



Committee and Date

Council

21 September 2017

COUNCILLOR NICK BARDSLEY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1.0 Summary

This report provides information on the key achievements and developments of the past year, and strategic priorities for the forthcoming year.

The past year has seen improvement in key areas of Children's Services including educational outcomes, Ofsted gradings for schools and other settings, performance and outcomes for children in social care.

The scale and pace of change in both Children's Social Care and Education continues.

REPORT

2.0 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING

The number of looked after children remains relatively stable, with a slight increase as 24 unaccompanied asylum seeking children were accommodated during the last twelve months. There has been a reduction in the numbers of children with a child protection plan. This is as a result of children stepping down to a child in need plan when all of the safeguarding concerns have been addressed, rather than remaining on a child protection plan until all needs have been met.

Children's Social Care has focused on the quality of social work practice, and making a positive difference to the lives of children and families. The restructure of the Children's Social Care Teams is resulting in lower caseloads in some teams and work is being completed in a more timely way. This is ensuring that children and families are receiving the right level of help, whether that be as a looked after child, child subject to a child protection plan, child subject to a child in need plan, or Early Help.

Development of the Early Help offer has continued to support families at an early stage. Feedback suggests that parenting capacity is improved as a result of

intervention. Our engagement with schools has played an important part in moving the Early Help offer forward.

The Corporate Parenting Panel has been strengthened and there is now a clear focus on a small number of priorities for our looked after children. We have two Looked after Children Ambassadors who are supporting our work.

A bespoke Peer Review took place in December 2016. The focus of the Peer Review was on whole system leadership and multi-agency front door and interface with Early Help. All recommendations arising from the Peer Review have been addressed.

3.0 EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

There are 38 academies in Shropshire, comprising 23 primary, 13 secondary, 1 all-through and 1 special school.

The most recent national data confirms that 93% of all Shropshire schools and academies are judged as good or outstanding.

The Education Improvement Service has maintained a sharp focus on primary and secondary schools judged to be satisfactory or to require improvement. The percentage of good or outstanding schools has increased every year since 2012. School inspection reports continue to confirm the effectiveness of the challenge support and interventions provided by the Education Improvement Service.

Officers and members have continued to work closely with Schools Forum on the funding and sustainability of schools in Shropshire. The reduction and removal of the Education Services Grant from April 2017 has resulted in reduced funding for schools and the Council and increases the challenge of sustaining current provision.

The overall school population continues to decline although in five areas of the county there is some pressure on school places. School leaders and governors are increasingly aware of the demographic challenges facing their individual schools, federations or multi academy trusts, and the need to secure sustainable models of leadership to ensure their schools are financially and educationally viable in the future. Governors are aware of the need to secure a sustainable approach to ensuring a good or better education for children in their communities.

The number of young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) remains below the national average.

Effective partnership working across early education, health and social care results in approximately 80% of all eligible families taking up some part of their entitlement for early education places for disadvantaged 2 year olds (24U).

The Integrated Review for 2 year olds (All about me @ 2) has been launched.

Shropshire Council provides information support and guidance to Early Years providers in line with the statutory duties. The percentage of good and outstanding early year’s providers is above national and regional averages.

Area	% of providers rated Outstanding	% of providers rated Good	% of providers rated Requiring Improvement	% of providers rated Inadequate
National	16%	77%	6%	1%
West Midlands	19%	76%	4%	1%
Shropshire	21%	74%	4%	1%

Key Priorities for the forthcoming year

Being inspection ready. Shropshire Council’s Children’s Social Care was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2012. The current programme of Ofsted inspections is expected to run until December 2017, so an inspection is expected at any time. Preparation continues. Following inspection (whatever the outcome) an action plan will need to be developed in response to the findings.

A joint Ofsted/CQC Local Area Inspection of Special Educational Needs is expected by 2021. Preparation is progressing well. A Peer Review was recently undertaken, and an action plan is in the process of being agreed in response to the feedback received.

Continue to develop the Council’s Corporate Parent Role, particularly in widening the engagement of members, and demonstrating its impact on the quality of lives of looked after children.

Continue to embed the new social work structure and ensure processes and systems are promoting timely interventions and decision making for children and families, thus ensuring that children and families are only in the social work system when they need to be.

Strengthening Families through Early Help. Focussing on the early identification of those children and families in needs and risk to ensure that we provide the right service at the right time. Continue to develop multi-disciplinary teams at a locality level, building on local assets and supporting community resilience.

Supporting and protecting vulnerable children. Continue to ensure good quality assessment and planning for vulnerable children, including those in need of protection and Care proceedings. Building on the Ofsted inspection and investment in social work we aim to ensure consistent quality across all of our work with vulnerable children and young people. Introduce the Martin Calder risk assessment model to support social workers in their assessment process.

Looked after children. Supporting children on the edge of care to remain at home if it is safe to do so. We will do this by ensuring that our placement sufficiency is reviewed so we are able to provide local and family based care arrangements wherever possible for

children, with foster carers that reflect the age and complexity of need of our looked after children. This will result in more children remaining in family based placements.

Transition into Adulthood. Ensuring that those children leaving care, or those who need continuing support from adult social services are supported through that transition. This includes the continued implementation of the SEND reforms, and development of suitable accommodation, especially a training flat, for children leaving care.

The performance of our schools and the outcomes for children, especially those who are disadvantaged, will remain a key priority for our work. We will continue our focus on reducing the gap in attainment between those who are deemed to be disadvantaged, and those who are not.

To continue to challenge and support governors and headteachers to be proactive in responding to national policy concerning academies.

To respond to changes and reductions in education funding to the local authority and schools, including the national funding formula to sustain improvements in provision and outcomes for Shropshire children and young people. We will work closely with schools forum to consider the in particular to ensure that Shropshire continues to lobby for a better settlement for Shropshire.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Nick Bardsley

Local Member

All

Appendices

None.