



Committee and Date
Young People's Scrutiny
Committee

10 September 2014

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

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1. Summary

1.1 The report summarises the latest performance indicators in relation to Social Care (Appendix 1) and Education (Appendix 2) for Children and Young people as at the end of the financial year 2013/14. Outcomes are broadly in line with those reported in the previous report.

1.2 Transformation changes that have been and are being implemented are aiming to address the continuing trends of increasing levels of demand especially with regard to the levels of looked after children and children with a child protection plan whilst maintaining good performance regarding outcomes for children and young people.

2. Recommendations

Scrutiny Committee Members to identify topics for further detailed scrutiny.

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3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1 Poor performance could have implications for vulnerable people (including children) who are supported by Council services and the economic growth in Shropshire. In turn, there may be significant financial, legal and reputational risk to the Council, Schools (including Academies), and partners from across the public and voluntary and independent care sectors.

3.2 Effective monitoring and follow-up against key measures of success provides the opportunity to manage risks and ensure that Children and Young People in Shropshire remain safe and achieve their desired outcomes. Increasingly, performance reporting will focus on the impact of commissioning

decisions by the Council, linking directly with the management of contracts and how effective the Council is at delivering its outcomes.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 This report does not have any direct financial implications, but presents service information to support decision making. Accountable officers, senior managers and key decision makers may use the information to inform actions or interventions for improving service performance and the prioritisation and use of resources.

5. Background – Children’s Social Care

5.1 The increasing levels of demand on our Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding Teams have continued from previous quarters. The number of referrals to Children’s Social Care in 2013/14 has increased by 60% compared with the previous year. As previously reported, this in part relates to the changes to the way operational decisions are made at the ICT (Initial Contact Team) regarding recording of contacts but like other LAs we have still seen an increase in referrals.

5.2 At 25.7% for 2013/14 the repeat referrals within 12 months is higher than the previous year’s 12.2% but in line with latest national result (24.9 for 2012/13). Audit activity resulted in further operational improvements and arrangements have been put in place to refine the recording of the outcomes of referrals to allow a greater level of analysis to support operational and strategic decision making.

5.3 The single social work assessment was implemented in October 2013. Timeliness of single assessments (95% within 45 working days) continued the very good performance achieved regarding initial assessments and core assessments.

5.4 The number of Children Looked After has also increased over the year (from 39.4 per 10,000 under 18 in Mar 2013 to 44.4 in Mar 2014, although Shropshire’s number remains below the average level of the similar local authorities (49.6 for Mar 2013).

5.5 Service redesign across Children’s Social Services has been implemented with a strong emphasis on reducing the need for children to be looked after, or the period of time that children are looked after – where it is safe to do so, developing support and resources for the children on the edge of care and ensuring timely care planning for those children deemed in need of permanency care outside of parental care due to significant harm. The work in developing Early Help as part of the redesign facilitates support from qualified social workers for partner organisations to help manage risk at the lower level and to ensure that where significant harm risk is identified this is

acted upon without delay. The impact of this work had to be seen in the national context of increasing referrals and Looked After Children and as such our performance is based on outcomes for children not simply number of children in the LAC and Child Protection system.

5.6 The proportion of newly Looked After Children (LAC) placed more than 20 miles from home has reduced significantly over quarter 4, returning to be below the planned level to be broadly in line with the expected performance. Work has been undertaken to both review externally placed children and bring them back into Shropshire where this can be achieved within a care plan that is in their best interest and also to ensure that we are closely scrutinising internal options as part of the decision making to agree LA accommodation. Future reporting will focus on all children placed out of Shropshire's boundary.

5.7 In addition, the number of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has followed an overall increasing trend. Benchmarking will be conducted once the 2013/14 results are published for the other local authorities, to assess if a similar increase has happened for Shropshire's statistical neighbours and at national level.

5.8 During September 2013 and March 2014 the percentage of children with a repeat Child Protection Plan within 2 years exceeded the maximum expected standard of 9% but during quarter 4 it reduced to 13%. This area remains on a more focused monitoring level that involves specific audit and quality assurance activity which to date has confirmed that there has been a robust response to those cases.

5.9 The implementation of the Public Law Outline and specifically the use of pre proceedings is being used within Child Protection planning to ensure there is timely intervention against outcomes for children both within child protection and court care planning.

5.10 Placement stability (% of LAC with 3 or more placements during the year and % of LAC for 2.5 years in the same placement for the last 2 years) in 2012/13 was better (top quartile) than Statistical Neighbours and England. This reflects a continuing improvement over 3 years. Changes in the cohort impacted the 2013/14 result for the length of placement indicator with performance declining to 67.7% (44/65) from 79.7% (49/65) for previous year (the new cohort has 4 less children with stable placements).

5.11 The levels of adoptions and placements for adoptions achieved during 2012/13 for which Shropshire Council has been congratulated by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families have been maintained during 2013/14. However, the increase in the number of LAC in the cohort translates into less favourable reported performance (percentage) compared to last year.

5.12 Key performance indicators included on the national adoption scorecard indicate that Shropshire performed better regarding timeliness of

adoption process when compared with expected thresholds or national averages. This performance is building on the good results of previous years when it was evident that we were not experiencing some of the delays that other authorities were facing, particularly in respect of court proceedings.

6. Background – Education

6.1 Schools in Shropshire continue to achieve good outcomes for children overall. Outcomes for 2014 are not yet confirmed and the information included in this report is based on provisional locally produced data. At the point of producing this report the GCSE and A Level data has not been collected and collated.

6.2 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Early indications for 2014 suggest that outcomes have improved significantly and are again likely to be ahead of national expectations in all areas continuing the trend from previous years. Provisional results show an increase in the average point score (35.8 in 2014 compared to 33.9 in 2013 when results were in the top quartile nationally).

6.3 A Phonics Screening Check for pupils aged 6 was introduced in 2012 and Shropshire's children have performed above the national average in every year since its introduction. 73% of Shropshire's children achieved the expected standard in 2013, compared with a national figure of 69%. This placed Shropshire second in the statistical neighbour group. Early 2014 data suggests an increase of between 2% and 3%.

6.4 At key stage 1 Shropshire's data shows an overall improvement in outcomes in all subjects at all levels over the last three years. Results in reading, writing and mathematics were ahead of national averages at level 2+, 2B+ and level 3 in 2013 and most often in first or second place in the statistical neighbour group. Again early 2014 data suggest that there have been further improvements, most significantly in reading at all levels and writing and mathematics at level 2B+ and level 3.

6.5 At the end of key stage 2 results in 2013 across reading, writing and mathematics placed Shropshire in the top three within the statistical neighbour group at level 4+, but only mid-table at the higher level 5+ and level 6+, with performance in mathematics at level 6+ being weakest. Improving outcomes at the higher levels has been a key focus and 2014 data suggests that there have been significant increases in the proportion of pupils attaining level 6 in both mathematics and English Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS).

6.6 At key stage 2 the progress children have made from key stage 1 is also measured, with children expected to make at least 2 levels progress. If they make 3 levels progress they are making better than expected progress. In Shropshire the proportion of children making expected progress in 2013 was in-line with national figures in reading and writing but below in

mathematics, whilst the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress was below the national figure in all 3 subjects. When compared with the progress made by children in LAs within the statistical neighbour group Shropshire is mid-table, or just below. These outcomes confirmed that although children do well in Shropshire they could make better progress. In 2014 initial unvalidated data is indicating significant improvements in progress in reading, writing and mathematics at both expected and better than expected levels.

7. Additional Information

List of Background Papers
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Ann Hartley
Local Member All Members
Appendices Appendix 1 – Children’s Social Care Indicators Appendix 2 – Education Indicators