



Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

19 June 2019

Report title	Children and Young People Service Key Priorities: 2019-2020 - Update on Progress of 2018-2019 Improvement Plan
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Wards affected	All
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Services, People
Originating service	Children & Young People
Accountable employee(s)	Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker Tel 01902 555534 Email Louise.Haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Children & Young People Leadership Team May 2019

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Consider and challenge progress on delivery and completion of the 2018-2019 Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan.
2. To comment on the 2019-2020 Key Priorities and Strategic Plan.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a progress update on delivery against the 2018-2019 Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan.
- 1.2 This report also includes the 2019-2020 Children and Young People Service Key Priorities (Appendix Three) and Strategic Plan (Appendix Four). The panel is invited to comment on the plans for panel comment.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Our values for Children and Young People Services are to develop respectful and empowering relationships with children, young people and families, to ensure children are at the centre of everything that we do and to have high aspirations and high expectations of our staff and the families with whom we work.
- 2.2 The Children and Young People Service Plan 2018-2019 and associated Improvement Plan was approved by Strategic Executive Board in May 2018 and Scrutiny Panel for Children and Young People in June 2018.
- 2.3 The plan is broken down by service area and each area's Head of Service has overall responsibility for delivering the actions identified for their area. Progress against delivery of the plan is monitored and reported on a quarterly basis to the Children and Young People Leadership Team.
- 2.4 The Children and Young People Management Team have developed and agreed key priorities and a Strategic Plan for 2019-2020.
- 2.5 The update of the 2019-2020 Strategic Plan will take place twice yearly to align updates with practice week feedback. This is to ensure that both performance and practice is captured within the progress against delivery of the plan to evidence impact.

3.0 Progress Against 2018-2019 Improvement Plan (Appendix One)

- 3.1 Throughout the year, significant progress has been made in delivering actions contained within the plan. The majority of actions and milestones have been completed (blue) however there are a few actions which either require further time to evidence impact or require further development (green). A few areas of progress have been highlighted below, as well as areas that require further monitoring to evidence impact. There is just one priority that will be moved into delivery in 2019-2020.
- 3.2 Ensuring interventions within Child in Need (CIN)/Child Protection (CP) occur at the right level, at the right time; A range of work has been undertaken to ensure that statutory social work services for children is delivered at the right level, is effective, takes place in a timely way and supports families to make sustainable change. The success of this work is evidenced in the reduction of demand across the Children and Young people service.

Children in need numbers have reduced from 1,037 in 2017-2018 to 821 in 2018-2019, the number of children subject to a Child Protection plan have reduced from 379 to 330 and the number of children in care has reduced from 648 to 624.

- 3.3 It is important that all children and young people in care have access to suitable education provision which meets their needs; this improvement plan evidences that over 99% of Children and Young People in Care have a suitable education provision.
- 3.4 The service has a robust workforce development plan that ensures social workers have access to training opportunities that are designed to improve their assessment and intervention skills. Audit evidences that social workers are demonstrating more relational and strength-based interventions. There has been an increase in the percentage of children's files that have been judged as good or outstanding in 2018-2019. Audits have gone from an average of 35% in 2017-2018 to 52% in the last practice week in February 2019.
- 3.5 The Children and Young People Service has achieved a "Good" Ofsted judgement and has a Recruitment and Retention Plan that includes targeted work to reduce caseloads, increased leadership support to frontline workers and promotes clear career pathways that enable social workers to plan their career development within the City Council.
- 3.6 The City of Wolverhampton's Children and Young People Service are delivering a range of actions designed to support the retention of social workers. This has included creating opportunities for greater visibility of senior managers, improved communications around what is working well in the service and a restructure that has strengthened the role of the team manager and created more opportunities for progression, turnover has halved in the period between November and March 2019 when compared with June – October 2018.
- 3.7 One area of the wider Improvement Plan which has not been progressed has been impacted by the delay in the implementation of the new social care system, Eclipse. This area is reviewed by senior management on a regular basis; (PMQA 2.1- The new social care system to be implemented and will allow more consistent recording and reporting)
- 3.8 Other areas, such as SSS 2.1 (work with Public Health colleagues to extend the Partnering Families team contract to include support for pregnant women of all ages at risk of having their child removed) and YOT 2.2 (Coordinated targeting of resources to mentor young people into education, training and employment) still require further development or more time to measure impact, but these will be included in local action plans and developed as business as usual. These will be monitored by via the Children and Young People Leadership Team and Heads of Service.
- 4.0 2019-2020 Key Priorities (Appendix Two) and Strategic Plan (Appendix Three)**
- 4.1 The 2019-2020 Key Priorities and Improvement Plan have been developed in line with the self-evaluation. The plan itself has been slightly revamped to encourage more of a focus on the impact of the actions in the identified areas. This plan now includes a

column titled “Evidence of Impact”, which includes key indicators for how we will know that we are making a difference for children and young people and be assured of the embedding of the actions long term. The evidence of impact will bring together performance information and qualitative information gathered during Practice weeks to ensure senior leaders have a clear understanding about what practice with children and families looks like.

4.2 In addition to what has been listed above, key priorities for the new year include:

- Improving workforce retention in order to provide children with greater consistency and establish a skilled and knowledgeable workforce who are fully equipped to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.
- There will be a continued focus on the quality of practice which includes improving assessment analysis and planning, improving the quality of direct work to strengthen the voice of the child and ensuring restorative practice is embedded within supervision which will promote a focus on the impact of interventions on the lived experience of children and explicitly provide opportunity for critical reflection.
- Embedding ‘Practice Weeks’ to ensure senior managers have a clear reflection of the quality of frontline practice.
- Implementing a single child’s record system through Platform for Care, this will bring together recording systems for early intervention and statutory social work and enable practitioners to record the experience and journey of the child well.
- Implementing Wolverhampton’s new arrangements for the Safeguarding Partnership.
- Review of governance structures relating to Contextual Safeguarding.
- Implementation of House Project for Care Leavers.
- Improving placement stability through a number of actions including piloting of ‘Fostering Families United’ (a model that enables fostering families to intensively support each other).
- Embedding the Regional Adoption Agency.
- Embedding Restorative Practice across Children’s Services.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 Any costs that were associated with the delivery and completion of the 2018-2019 Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan were contained within the overall budget for 2018-2019 for the Children and Young Peoples Service of £49.6 million.

- 5.2 Effective recruitment and retention has resulted in a reduction in agency spend of £140,000 when comparing 2018-2019 with 2017-2018.
- 5.3 As part of ensuring interventions within Child in Need/Child Protection occur at the right time a project group was established to specifically look at Section 17 and No Recourse to Public Funds payments. This has resulted in a reduction of historical spend of £140,000 during 2018-2019.
- 5.4 Whilst the Children and Young People's Service has seen a modest decrease in the number of children in care during 2018-2019, this has not resulted in a decrease in expenditure due to an increase in the average weekly external placement costs.
- 5.5 Any costs associated with the delivery of the 2019-2020 key priorities and strategic plan will be contained within the existing overall budget for 2019-2020 for the Children and Young People's services of £51.8 million.
[NM/11062019/O]

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
[TC/11062019/D]

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 The Children and Young People Service provides support to the whole community, including the full range of diverse groups. The numbers of children in care and the numbers of children subject to child protection planning largely reflects the diversity within the City. Black children are slightly over represented in the Children in Need category. The Children and Young People's service has a workforce plan that is representative of the community. The Improvement Plan highlights how the City of Wolverhampton ensures that the workforce is highly skilled and has the knowledge and resources needed to provide a high-quality service to the community. Training provided addresses issues around diversity and poverty.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

9.0 Human resources implications

- 9.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 10.1 There are no Corporate Landlord implications arising from this report.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

Report to Scrutiny—6 September 2018; Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan: Update on Progress - Quarter One 2017-2018

Report to Scrutiny (distributed outside of Panel)—November 2018; Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan: Update on Progress - Quarter Two 2017-2018