

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 22 June 2022

Wards: All

Subject:

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

Lead member(s): Cllr Brenda Fraser – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Cllr Sally Kenny – Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Farah Ikram, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report summarises the performance information for 2022/23, up to 30th April 2022, as set out in the accompanying document, the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2022/23.

2 DETAILS

Exception Report

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

No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
6	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	A	This is an indicator that we monitor every month . Performance data shows that during the last quarter, we consistently reached our target of 100%. However, there was a slight dip in March 2022. We will be monitoring the situation closely.
13	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against	A	Nationally a target of 26 weeks has been set for an authority to conclude court proceedings and to achieve a

	a national target of 26 weeks.		<p>court decision. We always strive to meet the nationally set target of 26 weeks. Due to a small number of children in proceedings in Merton, delays with one family can skew our figures.</p> <p>A range of influences impact on the duration of court proceedings – some of which are outside of the authority’s immediate control. These include court availability, the availability and timeliness of expert witness input, and the desire to engage effectively with the wider family network to explore alternatives (where appropriate and safe to do so). Performance in this area is currently showing an improvement, with us being above average at 41 weeks in comparison with the national average of 47 weeks.</p> <p>The service has monthly court and PLO tracking meetings including legal representatives. On a quarterly basis, representatives from the Children and Families Court Advisory Services (Cafcass) attend. These meetings allow the authority to raise concerns about timeliness.</p>
14	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	A	<p>For a small number of young people Looked After, it was right that a short delay took place when the placement or their situation changed. Whilst some matters related to court hearings, others related to ensuring records and information were completed and signed off promptly. All our young people had midway reviews, and discussion on plans and</p>

			transitions towards adulthood. Where in a very small number of cases delay was required, this was discussed with the child, parents and key professionals to ensure we had the right advocacy, information, assessment and plan.
20	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	R	Merton places a large proportion of children with in-house foster carers. There were some challenges last year within recruitment due to the pandemic. There is always room to improve and we have refreshed our communication strategy for the new financial year. We aim to promote the Mocking Bird model which we hope will help with recruitment.
23	% of total 0-5 year estimated Census 2011 population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services (cumulative)	R	The proportion of children aged 0-5 years old from areas of deprivation whose families have accessed children's centre services has seen a decrease over the past two years in particular because of the impact of the pandemic. There is now a full face to face offer from Children's Centre staff for parenting programmes etc, which are being well used. This, with the return to face to face contact from Health Visitors and other partners (who are collocated in the Children's Centres), and the development of a Family Hub model (as promoted by the Government) should see numbers beginning to rise again over the next few years.
28	Reception year surplus places	R	See commentary below.

29	Secondary school surplus places	A	See commentary below
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Commentary

Indicator 28: Reception surplus places

2.2. This indicator is the total school reception roll against total operating admission numbers. Between December 2021 and March 2022, the percentage of surplus primary school places increased and is now 11.6%, which is outside of our target range 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.

Indicator 29: Secondary school surplus places

2.4. Surplus places in secondary school year 7 is 3.2% so below the 5% target, hence has an amber rating. However, as the lower roll numbers flow through from primary school there will be more surplus places in future years.

2.5. To reduce the surplus in primary schools, and within the context of the School Place Planning Strategy (which was brought to Scrutiny in autumn 2021), officers continue to review school admission numbers to reduce capacity, with two further schools reducing their reception intake from September 2022.

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 2022/23.