

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 20 January 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Baker, Begg, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, Ratcliffe and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Goodall and McDermott

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, Z. Fearon, B. Holmes, K. Appleton, D. Roberts, H. Bell and M. Stapleton-Chambers

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
CYP27 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP28 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
CYP29 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT 1ST JULY 2024 – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024 - Q2	
The Board received the quarterly monitoring report (QMR) for quarter two (1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024) for Children’s Social Care and Early Help and Education Departments.	
The reports informed Members of the key performance indicators identified to measure progress against each of the priorities identified within the Children and Young People Plan.	

It was noted that the new format and content of the QMR was agreed by the Board at the November 2024 meeting. This was then updated to correlate with the priorities identified in the newly launched Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2024-27, and to comply with the new Corporate QMR reporting template.

Members commented that progress against many of the milestones was in 'amber' so appeared to have stalled, and challenged the reasons for this. The Chair also commented that he had challenged the schools SEND transport policies as there were savings to be made there, as well as in other areas – residential placements, outside foster agencies and court costs. It was agreed that a meeting would be set up to discuss these four areas in particular. Officers would provide relevant information on demand for the services, costs and strategies currently being used. In relation to SEND transport, examples of types of requests being dealt with would be presented at the meeting, to assist Members.

In response to the queries over the amber status' the following additional information was provided in response to questions:

P1.4 – Partner led MAPS – there was work going on in the background and Officers were working with the Early Help Improvement Board and other partners. Additional data would be available in Q3;

P6.5 – in relation to the Local Authority's role in ensuring children who were electively home educated (EHE) were safeguarded and received a suitable education, the Government was progressing a Bill in Parliament which would legislate this;

P6.5/6 – in cases where there was a concern following an inspection, over the quality of education received by a child who was EHE, a Schools Attendance Order could be issued via the Court and the child would be admitted to mainstream education using 'in year fair access';

P5.3 – The two new members of Quality Assurance staff were now in post and had visited all schools. In relation to exclusions it was noted that there was a change in the reasons for being excluded, as incidents relating to drugs possession and use had increased and schools operated a zero tolerance policy towards this. Drugs were being found in adapted vapes and Ketamine and snuff had been discovered recently in secondary schools. Officers advised that a multi-agency partnership meeting was planned to discuss this issue – Councillors Lloyd Jones and Ryan requested to know the details of this so they could attend;

P3.1 – there were improvements in EHCP completions and more were expected in quarter 3; and

P7.7 – agency costs were coming down and social care staff were using Connect Halton for recruitment, in liaison with HR. It was confirmed that the Council did not pay ‘finders fees’ for agency staff who became employed by the Council full time.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring report be accepted as the mechanism by which Members could monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP30 SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN HALTON IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board received a report from the Executive Director of Children’s Services, which shared the submitted Services for Children and Families in Halton’s Improvement Plan and provided an update against the 12 key areas of improvement.

The ILACS (Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services) Areas of Improvement document was appended to the report, from A1 to A12 and these were presented to the Board one by one.

It was reported that budgetary decisions throughout the improvement journey would be informed by the priorities identified within the Improvement Plan. The Finance and Investment Board would track spend and the impact this was having on the outcomes for Children and Young People and families. One Member requested to know the membership of the Finance and Investment Board, referred to in paragraph 5.1. This would be sought and sent following the meeting.

In response to Members questions regarding A3 - Quality of Social Work Practice - Plans, Assessments and Planning, it was commented that 1.1 support and targeted work had been undertaken by the Social Work Academy, this included assessment training. The impacts of the training were already being felt, for example the numbers of child court cases were reducing and positive financial benefits were being seen. Further impacts would be reported at a later date when the results of audits carried out in December 2024 were available.

RESOLVED: That the Improvement Plan be accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP31 A REPORT ON THE WORK TO DATE ON DBV AND IMPACT

The Board considered a report from the Director of Children's Services, which provided a progress update, (against the targets set out in the DBV Grant) on the Delivering Better Values (DBV) project, covering the period of the third quarter, from October 2024 to January 2025.

DBV was a Department for Education (DfE) programme working to identify and implement local opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND, across 54 Local Authorities and to aid local systems (alongside existing local and other DfE programmes) in their objective of achieving financial sustainability.

Halton was identified as being eligible to apply for the DBV grant funding so an application was submitted. Halton was awarded the full grant of £1m which provided an opportunity to positively transform inclusive practices across Halton.

The report provided detailed updates on the work being carried out in workstreams 1 and 2, and described the next steps to be taken.

Further to Members questions on the Programme, the following information was provided:

- Some schools, including academies, were initially hesitant to participate in the DBV Programme, for a number of reasons, such as waiting to see results before committing. The Council's Quality Assurance Officers were also now in place and monitored the Programme. Most Academy Trusts in Halton were now participating in the Programme;
- In order to select two High Dependency Pilot Units within secondary schools for the exploration of invest to save measures, Officers requested expressions of interest from schools at the Halton Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH) meeting. Once they were received, the schools were visited and the ones that offered the best existing resources were selected;
- The numbers of children in Halton that received extra time for exams – this was not to hand so would be sent following the meeting, with last year's figures for comparison; and
- The PRU was intended a temporary measure for

excluded children, however some got stuck there. Some obtained EHCP's but the aim was to diagnose these children whilst in mainstream schools, to avoid later misdiagnosis or exclusion.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

CYP32 NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, OR TRAINING (NEET) AND WHOSE ACTIVITY IS NOT KNOWN TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which gave the annual NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 'Not Known' figures for Halton and the reasons for growth of the number of young people who were NEET.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two raising participation age related duties on local authorities regarding academic aged 16-17 year olds as follows:

- To promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area, with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfilled the duty to participate in education or training; and
- To make arrangements to identify 16 and 17 year olds who were not participating in education or training.

The report and accompanying presentation described the work of the 14-19 Team at Halton who provided careers guidance and support to those who were not participating and informed how they worked with schools to support young people to transition from Year 11 into Post 16 education.

It was noted that paragraph 3.10.5 required a correction. The percentage referred to in 2021 should read 95.8%, not 98.8%.

The reasons why NEET and Not Known figures were rising were outlined in the presentation. There were multiple issues affecting provision in Halton, these were outlined and the provision that remained was presented to the Board.

Members were provided with statistics for Halton against national, regional, LCR and statistical neighbours where it was noted that Halton had seen the highest overall increase in NEETS since 2018/19.

The following responses were provided to Members questions:

- Following encouragement and hard work from the Council, *The Growth Company* was now in Halton, based at Murdishaw Community Centre. They were funded by the Department for Education (DfE), this was explained to the Board. They were offering 30 Level 1 and 2 places currently and hoped to increase this once they had more capacity;
- In relation to Council properties, an Education Officer was a member of the Asset Management Working Group who were looking at potential vacant properties for future use by other post 16 providers;
- The possibility of the Council setting up its own provision for 16-18 year olds was unlikely due to funding, as there would be set up costs to pay for and there would be a gap one year before any DfE funding was made available. The Growth Company had set up in Halton despite these risks; and
- Further information on The Growth Company in relation to progression for students and attendance of Widnes students would be provided.

Members understood the challenges faced with provision and welcomed the introduction of Level 1 and 2 courses for students by this company, as there were no others being offered in Halton.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP33 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which gave the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with the latest 2024-25 outturn forecast.

On 16 January 2025, Executive Board received the attached report and appendices, which presented details of Councilwide revenue and capital spending by each department and outlined the reasons for key variances from budget.

Executive Board has requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information. This is to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position
as outlined in the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.