

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13th January 2015

Agenda item: 8

Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families Dept

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel note the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in November 2014.

2 DETAILS

2.1 There have been no full Ofsted school inspections since the panel's last meeting. However, a section 8 monitoring visit to Liberty primary school, judged as requiring improvement in its last full inspection, was reported in December 2014. This concluded that insufficient progress was being made in addressing issues preventing the school from achieving a judgement of 'good' at its next full inspection. Officers are engaging robustly with the school to address deficits.

2.2 Merton's implementation of requirements in the 2014 Children and Families Act to undertake education, health and care planning for children with Special Educational Needs was examined in a DfE monitoring visit in December 2014. Feedback received was that Merton is making good progress in implementing the Act.

2.3 Professional health staff from Sutton and Merton Community Health Services have been appointed to join the integrated Education, Health and Care Team established in response to the Act. Co-location of these staff and new integrated assessment and planning tools will enable the 'joined up' approach envisaged in the new legislation.

2.4 Further progress has been made in the Department's project to increase the numbers of Merton pupils registered for Free School Meals and therefore attracting Pupil Premium for their schools. In October 2014, some 200 additional entitled pupils had been identified and registered as a result of promotional activities undertaken by the Department and schools. By December 2014, this figure has increased to 790. The impact of the project to date should result in Merton's schools receiving in the region of £1.2 million additional funding in the Designated Schools Grant for 2015-16.

- 2.5 Members of the panel will be aware of the retirement of Jan Martin, Assistant Director for Education. An interim postholder, Heather Tomlinson, is now in post and the council has made a permanent appointment. Jane McSherry is expected to join the Department in April 2015.
- 2.6 In response to the raised national profile of child sexual exploitation, London's Directors of Children's Services agreed a peer review initiative to support individual local authorities in service improvement. Merton has engaged strongly with this initiative and underwent a peer review in December 2014. This has contributed to the establishment of a specific improvement action plan which will be overseen by the MSCB and monitored internally by the department's Continuous Improvement Board. Local authorities' response to the issue of child sexual exploitation has now become a specific line of enquiry in Ofsted's single inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.
- 2.7 Following the transfer of certain health commissioning responsibilities to local authorities, officers in the Department and Public Health colleagues are currently working with Merton's Clinical Commissioning Group in preparing for the re-commissioning of community health services for children including health visiting, school nursing, therapies and specialist services for looked after children, currently provided by the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust. These services are critical to Merton's Children's Trust's overall approach to improving outcomes for children and the next provider will be expected to contribute to the further integration of services for children and their families in the borough.
- 2.8 During October 2014 a CYP scrutiny performance workshop was held in which Members received guidance and information about the Children Schools and Families departmental Performance Management Framework and associated performance governance. Following this a smaller group met to review and revise the CYP Security dataset for 2015/16. This is presented in the Performance report.
- 2.9 In addition to a new standard dataset for 2015/16 Members also requested that Officers submit supplementary indicators in the 'Officers Update report' as and when management were particularly concerned about performance. It was recommended that Members monitor selected indicators for a short period of time only until performance improved. These indicators will be reported separately in order to keep the integrity of the full (main) Scrutiny dataset.
- 2.10 At the last panel meeting, members expressed concern about a 'lagging' performance indicator relating to visits to looked after children. As panel members will be aware, the council is in the process of implementing a new social care and casework information system which will go live in summer 2015. Because of the set up of the existing system, data on visits is not easily extracted and 'work arounds' have been implemented to enable data to be inputted and reported. Whilst the annual corporate parenting report submitted at the last panel meeting showed deterioration in visits performance, subsequent sampling and audits undertaken indicate current performance in the region of 80% is being achieved. The Corporate Parenting Board will continue to monitor actual performance in pragmatic ways until the transfer to the new system and we will report accordingly.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. No specific implications.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. No specific implications.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. No specific implications.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. No specific implications.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. No specific implications.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- N/A

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

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