

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	08 July 2024
Title of Report:	Achieving Excellence – A Strategy for Children’s Services 2024 - 27
Lead Member:	Councillor Jemima Laing (Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care, Culture and Communications)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
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Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

Following extensive consultation with staff, children and young people, Children’s Services has developed a new three-year strategic plan, Achieving Excellence, to drive improvement and transformations in the service over the 2024-27 timeframe.

This report sets out the key drivers to the plan and the ten strategic priorities that are proposed for Children’s Services 2024-27 together with high level milestones for delivery over this timeframe and the intended outcomes.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Cabinet:

1. Agree the Children’s Services Strategic Plan, Achieving Excellence - 2024 – 27;
2. Agree the proposed milestones for the delivery of the ten Strategic Priorities are implemented in Children’s Services as set out in the attached three-year milestones.

Reasons

The strategic plan and the proposed ten strategic priorities put forward (as detailed in the attached appendix) are informed by key service drivers including;

- The priorities set out in the Plymouth Plan and A Bright Future, the partnership plan for children and young people;
- Responding to the findings of Ofsted Inspections of our Local Area SEND provision and children’s social care services (ILACS);
- Responding to the national reform agenda, including for children’s social care (Stable Homes Built on Love) and the SEND reform agenda;

- Our data and quality assurance tells us that outcomes for children and young people in Plymouth are not yet consistently good in key areas, including school attendance and educational achievement and outcomes for priority vulnerable groups;
- Children, young people and families have told us that they do not always experience strengths and relationship-based approaches;
- The need to stabilise and manage our budget position in response to increasing costs and demand and ensure that there is sufficient provision in key areas;
- -The need to develop a stable, skilled and well trained and supported workforce;
- To maximise opportunities to embrace new technology and modernise our working practices.

The plan builds on the direction of travel created by the Children's Services Target Operating Model (TOM) during 2023, to transform our approach and improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The plan sets out how we will develop earlier and more effective help for children and families to prevent problems and needs from escalating where possible, through a locality model of delivery and working closely with partners, and how this will improve outcomes for children and young people from the early years through to preparation for adulthood.

Adopting a three-year plan creates a framework for service delivery where we can drive change and improvement in priority areas over the longer term making lasting, sustained and impactful change. All service areas within Children's Service have revised and developed service plans that align to the ten priorities. These provide clarity and focus on delivering the priorities within the teams. The ten priorities are based on a 'One Children's Service' approach where we are building collaborative approaches across Children, Young People and Families service and the Education, Participation and Skills Service, particularly in key areas such as improved early intervention and inclusion for children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes, improving attendance and outcomes for whole families and preparing young people for success in adulthood with improved education, training and employment outcomes.

The plan sets out how we will transform and improve key services to improve outcomes for children and families, this includes creating the conditions within the organisation to enable us to achieve excellence. It includes how we will build on the work we have started to develop a stable, highly skilled, well supported and high performing workforce. A new approach to leadership and management development, which the whole Council will benefit from, and a refocused workforce development programme that will support us to recruit, support, develop and retain the right people with the right skills and develop a high performing workforce. This includes through the 'High Expectation, High Support, High Challenge' culture we are developing. Performance management and quality assurance are also identified as key pillars to achieve excellence, helping us to know that we are on track and operating a learning framework where we know ourselves well and continuously improve.

Many of our strategic priorities cannot be delivered on our own. We are working with Partners through our Strategic Systems Leadership Board and Corporate Parenting arrangements to develop shared strategic priorities and a partnership delivery plan which will inform the refresh of our partnership strategy A Bright Future. This includes key areas of partnership engagement in and governance of the development of a comprehensive early help offer across Plymouth, work with schools and Trust Leads to develop more inclusive approaches and reduce absence from school and work with health partners to improve access to and outcomes for health services, particularly for priority groups.

The plan describes our vision for children's services by 2027, where children and families receive the help they need when they need it and we prevent problems from escalating wherever possible. When families do need support from our statutory services we step in seamlessly with timely and high quality assessment and intervention, meeting identified needs using evidence based and value for money approaches which are delivered within Plymouth wherever possible.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Keeping children safe and Education and employment outcomes for all.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications

The delivery of the three-year strategic plan will include work to reduce financial pressures in key areas, including reducing demand on higher cost statutory services, improving placement sufficiency and costs of children in care, SEND sufficiency, home to school transport and stabilising the social care workforce.

Financial Risks

None identified.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications

None 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.*

Equalities impact has been considered in the development of the plan and equality of opportunity and equality of opportunity for vulnerable groups and those with protected characteristics will be delivered as part of the implementation of the three-year strategy. Programme Governance will include the management and mitigation of any risks that arise and a risk and issues log will be in place throughout the implementation.

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	Achieving Excellence – A three year strategy							

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)
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	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.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services, January 2024							

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley (Director for Children’s Services)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 26/06/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: <i>Councillor Jemima Laing</i> ((Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care, Culture and Communications)– <i>approved by email.</i> Date approved: 27/06/2024											