

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, 20 July 2020 via remote access

Present: Councillors Dennett (Chair), Logan (Vice-Chair), M. Bradshaw, Carlin, Cassidy, P. Hignett, Leck, P. Lloyd Jones, J. Stockton and Whitley

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Vasic, A. McIntyre, A. Jones and T. Coffey

Also in attendance: One member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
CYP1	MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2020 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CYP3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES The minutes relating to the Children, Education and Social Care Portfolio, that had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix 1 for information. RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.	
CYP4	INSPECTION OF AUTHORITY CHILDREN SERVICES The Board received the findings of the recent Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS) in Halton and its recommendations. The report was accompanied by a presentation delivered by the Operational Director for Children's Services.	

It was reported that OFSTED conducted a standard inspection under the ILACS framework from 2 March to 13 March 2020. The ILACS inspection provided a Judgement across four areas and Halton was deemed to 'require improvement to be good' across all areas. Appended to the report was the Judgement document which provided explanations of the findings within each of these areas and their recommendations.

Further, as required by the ILACS framework and in response to the recommendations made, an Action Plan has been drafted and submitted to OFSTED. This was also attached to the report.

Following the detailed presentation Members raised the following queries:

Was there disappointment with the outcome from the inspection – yes but it was recognized that maintaining consistency across all aspects of social work would always be a challenge. Unfortunately we had lost some staff and new staff were just in post at the time of the inspection, which was picked up on.

Are salaries for Social Workers comparable with neighbouring authorities – due to being a smaller authority we do tend to be below what neighbouring authorities pay. However we have done well in terms of retaining staff recently and systemic training is now offered to them. Some staff have left in the past to progress their careers and move onto the next level with other authorities.

Does the authority work with third party organisations such as *Nightstop* and *PiP (Power in Partnership)* when looking for temporary accommodation for young people – yes the homelessness service for young people do work with both of these organisations who both offer a good service.

How did staff respond to the report – they had to move on very quickly as immediately after the inspection the Covid-19 Pandemic overtook everything.

Is the Authority likely to receive any additional funding to help with budgets – this was presently unknown but the Authority would certainly benefit from some investment to help with areas such as residential costs for children with complex needs, which continued to be a challenge.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the report and comments made on the draft Action Plan.

CYP5 SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DURING COVID 19

The Board was presented with a report from the Strategic Director – People, that gave an update on support provided to children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Appended to this was the *Team Around the Family – Our Service Response during COVID-19* report.

Members were advised that throughout the lockdown the iCART had been in operation and although most staff were working from home, there had been a rota of social work staff in the office ready to respond to any immediate safeguarding concerns. Similarly, early help staff had been operating from children's centres and providing day care when needed along with other forms of family support, either virtually or by visiting and observing social distancing guidance.

The report provided summaries for each of the service areas as follows:

- Early Help Services;
- Disabled Children's Services (DCS);
- Daycare at Warrington Road and Ditton;
- Safeguarding and children in care;
- Children in care and care leavers;
- Fostering Service;
- Inglefield;
- Placements Team;
- Educational outcomes and effective practice for children in care and care leavers;
- Personal Education Plans; and
- Safeguarding Unit.

Further to Members questions the following responses were provided:

Where you able to visit children at high risk – yes we were able to do this, at times working with the Police to gain access if needed. Social distancing measures were adhered to and no infection transmissions were reported.

How are we coping with mental health issues and do we have the resources to manage any increases in demand for the service – Public Health England had invested in online learning courses around mental health first aid for staff, to help them identify when mental health is a problem with an individual. The specialist CAMHS help was also still available. There was also extra work done in house, training

staff to support and guide parents; the Education Psychologist Service was also available and the Health Improvement Team had many resources accessible on the Council's website.

Are the Court hearings up and running again for adoptions - yes they are back and one was completed last week. There was still a small backlog to clear however the cases were being heard via hybrid court hearings across Cheshire and Merseyside, which enabled parents to attend whilst some officials dial in, so that social distancing can be observed in the courts.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

CYP6 EDUCATION, INCLUSION & PROVISION UPDATE

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – People, which provided a summary of the work of the Education, Inclusion and Provision Department, during the COVID-19 outbreak.

It was reported that although most staff had been working from home throughout the lockdown, the Officers in the Education, Inclusion and Provision Department had continued to provide key services. Members were provided with summaries of some of the key activities that had taken place since 23 March 2020, in the following areas:

- Early Years and School Improvement;
- School Improvement and Governance;
- Behaviour Support Service;
- Halton Virtual Schools;
- Placements;
- Policy, Provision and Performance;
- Inclusion (0-25); and
- Broader Council support.

Members questions following the presentation were as follows:

Concerns were raised over a second spike in Autumn/Winter, would schools be likely to close in a local lockdown scenario – a detailed lockdown plan had been set across Halton and Warrington and a number of different scenarios included. With regards to outbreaks in schools, a decision on whether to close a whole school or not would be made by the Outbreak Team, after making their assessments as to the level of threat. Public Health

England (PHE) had been asked to create guidance for parents and students.

Could governors have access to lockdown plans as well –
yes this information could be shared with governors.

What support was in place for our A Level students – the 14-19 Team would go into schools and provide advice and guidance as to the opportunities available to them. Most schools were agreeable to physical appointments with officers. Schools would also invite students in to discuss their results.

Members noted that despite the difficulties Covid-19 had brought the Department, services had coped remarkably well and they passed on their thanks to all staff.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

Meeting ended at 8.23 p.m.