

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, 13 June 2022 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), Abbott, M. Bradshaw, Carlin, Goodall, V. Hill, Jones, Loftus and Aimee Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Bramwell

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, L. Davenport and A. Leach

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 24 January 2022 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
CYP3	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.	
CYP4	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE UPDATE	
	The Board received a presentation, which gave an update of the work undertaken to date, following the Ofsted focused visit and the subsequent actions taken in response to their findings.	

Halton received the focused visit to its Children's Services Department in October 2021 and inspectors looked at the arrangements for Children in Need (CIN), including those who were subject to a Child Protection Plan. Since the findings of the inspectors, steps had been taken to make improvements to the service, including the establishment of an Improvement Board.

The presentation outlined the progress made within leadership and management, areas of concern and the next steps to be taken; and progress made with the quality of practice, areas of concern and next steps to be taken. It also gave information on progress of quality assurance and performance and the activities carried out by the Operational Group.

Following the presentation, Members' queried the following:

Where was the structure of the management team currently – Principle Managers were operating a level down to cover the absence of practice managers. The aim was to have a visible leadership team to support social workers, however recruitment was difficult at all levels and there was a reliance on agency workers to fill management posts, as well as social worker and practice lead posts.

There was a high turnover of agency staff – yes, a snapshot of the workforce as of May 2022 was given. The Duty and Assessment Team (DAT) was brought via from agency staff and was making a positive difference. Reasons such as pay, distance from home, bridge tolls and lack of administration support were given as why workers left (agency and permanent). Recruitment and retention of staff was a priority and a workforce strategy had been launched and staff development forum had been created to help support this.

Why was Eclipse unpopular – social workers did not favour Eclipse as it could be time consuming to work with. It was being developed as much as possible to remove barriers to the system that would improve or reduce data input for workers. Eclipse was not like the previous system, Care First, whereby social workers could choose when to start a recording pathway. Eclipse follows the child's journey completely via the mandatory pathways and process re filling of forms and social workers have to follow the required steps to comply with the process and procedures that completes this journey.

Was there support for adopters following a successful adoption – yes a post adoption support team was in place available at any time for adopting parents to contact.

How was the increase in the numbers of unaccompanied child asylum seekers affecting the service – this has impacted on caseloads for social workers, budgets and sufficiency, as they either required foster care or accommodation. The Council has a statutory duty of care and other responsibilities in relation to asylum seekers.

It was commented by a Member that resell of the organisation was required to encourage the recruitment and retention of staff, in particular social workers.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the steps that had been taken and the role of the Improvement Board.

CYP5 HALTON LOCAL AREA SEND STRATEGY 2021-25

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which provided update in relation to the progress of the local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2021-25.

The report also outlined some of the pressures on the SEND provision and support service. It gave the position in relation to applications for Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) assessments, in that these had continued to be received at a high rate since Covid restrictions were eased in Schools over summer 2021, with 20% of applications being made by parents. Further, it was reported that the completion rate of applications to within 20 weeks had dropped to 62.5%; the report discussed the three factors contributing to this decline.

The Board was also presented with information on the following strategic developments:

- The Working Better Together sub-group of the SEND Partnership;
- The development of a Halton Co-production Charter;
- The DFE's Delivering Better Values Programme; and
- The development of a new SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

Was the Co-production Charter a living document – no it would stay the same. It had been co-produced by parents

and the Council and allows parents to hold the partnership to account. The document was new to Halton but was in place in many other local authorities who also developed them independently. It was acknowledged that there may be risks associated with raising parents expectations, however it was commented that it was a worthwhile to have the Charter.

Would the SEND Sufficiency Strategy be ready for Autumn – yes, the implementation timeline for the Sufficiency Strategy is that it would be in place over summer 2022.

Can we have an idea of costs of Out of Borough placements – these were broad in range depending on the child's needs, but can range from £30k to £90k per year per child/young person. Transport costs would be on top on this.

What was the furthest distance travelled to for Out of Borough placements – Precise information was not to hand but there were some Key Stage 3 and 4 students travelling to Bolton, Ormskirk and Stockport.

More about funding packages please – placements were quoted on an individual basis, depending on the needs of the child. Each provider had their own pricing structure and it was recognised that there were differences between different authorities' charges. Costs of placements were challenged regularly.

Further to discussion it was also noted that there were 7.4% of children in Halton with and EHCP, so the population of SEND was above the national average. The Free School, Raise Academy, had been delayed and was causing pressures on SEND provision; it was now due to open in September 2023 and would mainly address autism and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the report and comments made.

CYP6 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 &4 2021/22

The Board received the Performance Management reports for quarters 3 and 4 of 2021-22 (1 October to 31 December 2021 and 1 January to 31 March 2022).

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.

Members queried:

Virtual School PEP's, had they improved – this information was not to hand but a response would be sought from the relevant officer following the meeting. It was noted that the Annual Report of the virtual school was expected in the Autumn.

Was there an action plan in place to improve the attendance at the PRU – a response would be sought from the relevant officer.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 3 and 4 performance management reports be received.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.