

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 03 November 2021

Wards: All

Subject: Performance Report

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Contact officer: Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to review and acknowledge contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report summarises the performance information for 2021/22, up to 30th September 2021 for quarterly and monthly indicators, as set out in the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2021/22.

2 DETAILS

Exception Report

2.1. The following indicators are marked as amber or red.

No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
2	% of Single Assessments authorised within 45 days	R	<p>This is now the third month where performance is missing performance targets.</p> <p>The rate of assessments completed within 45 days has declined at a time when contacts and referrals to social care have increased. Reflecting national shortages of social workers, there have been challenges in recruiting to vacancies. This also contributes to delays in initial assessments as other parts of our service provision are prioritised (for instance visits to children and families).</p>

16	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks.	R	<p>We always strive to meet the nationally set target of 26 weeks. Due to small number of children in proceedings in Merton, delays with one family can skew our figures.</p> <p>Nationally, the duration of care proceedings has increased. This is a result of court closures during the pandemic. As lock-down eases, we should see this having an impact.</p> <p>Whilst above the nationally set target of 26 weeks, Merton's performance in Q1 (2021/22) is slightly better than the national average (44 weeks).</p>
19	Stability of placements of Looked after Children – number of placements (3 or more in the year)		<p>We have had a number of children with complex needs for whom we have struggled to find appropriate placements which can meet their needs. This is in the context of a national shortage of residential and foster placements.</p> <p>Three children with 3+ placements were unaccompanied asylum seeking children and their initial temporary placement provided by the home office is included in their placement count.</p> <p>Close monitoring of the children's permanence plans will be tracked by Merton's newly formed permanency tracking meeting.</p>
22	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	R	<p>This was flagged at the last meeting. We also have a focus on this at this month's scrutiny meeting.</p>

30	Reception year surplus places	R	See below.

Commentary

Indicator 30: Reception surplus places

- 2.2. This indicator is the total school reception roll against total operating admission numbers. In 2020/21 the percentage was 10.6% against our benchmark of 5-10%.
- 2.3. There is no official national benchmark on an appropriate level of surplus places. Surplus places across schools provide more choice of school places, but since schools are largely funded based on numbers on roll, surplus places have a negative impact on the school budget, and therefore potentially teaching and learning. In the late 1990s the Audit Commission recommended that a surplus of 5-10% would enable the appropriate balance of choice and to economically provide sufficient school places, and this is still considered a reasonable estimate of best practice and so has been used for this indicator.
- 2.4. With a greater fall in demand for reception year places due to the migration impacts of Covid, we narrowly missed the 10% target maximum for 2020/21. Members will note the School Places Strategy document was brought to this committee last month.

Amendments, Corrections and Data Caveats

- 2.5. Current system configuration and data recording issues in our social care reporting system Mosaic have an impact on our ability to report performance against some of the indicators effectively. This does not mean that the department is unable to monitor performance.
- 2.6. We are currently not able to report accurately against the following indicators:

Indicator Number	Descriptor	Commentary
8	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Data reporting is currently unreliable. The way in which Mosaic is currently configured does not allow an easy analysis of quoracy. The QA and Practice Development Team review quoracy as part of their service.
31	Year 7 surplus places	Q1 has been revised following receipt of January's validated data.

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

- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2020/21.