024</p> <p>Progress: Dates would be identified and sent to Councillors before December 2024.</p>

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel – Tracking Decisions 2024/25

		Officer: Jake Metcalfe
18)	The Chair of the Plymouth Children’s Safeguarding Partnership Board would write to faith groups in the city to be part of the Board.	Date: 6 February 2025 Progress: On-going Officer: David Haley
19)	A whole Council Councillor briefing would be arranged on early help in Plymouth.	Date: 06 February 2025 Progress: This action would be completed by the next scrutiny panel meeting due to the number of all councillor briefings scheduled before the end of the year. Officer: Jake Metcalfe
20)	Councillors of the Panel would be invited to be introduced to the detached youth service team before receiving a briefing and then having the opportunity to go out with them and be part of some of the work undertaken.	Date: 06 February 2025 Progress: Action to be completed by February 2025. Officer: Jake Metcalfe

Recommendations:

1)	For Plymouth City Council to collaborate with Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in the delivery of in house residential provision.	Recommendation would go forward to the Scrutiny Management Board.
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Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Work Programme 2024/25



Please note that the work programme is a 'live' document and subject to change at short notice. The information in this work programme is intended to be of strategic relevance.

For general enquiries relating to the Council's Scrutiny function, including this Committee's work programme, please contact Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor) on 01752 305155.

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member /Officer
18 July	Child Exploitation	4	Scrutiny request to have a report yearly and to review current and changing themes in the City.	Martine Aquilina
	Performance Scorecard	4	KPI's for the performance of Children's Social Care and Education, Participation and Skills Services.	Paul Stephens
	SEND Sufficiency Commission Strategy	5	To review the proposed strategy for the City.	Amanda Paddison
	Childrens Services Improvement and transformation plan	5	To review Children's services improvement and transformation plan. This item would see young people involvement and to hear their views on the plan.	Vivien Lines
	Education, Employment and Training Review	4	To include Care experienced children and care leavers.	Tina Brinkworth
10 October	Elective Home Education in Plymouth	20 mins	Report on the numbers of children and young people being increasingly electively home educated. To include reasons and what the Local Authority was doing to ensure children and young people were receiving a good education.	Isabelle Morgan
	Family Homes for Plymouth Children	20 mins	To understand the programme and how the authority was trying to increase family homes for Plymouth's children.	Temilola Salimon
	Inclusive practice to address exclusions and suspensions in Plymouth	1 hr	MATS to be invited. Youth Parliament (Jenny Way) to be invited and seek children and young people's views.	Lisa Linscott

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member /Officer
	Plymouth Safeguarding Childrens Board Annual Report	20 mins	Scrutiny to have an update from the Safeguarding Children's Board.	Siobhan Logue
	Early Help Strategy	25 mins	To include information on Family Hubs.	Martine Aquilina
	Children in the criminal justice system	20 mins	How are Children's services engaging with children in the criminal justice system.	Ian Taylor
	CYPFS Transformation Q1		For Scrutiny to evaluate the progress of the improvement plans.	Vivien Lines
14 November	Educational Attainment		To include data on the cared for children cohort.	Jim Barnicott
	Alternative Provision Assurance Report			Jim Barnicott
	Performance Scorecard Q2			Paul Stephens/Susan London
	CYPFS Improvement Plan Q2 Progress Report			Temilola Salimon/Vivien Lines
	Attendance/Children Missing Education and Mobility			Jim Barnicott
	Child Exploitation and the Philomena Protocol		Join up with the Police for this report and to include information such as the Philomena Protocol	Martine Aquilina / Police
6 February	CYPF Transformation Q2 Review		For Scrutiny to review the transformation plan for CYPFS.	Vivien Lines

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for Consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member /Officer
Items Raised by the Committee to be scheduled for 2024/25				
2024/25	Cost of Living for Education	(4)	Identified for consideration by the Committee at its July 2023 meeting.	Councillor Sally Cresswell
	Transitions to adulthood	(4)	Key component of improvement work	
	Youth Justice Annual Report			Ian Taylor
	Traveller Community	(3)		
	Toileting in schools	(3)	Young Safeguarders	
	Projection of school numbers and capacity			
	Young Female Violence Programme			
	School Uniform Policy			
	Free School Meals			
Issues Identified for Select Committee Reviews				
	Emotional Health and Wellbeing of children		Inclusion/Persistent absence/Child death/SEND/EHCP's/Toileting/temp accommodation	

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