



Oversight and Governance

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EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 16 February 2022

1.30 pm

Warspite Room, Council House

Members:

Councillor Laing, Chair

Councillor James, Vice Chair

Councillors Allen, Bingley, Carlyle, Cresswell, Goslin, Loveridge, Partridge and Vincent.

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

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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 - 12)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 November 2021.

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. ECSC Policy Brief:

(Pages 13 - 22)

6. General Update on Home to School Transport:

(Pages 23 - 30)

7. Child Exploitation Update and Child Evidence:

(Pages 31 - 40)

8. Children's Performance Report:

(To Follow)

9. Early Years Strategy Board:

(Pages 41 - 50)

10. Fostering Sufficiency and Marketing:

(Pages 51 - 54)

11. Draft Work Programme 2022-2023:

(Pages 55 - 58)

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 17 November 2021

PRESENT:

Councillor Laing, in the Chair.

Councillor James, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Bingley, Cresswell, Goslin, Loveridge, Partridge and Vincent.

Also in attendance: Alison Botham(Director of Children's Services), Jean Kelly(Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Ming Zhang (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills & Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Support Advisor)

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 5.15 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. **Declarations of Interest**

Name	Item Number	Interest
Councillor Allen	11 – Young Carers	Personal Interest

65. **Minutes**

The minutes of 8 September 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Councillor Cresswell had queried an action from page 5 of the minutes as to whether additional funding had been provided for Speech and Language services in Plymouth.

Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills advised that the Department for Education would make an announcement in the first three months of 2022.

The place based programme had been going well and a Board had been formally setup which was chaired by the Department for Educations Regional Commissioner with a Plymouth City Council officer as a stakeholder.

The Department for Education had injected £400,000 into training. A further priority in leadership would be rolled out on 1 December 2021, with a conference which would invite all school leaders in the region including Multi Academy Trusts, Maintained schools and Free schools to attend.

An evidence based approach had been developed closely with the Department for Education which produced a management information KPI to gauge the internal place based programme that was being finalised, All schools in Plymouth had signed up to send information for analysis. A final data sharing protocol would be finalised.

66. **Chair's Urgent Business**

Councillor Jemima Laing advised the Committee that a response had been returned from the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the Kickstart programme. The letter thanked the Committee for supporting the scheme in Plymouth and further advised that an improved application and assessment process has been completed.

Further discussion would take place on 16 February 2022 to discuss the Kickstart programme to ascertain whether the improved application and assessment process had translated to more young people have the opportunity to take part in the programme,

67. **Policy Brief**

Caroline Marr, Senior Policy Advisor provided the Committee with updates on:

- a) Consultations had been announced and Plymouth City Council would be responding to the consultation by 24 January 2022 regarding children's homes.
- b) *£24 million for regional recovery in tackling harms for vulnerable children* – Jean Kelly, Service Director for Children, Young People and Families had been chasing this but had not yet received a response.
- c) *£48 million investment for Adoption* – The South West Regional Adoption Agency would be accessing funding. Caroline Marr advised the Committee that all funding had been allocated. Jean Kelly further advised the committee a small amount of money had been allocated to each of the regional adoption agencies, the funding would be used to recruit and support adopters.
- d) 11 November 2021 – A press release from OFSTED highlighted a lack of foster carers in the system and a continued lack of capacity in the foster care sector. This had led to vulnerable children missing out on the care and support they required. Nationally foster carer numbers had increased by 4% since 2014, however the number of children requiring foster care had increased by 11% in the same period. It was also highlighted that the range of foster carers available had not always been meeting the needs of the children due to their increasing complex needs.
- e) 15 November 2021 – The Education Secretary gave an opening speech in the House of Commons for the second reading of the Post 16 and Education Bill, this had passed and was at the committee stage where a detailed examination of the Bill would be undertaken;

- f) 16 November 2021 – The Department for Education had provided a press release regarding anti-bullying. It stated that further support for schools in England would be given to combat bullying, with £1 million funding provided to five leading organisations to support schools and colleges. It was recognised that the press release did not advise how the funding would be disseminated.
- g) 17 November 2021 – A research publication had been released which provided insight as to schools views in relation to the benefits and obstacles of joining an academy trust.

Members discussed:

- a) Plymouth City Council were at an advanced stage in developing a local family hubs offer. The bidding process had been under way and the awarding of the contracts were in process. The additional fund allowed the Council to bid for up to £830,000 to support the transformation of the family hubs initiative. The bid was due to be submitted for 17 December 2021. It was expected that the Council would have the results of the bid by Spring 2022.
- b) *Care leavers and disadvantaged pupils to benefit from £126 million investment in new laptops and tablets.*

Support for training children and young people would be a part of the funding provided. It was recognised that young people would have a skills gap with the use of software on the hardware provided. For Children in Care, Ming Zhang would be able to bring information forward from the Virtual School team which would advise the committee how these children and young people are being supported.

68. **Finance Monitoring**

David Northey, Head of Integrated Finance presented this item to members. Members were advised that for Children's Social Care, business as usual had been coming in on budget with additional COVID spend holding at £7.914 million.

Members were advised that a budget preparatory session in relation to the directorates would be held in December.

Members discussed:

- a) Grant funding would cover the additional pressure from COVID-19 which had resulted in the budget for the directorate being nil. It was recognised that the grant funding from government may not continue.
- b) There had been and continued to be additional pressures in relation to the number of children coming into care and their complexity of needs requiring suitable placements, this included a greater use of residential

placements. Since March 2020 there had been an increase of 16-17% of children in care and the pressures of securing suitable placements for children remained challenging.

- c) Plymouth City Council's modelling of future budget requirements and how the modelling used national figures to translate to a local level for Plymouth. The modelling took into account historical trends and predictions. It was recognised that it would be difficult to forecast for the directorates budget in relation to what impact the cessation of the £20 universal credit uplift would have on families;
- d) Upon the release of new national data this would then be factored into the modelling undertaken by Plymouth City Council for its budget.
- e) The Children, Young People and Families service had been supporting families at earlier points of intervention in order to prevent further escalation of need. Further discussions around the modelling would be brought to the budget preparatory session in December 2021.
- f) Councillors were concerned that the COVID Grants provided by government on a temporary basis would be masking pressures on the budget.

69. **COVID Update - Verbal Update** (Verbal Report)

Jean Kelly, Service Director for Children, Young People and Families provided an update for members and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The Children, Young People and Families service continued to work with clear safe systems of work practices and staff were working from home where possible. Midland House was open to professionals and families and the service as a whole had low levels of infection and no one contracted COVID-19 through work.
- b) There had been 504 children in care from data ending 31 October 2021. For data 17 November 2021 this had reduced by 7 to 497 children.
- c) The number of children and young people in residential placements were high, this was due to issues in relation to placement sufficiency locally, regionally and nationally.

Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills provided an update to members and highlighted the following key points:

- a) COVID-19 infection rates within schools in Plymouth had been higher than the national average but low when compared regionally. Plymouth City Council's Public Health service and the service for Education, worked closely together and met every Monday to share

information and to decide the best advice to send out to schools in Plymouth. Advice had been given to parents that they needed to exercise more caution and to encourage staff and pupils to wear face coverings where required.

- b) It was recognised that despite the extreme difficulty in managing a higher infection rate there hadn't been a whole school closure.
- c) Staff illness had been a risk factor for schools in Plymouth from COVID-19. A shortage of supply teachers was a national issue. It was welcomed to hear schools in Plymouth had been supporting one another in times of difficulty.
- d) CO2 monitors continued to be delivered to all schools in Plymouth and Health and Safety colleagues continued to contact schools in Plymouth to ensure all schools had received the devices
- e) Future COVID updates would have a submitted written report for the committee.

70. **Elective Home Education**

Councillor Downie, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People introduced the report on Elective Home Education and advised the committee that he was pleased that the Inclusion Strategy Board had been moving to a preventative model which would seek to prevent and reduce the number of inappropriate elective home education undertakings.

Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills highlighted the following key points.

- a) During the pandemic, there had been a significant increase in parents electing to home educate their children. Plymouth, although had been a part of the increased trend, had not seen rates as high as the national average.
- b) 375 pupils had been officially registered as home educated at the end of the previous academic year. Previous to that, 369 pupils had been registered as home educated with pre-pandemic levels at 342 pupils.
- c) Plymouth had a high number of vulnerable children that were home educated and known to Plymouth City Council's Children's Social Care, where there had been either Child in Need or Child Protection concerns.
- d) 65% of those Children and young people had an EHCP. The Council planned to move to an earlier intervention model that would enable an earlier professional view as to whether the elective home education request was appropriate.

Members discussed:

- a) A further report would be submitted from Ming Zhang on analysis of the decision making of schools as to why pupils became home educated and why the proportion was higher in a small number of schools.
- b) Home educated students were not required to follow national curriculum as stated by the government's guidance. Whether an arrangement had been suitable or not would be based on a qualified teachers professional judgement.
- c) There had been no clear evidence to suggest schools were encouraging students to become home educated. Ming Zhang would look into the concerns raised by members of the committee and present findings at another committee date.
- d) Ming Zhang would also include in the analysis of the data, reasons as to why a high proportion of young people electively home educated were in the Year 11 cohort, this had concerned councillors due to the GCSE period.
- e) Councillors further requested information on whether those home educated young people were being linked in with the Kickstart programme or other alternative apprenticeship schemes.

71. **Inclusion Strategy Board**

Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Skills and Participation introduced the report to the committee.

Members discussed:

- a) A scorecard had been worked on and would be available in one month. This would aid democratic scrutiny in the future.
- b) Secondment opportunities continued to see an uptake from staff which represented good buy-in in relation to the strategic direction.
- c) As a city permanent exclusions in primary schools continued. A nurture provision had been created by Discovery Trust, specifically at the Edison Centre. An injection of investment into this would see the offer open up to all schools in the city at a reduced cost. The aim of the initiative had been to reduce exclusions and return children back to their original settings at an earlier point of intervention.

72. **REACH Academy - Verbal Report** (Verbal Report)

Dean Ashton, Chief Executive for REACH South Academy Trust presented this report to the committee and highlighted the following key points:

- a) REACH was a multi academy trust that had been founded in 2016. Plymouth had become the heart of REACH South and since then the Trust had set up 14 academies with 10 in Plymouth. Of those 10 academies, 8 were Primary schools, 7 in Devonport and the other being Goosewell Primary Academy. The Trust also operated UTC Plymouth and Millbay Academy.
- b) There were 12 trustees on the board, all of whom had been successful in their own worlds and came from a range of backgrounds.
- c) It had not been uncommon to create a collaboration between two schools. Millbay Academy and High Street primary school had collaborated to increase capacity and improve the quality of leadership.
- d) Millbay Academy and High Street Primary school had been geographically close. Millbay joined the trust due to OFSTED ruling that the school had been in unusually deep special measures for quality of education and various other qualities that would be expected of a school. The school had been on a transformational journey which had included the integration of a high quality leadership team who had significant experience in turning schools around. The Trust had also implemented a different form of Governance which focussed on school improvement.
- e) Millbay Academy pupil numbers had dropped since joining the trust due to parents electing to send their children to an alternative school due to the poor Ofsted reviews from 2019. Parents had also exercised their right to take their children elsewhere due to disagreement with the Ofsted findings and subsequent decision to join the trust.
- f) High Street Primary Academy's pupil numbers remained stable at 119 including nursery, however the school had been recognised as being half full with full capacity being 210, and this created capacity issues at the school.
- g) The Trust therefore brought the two schools together in order to embed a high quality leadership team and a governance structure focussed on school improvement. This decision had also been implemented to rationalise costs of management and the back office, this would focus resourcing of high quality teaching in the primary phase.
- h) The Trust had been working with Government on a significant capital investment into Millbay Academy which equated to £4-6

million. It was determined by the trust that although the building looked nice aesthetically from the outside, it did not operate how a school should with the open plan nature of the building not providing an area for focussed and effective learning. The long term vision would be to merge both schools together.

Members discussed:

- a) The consultation process between parents and the community as a whole to move students from High Street Primary Academy to Millbay Academy and vice versa.
- b) It was clarified that the leadership team consulted with parents around the plans for both schools. It was recognised that not all parents had been satisfied with the decisions, but the Trust had done their best to consult parents where they could. The Trust continued to evaluate whether the new arrangements were working.
- c) It was confirmed that there were no parents on the intervention board, however the intervention board would be time limited with the task of turning the school around from a deep special measure school into a school that would be fit for purpose. When those time limits had been reached, the board would then revert to a normal governing body where two parents would be elected. The timescale for Millbay and High street would be to achieve that by September 2022. Parental election would take place in summer 2022. The Trust Board would take a decision in Easter 2022 as to whether the school should return to a local governing body.
- d) The Curriculum at Millbay Academy had been unlawful, the law required that there would be a broad and balanced curriculum including Maths, English and Science; Millbay Academy made Science optional which had resulted in a dysfunctional curriculum. Since the Trusts involvement this has been resolved however many parents were unhappy with the decision to reinstate Science as a mandatory subject and believed that this had gone against the creative ethos of the school.
- e) The behaviour policy had been broken at the school which had resulted in attendance of pupils at school being very poor. The environment for the children and young people had been anarchic with physical capacity issues which had led to children feeling unsafe. Leaders at the school re-established discipline policies and created a consistent and safe environment for every child, attendance rates had subsequently risen. Staff attendance rates had also been low as the environment was not a fun or safe place to work.
- f) An update was provided on the estates on both schools; High Street Primary Academy continued to provide an early years setting; Millbay also had green field access which Millbay completely lacked.

- g) The trust had no intention to dispose of the High Street site and if this changed in the future would need Secretary of State approval who would seek recommendations from Plymouth City Council. Dean Ashton clarified that the trust had no plans or intentions to dispose of the High Street site and this has been assessed as a huge asset to the trust.
- h) It was advised that the use of different school uniforms within one setting would cause segregation issues between children and young people.
- i) The Committee thanked Dean Ashton for his attendance at the committee.

73. **Young Carers**

Ming Zhang, Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills presented this item to members and highlighted the following key points:

- a) It was acknowledged that it had been important to identify young carer children at the earliest point. This would be key to unlock support that would be available to them and understand their situation in order to try and improve their circumstances;
- b) Plymouth City Council had a very good record of meeting a wide range of diverse needs of its young carers in order to support them.

Members discussed:

- a) Councillor Laing thanked, on behalf of the committee, the young carers in the city who had been shouldering the burden which was recognised as being significant.
- b) Ming Zhang would investigate as to what arrangements were in place for young carers to have respite and report back to the Committee. Young carers had been offered a wide range of support which included giving advice and signposting to the correct agency.
- c) Support had been provided in school for Young carers to support them in their education to try and ensure that they would not fall behind with their studies. Ming advised the committee that schools were committed and flexible in providing support within schools for young carers.
- d) Young Carers assessment and transition assessments would be completed by schools and some agencies, all schools had access to the relevant portal.

- e) It was requested that support for young carers in going away on a retreat for a week should be sought to provide respite to young carers.

74. **Innovate**

Jean Kelly, Service Director for Children, Young People and Families presented the report to members and highlighted the following key points:

- a) The contracted Innovate team had continued to provide a social work service to children in the Local Authority that had been subject to Child Protection Plans and were in care proceedings.
- b) The service had experienced challenges in recruiting experienced social work staff to the Children Social Work service. It was recognised that there had been a 25% extra demand in the service for both referrals coming through the referral assessment service as well as children remaining within the service for longer due to the delay in care proceedings or a limited range of community interventions or responses available during difficult periods throughout the pandemic.
- c) The leadership team decided to use a managed team due to usual recruitment efforts not yielding the social work resource required at that time.
- d) Social Work capacity had increased twice in the last year. In October 2020 an additional 8.5 social workers were made permanent. During the summer of 2020 demand for the service had not receded.
- e) The COVID Outbreak management fund had allowed the service to fund the Innovate team and they had been with the Council since August 2020.
- f) The team had a positive impact on morale and caseloads for current staff. It was recognised that plans needed to be in place in preparation for the team exiting the service.
- g) The Children's social work service had seen a 7% vacancy rate which was identified as being lower than many other local authorities.
- h) Work had been on-going with Pertemps to ascertain whether they could provide the number of social workers required to fill vacancies within the teams;
- i) Management had reviewed all caseloads within the service to ensure that families had been receiving the correct level of support. This review had been successful and many families had

been stepped down to universal services or alternatively, other targeted support services.

Members discussed:

- a) Innovate had been offering their teams dedicated business support, quality assurance officers, head of service and a team manager. The team were also being paid a higher hourly rate than what had been offered by Plymouth City Council. It was also recognised that some social workers liked to work temporary roles rather than more permanent.
- b) There had not been a gap in capacity for managing Child Protection plans and the service did have experienced social workers in the service. With the exit of the Innovate team planned and the continued increase in service demand, it was planned by the service to recruit to the posts left by the Innovate team.
- c) The Vacancy rate in Plymouth's Children Social Work service continued to be low and was lower than many other local authorities. The service increased its permanent capacity in the service by 8.5 social workers. The service's vacancy rate had continued to be lower than the national average for children's social worker posts.
- d) Councillor Downie advised that he met with Jean Kelly weekly and Cabinet is aware through himself, of the pressures the service had faced.

75. **Work Programme**

Members discussed the work programme and actioned the following:

To add:

- Inclusion Board Scorecard
- Further update on elective home education
- Information to be included in respect of modelling for the budget session scheduled in December 2021
- Recruitment and retention of staff update
- Afghan Resettlement Programme
- School attainment to be a future item in October or November 2022.

To remove:

- Everyone's invited review
- Care Leavers offer; updates would be provided through the Corporate Parenting Group

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	16 February 2022
Title of Report:	ECSC Policy Brief
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People)
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 160222
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 – 16 February 2022							

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	Asset s	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Approved by: Giles Perritt, Assistance Chief Executive											
Date approved: 03 February 2022											

POLICY BRIEF

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

16 February 2022



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.

Consultations and Calls for Evidence

1. Consultation Outcome - [Reforming how local authority school improvement functions are funded](#)

In this consultation the DfE wanted to gather views current arrangements and about local authorities' school improvement functions and how they are funded.

Plymouth City Council responded to this consultation which closed on 26 November 2021.

2. Consultation Outcome - [Children not in school](#)

The Department for Education's response to the children not in school consultation, which sought proposals on:

- a local authority register of children not attending school
- support for home-educating families

This consultation closed in June 2019. It was a follow-up to the consultation and call for evidence on elective home education held by DfE in 2018. The consultation response provides details on DfE's commitment to a form of local authority administered register for children not in school.

The consultation response outlines intentions to legislate at the earliest opportunity to implement a duty on:

- local authorities to:
 - keep a register of all children of compulsory age in their area who are not registered pupils at a state or independent school
 - provide support to home educating families
- parents of children to supply information to such a register
- proprietors of defined settings to supply information on relevant children.

These proposals form part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and have been confirmed within the published white paper. Full Press release can be found [here](#).

3. [School attendance: improving consistency of support](#)

The Department for Education have launched a new consultation on proposals to improve the consistency of school attendance. They are seeking views on the following measures:

- Requiring schools to have an attendance policy, and have regard to statutory guidance on the expectations of schools, academy trusts and governing bodies of maintained schools on attendance management and improvement.
- Guidance on the expectations of LA attendance services.
- A clearer more consistent national framework for the use of attendance legal intervention, including a new regulatory framework for issuing fixed penalty notices for absence.
- Bringing the rules for granting leaves of absence in academies in line with other state funded schools.

Consultation closes at 11.45pm on 28 February 2022.

4. [Keeping children safe in education: proposed revisions 2022](#)

This consultation is seeking views on revisions to [Keeping children safe in education](#), the statutory guidance that sets out what schools and colleges should do, and the legal duties with which they must comply, to keep children safe.

Consultation closes at 11.59pm on 11 March 2022.

5. [Revised behaviour in schools guidance and suspension and permanent exclusions guidance](#)

Open consultation - In response to the [Timpson review of school exclusions](#), the government committed to working with sector experts to publish clearer, more consistent guidance. The aim of this guidance is to support schools to:

- create positive behaviour cultures
- ensure suspensions and permanent exclusions are conducted in a lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair way

Consultation closes at 10pm on 31 March 2022.

Date of publication	Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
All relevant guidance relating to schools, early years and childcare providers, further education and colleges and Children's Social Care providers has been updated in line with the government's Plan B announcement on 19 January 2022.	
Published 17 November 2021	<p>Government funds new tech in the fight against online child abuse</p> <p>The government will fund new innovative technology to help stop the spread of child sexual abuse material on end-to-end encrypted social media and online messaging platforms. The five projects - including tech companies in Edinburgh, Poole, St Albans and London - are the winners of the Safety Tech Challenge Fund, which aims to encourage the tech industry to find practical solutions to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse online, without impacting people's rights to privacy and data protection in their communications.</p> <p>Parliamentary update: The government's forthcoming Online Safety Bill will transform how illegal and harmful online content is dealt with. It will place a new duty of care on social media and other online companies towards their UK users. The Draft Online Safety Bill has undergone legislative scrutiny and the Joint Committee reported its findings on 14 December 2021.</p>
Published 19 November 2021	<p>New rules to drive down cost of school uniform for families</p> <p>Schools will need to follow statutory guidance which requires them to make sure uniform is affordable for all. The Department for Education cost of school uniform guidance means schools in England must ensure that school uniform costs are reasonable, and parents get the best value for money.</p>
Published 26 November	<p>New measures to reduce pupil absence</p> <p>Government attendance advisors to start work helping local areas and school trusts put new plans in place to increase attendance. As part of the Education Secretary's commitment to make school attendance his top priority, new expert</p>

	<p>attendance advisers with decades of first-hand experience are to begin work to reduce pupil absence.</p> <p>They will work with local authorities and multi-academy trusts who have been identified as having potential to benefit from the support and who want to use the expertise of the advisers to help re-engage persistently absent pupils.</p> <p>Update: Government has launched a consultation in relation to addressing school absences – see link in consultation section above.</p> <p>The Secretary of State has signalled his intention for attendance to be a key component of his upcoming Schools White Paper and we welcome the DfE consultation on the proposals. Plymouth has not been identified as an area for concern, however attendance and inclusion are a high priority and recognised as a key area of LA improvement, although our attendance during the pandemic has been better than the national average.</p> <p>We have a clear vision of improving school attendance of all pupils with a particular focus on the attendance of vulnerable learners. Attendance and inclusion is recognised as key to the school improvement and inclusion is a key area for the city and as such is within the scope of the Inclusion Strategy Board and A Bright Futures Plan.</p> <p>The Inclusion Strategy Board monitor and interrogate local and national data, feedback from schools and intelligence from partner agencies to develop an LA wide strategy to reduce absence and monitor impact (including joining up with early help, children’s social care and other LA services). We will use data to pivot resources towards specific schools/cohorts/wards or pupil groups where the data suggests the most significant issues. Data sharing agreements with schools will enable the LA to collate anonymised aggregated information which will be fed into dashboard reports, allowing for key KPI’s to be generated at a school, MAT and city wide basis. This data will be used by education professionals to fulfil their duties to fully understand the challenges and issues facing the provision of education within Plymouth and ensure that any improvement plans are based on the most complete and up to date information. This data will support the development of traded and core services and facilitate targeted interventions by the LA.</p> <p>A data sharing agreement is now in place with secondary schools and the next phase will be for the same at primary phase.</p>
Published 11 January 2022	<p><u>School recovery strategies: year 1 findings</u></p> <p>Schools’ approaches to education recovery in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This report details the interim findings from a mixed methods study which aims to understand how primary and secondary schools in England have responded to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what further support they need.</p>
Published 19 January 2022	<p><u>The Family Strategy, a new 10-year plan recognising the unique nature of military life and setting out bespoke support for service families has been published</u></p>

	<p>The strategy will deliver lasting, cultural change over the next decade as it brings together innovative policies on health and wellbeing, education and career support. The Family Strategy recognises the exceptional demands placed upon the UK Armed Forces and their families and focuses on health and wellbeing, learning and childcare, developing partners' careers alongside the serviceperson and career management sensitive to the needs of the family. It is based on recommendations made in a report by Andrew Selous MP titled 'Living in our Shoes: Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families' published last year.</p> <p>Update: The new 10-year plan will seek to influence the work of Plymouth's Armed Forces Covenant, specifically in relation to the Young People and Families Theme Group. The group are currently reviewing their priority actions and Terms of Reference which will look to reflect the key points of the new Family Strategy.</p>												
<p>Published 24 January 2022</p>	<p><u>More support for schools and students as plan B comes to an end</u></p> <p>New multi-million-pound funding from NHS England will enable all schools to fully support the in-school vaccination programme, and air cleaning units will be provided in all classrooms and teaching spaces that need them, the Education Secretary has announced.</p> <p>The Department for Education is to distribute a total of £8 million in funding from NHS England to support secondary schools with the vitally important in-school vaccination programme for young people – hosting NHS vaccination teams and passing on materials about vaccination to further boost protection.</p> <p>This comes as over 50% of 12-15-year-olds – over 1.5 million people – have now had at least one dose of the vaccine. The government is also committing to deliver up to 9,000 air cleaning units to early years, schools and colleges across the country to improve ventilation in classrooms – up to 1,000 more than originally promised.</p> <p>12 – 15 yr Vaccinations Update: 12 – 15yr old vaccination programme is managed by NHS England but the LA work closely with them to promote and ensure data accuracy. Latest figures show;</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="411 1541 1321 1653"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">12 – 15 yr Vaccinations</th> <th colspan="2">16 – 17 yr Vaccinations</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>31 Jan 2022</td> <td>1st dose – 57%</td> <td>31 Jan 2022</td> <td>1st dose – 72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2nd dose – 16%</td> <td></td> <td>2nd dose – 47%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>(Figures rounded to the nearest % point)</i></p>	12 – 15 yr Vaccinations		16 – 17 yr Vaccinations		31 Jan 2022	1 st dose – 57%	31 Jan 2022	1 st dose – 72%		2 nd dose – 16%		2 nd dose – 47%
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<p>Published 27 January 2022</p>	<p><u>94% of secondary schools provide free period products to students</u></p> <p>New data on the government's free period product scheme shows schools and colleges stepping up to make sure no student has to miss lessons because of their period. The data shows the value of products being ordered increased by almost a quarter (23%) in 2021 to £3.4 million compared with £2.8 million in 2020. The number of environmentally friendly or reusable products ordered increased from less than a third in 2020 (30%) to almost half (48%) of all products in 2021.</p>												

<p>Published 01 February 2022</p>	<p><u>Government outlines ambitious plans to level up activities for young people</u> Government commits to National Youth Guarantee backed by £560 million funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Investment Fund will deliver up to 300 new and refurbished youth facilities in the most deprived parts of England. • Funding will tackle youth group waiting lists and offer The Duke of Edinburgh's Award to all state secondary schools in England • National Citizen Service receives funding to ensure thousands more young people are 'world ready and work ready' <p>This announcement is part of the Levelling Up White Paper and will ensure young people in the most deprived parts of England have access to thousands of new activities. Youth services across 45 Local Authorities and around 600 district wards in the most deprived parts of England will be eligible to apply for the £378 million Youth Investment Fund.</p>
<p>Published 01 February 2022</p>	<p><u>Package to transform education and opportunities for most disadvantaged</u> Skills, schools and families at the heart of government plans to improve public services and level up left behind areas. 55 areas have been selected as Education Investment Areas in the Levelling Up White Paper.</p> <p>In these new 'Education Investment Areas', the Department for Education will offer retention payments to help schools keep the best teachers in the highest priority subjects. These areas will be prioritised as the location for new specialist sixth-form free schools where there is limited provision to ensure talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the highest standard of education this country offers.</p> <p>Schools in these areas that have been judged less than Good in successive Ofsted inspections could be moved into strong multi-academy trusts, to attract more support and the best teachers. This will be subject to a consultation in the spring.</p> <p>The paper will set a new national mission to ensure that 90% of children leaving primary school in England are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths by 2030. In 2019, just 65% of pupils met all 3 standards, with the proportion substantially varying across the country. Schools in the Education Investment Areas will also be given support to address wider issues.</p> <p>Update: Plymouth has been selected as one of the Education Investment Areas alongside its neighbouring Local Authority, Cornwall.</p>
<p>Published 01 February 2022</p>	<p><u>Around 1 in 10 children starting school at risk of measles</u> A new campaign warns parents and guardians of the serious risk to children's health from measles, reminding people to ensure their children are protected by 2 doses of MMR vaccine.</p> <p>The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the NHS are calling on parents and guardians to ensure their children are up to date with the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, and all other routine childhood immunisations, as</p>

	<p>the latest data shows MMR vaccination uptake has dropped to the lowest level in a decade.</p> <p>Since the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in March 2020, there has been a significant drop in the numbers getting their children vaccinated against MMR and other childhood vaccines at the right time.</p> <p>Update: Plymouth sits above the England and South West average for uptake of the MMR vaccine.</p>
Ofsted Announcements	
<p>Published 07 December 2021</p>	<p><u>Ofsted Annual Report: We must do all we can to make sure this generation is not denied its opportunities</u></p> <p>The Chief Inspector's Annual Report says that nearly all children and learners have been affected by the pandemic, with long-term consequences unknown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good, well-structured, face-to-face education will help most children catch up • Daily routines, and the return of sport and extra-curricular activities, will improve children's mental and physical health • Those requiring specialist care and support must not be left wanting • Improvements that were in progress before the pandemic need to continue and other reforms must be taken forward urgently.
<p>Published 13 January 2022</p>	<p><u>Supported accommodation: Education Secretary's letter to Ofsted</u></p> <p>Letter from the Secretary of State for Education to Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, formally requesting Ofsted to register and inspect providers of supported accommodation for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17.</p> <p>On 13 December 2021 Amanda Spielman responded to the letter from the Secretary of State for Education that asked Ofsted to register and inspect providers of supported accommodation for young people.</p> <p>The Chief Inspector confirmed that Ofsted would develop and implement a new system of regulation and inspection for providers of supported accommodation for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17.</p>
<p>Published 19 January 2022</p>	<p><u>Care leavers feel they left care too early. Ofsted finds</u></p> <p>The report, 'Ready or not: care leavers' views of preparing to leave care', brings to light the lack of choice many care leavers experienced: some felt they had to leave care 'whether they were ready or not'. Local authorities are required to prepare children for leaving care but this report finds that care leavers' experiences of this preparation have been varied, and many were unaware of the support they are entitled to.</p>

ECSC Scrutiny updates from previous meeting

An update was requested from the previous meeting held on 17 November 2021, in respect of the following government announcement;

Care leavers and disadvantaged pupils to benefit from £126 million investment in new laptops and tablets

Care leavers, children with a social worker and children arriving from Afghanistan will receive devices to enable them to access education and support.

Update: Official government figures show that for Plymouth **2054** devices (laptops and tablets) and **143** routers have been delivered or dispatched to the Local Authority or directly to LA-maintained schools since the start of the scheme.

The following information was circulated to committee members upon request after the 17 November meeting;

Schools' views: benefits and obstacles to joining academy trusts

This research report presents the results of a survey designed to understand the experiences and perceptions of schools about multi-academy trusts (MATs).

This research was designed to answer 3 key research questions:

1. what are the experiences of schools or academies that have joined a MAT in the last couple of years?
2. why have maintained schools decided not to convert to join a MAT?
3. why have standalone academies not joined or formed a MAT?

It presents the difference between the experience of being within a MAT and perceptions of what being in a MAT would be like.

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	16 February 2022
Title of Report:	General Update on Home to School Transport
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Children and Young People)
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Amanda Paddison
Contact Email:	Amanda.paddison@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide a general update on the delivery of the Home to School Transport service and the ongoing Covid related pressures.

Recommendations and Reasons

To continue to deliver the service in line with national requirements whilst continuing to make savings where possible.

Reason: To keep children, young people and adults safe whilst reviewing options for cost savings.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To stop delivery Home to School Transport
To contract out Home to School Transport

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Keep children, young people and adults protected. Delivering the best outcomes for children, young people and families

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Continuing and risking financial pressures as a result of the long term impact of Covid on the transport market both within Plymouth and nationally.

Financial Risks:

Escalating costs and continuing budget pressures.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

This is a for information report.

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.

This is a for information report.

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							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

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: Ming Zhang/ Amanda Paddison

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 24/01/2022

Cabinet Member approval: *[electronic signature (or typed name and statement of 'approved by email/verbally')]* Councillor David Downie Approved verbally

Date approved: 27/01/2022

OVERVIEW OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE

The School Transport Team co-ordinates the Home to School transport provision for children and young people who have a range of special educational needs and disabilities on approximately 200 vehicles each morning and afternoon to all of the Special Schools as well as other Schools and Specialist provisions within the City and also Specialist provision outside of the City boundary. They also provide free bus passes each year for qualifying students to enable them to travel on public transport.

Transport is provided in a variety of ways, minibus, taxi, ambulances, bus passes and petrol allowance (an allowance which enables parents and carers to take their child to school in their own transport). We allocate the most cost effective form of transport based on the information that is provided to the team about the child's needs, information from the school, health and parents and a robust risk assessment.

The team only provide transport for children who qualify under the statutory criteria.

To qualify for transport the following apply:

- The child does not live within walking distance of their nearest school. For a child under 8, the walking distance is two miles from home to the school and for a child 8 and over the walking distance is three miles. However if a parent has decided to send their child to a school which is not their nearest school then they will not qualify for transport even if it is over the walking distance
- The family are on a low income and feel the following conditions
 - For primary school ages children they must attend their nearest school, receive free school meals and the distance from home to school has to be more than two miles
 - For children aged 11-16 they must attend one of their three nearest schools, receive free schools means and the distance from home to school is between 2-6 miles
- The child has an Education Health and Care Plan and is unable to walk the distance to school accompanied by an adult

For all other children, parents are responsible for ensuring that their child gets to and from school even if they attend a school which is not close to their home. In summary, the school transport service affects the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.

Home-to-school transport is a complex area of PCC's statutory responsibility that involves high performing teams across Admissions; SEND 0-25 Statutory Assessment Team; School Transport Team; procurement and commissioning. It is also an area, which in recent years has come under significant financial and staffing pressures as the number of children who qualify for statutory provision increases. Teams have managed excellently in a constantly changing environment that has involved a number of policy, demographic, and market forces, that have led to rapid changes and growing expenditure.

PCC's existing travel assistance offer is mainly taxi and minibus transport for children and young people with SEND, resulting in an annual cost of circa £4.6m. Various teams within the Council are working together with families, young people, schools, colleges and transport providers to develop a change in culture and approach to home to school travel assistance.

PCC proactively promotes participation in education and training, including apprenticeships, for 16-18 year olds, and is working to reduce those Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). A bursary can be applied for at Post-16 institutions; this is not always used for travel, but can be. Legislation allows the Local Authority to charge all families of young people aged 16-18 a concessionary charge of £495 (2020/21 academic year) towards the cost of travel. This cost is increased by RPI on an annual basis. This contribution does not cover the full cost of providing transport for a young person.

PCC also proactively promotes participation in education and training, including apprenticeships, for Post 19 students with an Education, Health and Care Plan. No bursary is available to these students and legislation does not allow the Local Authority to apply a charge towards the cost of this transport so the full cost of providing transport is covered by the service and this is an increasing financial pressure. Providing transport to Post 19 students is a significant policy change that was introduced as part of the SEND reforms.

PCC's SEND transport has seen a significant rise in both the numbers of children in receipt of transport and the associated costs of providing that transport year-on-year. The growth in the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) is an important factor in increasing demand for SEND transport. We have contacted and benchmarked with several other local authority Home to School Transport teams and the majority are reporting an increase in demand of between 20% and 35% this is in line with the increase we are seeing within Plymouth. Plymouth has also recently seen an increase in the number of children and young people who are placed outside of Plymouth due to the complexity of their SEND needs. Although we have a range of special school provision the complexity of some children's needs means that they cannot be met within our current special school provision.

SUCCESS IN DELIVERING BUSINESS CASE TO REDUCE COSTS

A Business case was agreed in June 2020 which set out options to change the transport service in order to reduce the budget. The plan for the business case outlined actions that aimed to create a saving of £329K in 2020/21. The Business case was developed prior to the full adverse implications of Covid being realised, which have had a detrimental impact on the work of the team. The long term impacts of Covid on the provision of Home to School Transport, as outlined later in this report. However the team have managed to make the savings outlined in the 2020 business case and the full £329K has been achieved.

COVID IMPACTS ON FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF SAVING ACTIONS

The following actions were outlined in the June 2020 business case, which the services are reviewing and assessing their pertinence to the current challenge of full Covid advert impacts:

- Review current post 16 school transport policies, update as required to ensure legal and regularity compliance, consult on changes and implement in accordance with require timeline.

The current school transport policies were reviewed to ensure legal and regularity compliance. After consultation with other Local Authorities and working closely with finance colleagues it was agreed that any changes to the post 16 provision policy would result in an increase in financial pressure and would not result in the anticipated saving. It was therefore agreed that this action would not be pursued.

- Ensure adequate staffing of the team including staff to deliver travel training. Promote the same to ensure maximum number of children, young people and adults are diverted from taxis and minibuses, on to public or alternative transport. Increase life chances for this vulnerable group.

Although staff have been recruited to vacant positions new vacancies have been created as existing staff members have moved on and there is ongoing recruitment to these posts with the pandemic exaggerating the challenging situation. Staff vacancies within the team remain a pressure on the service.

The Travel Trainer positions are now filled and staff were recruited in December, however, these posts still need the completion of the recruitment process including DBS checks and references therefore we do not expect them to actually start work until February/March 2022. These posts had taken a considerable time to fill and once the staff members start work, travel training can commence subject to Covid restrictions.

- Review of Passenger Assistant ratios and reducing number of PAs to 1 per route

All routes have been reviewed and risk assessed to reduce the number of PAs to 1 per route where possible based on the needs of the children who are travelling

The team have also carry out comprehensive reviews of all routes every time a route needs to be changed or retendered to ensure that it is as cost effective as possible.

Despite working in very adverse conditions the team have managed to make the savings that were outlined in the 2020 Business case. Unfortunately ongoing pressures as a result of the long term impact of Covid are placing further pressures on the service in other areas.

LONG TERM ADVERSE IMPACT OF COVID ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT COSTS

The past 18 months of pandemic times have been a very difficult time for the service, like so many others services they have had to adapt to new ways of working in an ever changing environment. Home to School transport has continued to operate throughout the pandemic and continued to transport vulnerable children to school when the majority of children were not attending. Although there are no longer any social distancing requirements on school transport additional safe systems of working and PPE remain in place. The team are daily having to reschedule transport as children, PA's and drivers test positive for Covid 19.

Nationally there is a significant shortage of drivers across the transport industry which is having a detrimental impact on the supply chain for the country as a whole. In Plymouth we have seen an increasing number of taxi drivers and bus drivers leaving the profession, 180 during the past 12 month period with very few new drivers replacing them. The number of drivers leaving the industry has also been impacted by Covid. The adverse impact of this is that our transport providers are finding it hard to provide drivers to cover routes and are handing routes back. They are therefore having to incentivise drivers and offer higher salaries and guaranteed hours. At present we are seeing an increase in cost of between 10 – 20% across all routes.

The current taxi licencing consultation may also have an impact on the team if the number of private hire vehicles and hackney cabs is reduced further as a result of changes to taxi licencing.

Although we are seeing increased demand there has been a reduction of 7 transport routes since 2019/20 which demonstrates effective route planning. The total number of transport routes is currently 219, compared to 226 in 2019/20.

COVID GRANTS

The local authority was lucky enough to receive Covid grants from both the Department for Education and the Department for Transport recognising the urgent need nationally for additional financial support to support with the provision and coordination of Home to School Transport during the pandemic. This resulted in the team being able to maximise the grants and make considerable revenue savings last year in the region of £420K. However, these grants have now ceased.

INCREASE IN OUT OF CITY PLACEMENT

During the past 12 months we have seen an increase in the number of children who have been placed in educational provision outside of Plymouth. This is due to a variety of reasons including lack of capacity within our special school estate and the need for specialised provision which is unavailable within the city. We are also seeing an increase in the level of need within this cohort of children and this is increasing the need to place children out of city in very specialist provision.

The forecasted cost of out of city transport routes is £0.131m, an increase of 0.041m (45%) compared to 2019/20.

INCREASED COSTS FOR POST 19 TRANSPORT

When the SEND reforms were introduced it expanded the statutory duties placed on the Local Authority and increased the age range to 0-25 years. The major implication of this was the new duty to provide transport to Post 19 students with no additional budget so the team have provided this provision from within the existing budget arrangements. The number of Post 19 students is on the increase and this is now placing additional pressures on the budget. After consultation with other Local Authorities we have found that this area of work does not normally sit within the School Transport team but sits within Adult Social Care teams. However, in reality moving this provision would not solve the budget pressures it would just move them to another department.

The forecasted cost of Post 19 transport routes is £0.128m, an increase of £0.056m (76%) compared to 2019/20.

NEXT STEPS

Due to changing demands and new pressures on the school transport budget the team continue to explore other options to reduce costs and will review the contract tendering process to see if any further efficiencies can be made.

The Service Manager links closely with her colleagues in other local authorities to learn from each other any efficient practice. However, other LAs are also reporting considerable pressures on their Home to School Transport services and some are investing in the services and increasing the size of the transport teams to continue to address these issues. Devon is reporting a £5.5m gap in their transport budget, Wiltshire a £1.8m gap and Dorset at £3m gap, Cornwall stated that they are experiencing a crisis for both their budget and supply and West Berkshire also report a supply crisis. Plymouth is therefore not alone in experiencing these difficulties and the service will continue to work diligently to drive costs down whilst still providing a high quality service that meets the needs of children, young people and families.

Rising to the challenge, the Home to School Transport team will continue to offer a high quality service that meets the needs of the individual children and will continue to explore all options to drive down ongoing escalating costs.

The service will continue to promote and expand independent travel training, route plan, reduce PA ratios where applicable and to promote petrol allowances in order to mitigate the cost pressure of school transport.

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	16 February 2022
Title of Report:	Child Exploitation Update and Child Evidence
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Children's Services)
Author:	Martine Aquilina
Contact Email:	Martine.aquilina@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

Information in response to a request from Panel

Recommendations and Reasons

The Committee is asked to note this update on Child Exploitation issues within Plymouth.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None – This report is for information only

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Relates to Caring council agenda-

- Keep children, young people and adults protected.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention.
- People feel safe in Plymouth.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Information only

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No issues identified

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.*

This relates to risk management for the young people at risk of child exploitation in Plymouth. Child exploitation has a significant adverse impact on vulnerable and socially isolated young people, including children in care.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Definitions of child exploitation							

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)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes



Date agreed: 04/02/2022

Cabinet Member approval:

Councillor David Downie



Date approved: 07/02/2022

1.0 Introduction

This briefing report has been produced at the request of Scrutiny Panel to provide an update on Child Exploitation issues within Plymouth. It builds on the previous report to Scrutiny Panel dated 03 March 2021 (appendix A). Definition of Child Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation are appended for ease and reference. The report gives an overview of how agencies respond to children who go missing. It goes on to give an update on how we as a city respond and tackle child exploitation and gives an update of the Adolescent Safety Framework.

2.0 How we respond to children who go missing in the city

The Reducing Exploitation and Absence from Care and Home team (REACH) are a team of Professional Youth Workers who work with young people who are reported missing. They undertake a Return Home Interview with the young person and direct work with those who may be at risk as a result, including at risk of exploitation.

The Reducing Exploitation and Absence from Care and Home team will complete a Child Exploitation Tool (CE Tool) for every young person who is reported missing unless there has been a recent tool completed and the risks have not changed. This is reviewed by the Senior Professional Youth Worker / Manager.

The team will contact every young person and their parent / carer within 24 hours of the found report to offer and undertake the visit; not all agree to this. Where children/young people are already known to Children Young People and Families Service (CYPFS), the allocated social worker or other professional that has a positive relationship with the young person will be asked to follow up with the young person if they have declined a formal return home interview with the REACH worker.

During completion of the Return Home Interviews, workers are able to gather information and intelligence that can be used to signpost young people and their families and / or carers for appropriate support to reduce the risk of further missing episodes and exploitation as well as alert partners to those people who pose a risk to our young people. This may result in our police colleagues taking direct action to protect children and young people, implementing disruption tactics and targeting risky adults who pose risk to children. This also enables the city to target specific support to specific groups of young people and locations in order to reduce risk.

Since April 2021 there have been 657 missing episodes reported. These missing episodes were attributable to 388 young people. 276 of these young people were open to Children, Young People and Families. 135 were Looked after Children, 21 were on a Child Protection Plan and 120 were on a Child in Need Plan.

The data suggests that the number of young people going missing remains stubbornly consistent over the last year with a number of young people being reported missing on numerous occasions increasing the risk of exploitation. As a result a full review of the interventions and resources available to work with young people has begun so we can understand how we can work best to reduce the risk to them.

The REACH service has recently been moved to sit under the umbrella of the Youth Justice Service in order to improve the response to children and young people at risk of exploitation. Last year 61% of the young people working with the Youth Justice Service (both on statutory orders and voluntary contact)

were reported missing on at least one occasion. The Youth Justice Service aims to prevent young people entering the Youth Justice System service at the earliest opportunity. The IMPACT project aims to work with young people who have been identified as vulnerable to criminality and exploitation. This is a multi-agency approach to engage young people and has a range of specific interventions to assist them to make positive life choices.

3.0 Missing and Child Exploitation Sub Group

The Operational Missing and Child Exploitation (OpMACE) group meets every two weeks to discuss those young people most at risk of exploitation. The meeting is chaired by a Service Manager in the Children Young People and Families Service and is attended by a range of partners including the Police, Education, Youth Justice Service, REACH and Health and 3rd sector agencies.

The Operational MACE's responsibility is to identify those young people most at risk and ensure information is shared effectively across agencies to reduce risk. The group will also identify themes, locations and adults that pose a risk to children so that a multi-agency response can be developed to disrupt activity and protect young people.

Those children who are considered at most risk can be discussed at the meeting. Referrals into the Operational MACE can be brought by the Local Authority and partners.

Below are examples of some of the interventions and disruption tactics identified at OpMACE -

- Police primary tasking will often end up being created with intervention work coming from multi-agencies. For example over the summer concerns were raised regarding young people congregating in a specific area. The OpMACE co-ordinated a response that included detached youth workers, SHARP and Police working together to be present in the area and speaking to young people offering support and advice.
- Representatives from one school in Plymouth raised concerns about 2 large groups of young people who appeared to be organising fights and drug dealing. As a result a police operation was commenced. All young people involved were referred to the IMPACT project run by the Youth Justice Service to offer interventions to both the young person and parents. Joint visits were undertaken by the YJS worker, Police and Community Connections worker. Three of these young people were identified as the most at risk of offending and actions plans agreed by the Child Centred Policing Team were developed to tackle their behaviours.
- Having identified a pattern of concern relating to Child Sexual Exploitation in one area of the city brought to OpMACE following a Return Home Interview, the police were tasked to undertake disruption visits to the identified address of concern. Young people of concern were offered support given by First Light.
- Community Protection Notice warning letters can be issued as a result of information passed in the OpMACE relating to young people being exploited by adults. Evidence gathered from agencies that attend the meeting assists with this. The letter is jointly issued by Plymouth Community Connections and Police.

Child Exploitation is ever changing and how we as a city respond to this needs constant review to ensure the correct interventions are in place. A review of activities of the OpMACE meeting is currently being undertaken to identify best practice moving forward.

4.0 Plymouth's Adolescent Safety Framework and Adolescent Safety Hub

What is the Adolescent Safety Framework (ASF)?

The Adolescent Safety Framework (ASF) is Plymouth's multi-agency response to exploitation & extra-familial harm (sometimes referred to as contextual safeguarding). The framework has been fully operational since 4th January 2022.

The primary aim of the ASF is to ensure that young people feel and are safe outside their homes both in our community, and with their peers and sets out the responses for;

- Individual children
- Spaces and places in our communities and neighbourhoods where harm can occur
- School or college spaces and/or environments
- Peer groups
- Adults of concern who may be a risk to children and young people

The ASF is intended to;

1. Improve the quality of co-ordinated multi agency safety planning when an adolescent is at risk for which their parents are not culpable in respect of significant harm (for instance serious risk associated with gangs, peer group risk, county lines, CE, drug and alcohol misuse).
2. Ensure consistent safety planning support when key risks are identified.
3. Identify adolescents of concern early to intervene as a partnership to reduce risk and prevent further harm.
4. Ensure evidence-informed and consistent multi agency interventions.
5. Ensure linkage between strategic and operational issues affecting adolescent risk.

The Framework includes;

- An underpinning theoretical approach to multi-agency working with extra-familial risk
- A revised and unified model of Multi-Agency Coordination
- A clear pathway for the assessment of need and provision of help
- A comprehensive toolkit for professionals undertaking;
 - Referrals and screening
 - Assessment processes
 - Planning and review
 - Support, help and intervention
- A comprehensive document suite for all meetings and key elements of the framework.
- A multi-agency workforce training plan delivered by the PSCP
- A monitoring and evaluation plan

The ASF has been developed from best-practice evidence and evaluated models, in particular the Contextual Safeguarding Network Approach (University of Bedfordshire, Hackney, Carlene Firmin et al), Research In Practice Core Principles and Achieving Change Together (ACT Rochdale) model and embodies our commitment to a Trauma-Informed, Restorative and Strengths-based approach that understands children, young people and their families as experts in their own experiences, and ensures their inclusion in keeping them safe. It promotes a developmental approach to understanding and working alongside young people.

The Adolescent Safety Hub (AS Hub)

The AS Hub is co-located within the MASH. This new triage and coordination service has been created to receive contextual safeguarding concerns and referrals, ensure a same-day response for children who may be at immediate risk of harm and to determine, with partners, what further assessment, support or intervention is needed to improve safety.

A Safer Me assessment is the foundation tool for supporting decisions and allows professionals to clarify concerns in a holistic way.

The Safer Me assessment can be completed by any relevant professional and provided to the AS Hub for consideration. The assessment is a collaborative, multi-agency response to contextual safeguarding and can be completed by more than one professional. It must include the views of the young person/people and family wherever it is safe to do so.

Once the assessment is reviewed, the AS Hub Coordinator and Project Coordinator work with the referrer and / or Lead Professional to prioritise the extra familial concerns and agree the right multi-agency response.

Where concerns about spaces, places, education settings and/or peer groups are significant, this may include mapping meetings, community-based conferences, school based conferences or peer-group conferences, all of which bring together key stakeholders who can influence the context in which harm may be occurring.

Plymouth AS Hub |

The Safer Me Assessment is submitted to the Adolescent Safety Hub where it triaged

If Individual Safeguarding concerns are identified the MASH is notified.

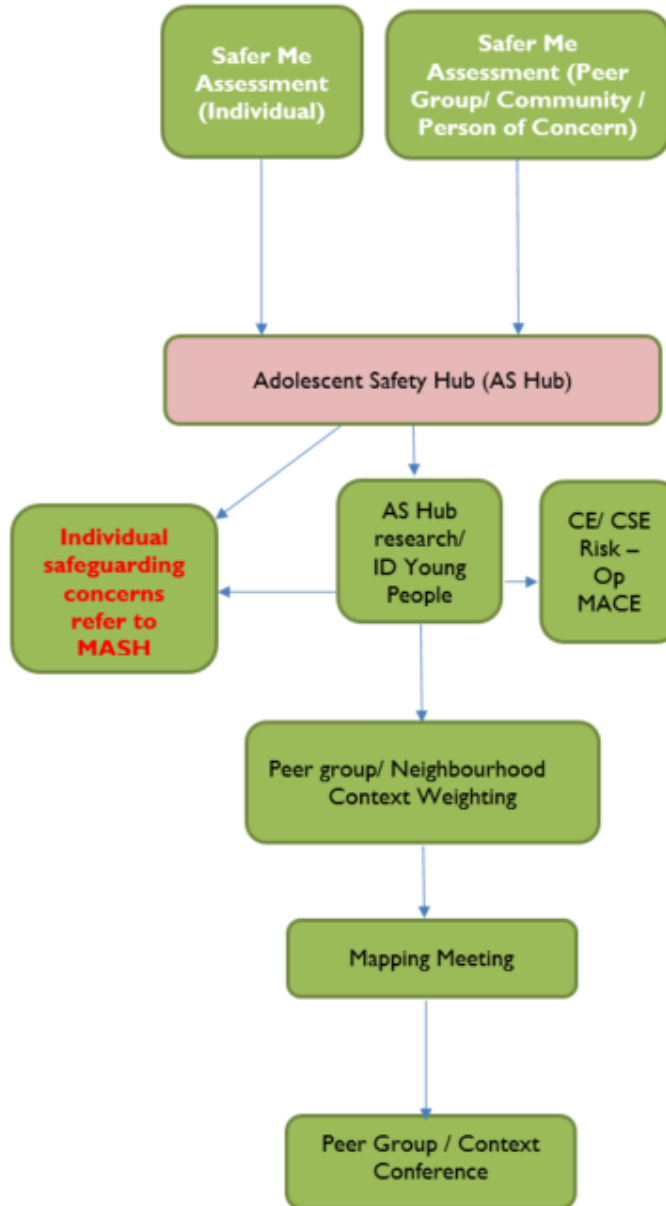
The AS Hub researches the Young Person / Peer Group / Person of Concern

When it is clear there are exploitation concerns the AS Hub will refer this to the Missing and Child Exploitation Group

'Context Weighting' is carried out in the AS Hub. This is where the *primary concern* is identified (eg: place / substance / weapons /persons of concern / exploitation)

A mapping meeting is organised with professionals to map out the concerns and the links between people and places.

Peer Group conference or a Context Conference is arranged once the concerns and risks have been mapped out, in order to explore the appropriate interventions and resources partners can offer to safeguard young people



The AS Hub also supports partner agencies with embedding a contextual safeguarding approach within their settings and assessing extra familial risk. Safer Me assessments are currently being completed alongside our partners to help build confidence in the approach.

The AS Hub is partnering schools and community services in using the Safer Me assessment to self-assess the spaces and places in their settings and there are comprehensive advanced assessment tools to support this, including ways of supporting wider community engagement and contribution. These tools can be downloaded from the PSCP website.

Responses to Individual children

The Safer Me assessment also supports decisions about what kind of support individual children need. For some, an Early Help response may be the most effective approach - building on and working within established and trusted relationships with young people and their families.

Where the risk of harm indicates a need for additional support and advice to ensure safety and/or the child's presentation, associations or changes in presentation suggest they may be or are at risk of suffering significant harm, and require a multi-agency child in need or child protection response, the requirements set out in Working Together 2018 apply and individual social work assessment and multi-agency planning will take place. In these cases a 'Safer Me' approach will be taken to ensuring young people and families are central to understanding and planning to support safety.

How we will know that young people feel and are safe outside their homes both in our community, and with their peers.

The ASF is currently in an implementation phase. Dissemination and awareness remain a primary activity to ensure stakeholder awareness, as well as embedding practices into assessment and intervention activity.

The AS Hub will capture a wide range of information and data regarding contextual safeguarding concerns in the city and will provide this to the operational and strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE). These groups analyse available intelligence and identify and deploy responses to operational and strategic threats and opportunities as well as ensuring the effectiveness of our contextual safeguarding response, including the Adolescent Safety Framework.

As part of its development, evaluation and wider learning for practice, Plymouth and Devon are working with colleagues from Bedfordshire and Kent Universities as part of the Innovate Project. They will be working over the next 2 years to explore the impact of contextual responses on practice in our local area.

Appendix A

1.1 What is CSE?

- I.11 Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).
- I.12 Child sexual exploitation is a crime with devastating and long-lasting consequences for its victims and their families. Childhoods and family life can be severely affected, and this is compounded when victims, or those at risk of abuse, do not receive appropriate, immediate and on-going support. The first response to children, and support for them to access help, must be the best it can be from social workers, police, health practitioners and others who work with children and their families. Serious case reviews show that the language and approach of professionals is highly significant in influencing when and how children will tell adults that they have been abused. Insensitive language can place “blame” with the victim and result in them being seen, and treated by safeguarding professionals as “adults”.

- I.13 The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology¹.

- I.14 Like all forms of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation:
- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex;
 - is still abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual;
 - can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity;
 - can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both;
 - can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
 - may occur without the child or young person’s immediate knowledge (through others copying videos or images they have created and posting on social media, for example);
 - can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults.
 - can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and
 - is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. (Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources).

- I.15 One of the key factors found in most cases of child sexual exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (sexual activity in return for something); for the victim and/or perpetrator or

¹ DfE, Child Sexual Exploitation. Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders, and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation (Feb 2017)

facilitator. Exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or alcohol) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived love or affection). It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs, and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that this can also be the prevention of something negative, for example a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

1.2 What is Child Exploitation?

- 1.21 We know that children can be exploited in a number of ways other than sexual exploitation, including criminal exploitation (for example shoplifting to order), “County Lines” drug supply networks, or human trafficking. There can often be cross-over between different types of exploitation and the experience of a young person does not always fall neatly into one category. Increasingly policy makers and professionals have recognised this, and now refer to “Child Exploitation” rather than concentrating solely on child sexual exploitation in order to ensure all risks to children and young people from this activity are recognised.
- 1.22 In line with other LA areas nationally, Plymouth now considers child sexual exploitation as part of the wider concern of child exploitation.

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	16 February 2022
Title of Report:	Early Years Strategy Board
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Children and Young People)
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Sue Smith
Contact Email:	Sue.smith@Plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update of the establishment of the Early Years Strategy Board and seeks Scrutiny Boards endorsement of its priorities and next stage of work.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Panel:

1. endorse the three strands of work for Early Years as agreed by the Early Years Strategy Board as set out in this report
2. endorse the 2022/23 priorities for the Board as set out in this report

The Early Years Strategy Board was established in December 2021 and Scrutiny Panel are being asked to support the current priorities and work streams of the Board.

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Early Years and childcare are cited in A Bright Future. Improving the life chances for the children within Plymouth by providing high quality and sufficient childcare is a priority. It also enables parents/carer to train/work. This supports the cities ambition to eradicate the effects of deprivation and poverty. It also supports Plymouth's economy.

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Ming Zhang / Sue Smith

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes
Date agreed: 24/01/2022

Cabinet Member approval: *[electronic signature (or typed name and statement of 'approved by email/verbally')] Councillor David Downie approved verbally*
Date approved: 27/01/2022

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY BOARD - FEBRUARY 2022

Education, Participation and Skills

This report provides an update of the establishment of board and seeks Scrutiny Board's endorsement of its priorities and next stage of work.

Why Early Years Is Important?

It is widely recognised that the quality of a child's first 1,001 critical days from conception to age two is fundamentally important for their long term outcomes, from childhood into adulthood.

High quality early experiences, including childcare can not only improve a child's physical, emotional, social and educational outcomes in their early years, but lay down solid foundation for success throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Central Government recognise the importance of early years, charging councils to deliver statutory duties to ensure that maternity, health and educational services provide high quality support for parents to be and parent/carers. One of these duties is to ensure there is sufficient, accessible and high quality childcare to support better outcomes for children and to enable parents/carers to work. The importance of early years and childcare is cited in Plymouth's strategy for children and young people, A Bright Future.

In order to build the synergy of the City's early years and childcare providers to maximise the outcomes of early year's children, the settings-led Early Years Strategy Board was established in December 2021.

Plymouth Demographics

During the height of the pandemic Ofsted stopped regulatory inspections. Childcare stopped for everyone except vulnerable children and those of Keyworkers. Consequently reliable data sources stalled. This is now restarting.

Currently, there are approximately 309 childcare providers across Plymouth. These are a mixture of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) structures.

There is currently sufficient childcare in Plymouth, although at time the number of baby places are limited in some areas.

Early indications show that our Ofsted results for 2020/21 are similar to those in 2019, when 95% of childcare settings in the PVI sector were judged Good and above by Ofsted and 81% in schools and academies.

In 2019, the free childcare entitlement was taken up by 4,792 children aged 3 and 4 years old and 1,028 children aged 2 years

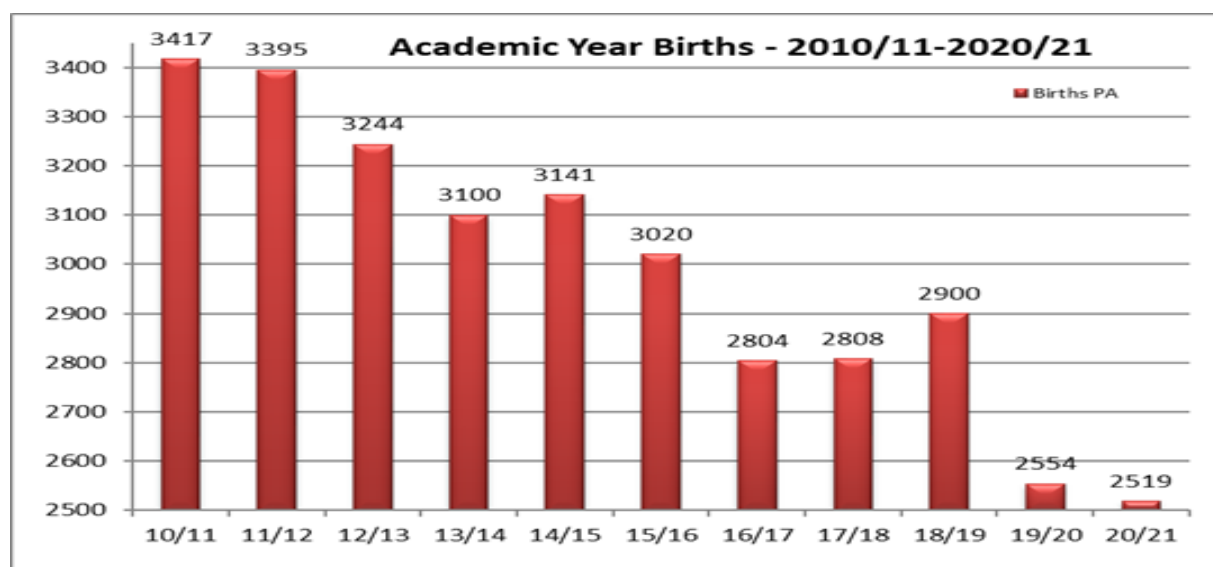
In 2021 the total number of children claiming entitlements, those receiving additional financial support based on deprivation and is shown in the table below:

	Spring 21	Summer 21	Autumn 21
Funded 2 yr olds	646	732	742
Children in receipt of Early Pupil Premium	-	735	460
Settings in receipt of deprivation funding	99	103	95
Children from deprived postcode	1,188	1,369	858
Total 2 yr olds	646	732	742
Total 3&4 yr olds	3,414	4,032	2,598
Total	4,060	4,764	3,340

Cautionary note: The number of children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium is dependent upon parents wishing to apply. Some of the children can fit into more than one category.

Prior to the pandemic (2019) Plymouth's % of 3 & 4 year old children benefitting from funded early education places was 95%, compared with England at 94%. The % of 2 year old children benefitting from funded early education places was 87%, whereas England's % was 68%. Central government are now resuming an annual census therefore there will be new data shared with council's in the later part of 2022/23.

The birth rate in Plymouth is decreasing too.



Achievement

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage sets out the statutory requirements for the development, learning and care of children from birth to age 5. The EYFS framework sets the standards that all early years' providers, including schools with early years provision, must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. At the end of reception all schools have to complete an Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) assessment on all children.

In Plymouth in 2019, the percentage of all children in EYFSP cohort within Plymouth Schools and Academies reaching a 'Good level of development' (GLD – having the essential skills, knowledge and understanding to be ready for starting the National Curriculum) for 2019 is 68.3%. Although Plymouth has improved continuously over the previous four years, when comparing this to National we were still behind by 4%. When comparing to our statistical neighbours Plymouth is the lowest performing Local Authority, performing 5.7% lower than our highest performing statistical neighbour.

Physical Development and Expressive Arts & Design remain the highest performing learning areas for the third year running. Literacy and Maths development remain the lowest performing learning areas for the fourth year running.

Girls consistently perform better than the boys in the GLD, however this gender gap reduced by 2.4% in 2019. In 2019 the percentage of girls reaching GLD was 73.9% compared to 63.2% for boys.

Children who qualify for Free School Meals (FSM) attain less well than those who do not qualify for FSM. 54% of children who qualify for FSM achieved GLD compared to 70.6% who do not qualify. The percentage of children who qualify for FSM achieving the GLD was up 5% from 2018.

The percentage of summer born (those children born in May, June, July or August) achieving GLD in 2019 was 56%. When comparing this against the non-summer born the summer born are performing 19% below the non-summer born. This has been the same performance gap for two years running.

The EYFSP data for 2022 will be the first set of data since 2019 due to the Covid19 pandemic. The revised EYFS became statutory from September 2021. One of the main changes to the EYFS 2021 has been a revision of the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). What has stayed the same is that there are still 7 areas of learning and development and 17 ELGs. The difference is that the ELGs are not the same as in the previous EYFS and all the descriptions of the Early Learning Goals have changed. This will also be the first year that most teachers will be using the new ELGs to assess children's attainment. Another part of the EYFS reforms was the removal of the statutory requirement for LA moderation of the EYFSP. Schools are required to carry out their own internal and interschool moderation.

There is a possible risk that some schools may find it challenging to assess children's attainment in the EYFSP due to children and staff absences due to COVID.

Parents/carers of children with SEND report that sometimes finding childcare is difficult. The numbers of referrals to specialist services are rising too.

Plymouth is currently looking at its School Readiness definition with an aim of improving the Communication and Language levels across the city and easing the transition process from childcare to Primary School Foundation.

The Purpose

The Early Years Strategy Board's role is to develop and monitor multi-disciplinary system improvement strategies that improve the life chances of Plymouth's youngest children.

The Early Years Strategy Board will improve educational outcomes for children 0-5 years, specifically as well as contribute to overall cross-phase city-wide development planning.

Specifically, the Board will:

1. contribute to the strategic direction of the framework and the governance of the city's education improvement partnership, in the framework of A Bright Future;
2. review performance data and other outcomes based evidence relating to the progress of specific early years outcomes, focusing on GLD and percentage of Good or Outstanding provisions;
3. set improvement priorities and contribute to improvement planning for Plymouth as a whole;
4. commission, broker and signpost setting improvement support;
5. encourage and sustain robust professional challenge between early years schools, setting and early years system partners;
6. communicate Plymouth's school and childcare setting improvement offer;
7. use intelligence to advise and guide on the future system planning;
8. ensure that no schools or settings are left out;
9. evaluate the impact of support
10. provide up to date information to other strategic groups to ensure there is no duplication, strategies are aligned and communication channels are clear.

The membership consists of:

- Service Director of Education, Participation and Skills, PCC
- Head of Education and Virtual School, PCC
- Service Manager of Early Years, PCC
- 1 x MAT CEOs
- 1 x representative Family Hub
- 3 x representatives private settings, sole trader, childminder, local chain and national chain
- 1 x representative from Livewell, health visiting and speech and language service.
- 1 x Public Health
- 1 x Early Years Federation and maintained school
- 1 x Social Care

Heidi Price (Head Teacher – Yealmpstone Farm Primary School) has been nominated as the Chair at the first Board meeting held on 4th December 2021.

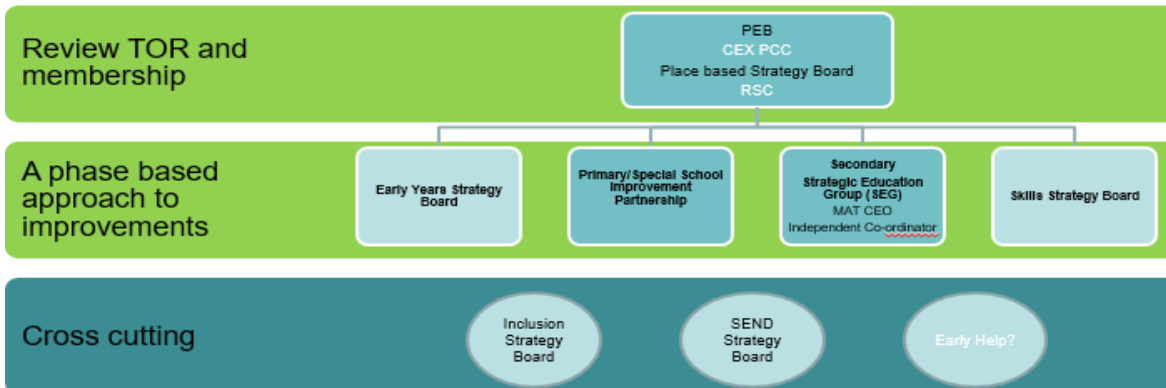
How it fits into the Governance Structure

Bright Future Governance Framework



- The voice and engagement with Children and Young People will be central to all aspects of the plan: See the C&YP version of the Plan
- Each Priority Partnership Board will have and agree
 - Key representatives on the Bright Future Strategic Leadership Board.
 - TOR and membership
 - Partnership Plan/s
 - Forward plan
 - Relevant sub groups/strategy Groups

Proposed Plymouth Education Board and related partnership governance



Board’s work programme for 2022

The Board are currently finalising an Early Years Strategic Improvement Plan for Dec 2021 – Dec 2024),

The three strands of work are agreed as:

- Quality
- Children are ready for school
- Disadvantage and Inclusion

The 2022/23 priorities for the Board are:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms: The new reforms started in 2021. These need to be fully embedded across the sector
- Raise standards: The Settings of Concern process will challenge and support settings at risk of falling below the standards needed for quality
- Communication: To formalise a working group to progress Plymouth’s approach to supporting children’s communication, language and literacy

- Transitions: To improve transitions from pre-school to school, for all children and those requiring additional support, through best practice interventions that implement recommendations from research
- Inclusion: To improve the sectors application of the Graduated Approach and mastery/up take of the newly developed Inclusion Award
- Closing the attainment gap/school readiness: To progress the pre-pandemic research into factors affecting school readiness and develop a response based upon any recommendations/best practice
- Data and research: The pandemic has disrupted the flow of outcome data. Re-establishing data scorecard will be 2022/23 priority.

Next Steps

The Board will meet four times a year. There will be subgroups convened and close alignment with other strategic groups in order to progress work in related to the priorities identified.

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Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	16 February 2022
Title of Report:	Fostering Sufficiency and Marketing
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Jane Anstis and Sarah Hunt
Contact Email:	Jane.anstis@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update for members on the progress of the fostering service and its fostering placements target of 36 new placements for children (2021/22).

Background

In March 2020, Plymouth's Fostering Service was restructured to support improved practice. A Recruitment and Assessment team was developed to focus on increasing the number of in-house foster carers in the city to support children in care close to home in a family setting. A Friends and Family Team was also created to progress assessments known as Connected Carer Assessments and Special Guardianship Assessments. These assessments are aligned to family or friends care arrangements.

Since restructuring we have seen an increase in the number of family care arrangements within Plymouth and to ensure that we are providing the right level of support to include financial support, an internal review was commissioned to look at Plymouth's current policies, financial framework and support offer.

The development of a Special Guardianship Service is in the process of developments to improve our capacity to meet the needs of the current and future cohort of Special Guardianship Carers and also to ensure we have an offer that serves all the Special Guardianship Carers living within Plymouth.

Recruitment Marketing

We continue to see a regional and national shortage of foster carers and this is evident in 2021 -2022 recruitment; this is true of both in-house fostering services and independent fostering agencies. We recognise that despite wide ranging and far reaching marketing campaigns we have not generated a significant uplift of new in house foster carers. We are projecting in this financial year to have created 8 new households and 13 new homes (placements). Whilst in the early stages of the pandemic (2020-2021) we achieved 16 new households and 30 homes (placements) we have not received the same level of enquiries or applicants this financial year and this maybe down to the longevity of living within a pandemic.

We have continued to work closely with an external sector-experienced marketing agency. The contract is due to end in February 2022 and tendering for a new marketing contract will be completed by the end of February. Marketing has continued to include the development and growth of the Foster for Plymouth website and Social media platforms with up to date articles about fostering, testimonials from foster carers and birth children, Myth busting questions and answers and information available relating to the fostering application process. Further marketing through social media, paid advertising and optimising searches on google that lead to Foster for Plymouth being a dominant find will be a primary marketing focus.

We are seeing a high number of visitors to the website and an improving picture regards to the downloading of the Foster for Plymouth Information Booklet. We have a rich suite of publicity images and messaging that have been used within a number of fostering campaigns. There is a continued social media presence that includes Plymouth City Council website, face book and twitter. The website can be found at www.fosterforplymouth.co.uk

To date, our campaigns have focused on:

- Promoting foster carers for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in line with Plymouth supporting the National Transfer Scheme.
- Promoting an Emergency Foster Carer Scheme to support children of any age to have access to regulated care in an emergency.
- Promoting prospective Foster Carers to support caring for Plymouth teenagers.
- Promoting prospective Foster Carers to choose a Local Authority Fostering Service instead of the independent sector
- There has been ongoing messaging regards to Fostering for Plymouth , changing careers and receiving a fee for a foster carer role

Fostering campaigns have attracted foster carers interested in caring for a younger age range of children. Despite promoting the breadth of support, training and development provided to foster carers this unfortunately is a consistent picture.

As set out above, challenges to recruitment in Plymouth mirror those regionally and nationally and within the public and private sectors. Plymouth will continue to build on the foundations of its marketing work today but increasingly look to re-establish direct marketing in our community and explore options for regional collaboration. A direct marketing timeline will involve corporate events such as the Seafood Festival. The recruitment and Assessment team will be promoting face to face presence in public facing arenas and this will remain in line with Covid-19 government guidelines.

We continue to see excellent care and support from our existing Foster Carers. They remain involved in fostering campaigns and we have had some success in Plymouth Foster Carers successfully referring new prospective carers as part of our 'refer a friend' scheme.

Key Targets and Progress

In 2020/ 21 the service had a target to achieve a net gain of 21 new foster placements (14 fostering households). 16 new households (30 new placements) were recruited.

Alongside this, however, a number of very longstanding foster carers retired during the course of that year. A proportion of these were expected each year however with an ageing cohort of carers, some with health needs, Covid-19 did have a part to play for some carers in reaching early decisions to cease fostering. As a result, 17 households (30 placements) ceased.

During this financial year (2021-22), recruitment activity is seeking to achieve a net gain of 36 foster placements (24 fostering households). This has been modelled over 12 Months on a net gain of 2 Households/3 Placements per month basis. We will have successfully recruited 8 households and 13 homes (placements) by March 31st. We are still seeing established foster carers ceasing to foster and are predicting a 14 home (placement) reduction.

Support and Retention:

We continue to work to ensure that Plymouth foster carers are valued, well supported and continue to receive good training and development opportunities. These areas were positively commented upon within the 2021 Fostering survey completed in July 2021. Plymouth foster carers have an allocated Supervising Social Worker who provides individual and group development and support. Our training and development offer embraces trauma informed parenting and promotes good understanding of the experiences of children and young people in care. Children and Adolescent Mental Health services provide consultation and training for Plymouth carers. In March 2022 fostering practitioners will receive training in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy which will support a therapeutic framework from which to support and educate further Plymouth carers regards trauma informed approaches.

Plymouth have an increasing number of Special Guardians (carers who in law share parental responsibility with the child's parents but can make almost all the care decisions) and Connected Carers (these are family/friend related foster carers) providing alternate to home care. Plymouth maintains a strong value base in promoting children live within their family, when it is safe to do so. The Friends and Family Team provide therapeutic support, advice, education on parenting a non-birth child and more recently have provided support in the community through coffee mornings. To ensure that we have a wide reaching support offer further resource is required to ensure that we have the right level and type of support in place that secures a child's permanence when they are unable to live with birth parents.

Next Steps:

Marketing Plymouth as a destination of choice to become a foster carer will remain a primary focus of future campaigns. Optimising search engine activity will require promoting our financial and therapeutic support to prospective carers and ensuring that we have paid advertising that supports profiling Plymouth as a leading fostering option.

Alongside foster carers, the Fostering Service assesses, approves and supports special guardians and connected carers. Special guardians are usually family members or friends of a child's birth family. They may be long term foster carers who want to legally and permanently secure a child's placement with them. This is an area of our work currently under review to improve and extend.

Ensuring children and young people are able to remain in their local community when they need care outside their families is a continual focus for our service and our recruitment, retention and service development work remains ambitious and determined to achieve that aim.

Recommendations and Reasons

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The Fostering Delivery Saving's plan is linked to regular annual savings to be achieved for CYPFS. Placing children with foster carers provides a more cost effective as well as preferable care plan for children in care in Plymouth.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

no immediate impact

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							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

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	djn.2 1.22. 255	Leg	LS/3 8047 /AC/ 8/2/2 2	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Asset s	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Jean Kelly											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes – Alison Botham Date agreed: 08/02/2022											
Cabinet Member approval: Yes – Councillor David Downie Date approved: 08/02/2022											

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DRAFT Work Programme 2022-2023



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 304963.

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
15 June 2022				
14 September 2022				
23 November 2022				
15 February 2023				

Date of meeting	Agenda item	Prioritisation Score	Reason for consideration	Responsible Cabinet Member / Officer
Items to be scheduled				
Review report – Adopt South West				
Regional Schools Commissioner				
Changes to pupil premium				
Finance Monitoring				
Sufficiency Strategy for Placements				
Unregulated placements				
Out of Hours Reshaping				
Education Improvements				
Plymouth Education Board and Work programme				
Changes to Pupil Premium				
Update on Elective Home Education				
Experienced Social Worker recruitment and retention				
Afghan Resettlement Programme				
Care Leavers and Barnardo's Care Journeys				
School Attainment (Annual Report)				
Children's Mental Health Select Committee update				
Update on Kickstart (first scrutiny of municipal year)				
Plymouth Safeguarding Board				
Update on arrangements for children missing education				
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?		

A bility	Could Scrutiny have an influence?		
P erformance	Is this an area of underperformance?		
E xtent	Does the topic affect people living, working or studying in more than one electoral ward of Plymouth?		
R eplication	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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