



Oversight and Governance

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Published 24 November 2020

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 2 December 2020
12.00 pm
Virtual meeting

Members:

Councillor Mrs Beer, Chair

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair

Councillors Allen, Corvid, Goslin, James, Loveridge, McDonald and Morris.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

This meeting will be broadcast and will be available on-line for playback once the meeting has concluded. By joining the meeting, councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the online viewing.

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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 to items on the agenda.

3. Minutes

(Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 October 2020.

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. Policy Brief

(Pages 7 - 14)

6. Update on Progress since JTAI - verbal

7. In House Fostering/ Impact of Service Re-design (to follow)

8. Covid Impact - verbal

9. Participation - Work of Young Safeguarders and the Listen and Care Council (to follow)

10. Work Programme

(Pages 15 - 18)

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday 19 October 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Beer, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Goslin, James, McDonald and Morris.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Downie and Loveridge.

Also in attendance: Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services), Niki Clark (Finance Business Partner), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) Caroline Marr (Senior Policy Advisor), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.20 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 for the municipal year 2020 – 2021.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

3. Minutes

Members agreed the minutes of 4 March 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

Under this item clarification was sought as to the status of minute 58b (Policy Update) and if a response to the 'Music Education: Call for Evidence' open consultation was submitted - it was confirmed that a response to this question would be provided.

4. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

5. Policy Update

Caroline Marr (Senior Policy Advisor) presented the Policy Update to Members and highlighted that since the publication of the agenda further announcements had been made by Government regarding the extra time allocation for students to prepare for exams in 2021, that relevant guidance for schools/ nurseries and childcare settings had been updated to reflect the tier level of 'alert' and that the DFE had published a report on the evaluation of Regional Adoption Agencies.

It was recommended that the Evaluation of Regional Adoption Agencies – 2nd report is provided to Panel Members for their information.

Members noted the update.

6. Children in Care Update - verbal

Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) and Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) provided a verbal update on Children in Care. It was highlighted to Members that –

- there had been a rise of 40 children in care since the beginning of lockdown from 431 to 471; this increase closely followed the trend analysis previously undertaken. Children whose adoption hearings hadn't taken place because of delays in the court system due to Covid 19 continued to be counted as part of the 471 figure;
- regular placement review panel hearings were undertaken to assess every child's review plan;
- since August 2020 there had been 6000 visits to the newly designed Fostering website.

Members questions related to the following key areas:

- clarification as to the reasons for the increase of children brought into care of the local authority since lockdown and the effect on the council's budget;
- praise for the Fostering for Plymouth advertising campaign;
- a request for comparison figures regionally and nationally regarding new foster carers figures and enquiries to the service;
- if enough emphasis was focused upon supporting parents other than bringing children into care; and what emphasis was placed upon the child's extended family;
- the effect of the increase of the number of children in care on the workforce and what challenges were being faced;

- if there was a higher proportion of children brought into care on a long or short term basis.

It was recommended that –

1. the Children in Care Update (verbal) would be a standing item on the panel's agendas going forward;
2. the update for the next meeting to include information upon the Children in Care Awards Ceremony, Care Leavers Week, personal advisors and Foster Carer Awards;
3. an update on children and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) to be added to the panel's work programme for future discussion.

7. **Children's Services - finance breakdown (month 4 monitoring report)**

Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services), Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Niki Clark (Finance Business Partner) presented the Children's Services Finance Breakdown (month 4 monitoring report). It was highlighted that the figures on page 27 of the agenda set out the pressure for the children's directorate which was currently £4.290m.

Members questions related to the following key areas:

- if the average cost of placements had increased or decreased;
- extra costs associated with the budget and what they were for;
- school transport and the impact of Covid 19 on this;
- financial support received from the Government and what plans were in plans to mitigate spend.

It was recommended that –

1. a written response would be provided to Members regarding the overall support received from Government for the children's directorate;
2. a finance breakdown would be added as a standing item for future scrutiny agendas going forward.

8. **Return to School Recovery Plan**

Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) presented the Return to School Recovery Plan update. The impact of Covid 19 on the curriculum was highlighted to Members, specifically with regards to the results of the Ofqual consultations upon the proposed changes to GCSE, AS and A level

examinations for 2021, and the assessment and awarding of Vocational Technical and other General Qualifications in 2020-21.

Members questions related to the following key areas:

- children's access to laptops to aid with home learning;
- if sufficient school transport was available to allow children to get to school;
- the variation in offer of remote learning from school to school across the city;
- if officers had been in contact with other local authorities to share best practice;
- the impact on families that could not afford to pay for the internet at home, therefore were restricted with home learning activities;
- at what age children learned to use IT in schools;
- a request for further information on the launch of the Kickstart programme and The Zone's wellbeing and mental health training.

It was recommended that –

1. an update on the Kickstart programme is added to the panel's work programme for future scrutiny;
2. an update on training project provided by The Zone with regards to wellbeing and mental health training is added to the panel's work programme for future scrutiny;
3. the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation continues to keep Members updated on the impact of Covid 19 on the curriculum, specifically with regards to effect of the Ofqual consultation.

9. **Work Programme**

Members discussed the work programme; it was recommended that the following items were added for inclusion:

- the Kickstart programme – to be added to the January meeting;
- the Zone update – to be added to the January meeting;
- the Return to School Recovery Plan – 6 months on;
- Child Exploitation and Sexual Exploitation;

- Children Giving Evidence in Court and the support provided;
- Finance and Monitoring;
- Children's Mental Health.

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	02 December 2020
Title of Report:	ECSC Policy Brief
Lead Member:	Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation)
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Caroline Marr (Senior Policy Advisor)
Contact Email:	Caroline.Marr@Plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	ECSC PB 02 22020
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the latest national picture in respect of policy announcements and legislation affecting children and young people.

Recommendations and Reasons

For Scrutiny to consider the information provided in regard to their role and future agenda items.

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Delivery of the Corporate Plan and Plymouth Plan needs to take account of emerging policy and the legislative picture.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

N/A

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

N/A

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.*

N/A

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	ECSC Policy Brief							

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:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services).											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 17 November 2020											
Cabinet Member approval: Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation)											
Date approved: 13 November 2020											

POLICY BRIEF

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

02 December 2020



The information within this Brief is correct at the time of approval for publication and contains relevant announcements made by Government and its departments and regulators since the last ECSC Scrutiny committee on 19 October 2020.

[Have your say on post-16 level 2 and below study](#)

[A call for evidence](#) has been launched seeking views on how to ensure post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below – excluding GCSEs – can support more people to progress into further study or employment. Closing date 31 January 2021.

Date of publication	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<p>Full range of guidance that has recently been updated to reflect latest government changes</p>	<p>The following guidance document has been updated to reflect the new National Restrictions.</p> <p>Education and childcare settings: New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020</p> <p>How New National Restrictions to control the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) impact education, childcare and children's social care settings.</p> <p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early years and childcare 2. Out-of-school activities and wraparound childcare 3. Schools 4. Children's social care, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people 5. Further education and apprenticeships 6. Higher education <p>The following targeted guidance was updated in October to reflect the move into the tiered 'alert' system, but has since be updated to reflect the new national restrictions.</p> <p>Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p> <p>Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak</p> <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): Education and childcare</p> <p>What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p> <p>Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings</p> <p>Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children's social care services</p> <p>Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</p> <p>Actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak</p>
<p>Published 19 October 2020</p>	<p>Evaluation of regional adoption agencies</p> <p>Evaluation of regional adoption agencies (RAAs): second report (2019 to 2020). This reviews the progress and early impact of RAAs up to early 2020.</p> <p><i>(Report circulated to Scrutiny Members on 21 October 2020)</i></p>

Published 23 October 2020	<p>Next stage of post-16 qualifications overhaul gets under way</p> <p>The next step in the government's drive to boost the quality of post-16 qualifications has been announced by the Education Secretary. New measures will aim to boost the quality of, and to streamline qualifications, so that students and employers get the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow.</p>
Press release - 26 October 2020	<p>Action to help prevent vulnerable young people from becoming homeless</p> <p>New guidance for councils has been published to help ensure care leavers have the stable homes they need, and prevent them from becoming homeless. The good practice guidance recommends how council housing departments and children's services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living • those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it • a quick, safe and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless.
Press release - 26 October 2020	<p>Protections for working parents eligible for childcare support</p> <p>Eligibility extended for parents eligible for 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare offers. The Government has confirmed that from Sunday 01 November, eligible working parents who receive support through the Government's new Job Support Scheme (JSS) and extended Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue to receive their childcare entitlements, including the 30 hours offer and Tax-Free Childcare, even if their income levels fall below the threshold temporarily whilst on these schemes.</p>
Press release 08 November 2020	<p>New winter package to provide further support for children and families</p> <p>Councils given new funding for vulnerable households. The funding will be ring-fenced, with at least 80% earmarked for support with food and bills, and will cover the period to the end of March 2021. Local Authorities will receive the funding at the beginning of December 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter • Holiday Activities and Food programme to be expanded, covering Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021 • Healthy Start payments set to rise from £3.10 to £4.25 a week from April 2021 • Suite of measures represents long-term plan to help tackle poor health, hunger and education.
Published 09 November 2020	<p>Child protection at heart of courts review</p> <p>A review launched today will consider how the current approach to decisions on parental access made in the family courts is impacting child safety, in the next step for government's wider plans to reform family courts and bring in greater protections for domestic abuse victims. This follows a package of reforms earlier in the year to overhaul how family courts deal with domestic abuse cases – providing extra protections in courtrooms for victims, stronger powers to block abusers repeatedly dragging victims back to court and a new investigative court process to reduce conflict. The review is expected to report back next year and forms part of the government's long-term plan, announced in June, to better protect victims in the family courts.</p>

Published 11 November 2020	<p>Vulnerable children and young people survey (Updated)</p> <p>Summary of local authority survey in England to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on children's social care. Updated to include waves 1 – 12.</p>
Published 17 November 2020	<p>Government leads national drive to protect victims of child abuse</p> <p>The Home Office has joined forces with charities including the NSPCC, Barnardo's and The Children's Society to launch a new campaign to protect victims of child abuse. The month-long campaign, 'Something's Not Right', encourages young people to recognise different forms of abuse, report it and get help. The campaign will see animated adverts aimed at secondary school pupils aged 13+, running across Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. Young people will be directed to a dedicated page on the NSPCC service Childline where they can access information and seek support.</p>
Ofsted Announcements	
Published 04 November 2020	<p>Education plans from September 2020</p> <p>Guidance for education providers about Ofsted's phased return to inspection. Added information about how Ofsted will carry out our work during the national restrictions starting on 5 November.</p> <p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. About the interim period 2. National restrictions from 5 November 3. Information for early years and childcare providers 4. Information for state-funded schools 5. Information for non-association independent schools 6. Information for further education and skills providers 7. Information for local areas on special educational needs and disabilities arrangements. <p>Social care plans from September 2020</p> <p>Guidance for children's social care providers about Ofsted's phased return to inspection.</p> <p>Contents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Details about the interim period 2. National restrictions from 5 November 3. The social care common inspection framework 4. Inspection of local authority children's services.
Press release 06 November 2020	<p>New Ofsted report highlights need to get matching right</p> <p>Ofsted's study highlights the importance of getting foster matches right for children's futures, as well as keeping foster carers in the system.</p>
Published 10 November 2020	<p>COVID-19 series: briefing on children's social care, October 2020</p> <p>Evidence from assurance visits to social care providers and focused visits to local authorities between 08 September and 15 October. The main findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better multi-agency working has often been a positive consequence of the pandemic, especially between education and LAs.

- Concerns about sufficiency, placement disruption and children entering care in an unplanned way have increased during COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions.
- Care leavers' personal advisers have shown strong commitment to them throughout the pandemic.
- Pressures on the family courts significantly impacted LAs' ability to issue care proceedings and to protect children. The backlog of public law cases has also made it harder to return children home or move them out of care.
- Contact between children and their families has largely been managed sensitively, in line with COVID-19 restrictions on a local and national level.
- Leaders did not always have a clear strategy to know which children known to social care should be attending school in person or to monitor attendance.
- There were differences in children's and young people's access to technology and therefore in their ability to engage in remote learning, access the job market or keep in touch with friends and family.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) often already did not have enough capacity to meet children's needs, and this worsened during the pandemic.
- LAs appear to have made little use of the temporary flexibilities in the regulations.

[COVID-19 series: briefing on early years, October 2020](#)

Evidence from research interviews with 208 registered early years providers and maintained nursery schools between 05 and 16 October. Main findings include:

- Many children have left EY settings since the first national restrictions and have not returned.
- Almost all providers said that the pandemic had significantly impacted the learning and development of children who had left and subsequently returned.
- They were particularly concerned about children's personal, social and emotional development. Some children had returned less confident and more anxious. In some cases, children had also become less independent, for example returning to their setting using dummies or back in nappies having previously been toilet trained.
- Providers reported that children who continued to attend their setting or who were well supported at home had made good progress in their learning.
- Many providers have given some aspects of the curriculum (what they wanted children to learn and be able to do) a greater focus as a result of children's experiences of the pandemic.
- Most said they have put more emphasis on personal, social and emotional development because they felt that children's skills had regressed.
- Many providers have made changes to the resources and routines in their settings and most have increased their teaching of personal hygiene

[COVID-19 series: briefing on schools, October 2020](#)

Evidence from visits to schools between 29 September and 23 October 2020. The briefing note reports on 380 Ofsted visits and is the second briefing to be produced with another due to be published in December. The main findings include:

- Variability in the extent to which pupils have returned to school this term: not all pupils have come back following the first national lockdown. And while, in many schools, attendance rates for those who have come back are comparable to normal for this time of year, in others it is now being affected by groups of pupils having to self-isolate.
- Leaders have said that they were making some adaptations to their curriculum, based on practical considerations, or as a result of pupils having lost learning while not at school, or often both.
- Leaders also talked about the many challenges they were facing in keeping their schools safe and open. Leaders said that their pupils were generally happy to be

<p>Press release 12 November 2020</p> <p>Press release 12 November 2020</p>	<p>back, and had settled in well. But they were also clear about the changes they had seen in some pupils, including poorer physical and mental health.</p> <p>COVID -19 series: briefing on local areas' SEND provision, October 2020</p> <p>Evidence from 6 visits to local areas, looking at their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision between 5 and 14 October 2020. The main findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of the families and survey respondents found the first national COVID-19 restrictions challenging and said coping got harder as time went on. Parents and carers who normally relied on established routines, informal and family support networks and specialist services for their children struggled without them. • Some spoke about their child's regression, their own emerging mental health difficulties and the challenges of explaining restrictions to their children, or real concerns about the risks the virus posed to their child's health. • Some children and young people had positive experiences, at least in some respects. Those who remained in education throughout were reported to have benefited from the experience and often flourished with smaller class sizes and more support. Others enjoyed being at home and made progress. • Some area leaders described their ambition to put children and young people with SEND and their families at their heart of strategic planning. • Some practitioners also described steps taken to ensure service continuity. Families in all six areas spoke about the benefits of bringing multi-agency practitioners together online. • Some services, such as short breaks, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, were more difficult or impossible to deliver at distance. There were also concerns that not all families were able to access online provision equally because they did not have the technology or because English was not their first language. • In all six local areas, some families reported receiving little or even no contact from practitioners. Some children did not receive learning support and some were not able to access health and therapeutic services. <p>Ofsted announces new early years inspection arrangements</p> <p>A new approach to inspecting early years providers will give good and outstanding providers more consistency while prioritising providers rated less than good.</p> <p>Capacity in foster care stalling, despite rising demand</p> <p>The number of fostering places and carers only increased slightly this year, despite demand being at its highest, new data shows. Ofsted's annual fostering statistics show there has been little change in capacity, adding to concerns about the difficulty in finding suitable care for the most vulnerable children in an over-stretched system.</p>
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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2020-2021



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 Helen Rickman, Democratic Advisor on 01752 398444.

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
19 October 2020	Finance – breakdown Children's Services. Month 4 monitoring report	Report required	Assess financial situation of Childrens Service	Cllr Lowry/Andrew Hardingham
	Children in care – numbers/cost	Verbal Update	Assess numbers/costs	Cllr Laing/Jean Kelly/Alison Botham
	Return to school recovery plan – update on health and wellbeing programme. Impact of Covid 19 (day to day for schools). School transport to be covered. Regular update	Report	Assess the impact of Covid 19	Cllr J Taylor/Alison Botham
	Policy Update	Report		Caroline Marr
2 December 2020	Update on progress since JTAI	5	Assess improvement via improvement plan – presentation?	Cllr Laing/Jean Kelly/Alison Botham
	In house fostering/ impact of service re-design.	5	Assess the impact of the service re-design – 2 page briefing report.	Cllr Laing/Jean Kelly/Alison Botham
	Covid impact – standing item. Covid related relaxation of regs. (policy)	Private briefing – to be emailed around.	Update since previous meeting – impact on service area – verbal update (briefing emailed)	

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
	Participation – work of young safe-guarders and Listen and Care Council		Report.	Cllr Laing
6 January 2021	Skills for Plymouth – (to include update on Kickstart)	TBC		Cllr J Taylor
	Youth provision across the city (Jean/ Matt) The Zone.	TBC		Cllr Laing
	Finance update	TBC		Cllr Lowry
	Covid update	TBC		
3 March 2021	Covid update			
	NEET			
	Child exploitation. All exploitation. Sexual.			
	Children giving evidence in court,.			
Items to be scheduled				
Select Committee Reviews				
To be scheduled				
Joint Select Committee Reviews				

Annex I – Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool

		Yes (=1)	Evidence
Public Interest	Is it an issue of concern to partners, stakeholders and/or the community?		
Ability	Could Scrutiny have an influence?		
Performance	Is this an area of underperformance?		
Extent	Does the topic affect people living, working or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth?		
Replication	Will this be the only opportunity for public scrutiny?		
	Is the topic due planned to be the subject of an Executive Decision?		
	Total:		High/Medium/Low

Priority	Score
High	5-6
Medium	3-4
Low	1-2

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