

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, 15 July 2024 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Begg, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, Ratcliffe and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Baker, Goodall, McDermott and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, A. Jones, B. Holmes, C. Finch and K. Appleton

Also in attendance: Councillor T. McInerney, in accordance with Standing Order number 33

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
CYP1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024 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, Young People and Families Portfolio taken from Executive Board meetings held since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix 1 for information.	
CYP4	TOPIC GROUP UPDATE - VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR	
	Councillor Logan, the Chair of the Board, gave colleagues an update on the topic group he was participating in, in relation to the transformation of Children's Services.	

The Delivery Plan Topic Group had met three times so far and Councillors Logan, Jones, Ryan and P. Lloyd Jones were participating together with the Portfolio Holder Councillor T. McInerney. It was commented that plans had been made to address all of the existing issues identified so far and solutions had been found. Councillor Logan and the Topic Group were confident with the progress made so far.

RESOLVED: That the update be received.

CYP5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2024

The Board received a presentation on the development of Halton's new Children and Young People's Plan 2024-2027.

Initially three principle questions were asked – what is life like for this child for young person; what can I do to make it better; and would this be good enough for my child. Three priorities were identified as a result of these:

- Working well in partnership;
- Developing the workforce; and
- Raising our aspirations.

The presentation gave information on what would be done to address each of these priorities and how the identified 12 priority issues would go into these.

In conclusion it was noted that the PPB would monitor progress made against the 12 priority issues of the Plan, as these would be reflected in the quarterly monitoring reports and be used to plan for the 2024-25 academic year.

Following Members' questions and discussions the following information was provided:

- Individual consultation had taken place with young people from various organisations such as schools, colleges and the Youth Council where a wide range of views had been received;
- Regarding the 'numbers of children in need of additional help to keep them safe' – it was commented that every step was taken by all agencies to prevent them from entering the care system. This cohort, numbering 1,295 (at the time of the agenda publication), were looked after by the 'edge of care' team;
- Many children with SEND were presenting with more complex issues, including health issues. It was felt

that the NHS should be approached to assist with funding and other support for these children and work in partnership with the Council. Examples were given of the challenges faced due to timeframes and the availability of places in special schools becoming available. Also, due to competition from neighbouring authorities, a decision on placing a child requiring SEND must be made very quickly, or the place would be offered to another local authority, so there was very little time to consult with the NHS;

- Having said the above, it was reported that there were a number of children who did receive NHS funding (joint packages of care) from the ICB – Members stated that the extent of this support was not clear and requested more information. It was noted that the new Children and Young People’s Plan would be used to record these outcomes;
- It was recognised that a formal agreement was needed with the ICB regarding the sharing of funding, so that there was accountability between all partners;
- The rate of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) requests in Halton was rising year on year and was above the regional and national average;
- Headteachers had been consulted on the Plan which had been positively received by them. They would also see the final Plan before it was published;
- Public Health were responsible for the recording of children’s height and weight and this was done by the Schools Health Improvement Team; and
- Clarity was provided over the use of and credentials of the consultant employed to help develop the Plan. He had worked with another local authority with very similar demographics to Halton. The cost of the exercise would be sought as it was not at hand.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report and presentation; and
- 2) approves the Children and Young People’s Plan 2024.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP6 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director of Children’s Services, which provided an update on the progress of improvements being made within Children’s Social Care Services.

In November 2023, Halton appointed a permanent

Director of Children's Services (DCS) and in January 2024, a permanent Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help was appointed. This had led to a re-focus for Children's Social Care and a request for corporate support to significantly improve services. The last 6 months had seen significant changes being implemented around culture and practice. It was recognised however, that there was still a significant journey of improvement required.

The report outlined some key areas of focus within the improvements as follows: recruitment and retention of staff; training, development and CPD; stabilisation of the management team; a service re-design project; children in care and care leavers; and local area partnerships and accountability.

Following discussions, the following responses were provided to Members questions:

- Examples were given of the not-for-profit organisations used in Halton for children's residential care and it was noted that these organisations charged less, as they did not profiteer from children's trauma;
- Conversations were currently taking place on how the Local Authority could invest and benefit from more use of these types of organisations;
- The recruitment of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW's) was discussed and the steps being taken to support them as they started their careers. The Social Workers Academy was involved in the development of NQSW's in conjunction with the line manager;
- It was recognised by the Department for Education (DfE) that an inexperienced workforce could add pressure to the system, with supervision for example. It was commented that Halton was not alone in having a new workforce in the social work area and as mentioned earlier, support had been added that was not there previously. NQSW's also have the opportunity to work with experienced social workers within the teams;
- It was commented that not all NQSW's were youngsters as some had previous health, childcare and community worker experience to add to their roles;
- Further to the Ofsted inspection and critique regarding instances of neglect not being identified, it was reported that the legal processes had been strengthened in this area; and

- The Portfolio Holder invited the Board to visit the ASYE (Assisted and Supported Year in Employment) Programme, to see the value of the role they played.

Overall Members felt that the culture had changed positively since the establishment of the new senior management team and they were optimistic about the future. Officers' would provide this feedback to all the staff.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP7 SEND IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which outlined (1) the progress made against the targets set out in the Area Priority Action Plan, following the SEND Area Inspection in November 2023; and (2) provided an update of progress in improvement work following receipt of the Delivering Better Values (DBV) grant.

It was reported that the Area Priority Action Plan was developed in partnership with stakeholders from across the area, and was subsequently approved by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. The Inspectorate identified 5 priority areas for improvement. The Board received updates on the progress being made against all 5 areas of the Priority Action Plan; the current risks to delivery; and the control measures in place to mitigate the risks.

In relation to the DBV programme, the report outlined the process of the grant application and bid and the subsequent successful award of a £1m grant for Halton.

The report presented how the grant would be split into two workstreams (1) Behaviour Support Change programme; and (2) Inclusion Framework, and described the objectives of each.

In response to Members questions, the following information was provided:

- Some areas of the Priority Action Plan were yet to start, as they involved working with other stakeholders – these generally related to strategy and policy work, so would not affect children in any way;
- Under the DBV Programme 'Thrive' would be implemented under workstream 2. This was discussed and it was clarified that schools

themselves become the practitioners via staff online training, but the child receives a face to face service;

- The list of participating schools that have taken up the Thrive Licensed Childhood Practitioner Training had grown since the publication of the agenda report; and
- One Member queried the status of the previous Nurture Programme – this had done its job and was now considered as embedded practice, so schools continue this to date.

It was recognised that the aim was to get as much value as possible from the £1m funding, which was a one off grant payment.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

CYP8 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 2023/24

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter 3 of 2023-24 (1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023).

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority's Business Plan for the following Departments:

- 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 were requested to consider the progress and performance information and highlight any areas of interest and/or concern, where further information could be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

The Mockingbird Programme for Fostering and Family Hubs were discussed and update reports would be submitted to the Board at future meetings.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 3 2023-24 performance management reports be received.

CYP9 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR
QUARTER 4 2023/24

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter 4 of 2023-24 (1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024).

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority's Business Plan for the following Departments:

- 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 were requested to consider the progress and performance information and highlight any areas of interest and/or concern, where further information could be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

The increases in the numbers of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEETS) in Halton was highlighted and discussed. This was higher than in neighbouring authorities and the possible reasons for this was being looked into. It was noted that the Council had a legal obligation to monitor this group of young people.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 4 2023-24 performance management reports be received.

Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.