

Appendix 1 Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in Section 4 of this report, met on 26 April 2022, 26 July 2022, 11 October 2022, 13 December 2022 and 28 February 2023. The following is an overview of the items reviewed by the committee.

ITEM: Increased Budget for Children's Services: Investing In Children's Services Transformation

Background: An Improvement Notice was issued by the Department for Education to Herefordshire Council on 18 May 2021, following significant concerns highlighted by the publication of Justice Keehan's High Court Judgement on Friday 16 April 2021, further cases of concern in the court system and inconsistent practice identified by Essex as Partners in Practice in April 2021; demonstrating a lack of pace and progress to improve children's services since the 2018 Ofsted inspection.

On 31 March 2022 Cabinet approved a decision to drawdown up to £11.49m from the Financial Resilience Reserve to support resourcing the transformation stage of Children's Services. The allocation of this additional funding would be fully project managed as per the decision of Cabinet. The progress of the transformation programme was to be reported to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its bi-monthly meetings focused on the improvement plan.

In its meeting of 26 April 2022 the Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director – Children and Young People, recommending that the committee considers the detail of the additional investment in Children's Services Transformation, £11.49m funding for which was approved at Cabinet on 31 March 2022 and determines the focus of scrutiny by the committee in the year ahead.

The committee asked for the following actions and recommendations to take place:

- To bring a draft proposal, based on the advice of officers, back to the next committee meeting, with regards to reviewing retention and recruitment in the form of a Task and Finish Group. This should include opportunities to meet frontline staff.
- Key weakness areas in the service delivery should be particularly identified for subsequent committee review, with the view of moving beyond just the recruitment and key performance indicators. The Director of Children's Service was asked to look at additional metrics that could be used by the committee to effectively evaluate service delivery improvement, which it was agreed would be reported to and scrutinised by the committee quarterly.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Children and Young People' Improvement Plan - Progress Update

To review the Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan. At the committee meeting of 26 April the Corporate Director, Children and Young People, introduced the [report](#) with the help of the Project Lead, the purpose of which was for the committee to review the Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan.

The committee made the following information requests:

- Regular updates to be circulated to members on the progress on corporate parenting.
- Monthly updates starting the end of May 2022 to be provided on the progress of the improvement plan to all members via a briefing note.

- A new format for looked after children to be updated and provided to the committee in the form of a briefing note within two weeks of the committee meeting.
- Version 2 of the improvement plan to be updated and circulated to the committee by 6 May 2022.

The committee recommended that:

- When the updates are provided they should include feedback on how the voice of the child is reflected and this should be included within the first quarterly report in July.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Children and Young People Directorate Children's Social Care and Early Help Improvement Plan 2022-2024

In its meeting of 26 July 2022 the committee considered the Herefordshire Council Children's Social Care and Early Help Improvement Plan 2022-2024 and the strategic framework for review of key improvement measures.

The committee recommended that:

- The content of the verbal update and presentation be noted; and
- Baseline key performance measures to enable the Committee to scrutinise delivery of the Improvement Plan be prepared by the Children's Services department for the next meeting.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Autism Provision and Nurture Hubs

The committee gave consideration to the report and received a supplementary presentation from the Principal Casework Manager on current autism provision and nurture hubs in Herefordshire alongside areas under development.

Status: Report Noted

ITEM: Establishment of Social Care Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered the establishment of a Social Care Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group, including the agreement of terms of reference and membership.

The committee agreed to consider establishing a potential task and finish group at its next meeting.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services.

The Director for Children and Young People provided the Committee with a summary of the key findings arising from the Ofsted inspection of children's services and outlined the actions undertaken during and in the immediate aftermath of the inspection to address key areas of concern. It was confirmed that development of the action plan in response to the report was progressing at pace and includes a number of engagement activities about to commence.

The directorate were working closely with the appointed Children's Commissioner, Eleanor Brazil, and were further developing their performance and management information systems, as well as preparing

to undertake a self-evaluation of practice which it was intended will be completed by the end of January 2023, with a view to this to be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. Work remained ongoing to review and improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which had recently been the subject of a peer review to also be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

The directorate were working with partners to ensure that the response to Ofsted and the action plan were multi-agency led, and arrangements were being made to convene a summit of key partners in the near future.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

- The Ofsted inspection report be noted; and
- The Committee Work Plan be reviewed at the next meeting to ensure that the work of the Committee is focused on the main areas for improvement in children's services as evidenced by the Ofsted report and the renewed improvement plan.

The committee also requested the following information:

- A copy of the Children and Young People directorate Risk Register;
- Clarification from the Monitoring Officer regarding what access social workers have to expert legal advice to embed quality in social work practice; and
- A workforce profile for Herefordshire to benchmark against other local authorities the level of staff turnover and the proportion of permanent and interim staff working in social care.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Corporate Parenting

The committee considered the Council's [Corporate Parenting Strategy](#). The purpose of the report was to present the background information for the Committee to review the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, the plans for the review of the Strategy in 2023 and opportunities for policy review and development of the strategy with any recommendations to the Cabinet. The Committee unanimously approved the report.

Status: Approved

ITEM: Children's Services Improvement Plan

The committee consider the revised draft Children's Services Improvement Plan.

At the end of the consideration of this matter, the committee resolved that the following recommendations be made to Cabinet for inclusion in the Children's Services Improvement Plan Action Plan:

- That trauma awareness training for all relevant persons including council staff and members be included in the Children Services Improvement Action Plan and that this be signposted to the relevant staff at the appropriate times.
- That the targeted action to develop and launch a Family Group Conference model be targeted for implementation by April 2023, rather than "asap thereafter" as currently stated.

- That families are properly advised on the right information (links will be provided to the Family Rights Group website and other resources) and advice and support on Public Law Outline (PLO) meetings and pre-court proceedings.

The committee also recommended that:

- That HRA/EA training be provided to all relevant council staff (including the Legal Team as promised to be financed in the first tranche of the transformation budget) and members as a priority and at pace, and
- That the committee share with cabinet some responses from a primary school teacher on the new Improvement Plan, as submitted by one of the committee's co-opted members.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Developing SEND services - progress report.

The Committee was provided with an update on progress and impact of activity undertaken within and across the multi-agency partnership in response to the recommendations made following the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer review carried out in October 2022.

The committee recommended that:

- The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee note the activity and progress thus far in responding to the recommendations of the Peer Review conducted in October 2022; and
- The Committee indicate any specific areas of practice, performance, or development that it would like to consider in the future work plan.

ITEM: SEND Peer Review feedback

To share the findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) peer review of services for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) in Herefordshire carried out in October 2022.

The committee made the following recommendations.

- To note the report.
- To share with the SEND officers a list of questions that weren't asked during the meeting, as well as feedback from Carer Parent Voice.
- To request a further update from the SEND officers (even if there were no further meetings pre-election) by the end of March.
- To request that Herefordshire Council lobby Government for provision of need.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2021/2022

The committee was presented with the annual Independent Reviewing Officer report (2021/22). The contents of this report were noted and accepted by the Scrutiny Committee.

Status: Ongoing

ITEM: Children's Services Improvement Plan – Implementation Review Update

The purpose of this report was to present an update to the Committee in respect of the progress and implementation of the Children's Improvement Plan. The 'measures that matter' dashboard was welcomed and the committee proposed three additional dashboard columns:

- a list of the objectives
- timescales for progress and
- assessment of best practice.

The committee otherwise noted the report.

Status: Ongoing