

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 21st June 2023

Wards: All

Subject:

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

Lead member(s): Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member Children's Services, and Cllr Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Maisie Davies, 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 2023/24, up to 30th April 2023, as set out in the accompanying document, the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2023/24.

1.2. With the change in financial year, the Performance team, alongside the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (CLLF) senior leadership team have reviewed the provisional year-end data from 22-23 and the latest available benchmarking data at a national and regional level. With this review, some additional target measures have been identified and some targets have been adjusted based on recent performance and benchmarking against London and National performance. All subsequent changes to the dashboard are set out in the below details section of this report.

2 DETAILS

Exception Report

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

No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
7	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	R	This is an indicator that we monitor every month. Performance data shows that during 2022/23 our average monthly performance was 96% within timescale. Although performance in April was below the target of 95%,

			we are monitoring the situation closely.
9	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) for the second or subsequent time.	R	<p>This indicator shows the % of children with an open CPP as at the end of the period who are the subject of a CPP for the second or subsequent time.</p> <p>Performance averaged 24% during 2022/23 and remained high at 26% in April. We are closely monitoring this indicator and a thematic audit has been undertaken, which gave assurances that thresholds were being applied correctly.</p>
13	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	R	<p>Performance declined in quarter 4 increasing from 25 weeks to 52 weeks; however, Q3 was an outlier due to only one care proceeding being completed during this period. See further contextual information in the commentary section below.</p>
14	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	R	<p>Performance during 2022/23 averaged 96% per month, and performance has dipped slightly from 94% in March to 93% in April. The Performance team are working with the service to monitor this closely.</p>
17	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	A	<p>The target for this indicator has increased to 71% from 65% following performance consistently above target during 2022/23 and to bring in line with regional performance at 71%. It is currently RAG rated Amber as there was a slight dip in the most recent quarter to 70%, although this is in line with the national benchmarking rate.</p>

28	Secondary school surplus places	R	See commentary below
33	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system - quarterly / annual	R	The service has agreed a target for this indicator (41.8% to align with our regional benchmarks) and the service will work towards this new target. Q3 and Q4 data is not yet fully validated, but is currently indicating that we are performing below the target set. However, this is in the context of Merton having a small cohort of young people in the youth justice system.
35	% agency social workers (HR data)	R	The service has agreed a target for this indicator (22.7% to align with London benchmarking) and the service will work towards this new target. This is a stretching target as last year the proportion of agency social workers peaked at 36% in September 2022, but with focused attention on this area the Department has reduced this to 26% in March 2023.

Commentary

Indicator 28: Secondary school surplus places

2.2. Surplus places in secondary school year 7 have reduced from 2.4% to 2.3%, remaining below the 5% target, hence has a red rating. However, as the lower roll numbers flow through from primary school there will be more surplus places in future years.

2.3. 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 in September 2022.

Indicator 13: Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks

2.4. Nationally, the duration of care proceedings has increased. This is a result of court closures during the pandemic.

2.5. 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).

2.6. 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.

2.7. Merton continues to receive positive feedback from Merton’s link judge on the Council’s PLO work.

All indicators:

2.8. The service has reviewed the scrutiny dashboard and amended the following targets. Some new indicators have been introduced and others, which are no longer considered relevant, have been removed, this has resulted in some indicators being re-numbered.

No	Indicator	Service Commentary
3	% of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) Plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale (YTD Calendar Year /Monthly)	The target has increased from 60% to 65% owing to strong recent performance in this area in Merton and to stretch us to continue to perform better than the London and National averages.
7	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	The target has been revised to 95% to bring this more in line with benchmarking nationally and locally. The revised target remains more ambitious than national and local benchmarking performance.
8	% of Children subject of a CP Plan who had a CP visit within timescales in the month	This indicator was previously reported without a target. A target of 90% has been agreed.

12	Number of UASC children and young people	This indicator now shows the agreed quota of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (under the National Transfer Scheme Protocol, 0.07% threshold), although this is not a target.
16	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	The target has been reduced from 11% to 10% to bring it in line with the regional and national benchmarks. Merton's performance last year was particularly strong but this indicator can be volatile.
17	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged under 16) - length of placement (in care 2.5 years, placement 2 years)	The target has been increased from 65% to 71% to bring it in line with national and regional benchmarking.
19	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	This indicator was previously reported without a target. A target has been agreed of 2 recruitments per quarter; 8 for the year.
22	% of total 0-5 year estimated Census 2011 population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services (cumulative)	This target has been amended to an annual target due to the complexities of in year monitoring.
26	Persistent absenteeism - All Schools (10% or more sessions missed)	This indicator hasn't been reported against since Covid and had no agreed target. A target has now been set at 21%. The indicator has also been amended to incorporate all schools and not just secondary.
30	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	This indicator was previously reported without a target. A target has been agreed of 1.2%, which aligns with our internal corporate performance report.

32	Number of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (cumulative)	The target is currently 50, and the Performance team are currently reviewing this to check it is in line with the national benchmarking per 100,000 rate. Any possible change will be included in a future report.
33	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system - quarterly / annual (annual is 20/21)	This indicator was previously reported without a target. A target has been agreed of 41.8% to align with regional benchmarking.
35	% agency social workers (HR data)	This indicator was previously reported without a target. A target has been agreed of 22.7% given the focus on this area in Merton.

3 AMENDMENTS, CORRECTIONS AND DATA CAVEATS

Amendments, Corrections and Data Caveats

3.1. We are currently unable to report against the following indicators:

No	Indicator	Service Commentary
6	% of quorate attendance at CPP conferences	Following amendments to the system workflow, as part of the Mosaic Repair Project, a report has now been built to extract this data and we are currently in the process of user acceptance testing.
29	Youth services participation rate	This data is no longer collected nationally, and the indicator is on hold until new guidance is published later this year.
Previously 34	Number of families who will be eligible for support under Supporting Families programme.	It is suggested this indicator is removed from the dashboard as it does not provide an indicator of service performance.

		However, the Early Help Service with the Performance team will review alternative information that could come to OSC in light of the Department's roll out of Family Hubs and Insights to Intervention Programme.
Previously 35	% of commissioned services for which quarterly monitoring was completed	It is suggested this indicator is removed from the dashboard as the appropriate procedures are in place and this has consistently been at 100% for the last two years.

Proposed New Performance Indicator areas

3.2. Following the review of the dashboard, two areas were identified which members may consider helpful in their scrutiny of performance. They are as follows:

3.3. The dashboard currently does not include data relating to care experienced young people. Monitoring performance relating to care experienced young people is important given the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and recent decision locally to treat care experience as a protected characteristic. The Department's Outstanding ILACS inspection also identified development of housing for care leavers as an area for improvement. It is therefore proposed that indicators relating to care leaver outcomes be added to the dashboard, for example, proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation and in education, employment and training.

3.4. Indicator 9 measures the proportion of children that became subject to a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time (ever). It is suggested that members may find it more helpful to receive data relating to children who have become subject to a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time in the previous two years as this tends to be more reflective of service performance.

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 2023/24.

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