



Oversight and Governance

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Published 10 July 2018

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 18 July 2018
2.00 pm
Warspite Room, Council House

Members:

Councillor Mrs Beer, Chair
Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair
Councillors Derrick, Goslin, Johnson, Samantha Leaves, Rebecca Smith, Tuohy and Winter.

Statutory Co-opted Representatives:

Vacant – Parent Governor Representative

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

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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 of items on the agenda.

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 June 2018.

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. Appointment of Co-opted Representatives

To consider the appointment of co-opted representatives.

6. School Readiness (Pages 7 - 10)

7. Transport - Home to School Contract (Pages 11 - 14)

8. OFSTED Focussed Visit to Children Young People and Families service (Pages 15 - 24)

9. Work Programme (Pages 25 - 28)

10. Tracking Resolutions (Pages 29 - 30)

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**Wednesday 20 June 2018****PRESENT:**

Councillor Mrs Beer, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall (substituting for Winter), Derrick, Downie (substituting for Johnson), Goslin, Samantha Leaves, Rebecca Smith and Tuohy.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Johnson and Winter.

Also in attendance: Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Neelam Bhardwaja (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and Amelia Boulter (Democratic Adviser).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.35 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.

1. To Note the Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair

The Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Mrs Beer as Chair and Councillor Murphy as Vice Chair.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

4. Terms of Reference

The Committee noted the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference.

5. Work Programme

Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member for the Children and Young People) has responsibility for Children's Social Care and the lead member for Children and Young People introduced the item. Neelam Bhardwaja (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) gave Alison Botham's apologies. Alison was

currently involved in Torbay's Children Services Ofsted. Neelam provided an overview of children's social care. It was highlighted that –

- (a) they were working with schools and partners to offer assistance to people and young families when difficulties start to emerge as part of the early help offer;
- (b) they use best practice standards to ensure that the child was central to everything they do;
- (c) they were engaging with children and young people by listening to their voice and were working in partnership with agencies to give a united response to keep children and young people safe and supported;
- (d) they were undertaking a 10 year programme called Together for Childhood with the NSPCC which focusses on preventing child sexual abuse;
- (e) another project they were hoping to have in place in September 2018 called PAUSE which supports women that continually have their children taken away This project started in Hackney and has been very successful in building self-esteem for these women;
- (f) with regard to recruiting and retaining of staff, they had improved the offer to staff by providing development opportunities and reviewing caseloads;
- (g) the challenges for Children's Social Care -
 - continuing to manage demand;
 - managing 16/17 year old with complex behaviours and needs;
 - containing cost of residential placements;
 - planning for 0-25 agenda for Care Leavers;
 - successful transition to Regional Adoption Agency (RAA);
 - recruiting qualified experienced social workers.

In response to questions, it was reported that –

- (h) an independent person was brought in to quality assess their audit work and to give them an overview and assurance that they were on the right track with the grading of their work and to ensure that the were Ofsted ready;
- (i) caseloads were split across 150 social workers with each being allocated around 20 cases each, it was highlighted however that social workers work across a wide spectrum and caseloads would vary from team to team. Weekly workload meetings take place to ensure that caseloads were manageable for social workers;

- (j) the current level of sickness was currently at 6.82% and the turnover of staff was currently at 14% with the national average currently at 15%. It was highlighted that you would expect people to move and change jobs and exit interviews were conducted when an employee leaves the council;
- (k) they follow best practice standards on referrals and assessment;
- (l) with regard to long term stability of children in care, it was highlighted that the integrated team would help with the smooth transition and planning of young people post 18 years;
- (m) they want to reduce institutional placements and provide placement stability by building support around the person and the placement to stop the placement from breaking down.

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) has responsibility for learning and skills introduced the item. Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) further highlighted –

- (n) that the main purpose was facilitating partnerships so that all children, young people and their families in Plymouth have the best access and opportunities, this is done by –
 - championing for children;
 - commissioning with others and working in partnership to secure high quality services, and
 - convening collaborative relationships to secure outstanding provision;
- (o) the nine key functions of the department -
 - school improvement
 - health and wellbeing
 - transport
 - admissions and organisation
 - safeguarding and inclusion (including the virtual school)
 - skills
 - special educational needs and disability
 - sport development
- (p) that from April 2018 there were only 25 maintained schools left in the city. The local authority can use their powers of intervention to challenge schools that were underperforming and help them improve;
- (q) that the local authority works together with the Department of Education (DfE), Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), Teaching School Alliances, Schools and Multi Academy Trusts to support and improve the education system;

- (r) that the business plan priorities were linked to plans such as the Children and Young People's Plan, STEM Plan, Plan for Sport and the Skills Plan. They also work very closely with Plymouth Children Safeguarding Board (PSCB) to ensure there was a clear priority around safeguarding. These plans sit within the Plymouth Plan;
- (s) that this service area was funded by Plymouth City Council, money received from schools trading with the vast majority of the funding received from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG);
- (t) that since the change to how schools were funded, Plymouth received one of the highest uplifts of 5.2% which amounts to around £7.5m a year. Plymouth compared to other local authorities had a very low baseline to start with and consequently would not feel well compensated for at least another 3 years;
- (u) the challenges for Children's Education, Participation and Skills -
 - children being ready for school
 - we are below the national average in performance at KS4
 - falling school attendance
 - growing numbers of complex cases in SEND
 - fragmentation in the system
 - school governance, we no longer have oversight of governors in the city.
- (v) the Plymouth Challenge was recently set up to address KS4 performance and the focus of the challenge was to bring a coherence to help people to collaborate, developing strong leadership, challenge groups at schools to raise standards and to offer a wraparound advice and aspiration to young people.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that -

- (w) with regard to school admissions, if a school was oversubscribed a criteria would need to be followed and if we can't find the right outcome we can ask the school to go over the planned admission number. A discussion also took place around whether there were catchment areas within the city;
- (x) with regard to Longcause School and the change to the school's finishing time on a Friday. It was reported that schools were at liberty to consult on the length of the school day and discussions had taken place with the school and assurances given that an after school club would take place to enable children to stay on after the school day had finished;
- (y) the timeframe for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) would normally be completed within 20 weeks. It was highlighted that this may seem like a long time scale however, it was important to invest

the time to get the plan right for the child and family. Two EHCPs did go over the 20 week period but this was at the request of the parents. However, some were completed well within the 20 weeks because the parents were very clear about what was required for their child;

- (z) they currently do not have adequate services in place to support people with autism post 18 years and this was a national issue. It was further reported that families with children that had special educational needs and disability (SEND) were supported up to 25 years;
- (aa) they have undertaken a new holistic approach by working with adult social care, the care leavers team and a range of partners to look at supported work experience and internship. However, building the infrastructure around housing had been more difficult with parents electing to keep young people at home and deal with the employability first thus delaying the reality around future housing;
- (bb) they collaborated with housing partners across the city to provide a wraparound support to the family to help the young person with SEND as part of the preparing for adulthood programme;
- (cc) with regard to performance data it was highlighted that most of the indicators were not comparable from year to year;
- (dd) the Plymouth Education Board wanted to address the issues around key stage performance in the city which resulted in the Plymouth Challenge. This was launched with schools and was now a schools led project with full support from the local authority and the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office;
- (ee) it was their understanding when talking with early years settings that a small number of children were not absorbing language within the home and this inevitably would have an impact on children engaging with education.

It was agreed –

1. A glossary of the Children Service's acronyms and terminology to be circulated to the Committee.
2. The Children Service's Best Practice Standards to be circulated to the Committee.
3. A briefing paper explaining the school admissions process, criteria and catchment areas, if any, to be circulated to the Committee.
4. The Committee to be provided with the Children Service's Business Plans including action plans.

5. Visit to the Gateway for the Committee to meet the team and gain a better understanding of the 'front door'.
6. To enable the Committee to scrutinise more effectively, headline performance data going back 2 - 3 years to be provided with the caveat that data received was not comparable year on year.

To add to the work programme –

7. To receive a report on high cost of placements and how the scrutiny committee can effectively monitor these placements.
8. To receive a report outlining the NSPCC's Together for Childhood project and how progress of the project is monitored over the next 10 years.
9. To monitor the progress of the Plymouth Challenge.
10. The Committee to receive a report on school readiness around assessments undertaken in early years and reception to ascertain speech and language levels and the support provided to the child and family.
11. To receive a report on the support received by families with children and young people with high functioning autism and SEND, in particular, exploring housing support and transition into adulthood.

6. **Work Programme**

The Committee agreed that for the following items to be scheduled into its work programme for the current year:

Refer to minute 5.

- The role of the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- Update from the Plymouth Children Safeguarding Board.
- The legal framework for undertaking assessments.
- A report on the Plymouth Education Board to include overview of the board, membership and terms of reference.
- A report on School Transport (in relation to an untaxed school vehicle).

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	School Readiness
Committee:	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 July 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Sue McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation)
CMT Member:	Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services)
Author:	David Bowles (Head of Education)
Contact details	Tel: 01752 307149 Email: david.bowles@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:	DB/AB/JAH/060718
Key Decision:	No
Part:	I

Purpose of the report:

To provide members with an overview of the key issues facing the city's children regarding their readiness for school; the organisations involved in helping children become ready for school and how members of the Early Years Team of Education, Participation and Skills are supporting organisations to help children become, and remain ready for school.

Corporate Plan

This supports 'A growing city'. It helps to make sure children get the best possible start in life; develop the necessary skills to be productive citizens who can make a sustained contribution to both the society and economy of the city. It will also help to reduce inequalities within the city. The work reflects our values of co-operation between partners and the recognition that as a society

We are responsible for each other.

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

All resources are met from the present Revenue/Dedicated School Budgets.

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

- It will support the reduction of child poverty by giving children a better opportunity to achieve at school.
- It will improve the health and safety of children by allowing them to become more aware of everyday dangers, and provide them with the skills to understand how to live healthy and safe lives.

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

To note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Published work / information:

N/A

Background papers:

N/A

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sign off:

Fin	djn18.19.42	Leg	lt/30 807/ 0907	Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Judith Harwood, Service Director (Education, Participation and Skills)													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

'School Readiness' - Educational achievement in the city.

The Challenges we face:

It is clear from pupils performance data, conversations with and visits to early years settings and schools that we face an increasing challenge in making sure children are 'school ready' by the time they enter Reception Year. Consequently, some children enter school with levels of understanding and skills that are below what is expected for their age i.e. below national expectations. Some children not only display relatively low skill levels in literacy, numeracy and communication and language, but also struggle to master basic social skills and to manage their personal hygiene in pre - school and school settings.

Key results in 2017:

In 2017 the proportion of children making the expected progress in a number of basic skills by the end of Reception Year was as follows:

- The proportion of children reaching the expected standard of a 'Good Level of Development', by the end of Reception Year was 66%. This is 5% below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals who reach the required standard by the end of Reception year is 51%. This compares to 69% of non-free school meal pupils who reach the required standard.
- The proportion of SEN children reaching the required standard by the end of Reception Year is 23%. This compares to a national average rate of 25%.
- The percentage of children reaching the expected standard in Communication and Language was 75%. This is 7% below the national average.
- The proportion of children reaching the required standards in literacy and numeracy was 66% and 74% respectively. Both these figures are well below national averages.
- In terms of the personal, social and emotional development, the percentage of children reaching the expected standard was 82% which is 3% below the national average.
- Phonics tests at the end of Year 1 show that our results equal the national average i.e. 80% of pupils passed the test. However, only 63% of disadvantaged pupils passed the test last year
- Pupils' progress accelerates through KS2 so that standards are broadly in line with national averages. However, gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils remain.
- By the time students finish their KS4 studies the progress they make, and the standards they reach, are well below national averages. The gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils are still evident.

Whilst the data over time does show an improving trend many results in the city in primary and secondary schools do not compare favourably with the national picture, nor with our regional and statistical neighbours. Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve less well than non-disadvantaged pupils.

In addition to 'academic' outcomes feedback from settings and schools indicates that a growing number of pupils display 'challenging behaviours' indicating a limited amount of social skills and many pupils struggle being able to toilet themselves. A number of children's settings are reporting to us with a Child Protection Plan/Children in Need Plan. The numbers of families that have a high level of need including mental health issues, poor housing, domestic abuse, low parenting skills is increasing.

Actions being taken to support settings and schools to help children to become school ready:

Within the city there is a range of partners working hard to meet the challenges we face:

- Children's Centres and the Health Visiting Service offer advice, help and support to them around many parenting issues. These issues include behaviour, toilet training, eating and sleeping all of which are fundamentally important to children's development and readiness for school.
- SEN Education Advisers organise early intervention, enhanced transitions which has the effect of helping children make a brisk start to their schooling and help many to reach the required standards in literacy and numeracy.
- Early Years Advisers have delivered training around the National Association of Head Teachers school ready survey. This has increased the knowledge and understanding amongst settings and school leaders about what it means to be 'school ready'.
- All advisers visit settings annually to talk about the narrowing the gap agenda and school readiness. This means that settings are better able to monitor the impact of their work and enjoy advice on further improvements from specialists. Feedback indicates that this is having a positive impact on the teaching of all pupils and the progress made especially by disadvantaged children and pupils.
- Our universal and in-house training – upskilling the workforce to help children become school ready.
- We offer the Bristol Standard Quality Improvement framework that supports self-evaluation and settings/schools to improve on their previous best. As a result schools and settings have a much clearer and accurate picture of their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do next to improve.
- At April's Maternity, Early Years System Optimisation Group (MEYSOG) a task and finish group was set up to develop a 'school readiness' work stream. They have held their first meeting to analyse data on children's attainment and/development and will report to the next MEYSOG meeting on 17th July. At this meeting next steps will be agreed.

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	Transport – Home to School Contract
Committee:	Education and Children’s Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 July 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member of Children and Young People) Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet for Education, Skills and Transformation)
CMT Member:	Alison Botham (Director of Children’s Services)
Author:	Jayne Gorton Head of Access and Planning
Contact details	Tel: 01752 307472 email: jayne.gorton@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:	JEG/AB/JAH/050718
Key Decision:	No
Part:	I

Purpose of the report:

To provide members will an update on the issue relating to a vehicle which operates as part of the Home to School Transport contract.

Corporate Plan

Caring Plymouth - Provides access to improved facilities that ensure children and young people are safe and confident in their communities, narrowing the gap in equality of access, helping them take control of their lives and communities.

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

The current revenue budget provides resources to fund the Home to School Transport contract.

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

No other implications

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

To note the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

The Contract could have been withdrawn but this would have involved having to cancel Home to School Transport for pupils with complex and challenging needs attending school.

Published work / information:

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sign off:

Fin	djn18.19.43	Leg	It/30 806/ 0907	Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

1.0 Introduction

On Friday 1 June 2018, an article published by the Herald indicated that a vehicle being used for transporting children on our Home to School contract had been clamped due to the road tax having expired. The Herald were also misled by the DVLA's website where you can check if a vehicle has current tax and MOT. Apparently, the MOT section is not accurate for Public Service Vehicles (which includes minibuses). It would seem that drivers are routinely stopped by the Police due the alarm being raised on their ANPR equipment advising there is no valid MOT on the vehicles. Many of the drivers and contractors have copies of the MOT certificates on their phones to show to police.

1.1 Action taken

The Transport Team immediately contacted the owners of Transport Operations Brian Couch and John Tompkins, who were not able to meet until Monday 4 June 2018.

John and Brian advised at the meeting on 4 June they had set up a direct debit to pay this vehicle's road tax monthly (together with 4 other vehicles) and for some reason the direct debit was cancelled in February 2018. They provided copies of bank statements prior to February and March 2018, which confirmed the facts.

They had not cancelled the direct debit

They had raised this issue with their bank who had confirmed the direct debit was still live but the DVLA had not requested any monies for the direct debit relating to this vehicle since February 2018. The DVLA have indicated that it is the drivers' responsibility to check if the direct debit is taken so they do not accept liability.

The company will now check bank statements each month and they have agreed they will check bank statements and the DVLA website to confirm tax (vehicle excise duty) each month.

The company have provided an email from their Insurance Company, which indicates that the vehicle remained insured; irrespective of road tax being paid, (no road tax is an excise duty and does not affect the roadworthiness of the vehicle)

This therefore confirmed that the children were not being driven to/from school on an uninsured vehicle

We also hold a copy of the MOT certificate for the vehicle so can confirm this was also valid

1.2 Going Forward

We have discussed the implications of their actions on the Council and they completely understand the position they have put us in and they are implementing changes within their organisation so ensure things of this nature do not occur again. They were deeply apologetic.

We have checked our current contracts and whilst it does not specifically include vehicle tax, the following is contained within three different sections:

'it has and will maintain all the licences, permissions, authorisations, consents and permits that it needs to carry out its obligations under the Contract;

it will perform the Services with all reasonable care, skill and diligence and in accordance with best practice in the Supplier's industry, profession or trade;

All vehicles will need appropriate insurances, MOT certificates, registration documentation and (where appropriate) to have complied with the Council's licensed vehicle checking requirements and any applicable Operating License / VOSA requirements. Vehicles will also need to meet specified standards in respect of presentation, quality and cleanliness.'

We therefore do not feel we need to action a contract variation at this time.

All contractors have received an email reminding them of their vehicle responsibilities under the contract. We have also checked with current minibus contractors that all vehicles has valid road tax.

This is not an exercise we can undertake for the taxis as this would be the responsibility of the Licensing department with whom we work very closely and have access to their database.

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PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	OFSTED Focussed Visit to Children Young People and Families service
Committee:	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 July 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Sue McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation)
CMT Member:	Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services)
Author:	Siobhan Wallace Head of Service, CYPFS
Contact details	Tel: 01752 306351 email: Siobhan.wallace@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:	
Key Decision:	No
Part:	I

Purpose of the report:

This report provides feedback on the outcome of the OFSTED Focussed Visit to the Children Young People and Families service (CYPFS) which took place in May 2018.

It is provided for information and scrutiny purposes.

Corporate Plan

This report relates to the provision of services for children and young people, with a particular emphasis on children in need and safeguarding. As such, it relates to our priorities as a caring council, which keeps children, young people and adults protected, has a focus on prevention and early interventions and allows people to feel safe in Plymouth.

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

No relevant implications, other than demand management for CYPFS by maintaining appropriate thresholds for entry into the service and assessment of need and risk in order to ensure that families have the right service at the right time and that children are not brought into care inappropriately.

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

The Focussed Visit provided feedback on the quality of the work undertaken by CYPFS staff, with a particular focus on outcomes for children and young people.

The Focussed Visit report is generally very positive, which has relevance to Plymouth City Council's approach to child poverty, community safety and risk management.

An area for further development highlighted in the feedback is the use of temporary accommodation for homeless 16-17 year olds. This is a national issue and has implications for child poverty and risk management.

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

The CYPFS have drawn up an action plan in response to the Focussed Visit. This is being monitored by the Head of Service for Referrals, Assessment and Early Help and the Service Director, and progress against the plan is reported to the Safeguarding Assurance Meeting.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Not applicable

Published work / information:

Letter: Focussed Visit to Plymouth City Council Children's Services

Background papers:

None

Sign off: comment must be sought from those whose area of responsibility may be affected by the decision, as follows (insert references of Finance, Legal and Monitoring Officer reps, and of HR, Corporate Property, IT and Strat. Proc. as appropriate):

Fin	djn.18.19.40	Leg	let/30790/0407	Mon Off	
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I. Introduction

From January 2018, OFSTED inspections of Children's Services have followed a new framework, which aims to ensure that inspections are proportional, of high quality and of value to children, and follows a set of principles which-

- focusses on the things that matter most to children's lives.
- is consistent in expectations of providers.
- prioritises OFSTED's work where improvement is needed most.

Plymouth was last subject to an inspection under the Single Inspection Framework in Autumn 2014. This means that we are at the end of our three-year inspection cycle.

The new system for those local authorities like Plymouth judged to be Requiring Improvement will comprise of:

- standard or short judgement inspections every three years to evaluate local authority children's services and provide graded judgements., known as ILACS (Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services).
- focussed visits between inspections, providing a narrative report that details strengths and areas for improvement.
- local authority self-evaluation of social work practice.
- reviews of data and intelligence.
- regular engagement about these activities between Ofsted regional directors, inspectors and local authorities.

On May 1st and 2nd, Plymouth CYPFS received a two-day focussed visit, centred on the front door. For us this meant particular attention was given to the Hub and Plymouth Referral and Assessment Service (PRAS), although there was also some more limited consideration of the work with children as they passed through the Gateway and the Children's Social Work service. Specifically, inspectors considered contacts, referrals and assessments for children in need of support and protection.

Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including case discussions with social workers and managers and other professionals working in the Hub. They also reviewed our performance management arrangements, quality assurance information and children's case records.

2. Outcome

The Outcome letter was published on 25th May.

Overall, we are extremely pleased with the positive tone of the feedback. Inspectors recognised that senior leaders and members have focused on improving services for vulnerable children. They note that leaders and managers know their services well and promote the development of good social work practice.

Inspectors did not identify any child at risk of harm or for whom the local authority had not provided an appropriate service. They commented particularly on the morale and commitment of frontline

workers and the good quality direct work with children and families, and felt that we could demonstrate that children were listened to and that our assessments were good.

Headline feedback included-

-Overall, contacts and referrals are responded to promptly. However, leaders recognise this could be improved further. In order to achieve a consistently timely response for all children, senior managers are comprehensively restructuring services at the front door.

-Partnership working in the Hub results in effective decisions which safeguard children. Thresholds are applied appropriately in the Gateway team, Hub and in PRAS.

-Interventions to meet children's needs are proportionate. The response to child protection concerns is timely. However, strategy meetings to consider the risk of significant harm to children often do not include all relevant agencies.

-Performance management and management oversight are strong overall. Staff feel listened to, supported in their day-to-day practice and valued by leaders and managers.

In terms of areas for improvement, the key messages were-

-Child in need and child protection plans should clearly outline what needs to change, and should include specific attributed tasks and achievable timescales.

- Transfer of case responsibility between teams should be quicker in order to reduce delay and disruption to children and families.

- Accommodation for children requiring emergency care placements, including 16- and 17- year olds who present as homeless, should be appropriate to their needs, provide protection from potential risks and promote their well-being.

-Swift implementation of the local authority's 'Safeguarding HUB and Gateway integration project plan' is needed in order to improve the quality of management.

The management team feel this is a fair and proportionate overview, and are particularly pleased with the recognition for frontline staff. There is already a project underway to align and develop the Hub and Gateway which will address some of the points picked up by inspectors, as well as a programme of work alongside colleagues in Commissioning and Community Connections to improve outcomes for homeless young people in Plymouth. This however should be recognised as a national issue which all LAs are facing.

3. Next steps

1. Positive feedback has been shared with staff and partners to ensure we recognise and celebrate the progress they have made. We have also shared where we need to continue to improve services and our plans to deliver improvements.
2. We have created a Focussed Visit Action Plan which details a range of actions to address the points raised in the letter
3. We will continue to progress the Hub/Gateway Phase 3 implementation plan and are picking up pace over the next 3 months, with an implementation plan for a n August go live date.

4. We are working closely with colleagues in Commissioning, Community Connections and partner agencies to improve our response to homeless young people and increase sufficiency of appropriate accommodation resources.
5. We will use the outcome of the focussed visit to inform our inspection planning going forward, as we are still due a full ILACS inspection.

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25 May 2018

Ms Alison Botham
Director for Children's Services
Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Royal Parade
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

Dear Ms Botham

Focused visit to Plymouth City Council children's services

This letter summarises the findings of a focused visit to Plymouth City Council children's services on 1 and 2 May 2018. The inspectors were Mandy Nightingale, HMI, and Pauline Higham, HMI.

Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements at the first point of contact for children who need help and protection in accordance with the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services framework (ILACS). Specifically, they considered contacts, referrals and assessments for children in need of support and protection.

Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including case discussions with social workers and managers and other professionals working in the multi-agency hub (MAH). They also reviewed the local authority's performance management arrangements, quality assurance information and children's case records.

Overview

Plymouth's children's services were last inspected by Ofsted in 2014, when the overall effectiveness of services was judged to require improvement to be good. Since then, senior leaders and members have focused on improving services for vulnerable children. Leaders and managers know their services well and promote the development of good social work practice.

Inspectors did not identify any child at risk of harm or for whom the local authority had not provided an appropriate service.

Overall, contacts and referrals are responded to promptly. However, leaders recognise that this could be improved further. In order to achieve a consistently timely response for all children, senior managers are comprehensively restructuring services at the 'front door'.

Partnership working in the MAH results in effective decisions which safeguard children. Thresholds are applied appropriately in the gateway team, MAH and in the Plymouth referral and assessment (PRAS) teams. Interventions to meet children's needs are proportionate. The response to child protection concerns is timely. However, strategy meetings to consider the risk of significant harm to children often do not include all relevant agencies.

Performance management and management oversight are strong overall. Staff feel listened to, supported in their day-to-day practice and valued by leaders and managers.

What needs to improve in this area of social work practice

- Child protection strategy discussions and meetings should include contributions from children's social care, police, education and health services, as a minimum, to ensure that decisions about significant harm take account of all relevant information.
- Child in need and child protection plans should clearly outline for children, families and professionals what needs to change, and should include specific attributed tasks and achievable timescales.
- Transfer of case responsibility between teams should be quicker in order to reduce delay and disruption to children and families.
- Accommodation for children requiring emergency care placements, including 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, should be appropriate to their needs, provide protection from potential risks and promote their well-being.
- Swift implementation of the local authority's 'Safeguarding HUB and Gateway integration project plan' is needed in order to improve the quality of management.

Findings

- Senior leaders recognise the changes that are required to improve outcomes for children. They have taken action to review the structure of the assessment teams and have consulted with staff in a meaningful and effective way. The resulting changes within the PRAS teams have led to a reduction in social workers' caseloads. This means that social workers have more time to develop relationships with children, undertake direct work and complete more timely assessments. Social workers who spoke with inspectors knew children and their families well, despite often only being in contact with them for a short time.

- Agencies work well together in the MAH, and information about children and their families is shared promptly when a request is made, enabling timely decision-making.
- Thresholds are understood and are applied appropriately. Insufficient management capacity means that social workers finalise decisions when a contact does not progress to a referral. The advanced practitioner dip samples such cases and has not found any inappropriate decisions. The absence of routine oversight limits their oversight of these threshold decisions. Senior managers have identified these gaps in management oversight in the MAH and are actively addressing them through the Safeguarding HUB and Gateway integration project plan.
- Parental consent for the local authority to gather and share further information is gained in the majority of cases. However, in a small number of cases, decisions to override consent are made by social workers without consultation with a manager. This practice is not in accordance with the local authority's best practice model.
- Assessments are consistently good; they include family history and information that has been shared by other agencies. Children are consistently at the centre of assessments and their voices and experiences are clearly articulated.
- Young people who present as homeless are informed about their rights and entitlements, with clear explanations provided for what this might mean for them. This enables young people to make informed choices.
- Inspectors identified five cases where young people aged 16–17 had been placed in short-term hotel-type accommodation in an emergency. Two of these young people had been in care for some time and remained in this unsuitable accommodation for longer than two weeks; these arrangements were wholly unsatisfactory.
- When appropriate, children are seen alone by social workers and direct work is an integral part of social work practice.
- Recording of the outcome of direct work with children and parents is concise and clear and informs assessments and care planning. However, social workers cannot easily locate in case files the direct work tools they have used with children, reducing their ability to measure children's progress or to take full account of their changing experiences.
- Management oversight is evident throughout children's case records. However, it is often descriptive and with limited analysis. Managers' decisions are not always clear and the impact of management decisions and oversight on children's plans are not consistently evident.
- A variety of effective performance management tools support performance monitoring; these tools are widely used by managers and social workers.

Managers use performance information to help social workers to recognise good practice and where practice needs to improve to achieve better outcomes for children.

- The local authority designated officer role is well embedded. Arrangements for considering and responding to allegations or concerns about employees or volunteers are timely and effective. Robust action plans are put in place to safeguard children and to support the adult involved.
- Plymouth's out-of-hours service has a wide remit, covering adult and children's services, adult mental health and emergency housing. The team is well staffed with experienced workers. Regular and effective communication supports the daytime service.
- Social workers are well supported to develop their knowledge and skills through a comprehensive learning and development offer, and this contributes to good retention of staff. The recent implementation of the local authority's chosen practice model and the accompanying training programme for all social workers and managers have assisted improvement in social work practice.
- Social worker morale is high. Social workers feel listened to and supported and they demonstrate passion and commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable children.
- Most social workers told inspectors that their caseloads are manageable; performance information confirms that caseloads were decreasing during the six months preceding the visit.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning your next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

Mandy Nightingale
Her Majesty's Inspector

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Work Programme 2018 - 19



Please note that the work programme is a 'live' document and subject to change at short notice.

For general enquiries relating to the Council's Scrutiny function, including this committee's work programme, please contact Amelia Boulter, Democratic Support Officer, on 01752 304570.

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
20 June 2018	Education and Children's Social Care Landscape		To give the committee a better understanding of the two service areas.	Alison Botham/ Judith Harwood/ Neelam Bhardwaja
18 July 2018	Ofsted Report 'Front Door Services'		To provide the committee with an update on the recent inspection.	Neelam Bhardwaja
	School Transport		The Committee to be assured that all school transport is safe for children and young people following the recent article in the Plymouth Herald of an untaxed vehicle.	Judith Harwood
	School Readiness		The Committee to receive a report around assessments undertaken in early years and reception to ascertain speech and language levels and the support provided to the child and family.	Judith Harwood

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
19 Sept 2018	Headline Performance data		To enable the Committee to scrutinise more effectively, headline performance data going back 2 - 3 years to be provided with the caveat that data received was not comparable year on year	Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja/ Judith Harwood
	SEND Transition		To receive a report on the support received by families with children and young people with high functioning autism and SEND, in particular, exploring housing support and transition into adulthood	Judith Harwood
	Torbay Children's Services – monitoring		To be kept informed	Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja
28 Nov 2018	Children Services Business Plans including action plans			Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja/ Judith Harwood
	Plymouth Education Board		A report on the Plymouth Education Board to include overview of the board, membership and terms of reference	Judith Harwood
	Social workers/ thresholds/ recruitment			Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja
20 Jan 2019	Plymouth Challenge/attainment levels		To monitor the progress of the Plymouth Challenge.	Judith Harwood
	High Cost Placements		To receive a report on high cost of placements and how the scrutiny committee can effectively monitor these placements	Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
13 March 2019	Regional School Commissioner		Understanding of the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner	Judith Harwood
	Monitoring of the NSPCC Together for Childhood		To receive a report outlining the NSPCC's Together for Childhood project and how progress of the project is monitored over the next 10 years	Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja

Items to be scheduled				
	Agenda item	Date to go to Committee	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
	Plymouth Children Safeguarding Board	TBC	Update form the Plymouth Children Safeguarding Board	Andy Bickley
Select Committee Reviews				
Cross Scrutiny Items				
	CAMHS			
Scrutiny Visits				
	Gateway		The Committee to meet the team and gain a better understanding of the 'front door'	Alison Botham/ Neelam Bhardwaja

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Education and Children’s Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minute No.	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
<p>20 June 2018</p> <p>Overview of the Children’s Directorate</p> <p>Minute 5</p>	<p>It was <u>agreed</u> –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A glossary of the Children Service’s acronyms and terminology to be circulated to the Committee. 2. The Children Service’s Best Practice Standards to be circulated to the Committee. 3. A briefing paper explaining the school admissions process, criteria and catchment areas, if any, to be circulated to the Committee. 4. The Committee to be provided with the Children Service’s Business Plans including action plans. 5. Visit to the Gateway for the Committee to meet the team and gain a better understanding of the ‘front door’. 6. To enable the Committee to scrutinise more effectively, headline performance data going back 2 - 3 years to be provided with the caveat that data received was not comparable year on year. <p>To add to the work programme –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. To receive a report on high cost of placements and how the scrutiny committee can effectively monitor these placements. 8. To receive a report outlining the NSPCC’s Together for Childhood project and how progress of the project is monitored over the next 10 years. 9. To monitor the progress of the Plymouth Challenge. 10. The Committee to receive a report on school readiness around assessments undertaken in early years and reception to ascertain speech and language levels and the support provided to the child and family. 11. To receive a report on the support received by families with children and young people with high functioning autism and SEND, in particular, exploring housing support and transition into adulthood. 	<p>Date: July 2018 Officer: Amelia Boulter Progress: Complete Complete Complete Added to work programme Progressing Added to work programme Added to work programme Added to work programme Report at 18.07.18 meeting Added to work programme</p>

Education and Children’s Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minute No.	Resolution	Target Date, Officer Responsible and Progress
<p>20 June 2018</p> <p>Work Programme</p> <p>Minute 6</p>	<p>Work Programme</p> <p>The Committee <u>agreed</u> that for the following items to be scheduled into its work programme for the current year:</p> <p>Refer to minute 5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the Regional Schools Commissioner. • Update from the Plymouth Children Safeguarding Board. • A report on the Plymouth Education Board to include overview of the board, membership and terms of reference. • A report on School Transport (in relation to an untaxed school vehicle). 	<p>Date: July 2018 Officer: Amelia Boulter Progress:</p> <p>Added to work programme Added to work programme Added to work programme</p> <p>Report at 18.07.18 meeting</p>