

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 24 January 2022 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), Abbott, Goodall, Jones, Loftus, Ratcliffe and Aimee Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillors C. Plumpton Walsh, Bramwell and V. Hill

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Vasic, A. Jones, J. Farrell and M. West

Also in attendance: T. Dooks – Youth Justice Service

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

CYP22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2021 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CYP23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

CYP24 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The minutes relating to the Children and Young People Portfolio, that had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix 1 for information.

CYP25 OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT 13TH AND 14TH NOVEMBER 2021

The Board received a presentation from the Strategic Director – People, on the Ofsted focused visit which took place in October 2021 and the subsequent actions taken in response to their findings.

Halton received the focused visit to its Children's

Services Department on 13 and 14 October and inspectors looked at the arrangements for children in need, including those who were subject to a child protection plan. This visit was carried out in line with the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework, however the delivery model was adapted to reflect the Covid-19 context. Arrangements were made to deliver the visit effectively whilst working within national and local guidelines for responding to Covid-19.

The Board was advised that the Ofsted findings were published in a letter on 17 November 2021, and gave two Areas for Priority Action (APA's) as well as findings relating to Legal Access Meetings, Public Law Outline, Private Fostering and Homelessness.

The response to the findings in relation to the APA's were outlined to the Board, which included the establishment of a Children in Need Panel and an Improvement Board, the latter to oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan being put in place, a draft of which had already been submitted to Ofsted.

It was noted that the Improvement Board would be presented with areas of progress; areas of concern; and areas of action. Actions in the Plan would be delivered operationally through the Children and Young People Service Improvement Meeting (CYPSIM).

Following the presentation, Members discussed with officers the following issues/areas:

- The shortage of social workers in Halton and in neighbouring authorities;
- What could be done to attract more social workers and retain the ones we have;
- The competitive nature of the profession, in that other local authorities had the same recruitment and retention difficulties;
- Better marketing and improving the Halton work offer for social workers and making Halton more attractive to potential staff;
- High caseloads of work and lack of skilled clerical support;
- Improving terms and conditions as well as pay;
- The increasing demand on the service;
- Staff evaluations, training and support; and
- Additional funding.

The Board conveyed their thanks and appreciation to

social workers and other staff employed in these services. It was agreed that the completed Improvement Plan would be presented at the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the steps that have been taken and the role of the Improvement Board; and
- 2) agrees with the future reporting arrangements to this Board.

Strategic Director
- People

CYP26 HMI INSPECTORATE OF PROBATION REPORT OF CHESHIRE YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

The Board considered a report which shared the findings of an inspection of the Cheshire Youth Justice Service (CYJS), led by HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Members were advised that the CYJS provided the statutory services for children and young people who were at risk of offending or had committed offences. CYJS is a partnership of Halton, Warrington, Cheshire East and Cheshire West Local Authorities (LA); Cheshire Police; Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner; the respective clinical commissioning groups in each LA area; HM Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS); and the National Probation Service.

The CYJS was subjected to a joint inspection led by HM Probation Inspectorate and supported by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Services in July 2021.

Members received the findings of the inspection, the full report was published in December 2021; this was appended to the report. In summary, the overall judgement was that CYJS was good, with three outstanding areas and one area for improvement. An action plan to address four recommendations that were made would be approved by the Youth Justice Management Board in December, who would monitor its progress.

Members' welcomed the inspection report, the good working practice around keeping people safe and joint working with social workers. It was noted that to date, Cheshire YJS had the highest overall rating score nationally for a joint inspection.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board thanks the staff, partners, children and young people and their families; and volunteers for their contribution.

CYP27 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MONITORING AND BROKERING GRANT CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which shared a summary of the Department for Education (DfE) consultation regarding the DfE proposed changes to the Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) funding, and the role of the Local Authority in relation to School Improvement.

The DfE consultation *Reforming how Local Authorities' School Improvement Functions are Funded*, took place between 29 October and 26 November 2021. The areas of the consultation and its rationale were outlined in the report. The report also described the potential impact of this consultation paper on schools and wider LA services across the region.

The plan was to reduce the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant by 50% from 1 April 2022 and then fully remove the funding from 1 April 2023; the LA had opposed this. Members discussed the current grant funding that was available to Halton and the risks that a reduction in funding would pose, especially as Halton had a very high proportion of maintained schools.

It was reported that the outcome from the responses and plans following consultation moving forwards, were due to be published either late December 2021 or early in the New Year 2022. To date the feedback was still being analysed but it was expected soon.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) notes the key risks and issues which may arise from this consultation if plans proposed do evolve; and
- 2) will consider future proposals to new ways of working with schools if this grant was reduced and/or fully removed.

Strategic Director
- People

CYP28 SEND STRATEGY 2021-25

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, advising them of the recently approved local area SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Strategy for 2021-25; this was appended to the report.

It was reported that the SEND Code of Practice 2014 required statutory bodies in local areas to work together to meet the education, health and care needs of children and young people with SEND. The Halton SEND Strategy was a joint strategy under the governance of the Halton Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children’s Trust, so was not the sole responsibility of Halton Borough Council to deliver. The Strategy had been co-produced in partnership with other statutory bodies from education and health, including schools and the CCG, as well as parent/carer and young peoples’ representatives.

One Member challenged the ‘inclusive’ priority contained within the Strategy for children with EHCP’s, stating that not all children coped in mainstream education. In response, it was commented that mainstream education would only be pursued for a child with an EHCP where appropriate. All placements were discussed at length before decided upon and periods of transition were taken into consideration, to ensure the needs of the child were met.

It was noted that the SEND Strategic Partnership had the overall responsibility for improving the outcomes, life chances, services and provision in relation to special educational needs and disabilities. They owned and oversaw the area’s SEND strategy, to ensure that the outcomes were improving and objectives from the Strategy were being met.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report and presentation be received and comments made noted; and
- 2) annual progress updates on the delivery of the SEND Strategy be presented to the Board, to ensure that leaders remained informed and able to enquire and intervene as deemed necessary.

Operational
Director -
Education, Inclusion and
Provision

CYP29 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS - QUARTER
2 2021/22

The Board received the Performance Management reports for quarter 2 of 2021-22 (1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021).

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2021-22 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority's Business Plan, for the various functional areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Education, Inclusion and Provision Services; and
- Children and Families Services.

The reports detailed progress made against objectives, milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

It was noted that the production of these reports was interrupted by a focussed Ofsted inspection causing a delay, so they could not be presented as planned at the last meeting in November. They were emailed to Members on 8 December 2021 after they were completed.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 2 Performance Management reports be received.

Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.