

Scrutiny Performance Working Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th October at 1:00pm, Training Suite A+B, Cumbria House, Carlisle.

Present:

Chair – Cllr Bill Wearing;
Cllr Stan Collins;
Cllr Val Tarbitt;

Cllr Hilary Carrick;
Cllr Marjorie Rae;
Cllr Mark Wilson.

Officers in Attendance

Julie Crellin – Director of Finance;
Lynn Berryman – Assistant Director Children and Families;
Dan Barton – Assistant Director Education and Skills;
Emma Graham – Performance and Intelligence Manager;
Rob Howieson – Policy and Scrutiny Officer.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Geoff Cook and Cllr Carni McCarron-Holmes.

2. Minutes and Actions from the last meeting

Members reviewed the minutes from the last meeting and agreed them as a correct record.

Cllr Tarbitt informed Members that she had been contacted by the Council's property team regarding asset management transfer opportunities in Longtown but requested a meeting to discuss further. Officers agreed to arrange a meeting for Cllr Tarbitt.

As Members reviewed the requested update on highways inspection schemes, Cllr Wilson explained that he had recently attended a joint meeting between the County Council and Highways England which considered planned highways activity across the county. Cllr Wilson went on to explain that he wished to understand further how the Council's Highways Teams could work collaboratively with Highways England to deliver improvement work. Cllr Wearing, as Chair, asked Cllr Collins to request an update through Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board.

Emma Graham also provided a verbal update on statistics training for Members. Emma explained that she is working with the Council's Policy Team to identify opportunities to introduce statistics training as part of the Council's Member Development Programme.

Actions:

- Officers to arrange a meeting for Cllr Tarbitt to discuss Asset Transfer opportunities with the Council's Property Team;
- Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board to request an update on opportunities for joint activity between the Council's Highways Team and Highways England.

3. Performance Update from the SEND Local Area Inspection

Dan Barton, Assistant Director Learning and Skills was present to set out how partners plan to respond to the recommendations of the SEND Local Area Inspection.

Dan began by explaining the background to the Local Area Inspection, including that partners had recently submitted a revised Written Statement of Action (WSoA) based on feedback from Government.

Dan informed Members that if the system is to achieve improvement, there is the need to understand the landscape. Dan went on to explain that this meant that some measures are new and that baselines will develop as activity is embedded. Members then sought clarity on who was involved in the system. Dan clarified by explaining that the system partners included the Council, CCGs, NHS Trusts and Schools.

The presentation then considered the revised governance structure which had been developed to provide robust oversight of improvement activity. Dan explained that an independent chair had been appointed for the SEND Improvement Board to ensure appropriate challenge and that updates would be provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board who would provide oversight for the improvement programme.

Cllr Carrick then asked Dan to explain how the other bodies cited on the governance structure fed into improvement activity, as the current structure didn't include lines of accountability for these bodies. **Action:** Dan set out that reporting structures for these groups were still developing but agreed to provide further information on the links between these groups and the SEND Improvement Programme.

Dan's presentation then set out the strengths and areas of improvement which were highlighted during the Local Area Inspection. Dan explained that strengths included the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the numbers of young people with SEND who were in Education, Employment and Training. Cllr Wilson echoed these comments by reporting on activity that Cumbria LEP had been undertaking to improve opportunities for those with SEND to access post 16 and post 18 education routes and to improve their visibility with employers. **Action:** Members agreed that a further update on this activity should be sought through LEP Scrutiny Committee.

In terms of areas requiring improvement, Dan explained that although the inspection had highlighted nine areas of need, system leaders agreed to have a smaller number of groups in order to cluster and target activity. The presentation then moved to set out the focus of each of the six working groups and the performance measures that would be used in order to demonstrate improvement.

Dan set out that the first working group focuses on understanding of need and informed Members that the system is currently data rich but evidence poor. Dan explained that the working group will be creating a Performance Management Quality Assurance Framework (PMQAF) which will support improvement leads to review and have oversight over the direction of travel with performance. **Action:** Members then sought clarity on the different acronyms included in the presentation, Dan agreed to circulate a list of relevant acronyms to the group.

Cllr Carrick then asked Dan to explain how the system ensures quality as well as timeliness. Dan informed Members that there is no current national standard for quality assurance as Government see quality as needing to be a locally defined standard. Dan went onto explain that by using the PMQAF to better understand the current landscape and need, this will help to define quality standards.

The discussion then moved to consider the second working group which concerns commissioning and access to provision. Dan explained that officers are working to develop a joint commission framework which will make best use of resources across the system to improve outcomes for those with SEND. Cllr Collins questioned the impact of those with life limiting illnesses living longer due to medical advances. Dan and Emma jointly explained that although demand may increase, improved data will help to identify these young people more effectively and help to put the right support in place.

Members then heard about working group three which focuses on engagement and co-production. Dan explained that this group will focus on working with young people and parents to provide opportunity to discuss how available funding is spent to ensure that funding decisions are based on local need. The discussion also considered the revised local offer, which Dan explained was a source of Information, Advice and Guidance for parents and young people with SEND. **Action:** Members then asked how they could find out more information about the local offer, with officers agreeing to circulate a link to the refreshed local offer.

Dan then discussed the transition to adulthood working group. Dan set out the key focus of this work stream is introducing processes that supporting transition planning to start earlier. Members were informed that this activity would support better access to education, employment and training and ensure young people could access the right supported accommodation. Cllr Wearing asked Dan if the system is aware of young people who are currently NEET across Cumbria. Dan responded by explaining that the system tracks those who are NEET at the ages of 16 and 18 which allows support to be shaped to the needs of the individual.

Dan's presentation then considered the emotional health and wellbeing work group. Members were reassured that demand pressures with CAMHS are recognised by system leaders and alternative models were being explored with schools to address mental health at an early stage to reduce the chance of escalation. Dan also pointed out that a number of new digital models were being developed that allow young people to access counselling and support in a more informal manner.

The discussion then considered the last working group which focuses on SEND support. Dan explained that Cumbria currently has approximately ten thousand young people who require a level of support but are not eligible for an EHCP. Members were informed that although academic outcomes for those with an EHCP were better than average, work needs to continue with schools to ensure all young people who were eligible for support, achieve the best outcomes possible.

Dan closed the presentation by setting out the oversight and monitoring arrangements for the SEND Improvement Programme. The discussion referenced a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for those with SEND that would be developed by the understanding local need working group, joint oversight by NHS England & the Department of Education and regular input from the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Advisory Board.

Julie asked if system leaders are identified within the improvement plan. Dan confirmed that lead officers are named against actions and that the Council's Executive Director for People and the Lead Officers from the CCGs which operate within Cumbria are signatories for the improvement plan.

Cllr Tarbitt informed Dan that it had been proposed that she would be invited to meetings of the SEND Improvement Board as the Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Advisory Board but had not since been invited. **Action:** Dan agreed to review Cllr Tarbitt's membership with the SEND Improvement Board and update her accordingly.

Actions:

- Dan to provide further information on the relationships between the SEND Improvement Programme, and the external bodies cited on the Governance Structure;
- A further update on the LEP's activity to increase opportunities for young people with SEND to be requested through LEP Scrutiny Committee;
- Dan to provide a glossary of acronyms which were included in his presentation
- Officers to circulate a link to the SEND local offer to Members;
- The SEND Improvement Board to consider inviting Cllr Tarbitt as chair of the relevant scrutiny board to future meetings.

4. Update on Performance relating to Children Looked After

Lynn Berryman, Assistant Director Children and Families, joined the meeting to provide a six month update on Children Looked After (CLA) numbers and progress with improvement activity.

Lynn began her presentation by considering the trends with CLA demand within each of the six districts. Lynn informed Members that demand pressures are prevalent in Allerdale and Copeland due to on average larger sibling groups requiring support, and Barrow has the highest levels of demand, corresponding with the highest levels of deprivation.

In responding to a request from the Chair, Lynn also providing a performance update in relation to Child Protection Plans. Members were informed that the number of Child Protection Plans across Cumbria has reduced from a rate of 66.3 per 1000 at the end of August 2018 to a rate of 61.5 per 1000 at the end of August 2019.

The discussion then moved to consider the link between levels of deprivation and number of Children Looked After. Members asked if there is a link between placement cost and level of deprivation in relation to the young person's home location. Julie and Emma jointly responded by explaining that the cost is dependent on the placement which is available which may not be in that home location. Further, there is limited evidence in relation to the link between placement cost and level of local deprivation. Emma went onto explain that work is on-going with other councils across the North West to identify possible data trends.

Lynn's presentation then looked at the changing age profile of CLA demand. Lynn explained that the growth in demand from the ten to fourteen age group is due to a combination of legacy demand and increased safeguarding pressures due to criminal exploitation through county lines as an example.

Members then received an update on the use of residential placements. Lynn explained that the Council has recently achieved success by moving sixteen young people from residential placements back to their home environment. Lynn went onto explain that a further fourteen young people are scheduled to be transitioned back to their home environment by the end of the year. Although the overall number of children in residential placements has been and remains around 100 since April.

Lynn's update also highlighted the increasing number of CLA being placed with their parents. Lynn explained that whilst the Council retains a statutory responsibility, placing CLA backed with their parents keeps the young person in their home environment and is sometimes the most appropriate placement.

The conversation then moved to consider the drivers of demand. Lynn explained to Members that independent review activity of all new entrants has been employed to understand the factors behind demand. Members heard the highest levels of demand continues to come from Barrow where deprivation is high and challenges remain with neglect and large sibling groups within Allerdale and Copeland.

The final part of Lynn's presentation provided an update on improvement activity which focuses on safely reducing the demand for interventions and placements. Members were informed that targets for foster carer recruitment were being exceeded and homestay provision which is providing appropriate accommodation for those aged over the age of sixteen has delivered £106,000 of savings.

Lynn reaffirmed the success that Children's Services had achieved by transitioning sixteen young people back into their home environment and confirmed to Members that although new demand continues to emerge, the children to go home programme can still achieve the required savings targets. Although achievement of the CLA Recovery Plan will not address the total budget pressure, as a result the overall level of demand and placement costs. Although achievement of the CLA Recovery Plan will not address the total budget pressure, as a result of the overall demand and placement costs.

The discussion on improvement activity also covered the new adoption team, introduced to increase the availability of foster and adoptive placements. As part of this discussion, Cllr Collins asked if links had been made between fertility services and adoption teams. Lynn responded by highlighting that fertility is a sensitive issue and the team's eighteen month review period helps to ensure prospective adopters are the right fit for the role.

Lynn also covered a number of work streams relating to CLA recovery activity, including regular reviews of the most expensive placements, new Children in Need panels and increased collaboration with Independent Fostering Agencies. Lynn reminded Members that the combination of this activity helps to ensure Children Services is supporting vulnerable young people whilst aiming to operate as a financially sustainable service.

Lynn closed the update by informing Members about prevention and early intervention activity. Members heard about the review of the Council's Edge of Care Service, the relaunch of Early Help, promoting the SAFE families programme in Allerdale and Copeland and embedding family resilience workers in communities. Lynn highlighted to Members that the combination of this activity supports CLA to be stepped down from intensive support and helps to proactively review admissions in order to reduce demand.

Cllr Tarbitt asked Lynn to update Members on progress with the Regional Adoption Agency. Lynn explained that the Regional Adoption Agency is developing as a slightly different model than first envisaged but is still on track to be introduced by the 1st April 2020.

5. Q1 Council Plan Delivery Plan Progress Report

Julie Crellin, Director of Finance, then introduced the 2019/20 Quarter One Council Plan Delivery Plan Progress Report, which was considered by Cabinet on Thursday 19th September.

Julie referenced the comments made by the Leader of the Council at Cabinet and explained that the report has kept the same format as the past year, identifying the performance issues which would be the subject of attention. In addition, Julie indicated to Members those red and amber indicators which scrutiny could consider.

Cllr Wilson then provided an update on DTOC performance which was considered by Adults' Scrutiny Advisory Board on Friday 4th October. Cllr Wilson, initially referenced a visit that Members had to Maryport and Cockermouth Integrated Care Community (ICC) in the previous week, informing Members that although the ICC was making good progress there was still work to do in order to reduce DTOC.

Cllr Wilson continued his DTOC update by explaining that the Assistant Director for Adults informed Adults' Scrutiny Advisory Board that performance continues to be a challenge and that there is a need to create adequate levels of provision across Cumbria.

Cllr Wearing also asked about the relationship with reablement services, Cllr Wilson responded by highlighting that services vary across the county and that there is further work needed to integrate health and care services. Cllr Wearing then asked Cllr Wilson to keep DTOC performance under review through his role as Chair of Adults Scrutiny Advisory Board.

Members also considered the implementation of new Highways Inspection Schemes. Cllr Wearing informed Members that he had recently visited the Council's Service Centre as part of Scrutiny Management Board's oversight of the delivery of the Council's Customer Strategy, which included the transition of the Highways Hotline into the Service Centre. As part of this discussion, Cllr Collins was asked to consider the relationship between the Service Centre, HIMS and Highways Area Teams through Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board.

The discussion also highlighted a reduction in the Progress 8 scores. Emma informed Members that data on schools has been delayed and suggested to Members that a more substantial update could come to the group's next meeting in January.

Members then questioned Julie on the current position for the Council's revenue budget. Julie explained that there are three demand pressures which the Council has to manage. Members heard that demand pressures include Children Looked After, Home to School Transport relating particularly to those with SEND needs and care for Young Adults with complex needs. Julie's discussion with Members set out that in the Council had, in previous years, received health contributions including back payments which had helped to address costs of care for younger adults.

Julie then confirmed to Members that no back payments are expected this year, which combined with increased demand will result in an end of year budget pressures relating to CLA which had been explained in the previous item. Members were informed that looking to 2020/21, the spending round had provided some additional grants in relation to social care pressures which is welcomed, despite funding restraints remaining.

Actions:

- Adults' Scrutiny Advisory Board to keep DTOC performance under review;
- Emma to bring a further update on attainment once data has been released;
- Cllr Collins to seek clarity on the relationships between the Service Centre, Highways Area Team and HIMS through Communities and Place Scrutiny Advisory Board.

6. Future Agenda Items

Cllr Wearing reminded Members of the one day Task and Finish Group session to consider absence, asking officers to ensure an update comes to January's meeting.

Members were also asked to accept future agenda items on the performance focused recommendations arising from the Fire and Rescue Service's recent inspection and an update on the roll out of Superfast Broadband across Cumbria.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4:00pm

The rest of this page was left intentionally blank.