

Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

January 2019

1. Improvement Board update

The Committee welcomed Andrew Ireland, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board to the meeting. Mr Ireland reported on the progress work of the Board, his role as Chair and the cross partnership aspects involved in the work. In addition he reflected upon developments made within the service, the performance improvements and he proceeded to highlight the critical areas where progress was still required in order to secure the sustainable improvements.

2. Quality Assurance Framework: Progress Update Report

The report provided an overview of the audit activity undertaken in December, including the completion of audits against expectation, the growth in the number of auditors through the rolling training programme and other quality assurance activity. The Committee welcomed the report and appreciated having sight of the latest figures. The Committee accepted that in order for the organisation to be lifted from an overall rating of inadequate, it was necessary to move the monthly audit ratings to no more than 8% inadequate. As such there were significant improvements in the audit completion rates as a result of considerable pressure and the need to have any exemptions approved by Directors. The Committee agreed that the pressure needed to be maintained until audit process was seen as business as usual.

3. Performance Monitoring

It was reported that there were a number of areas across Children's Social Care where performance had improved or continued to improve since November 2018. The Committee felt that this performance would need to be maintained despite the challenging factors of a system under pressure and a continued workforce turnover, which resulted in recruitment issues.

Members appreciated that further work improvements were required in those areas where performance was not progressing or where issues were still evident for a reducing number of children, in order for all children to be seen, assessed or worked within a timely way and have plans in place to support progress, protection and transition to adulthood. The Committee were pleased to note that no children had been left in unsafe circumstances.

The Director of Children's Services shared his initial thoughts following Ofsted's visit with committee members and was eagerly awaiting the latest outcome letter from Ofsted.

4. Revenue Monitoring

The report highlighted the position as at November 2018. The current position for non-DSG funded services was an overspend position of £7.23 million (6.81% of budget). The underlying over-spend was £9.83 million, £5.98 million being external placement costs, which reduces to £7.23 million when offset by £2.6 million of Business Rates Retention pilot income. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funded services are forecast to be over-spent by

£4.42 million in-year and this exceeds uncommitted balances resulting in an over-spend of £1.92 million.

The Committee noted the position statement.

5. Children and the Justice System

The Committee noted the progress made in relation to further developing the local arrangements for Youth Justice with a particular emphasis on the work being undertaken to prevent the detention of children in police stations following charge. A vigorous discussion took place which assisted officers in the development of the plan. Officers explained that the local authority was not provided with a specific grant or funding stream to meet this duty, as such the costs for children transferred to the care of the local authority were met from existing budgets for children in care.

The committee reports can be viewed at:

<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=670&MId=9041&Ver=4>

Cllr Brian Robinson
Chairman