



You can view the agenda on the [website](#)
or use a smart phone camera and scan the code

To: The Chair and Members of the Children's
Scrutiny Committee

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Date: 11 September 2023

Contact: Charlie Fisher

Email: charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19th September, 2023

A meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Committee is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am at Committee Suite, County Hall, Exeter to consider the following matters.

Donna Manson
Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE

1 Apologies

2 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2023 (previously circulated).

3 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Items which in the opinion of the Chair should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

4 Public Participation

Members of the public may make representations/presentations on any substantive matter listed in the published agenda for this meeting, as set out hereunder, relating to a specific matter or an examination of services or facilities provided or to be provided.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION OR REVIEW

5 Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Committee

Verbal reports of the Cabinet Members.

6 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

In accordance with previous practice, Scrutiny Committees are requested to review the list of forthcoming business and determine which items are to be included in the [Work Programme](#).

The Committee may also wish to review the content of the [Cabinet Forward Plan](#) and the Children's Services [Risk Register](#) to see if there are any specific items therein it might wish to explore further.

7 Election of Domestic Sexual Violence and Abuse (DSVA) Champion

The Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality has requested nominations for a Member Champion on each of the three Scrutiny Committees in order to support him to better understand the Council's responses from across its services.

8 Children's Social Care Performance Report (Pages 1 - 16)

Presentation attached.

9 Update on Devon's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Improvement Plan (Pages 17 - 26)

Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures (CS/23/12), attached.

10 Children Electively Home Educated and Missing Education (Pages 27 - 36)

Report of the Director of Children's Services and Head of Education and Learning (CS/23/13), attached.

11 Children's Scrutiny Social Care Visits Report (Pages 37 - 52)

Report of the Children's Scrutiny Committee (LDS/23/10), attached.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

12 Children's Standing Overview Group (Pages 53 - 68)

Reports of the Children's Standing Overview Group dated 22 June 2023 (LDS/23/11) and 17 July 2023 (LDS/23/12), attached.

13 Information Previously Circulated

Below is a list of information previously circulated for Members, since the last meeting, relating to topical developments which have been or are currently being considered by this Scrutiny Committee.

- Social Care Performance Report (31 May)
- Babcock LDP Post Transition Update (12 June)
- SEND Improvement Board NHS Neurodiversity Presentation (12 June)
- Improvement Partnership Board Update July 2023 (1 August)
- Committee Risk Register (8 September)
- Response to Questions – Alternative Provision (8 September)

PART II - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Nil

Members are reminded that Part II Reports contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). They need to be disposed of carefully and should be returned to the Democratic Services Officer at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.

MEETINGS INFORMATION AND NOTES FOR VISITORS

Getting to County Hall and Notes for Visitors

For SatNav purposes, the postcode for County Hall is EX2 4QD

[Further information about how to get to County Hall](#) gives information on visitor parking at County Hall and bus routes.

Exeter has an excellent network of dedicated cycle routes. For further information see the [Travel Devon webpages](#).

The nearest mainline railway stations are Exeter Central (5 minutes from the High Street), St David's and St Thomas. All have regular bus services to the High Street.

Visitors to County Hall are asked to report to Main Reception on arrival. If visitors have any specific requirements, please contact reception on 01392 382504 beforehand.

Membership of a Committee

For full details of the Membership of a Committee, please [visit the Committee page](#) on the website and click on the name of the Committee you wish to see.

Committee Terms of Reference

For the terms of reference for any Committee, please [visit the Committee page](#) on the website and click on the name of the Committee. Under purpose of Committee, the terms of reference will be listed. Terms of reference for all Committees are also detailed within Section 3b of [the Council's Constitution](#).

Access to Information

Any person wishing to inspect any minutes, reports or background papers relating to an item on the agenda should contact the Clerk of the Meeting. To find this, [visit the Committee page](#) on the website and find the Committee. Under contact information (at the bottom of the page) the Clerk's name and contact details will be present. All [agenda, reports and minutes of any Committee are published on the Website](#)

Public Participation

The Council operates a Public Participation Scheme where members of the public can interact with various Committee meetings in a number of ways. For full details of whether or how you can participate in a meeting, please [look at the Public Participation Scheme](#) or contact the Clerk for the meeting.

In relation to Highways and Traffic Orders Committees, any member of the District Council or a Town or Parish Councillor for the area covered by the HATOC who is not a member of the Committee, may attend and speak to any item on the Agenda with the consent of the Committee, having given 24 hours' notice.

Webcasting, Recording or Reporting of Meetings and Proceedings

The proceedings of any meeting may be recorded and / or broadcasted live, apart from any confidential items which may need to be considered in the absence of the press and public. For more information [go to our webcasting pages](#)

Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chair. Filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible without additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard to the wishes of others present who may not wish to be filmed. Anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer in attendance.

Members of the public may also use social media to report on proceedings.

Declarations of Interest for Members of the Council

It is to be noted that Members of the Council must declare any interest they may have in any item to be considered at this meeting, prior to any discussion taking place on that item.

WiFi

An open, publicly available Wi-Fi network (i.e. DCC) is normally available for meetings held in the Committee Suite at County Hall.

Fire

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately by the nearest available exit following the fire exit signs. If doors fail to unlock press the Green break glass next to the door. Do not stop to collect personal belongings; do not use the lifts; and do not re-enter the building until told to do so. Assemble either on the cobbled car parking area adjacent to the administrative buildings or in the car park behind Bellair.

First Aid

Contact Main Reception (Extension 2504) for a trained first aider.

Mobile Phones

Please switch off all mobile phones before entering the Committee Room or Council Chamber

Alternative Formats

If anyone needs a copy of an Agenda and/or a Report in another format (e.g. large print, audio tape, Braille or other languages), please contact the Customer Service Centre on 0345 155 1015 or email: committee@devon.gov.uk or write to the Democratic and Scrutiny Secretariat in G31, County Hall, Exeter, EX2 4QD.

Induction Loop available



#togetherwecan



Restorative Devon

Children's Social Care *Performance Report* September 2023



Introduction

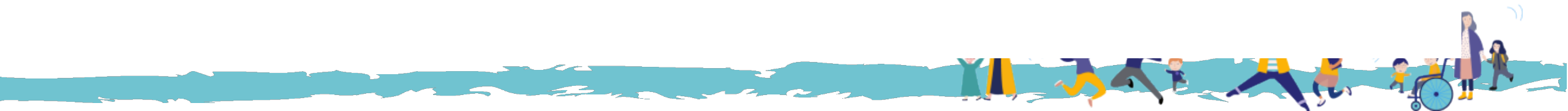
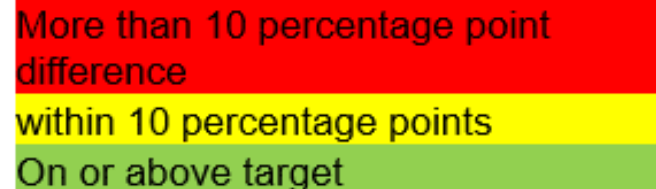
- The Children Social Care performance dashboard has been reviewed following feedback from scrutiny members.
- The revised dashboard is now consistent with the same methodology Ofsted uses to visualise the data and direction of travel in the Children’s services Analysis Tool (ChAT).
- The monthly performance has also been coloured coded to assist Scrutiny members to identify areas for further consideration.
- The statistical comparison data has now also been updated with the recently published 2021/2022 update.

Page 2

The Performance Dashboards shows the Local Authority's latest data for each indicator, and the direction of travel in the most recent month using the following method:



The performance has been RAG rated against the national and statistical neighbours using the following parameters:



Measures of change



| Area | Indicator | Apr-23 | May-23 | Jun-23 | Rolling 12 months | Monthly Average over 12 months | England Average 21/22 | Statistical Neighbours 21/22 | DOT | |
|---|--|--------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----|---|
| Activity Data: Number of children/young people supported per 10,000 | Referrals to children's social care (per 10,000) | 329 | 467 | 495 | 464 | | 538 | 465 | | |
| | Section 47 enquiries (per 10,000) | 133 | 175 | 198 | 199 | | 180 | 173 | | |
| | ICPCs (per 10,000) | 45 | 53 | 60 | 65 | | 61 | 62 | | |
| | Children who are the subject of a child protection plan at period end (per 10,000) | 41 | 39 | 38 | | 40 | 42 | 41 | | |
| | Initial Assessments completed in the period (per 10,000) | 373 | 319 | 358 | 385 | | 518 | 451 | | |
| | Children looked after at period end (per 10,000) | 61 | 62 | 61 | | 57 | 70 | 69 | | |
| | Rate of children in need at point in time (per 10,000) | 263 | 255 | 263 | 271 | | 334 | 319 | | |
| | CiC starts (per 10,000) | 22 | 20 | 23 | 26.14 | | 26 | 25 | | |
| | CiC ends (per 10,000) | 11 | 23 | 31 | 20.36 | | 26 | 20 | | |
| Quality and Timeliness of Practice | % of referrals which are repeat referrals | 23% | 22% | 24% | | 27% | 22% | 18% | ↔ | |
| | % S47s that progress to ICPC | 23% | 30% | 5% | | 28% | 34% | 35% | ↔ | |
| | % initial assessments with outcome Case to Close | 42% | 48% | 53% | | 41% | | | → | |
| | % of initial assessments completed in 45 days | 71% | 86% | 82% | | 85% | 85% | 84% | ↔ | |
| Child Protection | % ICPCs completed within 15 days of S47 | 66% | 66% | 85% | | 72% | 79% | 82% | → | |
| | % of children subject to CPP for 2 years + | 1% | 2% | 2% | | 2% | 3% | 2% | ↔ | |
| | % children starting a CP plan who have been subject to a previous CP plan | 30% | 28% | 33% | | 33% | 23% | 24% | ↔ | |
| Children in Care | % of CiC with an up to date health assessment | 87% | 85% | 84% | | 84% | 89% | 90% | ← | |
| | % of CiC with a permanence plan | 94% | 98% | 98% | | 92% | | | → | |
| | % of CiC with an up to date visit | 84% | 84% | 88% | | 86% | | | → | |
| | % Children who had three or more placements in the year | 14% | 14% | 15% | | 14% | 10% | 10% | ↔ | |
| | Number of under 16's in unregistered accommodation | | | | | | | | | |
| Care Experienced | % Care Leavers in Touch | 17-18 | 86% | 85% | 89% | | 86% | 94% | 95% | → |
| | | 19-21 | 94% | 95% | 95% | | 94% | 92% | 94% | ↔ |
| | % Care Leavers in suitable Accommodation | 17-18 | 78% | 77% | 82% | | 77% | 90% | 91% | ↔ |
| | | 19-21 | 82% | 82% | 84% | | 83% | 88% | 90% | → |
| | % Care Leavers in EET | 17-18 | 56% | 56% | 57% | | 51% | 66% | 69% | → |
| | | 19-21 | 42% | 41% | 41% | | 46% | 55% | 55% | ← |
| % of Pathway plans up to date | 82% | 84% | 85% | | 84% | | | | → | |
| Workforce | % FTE Agency worker rate | | | | | | 15.4% | | | |
| | Average caseloads | 16.2 | 15.94 | 16.47 | | | 16.3 | 16.2 | ↔ | |

What is the data telling us?

Referrals

Referrals have decreased from 483 to 464 per 10,000. This is lower than the England average, and in line with our statistical neighbours.

The number of repeat referrals has decreased from 28% average to 27% average and stayed consistent at 22%-24% across April to June.

Assessments

There has been a drop in initial assessments from 386 per 10,000 to 385 per 10,000. The timeliness of the assessments is averaging 85% completed in 45 days which is comparable with the England average and statistical neighbours.

Child Protection

Children subject to a Child Protection Plan decreased to 40 per 10,000 and Children Looked After increased to 57 per 10,000.

The timeliness of initial Child Protection Conferences is up again to 72% monthly average.

Children starting on a Child Protection Plan who had a previous Plan is currently at 33%.

Children in Care

The average number of children in care is at 57 per 10,000, which is lower than England and statistical neighbours.

The number of children coming into care in June 2023 was 23 per 10,000. This is a decrease from March 2023, and is lower than the England average and statistical neighbours.

Percentage of children with a Permanence Plan is up to 92% average, from 90% at the last report, and the figure for May and June was 98%. Percentage of up-to-date health assessments is 84% up from 81% at the last report.

Care Experienced Young People

Care leavers in suitable accommodation age 17-18 is at 77% overall, and this was 83% in June. For care leavers aged 19-21 the average is 83%.

Care leavers in EET at 17-18 years old is up to 51% average and this was 57% in June. Care leavers in EET at 19-21 years has decreased to 46%.

Workforce

Our agency worker rate has decreased to 35% from 39% average for all children's social care posts. The agency worker rate for social workers is 50.37%.

The average caseload has decreased and was at 16.47 in June 2023.



Headlines

- New permanent leadership in Children's Services
- Progressing Phase 2 of the children's workforce Reshape
- Refreshed strategic Corporate Parenting agenda within the whole Council, and with our partners
- Revised Safeguarding Partnership structure and strategic priorities
- Refreshed and refocused Improvement Partnership Board approach
- Peer reviews of services taken place and visit from Mark Riddell, DfE National Adviser for Care Leavers
- Ongoing preparation for next Ofsted Monitoring Visit in Autumn – becoming always Ofsted ready.

Page 5

Agenda Item 8



Peer reviews and learning

We have invited in colleagues to help us improve

- Cornwall conducted a peer review of our Disabled Children's Service
- Leeds Relational Practice Centre peer-reviewed the Front Door and Early Help
- Wiltshire reviewed the Corporate Parenting service

The findings and recommendations have been shared with each respective service area who have each come together to co-develop service development plans in response.



Wiltshire Council



Mark Riddell visit 27/28 June 2023

Mark Riddell MBE is the National Adviser for Care Leavers within the DfE. His role is to drive improvement in leaving care services which are deemed as needing an intervention through a targeted visit to offer his experience and expertise of the sector, to share best practice, and to offer advice and recommendations to help improve the leaving care services. Mark visited Devon on 27 and 28 June 2023 to focus on:

- leadership
- culture
- attitude
- the corporate governance approach
- the development of relationships with internal and external partners and the partnership offer
- the local offer
- the new statutory duties around the extended Personal Advisor offer of support for all care leavers up to 25yrs old.

Mark told us that he sensed the passion and commitment towards our care-experienced young people, with clear signs of ambition and aspiration for them. However, accessing services is still a struggle for many of our young people and some partners are not yet fully engaging with the Corporate Parenting Principles.

Mark's challenges to us

- Reaffirm the strategic and political leadership on corporate parenting to ensure comprehensive partnership engagement and improved outcomes for young people
- Ensure that housing services and other support services are being delivered with a focus on Corporate Parenting principles and treating care-experienced young people as our own children
- Use our resources as the 'family business' to promote and target employment opportunities for care-experienced young people

What we're doing in response

- Resetting the Corporate Parenting governance, with greater partnership engagement and political leadership
- New Housing plan with Districts, looking at housing stock and Council Tax relief
- Exploring new ETE opportunities internally, as well as through our partners and local businesses



Children's Services Improvement Plan 2023-24

Revised Improvement Plan

More detailed Plan, approved by our DfE-appointed Commissioner with three distinct, but related areas:

- Children's Services actions with impact statements for young people – developed and monitored through QPRM and CSLT
- Devon County Council whole council actions – developed and monitored through Strategic QPRM
- Partnership Plan actions – developed and monitored through Improvement Partnership Board

Reset of the Improvement Partnership Board

- Structure and approach to the meetings refreshed to create the conditions for a pro-active partnership which owns and directs the partnership actions
- Board meetings now structured to give more focus to priority action areas
- Shared targets with SEND Improvement Plan and engagement with Health to set shared targets



Front Door Redesign

Improving the process of the Children's Social Care front door is one of three key priority areas identified by the Improvement Partnership Board in the Improvement Plan 2023/24.

Priority Area 2 – Improving partnership working in compliance with Working Together, focusing on areas of shared responsibility and multi-agency responses to families

How we effectively and consistently understand and respond to need. Including who provides support, where and how. How agencies work together to understand levels of need and provide the most effective response at the right time.

Outcomes

- I get the right support at the right time in the right way.
- Services work effectively together to support me and my family.

The Front Door Redesign Project is led by DCC with support from Leeds Relational Practice Centre. It aims to:

- support and develop our staff to build capability and confidence
- improve the referral process resulting in less failure demand and more high-quality and appropriate referrals into the Front Door for children and families
- redesign the Front Door – including our Targeted Early Help/Family Intervention Team offer - to improve the response to referrals and moving from a procedure-heavy approach which creates duplication and slows down responses, to a model which puts expertise at the beginning of the process to understand the need and respond effectively and quickly
- align closely to the refocus of the Safeguarding Partnership.



Strategic QPRM

Purpose

To create a culture of continuous learning and improvement within DCC to ensure every family and child receives a service which is sustainably good.

Two have taken place so far and the next one is 2 October 2023.

Chaired by Commissioner Matt Dunkley to provide external support and challenge

Intended outcomes

- For Children's Services to improve because of Strategic Leadership Team support
- Evidence of each Directorate having Children's Services central to its own function
- Evidence of shared decision making which avoids unintended consequences
- Wider Devon County Council corporate services working together to improve Children's Services. Actions are created and governed through the regular Strategic Quality Performance and Review Meeting (QPRM).



QPRM – six month review and evaluation

In July, we gathered feedback from QPRM attendees to evaluate its impact.

- **Achieving impact for children:** Heads of Service said that the QPRM approach helped them to stay focused on outcomes for children, and to be clear on what still needed to improve for them
- **Greater connection and relationships:** Heads of Service strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of the whole service, how it connects and how each service area contributes to the common vision
- **Sharing challenges:** Heads of Service agreed that they could share issues honestly, and both offer and ask for help through QPRM
- **Providing structure and accountability:** the monthly schedule gives discipline and routine to tracking progress and impact regularly and over time, as well as ensuring joint accountability

QPRM is evolving based on what works best for driving improved outcomes for children and families.



Recruitment and retention

| Includes C&F, P&T, IRT, DCS, MASH | Perm | Agency | Total | Budgeted Est | Vacant |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------|--------------|
| Social Workers (Adv, Exp, NQ) | 110.71 (47.51%) | 117.36 (50.37%) | 228.07 | 233 | 4.93 (2.11%) |
| All Posts (Below Service Manager Level) | 262.57 (62.96%) | 145.36 (34.86%) | 407.93 | 417 | 9.07 (2.16%) |



Creating a stable and supported workforce

- Workforce reshaped to better meet changing demand across the county
- Hearing the views of staff in the North locality and local challenges, leading to co-ordinated Senior Management response and positive impact for staff
- Improved management oversight and supervision
- New progression and development opportunities for staff
- More permanent staff and reduced reliance on agencies
- Maintaining manageable work loads
- Supporting new social workers into Devon (ASYE, NQSW and overseas recruitment)



Permanency

In our April Ofsted Monitoring Visit it was noted that most children in care experience delays in securing permanent homes.

Since April we have:

- Established the Achieving Permanence project group which is led by the Deputy Director
- Launched a revised panel process to improve senior management oversight and understanding of the issues
- Commissioned best practice training led by Research in Practice
- Ensured all children now have a primary permanence plan by their second Review

Although there have been delays in getting agreement, the approval of the revised SGO policy at cabinet would enable around 30 children to exit care- the offer to foster carers is improved with the revised policy.

All children now have a permanence plan on file; we are working to ensure these are each reviewed routinely within appropriate timescales and evidence impact.

Bridges Team and social workers are working together to plan for 4 children to benefit from bespoke 3 month pre-reunification support approach, then 9 months post-reunification while family support. We are currently identifying another 2 children.

We are tracking children who could return home better and we have identified a cohort of children who are we are targeting to either step-across back to fostering or home from residential care.



Practice Quality Assurance (Audit Framework)

We said we would:

- Further develop our Audit Framework to align with Best Practice themes and focus.
- Further develop the Framework to include scaling/scoring questions and for the tool to be web-based – potentially attached to the Eclipse IT system, so data can be more easily collected, improvement can be tracked and to enable improved reporting.

What we have done:

- We have further developed the audit framework and tool, with oversight from Ofsted.
- Regular dip-sampled audits, alongside the monthly audit cycle, focus on Best Practice themes and specific cohorts of children
- We are developing the Web-based audit tool, with the requirements being scoped and the right provider being sought
- A monthly audit summary report is now produced, capturing key themes, areas for improvement and strengths – the report is routinely circulated to all Heads of Service and Service Managers
- Key themes are shared at QPRM every month
- An infographic, to summarise monthly audits, is shared with Team Managers and frontline practitioners
- Audit reports are reviewed monthly by the Social Work Academy to inform and tailor our training offer based on current needs and gaps
- Good practice examples are identified and celebrated during Practice Week with staff
- Our Audit Framework is aligned with multi-agency Quality Assurance activity through the DCFP

Page 15



Our focus for the next 6 months

- Implementing the children's social care improvement plan (to be completed by April '24)
- Embedding Phase 2 of our Social Care workforce reshape and ensuring it is working for all parts of the service
- Alignment and strengthening of Targeted Early Help offered by DCC
- Developing our new children's homes and launching our second Mockingbird Constellation
- Continuing to develop corporate parenting in Devon, creating new partnerships across public and private sector to support our care-experienced young people
- Continuing to embed Restorative Practice through the service, among our partners and with elected members of the Council
- Refocusing the statutory partnership – DCFP will become DSCP – with one strategic priority (the multi-agency Front Door)



CS/23/12
Children's Scrutiny Committee
19th September 2023

Update on Devon's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Improvement Programme

Report of the Director of Children & Young People's Futures

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Committee;

- (a) Note the revised approach to improvement to enable system wide change.
- (b) Support and challenge the partnership work, particularly with schools and health, that is crucial to improving the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND, and their families.
- (c) Review the progress since the last Scrutiny Committee and the actions to be delivered before the next meeting.

2) Background / Introduction

- 1.1. The Devon local area was inspected by Ofsted/CQC in December 2018 and were required to produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to address four areas of significant weakness. In May 2022, the local area was revisited by Ofsted/CQC and were found to have made no progress. The Department for Education (DfE) issued an improvement notice in September 2022 and the local area produced an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) (known in Devon as the [Devon Local Area SEND Improvement Plan 2023/24](#))
- 1.2. Furthermore, the Council is in discussions with the DfE as part of their Safety Valve Intervention programme, which is targeted at local authorities with the highest percentage Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits.
- 1.3. This report provides an update on Devon's SEND Improvement Programme, the revised approach to be taken to enable system wide change, and an update on actions since the last Committee meeting and those to be delivered before the next meeting. The report also emphasises the partnership work that's needed to truly improve the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND, and their families.

Agenda Item 9

3) Delivering system wide change in SEND

A revised approach to SEND Improvement

- 3.1. The Council, with partners, is focused on delivering the Local Area SEND Improvement Plan, which is being monitored by the DfE. However, the core elements of the plan are based on weaknesses identified by Ofsted/CQC in December 2018, nearly 5 years ago. Ofsted/CQC were only able to consider these areas at the revisit in May 2022.
- 3.2. The [Ofsted/CQC Area SEND Inspection](#) guidance, published in January 2023, sets out a new framework for inspecting the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). When Devon is next inspected, the inspectors will look at the whole system using the evaluation criteria, set out in Annex A, to judge the effectiveness of the local area partnership's SEND arrangements and their impact on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people.
- 3.3. Whilst there is a commitment to delivering the SEND Improvement Plan as a response to Ofsted/CQC findings we know, from what parents and young people are telling us and from our data and intelligence, that this alone will not drive the significant change required.
- 3.4. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit Reserve is expected to increase to £152.2 million by the end of 2023/24 after management actions of £20.3 million identified as part of the SEND Improvement plans. Further discussions are currently being had with the DfE and Devon has been invited into discussions for tranche 4 of the Safety Valve Intervention programme.
- 3.5. The Council and its partners need a system-wide improvement plan which will address the challenges the local area face, improve the experiences of children, young people and their families in Devon and lead to financial sustainability. This aligns with the recommendation of the Children's Scrutiny Committee SEND Task Group.
- 3.6. To deliver system wide change at the scale required in Devon, a clear strategy and vision is essential. Devon requires a new strategy which is based on the current context and is co-produced with parent carers and young people. Parent carers and young people have been telling us about their experiences for some time. Rather than seek further views and exasperate the fact that we have not yet responded sufficiently to those views, we have gathered all the information we currently hold from parent carers and young people. This includes information from parent engagement sessions in spring 2023, information gathered from youth groups, information from the recent parent carer and young people surveys. We have put this together with our data and intelligence and worked with the Parent Carer Forum Devon, as our strategic partner, to form the basis of a draft SEND Strategy.
- 3.7. One of criticisms of Ofsted/CQC is that the SEND strategy has not previously been embedded and understood by all stakeholders. Once a revised strategy is established, we will continue to evaluate partners understanding of the strategy and

how effectively it is being delivered (Section A of the current improvement plan). This will form part of our annual self- assessment.

- 3.8. Aligned to our draft SEND Strategy, we have brought together the APP (monitored by DfE) and the work developing as part of the Safety Valve intervention to form the basis of Devon’s refreshed SEND Improvement Programme, which will look at whole system improvements to make a tangible difference to children and young people in Devon.

Working in partnership

- 3.9. The Children and Families Act 2014 places a strong emphasis on schools, local authorities, health, care and any commissioned service providers working closely together to meet children and young people’s needs, rather than as separate entities. To improve the support for children and young people with SEND in Devon, partnership working is crucial, but it is not yet effective.
- 3.10. Delivery of SEND services is under significant pressure nationally. The demand for statutory assessment processes is just one area that has put pressures upon the services that support children and young people with SEND. The continued rise in the number of children and young accessing support through statutory education health and care plans (EHCPs) is also being seen locally. However, in Devon, figures show that the local area is a significant outlier compared to regional, national and statistical neighbours.

| | Devon | Statistical Neighbour average | Regional average | England average |
|---|-------|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| % population with EHCPs (2022) | 3.99% | 3.10% | 3.24% | 3.08% |
| % requests for EHC needs assessment (2022) | 0.96% | 0.64% | 0.73% | 0.68% |
| % EHC assessment completed in 20wks (2022) | 11.8% | 45.1% | 35.2% | 50.7% |
| % requests for assessment refused | 35.1% | | 22.9% | 21.9% |

- 3.11. The Council’s statutory assessment team, educational psychology service and social care teams are the recipient of referrals for EHC assessment and yet they have no control over the demand coming into the Council. All the above stages interact to impact both the timeliness of EHC assessments and the financial cost of the process. In 2022, Devon budgeted a 25% larger per capita spend on SEN administration, assessment and monitoring than the England average and 15% larger than statistical neighbours.
- 3.12. The data shows that the demand we’re seeing in Devon is not akin to what is happening elsewhere in the country, despite increasing national trends. The Council alone cannot address the system wide issues - though it recognises its own weaknesses - but is keen to work with partners to understand what is driving this demand. Partnership work with schools will be crucial in ensuring the right support is in place for children at the right time, which will also drive down suspensions and

Agenda Item 9

exclusions of children and young people with SEND, an indicator where Devon is also an outlier.

Progress since the last Committee meeting

- 3.13. Since the last Scrutiny Committee meeting, we have undertaken the following activity;
- appointed a new SEND Improvement Director which has brought opportunity for a fresh perspective and is yielding a more strategic approach to SEND improvement.
 - improved the rigour and discipline of programme and project management arrangements, to provide greater assurance that we can deliver the urgent improvements needed.
 - conducted a strategic assessment of projects against Safety Valve objectives and improvement priorities, underpinned by robust financial analysis.
 - Secured support from Essex County Council, through DfE, to assist our thinking in relation to the SEND improvement work.
 - Work with regional SEND leads to look at focused areas, such as self-evaluation and team structures.

Actions to be delivered before the next Committee meeting

- 3.14. Whilst a significant amount of activity is underway to ensure the required system change, we are committed to setting out clear actions to demonstrate progress. By the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, the following actions will be completed;
- A draft SEND Strategy, co-produced with the Parent Carer Forum Devon and other strategic partners.
 - A SEND sufficiency strategy
 - A deep dive review of statutory assessment processes

4) Strategic Plan

- 3.15. One of the key focuses of Devon County Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is to create a 'Child Friendly Devon', where Devon is the best place to grow up. Specifically, one element of the Strategic Plan is to "ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes" (Devon County Council, 2021).
- 3.16. The SEND Improvement Programme contributes to the realisation of this element of the strategic plan by ensuring that local area partnership arrangements lead to an improved lived experiences and improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and their families.

5) Financial Considerations

3.17. There are no specific financial considerations related to this update.

6) Legal Considerations

3.18. There are no specific legal considerations related to this update, however the SEND Improvement Programme should be delivered in line with the Children & Families Act 2014.

7) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

3.19. There are no specific environmental impact considerations related to this update.

8) Equality Considerations

3.20. There are no specific equality considerations related to this update.

9) Risk Management Considerations

3.21. A risk register is maintained for the SEND Improvement Programme which is regularly updated and monitored. The improved rigour around project management has strengthened the risk management approach.

10) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

3.22. This report provides an update on the SEND Improvement Programme, a revised approach to enable system wide change and an update on actions since the last Committee meeting and those to be delivered before the next meeting.

Director of Children & Young People's Future - Stuart Collins

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Special Educational Needs & Disabilities: Councillor Lois Samuel

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper

Date

File Reference

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Kellie Knott

Telephone: 01392 382161

Address: County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD

Agenda Item 9

Annex A – Extract from Ofsted/CQC Area SEND Inspection Framework: The evaluation criteria

47. This section provides detail about what inspectors will consider when evaluating against each criterion.

48. The evaluation criteria apply across education, health and care, and to all children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25 covered by the SEND code of practice, including those receiving SEN support and those with EHC plans.

49. Inspectors will evaluate the local authority's commissioning and oversight of alternative provision for all children and young people who attend, not only those with SEND.

Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way

50. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- children and young people are accurately identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities
- children and young people's needs are identified in a timely way, so as to prevent needs from escalating
- practitioners assess the strengths and determine the aspirations of the child or young person alongside their individual needs
- the criteria for carrying out assessments of need and for accessing services and support are understood, and the application of these criteria improves outcomes

timely referrals are made to other services and agencies, where necessary

Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

51. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- children and young people access impartial information, advice and support that enable them to make informed choices about their future
- children, young people and families are supported to understand their rights, make choices and contribute to decision-making about their plans and support
- children and young people understand their plans and support, including intended outcomes, and why some changes are not possible

Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time

52. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- plans are developed and support is provided in a timely way, and meets children and young people's needs
- children and young people receive support based on their identified needs when they are awaiting assessment

- plans and support are coordinated within and, where necessary, across providers and services, and are based on a shared understanding of the child or young person.
- plans and support are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in children and young people's skills, independence, understanding and other factors in their lives, including reduced support in line with reduced need where appropriate
- the wider needs of the child or young person's family are considered, and barriers to learning and participation are addressed

Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

53. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- the outcomes that are the most important to children, young people and their parents and carers are understood and planned for
- support and plans reflect children and young people's ambitions, and extend beyond required levels of support (such as the number of hours of support from a particular service) to focus on the planned outcome
- children and young people are supported before and during any point of transition, including when they will no longer be eligible for a service
- from an early age, children and young people develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to prepare for greater independence and adulthood, including in the areas of further and higher education, employment, more independent living, good health, positive relationships and participation in society

Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

54. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- children and young people and parents and carers understand what community activities are available
- children and young people are supported to participate, where appropriate, in activities, and to make friends and develop positive relationships
- children and young people are supported to develop their confidence, resilience and knowledge, so that they can participate in universal and specialist activities as appropriate

Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

55. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders have an ambitious strategy that defines the shared outcomes they will work collectively to achieve for all children and young people with SEND, and they embed an aspirational culture of high expectations and quality across services and provision.
- leaders understand their responsibilities and accountabilities, including their statutory duties and their individual responsibilities in the wider area strategy
- responsibilities are delegated in line with leaders' legal duties and there is strong oversight of these resulting activities

Agenda Item 9

- processes for making decisions are structured so that the leaders responsible can swiftly agree to the changes that are required to improve services
- leaders challenge themselves and each other to improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND

Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families

56. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders consider the specific needs of groups of children and young people with SEND, and how best to engage them in co-production
- leaders ensure that decisions relating to services are appropriately shaped by children and young people's needs, experiences, ambitions and outcomes
- leaders give feedback to children, young people and parents on changes they have made to their area's services, and explain where change is not possible and why

Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

57. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders gather accurate, timely information about children and young people with SEND in their local area and monitor the changing needs of the population, including using the perspectives of children, young people and families
- leaders understand the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND in their area; their backgrounds and identities, including any barriers to them accessing support; and their needs and strengths
- leaders share information across education, care and health services so they can learn from different perspectives and approaches

Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people

58. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- services and systems have been designed around the needs of children and young people, and are informed by evidence of what works in achieving good outcomes
- joint commissioning arrangements enable partners to make best use of all the resources available to improve outcomes for children and young people in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way
- joint commissioning arrangements meet the local area's statutory responsibilities for identifying, assessing and meeting needs
- leaders understand that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse, and ensure that this is carefully considered when commissioning and evaluating services
- the local authority identifies children and young people's needs accurately and arranges suitable full-time educational provision to meet the needs of children or young people who require alternative provision as early as possible, for example, ensuring that full-time education for children and young people who have been excluded begins no later than the sixth day of the exclusion

- the local authority ensures that there are intervention plans for each child and young person in alternative provision, including clear objectives and plans for their next steps, such as returning to mainstream education

Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

59. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- leaders jointly evaluate whether their services and provision are improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, not only whether children and young people have received the services
- leaders monitor whether there are sufficient services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of the children and young people in their area and take appropriate action as a result
- leaders use information from a range of sources in their evaluation, including feedback from representative groups, children and young people using services and data relating to outcomes to improve their services and provision
- leaders have established clear processes to enable services and providers to evaluate and improve their provision regularly
- the local authority evaluates how well the alternative provision it commissions is improving outcomes for children and young people, and takes action if needed
- the local authority maintains strong oversight arrangements for alternative provision it commissions, including oversight of each alternative provision's safety and suitability, and in particular of alternative providers that are not registered as schools

Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

60. Inspectors will take account of the extent to which:

- processes and systems are set up to support practitioners to work together and share appropriate information in a timely manner, including strong systems for identifying and responding to risks to children and young people with SEND
- leaders ensure that practitioners are clear on their individual roles and how they can best work together to improve outcomes for children and young people
- leaders ensure that practitioners have the appropriate skills to understand children and young people's needs and aspirations, and to create an inclusive environment
- leaders encourage practitioners working together to focus on the child or young person, identifying alternative solutions when existing options do not meet needs and aspirations effectively
- leaders ensure that practitioners working with children and young people with SEND have the right knowledge and skills to reduce the risk of harm, and understand that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation

CS/23/13
Childrens Scrutiny Committee
19 September 2023

Electively Home Educated and Children Missing Education Briefing Report of the Director of Childrens Service and Head of Education & Learning

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Children's Scrutiny Committee be asked to:

- (a) Review the Draft Annual Report for Elective Home Education 2022-23
- (b) Review the data relating to Children Missing Education 2022-23;
- (c) Support proposals to review CME & EHE Policy and resources through the Autumn Term.

1. Background

- 1.1 Elective Home Education (EHE) is when a parent or appropriate adult chooses to provide education for their children at home or in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time.
- 1.2 Children Missing Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. These children may have been previously on roll at a school and have come off roll, children who have not secured a school place or children whose home education has been deemed unsuitable.
- 1.3 The report provides an overview of the 2022-23 academic year for students identified as Electively Home Educated (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME). EHE and CME data and performance are included in the ILACS.
- 1.4 The report also confirms plans to review the EHE and CME policies as well as other policies such as Admissions Fair Access.

2. 2022-23 Draft EHE and CME Report

- 2.1 The Annual Report for EHE can be found in Appendix 1. The report highlights a continued increase in the requests for Elective Home Education and an overall reduction, in percentage terms, for lifestyle and choice being the reason to seek EHE. Whilst all Local Authorities, post Covid, are experiencing increases in the number of learners EHE, evidence suggests that Devon is an outlier, being above national averages as a proportion of school population.

Agenda Item 10

2.2 In response to the continued increase in the number of learners who are EHE, the Service intends to review the EHE policy during the Autumn term including for example, increasing the 'cooling off period' for decisions regarding EHE and increasing priority for in year admissions back into school through fair access. The policy review will include conversations with schools who have seen high numbers of students moving to EHE to better understand the complexities of this policy area as well as seeking views from parents and children. Existing networks with other Local Authorities, including a meeting with statistical neighbours in early September, will provide opportunities to consider any different policy or practice although the number of EHE reflect wider policy, practice and performance relating to Inclusion, SEND and Attendance.

2.3 At the time of writing this report, the 2022-23 Children Missing Education Annual Report has yet to be drafted. The headline **draft** data confirms:

- An 11% increase in children and young people identified as CME over the year (total 574);
- A percentage increase in the number of learners with EHCPs identified as CME, 23% of the total CME population compared to 21% in 2021-22 and 19% in 2020-21. The data is similar for SEN Support.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people with a social worker being identified as CME.

2.4 There are numerous complex factors resulting in learners being identified as CME, this data will inform a review of policy and practice as well as a review of resources which are under significant strain.

2.5 A review of data published by the DfE based on the number of children registered as EHE and CME (Spring 2023) as a percentage of the statutory school age population confirms:

| | Devon | Statistical Neighbours | National |
|-----|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| EHE | 1.90% | 1.50% | 1.07% |
| CME | 0.12% | 0.22% | 0.31% |

Devon has the highest proportion of learners registered with EHE as a per proportion of statutory school age compared our statistical neighbours (who submitted data) and is 142nd out of 145 nationally. For CME this is 3rd out of 9 for statistical and 52nd out of 140 nationally.

3. Consultations

- 3.1 Any proposed changes to policy and practice will undergo a robust period of consultation with key stakeholders including Scrutiny Committee.

4. Strategic Plan

- 4.1 The review of policy and practice and resources will support the Strategic Plan overarching priority of Growing Up, Living Well and Prosper by ensuring that Children and Young People have access to full time education, preferably in a school setting that meets their education needs.
- 4.2 Policies and practice will continue to be ambitious for children and young people and align to the education priority of 'Every child thriving in an education setting every day'. Proposals will support some of the most vulnerable learners and contribute to tackling poverty and equality.

5. Financial Considerations

- 5.1 There are no specific financial considerations for this paper although the cost of interim packages of support and education directly impact on the High Needs Block. A review of resources is likely to confirm a shortfall in capacity to meet current demand across EHE and CME.

6. Legal Considerations

- 6.1 There are no specific legal considerations for this paper but changes in policy and practice will need to align to statutory guidance.
- 6.2 However, the local authority needs to be mindful of its obligation under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME). This duty applies to all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school (either at home or in alternative provision).

7. Environmental Impact Considerations

- 7.1 There are no specific environmental impacts for this paper.

8. Equality Considerations

- 8.1 A high proportion of learners who are formally registered as EHE/CME will be vulnerable and the impact of not accessing full time education in a school setting will impact on their life chances. A significant number will have identified special educational needs and to a lesser extent, will be known to social care.

Agenda Item 10

- 8.2 The development of all policies and practice will ensure the Council has exercised its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, highlighting how the policy/scheme will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good community relations. This will be evidence through a full Impact Assessment.

9. Risk Management Considerations

- 9.1 The review of policy and practice of EHE and CME will endeavour to mitigate the risk to children and young people as well as the Local Authority.

10 Summary

- 10.1 This report demonstrates the increasing call on limited resources to support learners who are EHE and CME.

Director of Childrens Services - Julian Wooster/Stuart Collins
Head of Service – Rachel Shaw
Electoral Divisions - All

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools, Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper
Date
File Reference

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Simon Niles

Telephone: 01392 383149

Address: Room 120 County Hall, Topsham Rd, Exeter EX2 4QD

ELECTIVELY HOME EDUCATED

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Academic Year 2022-23

OVERVIEW

- During the last 12 months 2,951 children and young people were registered as home educated at some point during the year. This equates to 3.3% of the school age population. There is an overall reduction in EHE due to lifestyle and choice;
- This figure represents a 17.9% increase on 2021-22 figures and is the highest on record for Devon County Council
- In addition to the number of registered children and young people, there were 165 recorded as not registered. They are known to be residing in Devon, but they have no involvement with the Elective Home Education Service. This is because there is no legal requirement to register if a child has never attended school or they have moved to the area from out of county
- During the last 5 years numbers of children and young people registered as home educated has risen each year except during 2019-20 when there was a slight decrease in numbers. This was due to schools being closed in March 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Numbers surged when schools reopened, particularly at the start of the Autumn term 2020;
- There were 1,243 new cases during 2022-23, a 32% increase on 2021-22 figures.

ANALYSIS/TRENDS

Numbers of registered EHE children as a percentage of the school population:

| Academic Year | Number of registered EHE children* | % of total school population** |
|---------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2018/19 | 1940 | 1.7 |
| 2019/20 | 1907 | 1.9 |
| 2020/21 | 2389 | - |
| 2021/22 | 2502 | 2.0 |
| 2022/23 | 2951 | 3.1 |

*These figures represent all children and young people who were EHE at some point during 2022-23

**Data taken from the number of children aged 5-16 years in the Autumn school census

- During 2022-23 the overall number of girls being home educated slightly exceeded the number of boys – 1,551 girls, 1400 boys. The second time since 2012.

Number of boys compared to girls being home educated:

| Academic Year | Number of boys | Percentage boys | Number of girls | Percentage girls |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 2018/19 | 999 | 51.5 | 941 | 48.5 |
| 2019/20 | 979 | 51.4 | 925 | 48.6 |
| 2020/21 | 1199 | 50.2 | 1190 | 49.8 |
| 2021/22 | 1195 | 47.8 | 1304 | 52.2 |
| 2022/23 | 1400 | 47.4 | 1551 | 52.6 |

- During 2022-23 240 children and young people with an Education Health Care Plan were registered as home educated: This was a 10% increase on the previous year and highest on record.
- During 2022-23 there were 95 new cases with an EHCP; whilst 33 children returned to school or were provided with alternative provision.

Number of registered EHE children with Education Health Care Plans

| Academic Year | Number with EHCP |
|---------------|------------------|
| 2018/19 | 123 |
| 2019/20 | 166 |
| 2020/21 | 197 |
| 2021/22 | 217 |
| 2022/23 | 240 |

*These figures represent all children and young people who were EHE with an EHCP at some point during 2022-23

- During 2022-23 the number of primary age children being home educated increased by 1.4% compared to the previous year; whilst the number of secondary age children being home educated increased by 29.5%. The overall numbers of secondary age children being home educated has seen year on year increases for the last 5 years

Numbers of registered EHE children at each Key Stage:

| Academic Year | EY & KS1 | KS2 | KS3 | KS4 |
|---------------|-------------|-----|------|-----|
| 2018/19 | 255 | 539 | 606 | 540 |
| 2019/20 | 270 | 553 | 534 | 550 |
| 2020/21 | 367 | 776 | 718 | 528 |
| 2021/22 | 294 | 731 | 872 | 605 |
| 2022/23 | 282 (50 EY) | 757 | 1131 | 781 |

EHE DECISIONS

Previously the main reasons provided by parents for deciding to home educate were lifestyle and philosophical or preferential reasons, however, mental health issues are now reported as the number one reason for home education.

| Reason for EHE | All registered students | New students for 2022-23 |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Accessing a school place | 20 | 19 |
| Did not get school preference | 29 | 14 |
| Dissatisfaction with school - SEND | 77 | 40 |
| Dissatisfaction with school - bullying | 64 | 59 |
| Dissatisfaction with school – general | 357 | 148 |
| Health concerns – Covid 19 | 74 | 0 |
| Lifestyle choice | 101 | 77 |
| Mental health | 774 | 353 |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| No reason recorded | 11 | 0 |
| Other | 326 | 114 |
| Parent / guardian no reason | 5 | 5 |
| Permanent exclusion | 7 | 5 |
| Philosophical or preferential | 539 | 65 |
| Physical health | 24 | 11 |
| Religious reasons | 1 | 1 |
| Risk of school exclusion | 30 | 20 |
| Unknown (at point of registration) | 512 | 312 |
| Total: | 2951 | 1243 |

EHE TEAM

The EHE team current structure is:-

- Professional Lead for EHE (1 FTE)
- EHE Advisers (2.5 FTE Term Time)
- EHE Officer (0.5 FTE Term Time)
- EHE Family Support Worker (1 FTE Term Time)

Summary of activity includes:

Ensuring children receive a suitable education:

- During 2022-23 275 home visits were undertaken, as well as advice and support provided through virtual meetings, telephone calls, emails and the EHE website.
- The overall number of home visits has now returned to pre-pandemic levels, however, due to the significant increase in EHE numbers, a smaller proportion of children overall are being seen.
- In 22 cases where EHE was judged unsuitable, the school attendance order process was instigated; in 4 cases parents were fined, in 3 cases the children went on roll prior to going to court, whilst 12 other cases are on-going or placed on hold due to mitigating circumstances. In 4 cases suitable evidence was provided and therefore home education has continued
- During 2022-23, 363 children and young people returned to school, 83 moved out of county, 19 moved abroad and 54 were listed as Children Missing Education due to unsuitable home education provision.

Safeguarding:

- During the last 12 months there have been 195 police incidents reported involving EHE children. Each incident is followed up and support offered by the EHE team as appropriate
- A number of children and young people are registered with the EHE Service at varying stages within the child protection process and receive on-going support from the EHE team through home visits and liaison with a range of agencies, as well as attendance at relevant meetings.
- In addition, the EHE Family Support Worker liaises closely with Early Help colleagues across Devon, supporting families requiring Early Help

| Safeguarding meetings & welfare checks undertaken | 2022-23 Total |
|--|----------------------|
| Strategy | 20 |
| CP review / ICPC meeting | 33 |
| CP Core Group meeting | 45 |
| CIN meeting | 63 |
| Safeguarding / welfare home visit checks | 51 |

LDS/23/10
Children's Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday 19th September 2023

Report of the Children's Scrutiny Committee – Social Care Visits

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

| |
|---|
| Please note that the following recommendations are subject to confirmation by the Committee before taking effect. |
|---|

1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

1. Commend this report to Cabinet for Cabinet to consider this report and its findings as part of the Council's improvement journey in Children's Services.
2. That Cabinet has due consideration of the following key points and responds to the Scrutiny Committee at the next meeting with a response about how they will be addressed:
 - A) The need to continue to recruit permanent staff across services.
 - B) Support from staff for increasing the Council's in house provision of accommodation for children in our care.
 - C) Support from staff to in their feedback to work with District Councils and make care leavers exempt from council tax across Devon.
 - D) Support from staff in their feedback to work with District Councils and Devon Home Choice to ensure care leavers are automatically placed in Band B for priority of accommodation.
 - E) Support from staff to the provision of in house mental health services due to rise in need and to ensure timely access to mental health professionals for children and young people.
 - F) Support amongst staff for Councillor Rob Hannaford's motion to treat care experienced young people as a protected characteristic.
 - G) Recognising the important work of Bridges, Cabinet's continued support for the service and consideration of expanding the service to support more families.

2) Background / Introduction

It was agreed that Members would undertake a series of visits to front line staff across the County as they had previously done in the Spring of 2022. In 2022, Members visited staff mostly in the Initial Referral Teams (IRT) and Children and Families Teams across the County. Members wanted to get a first-hand account from staff of where the system is working well, how supported they feel and where there may be issues of concern. The visits were about members getting a better understanding of front-line services and the key issues affecting services from a frontline perspective.

Agenda Item 11

In this round of visits, Members were invited to undertake a series of visits to the Council's Permanence and Transitions Teams (P&T). Alongside this, Members also visited the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Bridges and made use of visiting other teams co-located with the Permanence and Transitions Teams such as Business Support and Fostering. In addition, Members took part in a Devon Young Carers Council meeting and met with the Young Carers Service.

Across the visits to frontline staff Members undertook 7 visits to teams, across 5 locations, meeting with 56 members of staff and 5 service users.

The Committee would like to place on record it's thanks and formal recognition of the dedication and hard work carried out by staff that took the time to speak to Councillors on these visits.

3) Key findings

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Councillors began the visit to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by having a brief presentation from the Head of Service and Service Manager on progress made since March 2022. This included information on the new online 'Request for Support' Form, Quality Assurance work, IT systems and the consultation line. Members then joined staff at their desks to hear from them and gather their feedback.

Digital and IT

At the time of the visit in March 2023, the online 'Request for Support' form had gone live and initial feedback was positive. Rather than just safeguarding previously, the new form mean support from Early Help could be requested. The new 'request for support' form means professionals, family members, members of the public or a young person themselves can complete the form to raise issues with MASH where they are concerned about a child or young person.

The MASH will move across from MASH Guardian to Eclipse on 3rd April 2023 to be in line with other services in Children's Services. This was also due to Ofsted's concerns with MASH Guardian. A full suite of training had begun and overview training of the system for staff and partners would continue. Partners such as the Police, Education and Health would have access to a limited number of areas to input relevant data but would have read only access for most of the system. Whilst staff continued to call Eclipse 'clunky' and mentioned the difficulties using Eclipse, they recognised all systems had advantages and disadvantages. Members heard that there is a 2-year project to improve Eclipse.

The consultation line for partners to get advice was up and running. Members welcomed this line as it allows practitioners to be able to talk to social workers for advice before making referrals.

Recruitment and Retention

Members welcomed the number of permanent staff across the services, which had significantly improved from their last visit of April 2022. The Head of Service was positive about the service's trajectory to getting a fully permanent team of staff. Members heard that there was continuing work to recruit staff with a new Head of Service and Service Manager in place.

In addition, Members spoke to a number of agency staff who told Members that better pay and flexibility were the main reasons why they wanted to remain agency staff. This is despite some having to drive long distances weekly to Devon.

There was a drive to get staff into the office more frequently (at least 2 times a week) and expecting partners to do the same.

Due to the large rise in reports from the new Request for Support Form, a number of new Early Help Connectors have been employed. The funding for these staff was based on grant funding from Government on a rolling basis based on results. As a result, these were mostly on short term temporary contracts and seconded from other teams. These staff wanted to remain working in this team and asked for long term stability. Their current contracts ended in the Summer and there wasn't certainty over what would happen next.

Volume of Work

Most services described the current volume of work as steady but that the volume of cases was higher than it was pre-pandemic. Most services reported that an additional 2 members of staff in their team was needed to deal with the level of demand. Staff did report that the week before the visit (w/c 27th February) was particularly busy across the MASH and it meant that Referral Coordinators were under pressure and some had to do additional work at the weekends to clear the email inbox.

The new Request for Support form meant that there had been a considerable increase in reports coming in, especially from the public. Staff were concerned about this rise and stated they don't have the capacity to currently deal with the rise in cases. However, there was an overall impression that this system should now be working better for families. The Early Help connectors do not just point families to support services they need but also 1 person in the team revisits cases to find out what the outcomes were of the support and interventions.

Health partners showed Members the number of cases they had and the number of cases that had ran out of time for them to respond to. Staff have 24 hours to get information to respond, after 24 hours the decision on the case is made with the information available. If there is no health data, then a decision is made without health input. This demand on Health colleagues meant they told Members there was little time to reflect, critically think and develop and it contributed to what they called a 'roundabout' mentality.

Social Workers stated they were usually busier when they came into the office and didn't have time for a break when there. This was different to being at home where they could have time to focus. However, staff reported to Members they enjoyed the balance of working at home and being in the office.

Additional comments

Agenda Item 11

- Social Workers were positive about Devon’s restorative practice model as “the way we want to practice” and how it was good to be engaging with families to dispel myths of Social Workers and Social Care.
- The importance of skills, consent and building rapport with partners and parents in the MASH – staff have to very quickly establish trust over the phone with the person on the other side (e.g. parents, partners, schools).
- Police colleagues raised their concerns about the number of re-referrals in the system and how it showed the difficulty in making decisions and closing cases.

Bridges

County Hall

Councillors met with staff from the Bridges Team in County Hall to learn more about what the service does and listen to practitioners on their experiences and reflections on the service.

The session began with a presentation from the Bridges team covering the development of the service, the service and team structure, outcomes and financial savings, the ethos, values and practice framework.

Pertinent points raised in the presentation included:

- Bridges was established in November 2020 as the Edge of Care Service but was renamed in Summer 2021 as a more appropriate name.
- The service and its 39 FTE staff are now permanent.
- Bridges is a multi-disciplinary adolescent service working alongside Children’s Social Care teams and PAs as a prevention team – working with children and families open to social care almost as a last resort to stop children going into care.
- The service also works with children to help them return home following placement in local authority care.
- Interventions with children and families last 3 to 6 months and are based on intensive contact with families.
- The service is an invest to save service and has saved around £1.5m in Children’s Social Care.
- The service is proud of it’s successes and outcomes for children and families:
 - 85% of young people referred to prevent family breakdown and placement out of the family, remain at home.
 - Since the implementation of the Bridges practice framework in January 2022, the number of young people open to Bridges and accommodated has halved.
 - Of those young people receiving support for reunification home – 23% have returned home to their family.
- Ethos and Values – the service has a “we come in peace” ethos of no criticism or judgement of families.
- The practice model (STAIRS) is based on sustainable change and collaboration at every stage and fits with Devon’s restorative practice model.
- All of the practitioners are trained in Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) based on attachment, high nurture and trauma informed therapeutic practice.

Members were given an opportunity to hear feedback from children and young people via audio clips from a young person and a parent, a presentation of quotes and testimonies and story boards of how the service have worked with families and what impact they have had.

Discussions and reflections with Members

- How and why does the Bridges team model work successfully?
 - It is a responsive, intensive team – they make contact within 24 hours after referral from Social Workers and meet families 3 times a week or even daily contact in times of crisis.
 - Staff have low caseloads, working with up to 8 families at any one time in the 3 to 6 month interventions. This means there is around 100 young people in the service at a time.
 - Restorative, sustainable and working with families.
 - Empowering families to understand their own situations better.
 - Thinking systemically.
 - Supportive culture within the team – everyone looks after everyone.
 - They take responsibility for engaging with families – slow down to go faster approach.
- The lower cases per practitioner and the ability to work more closely with families was clearly an important part of the service and Members heard how 3 Social Workers from other teams had taken pay cuts to work in the Bridges team because of this. The retention of staff in the service was good.
- Members found meeting the staff from the Bridges team to be an insightful experience and reflected how committed the team is. The team was close knit and supported each other.
- Members welcomed the successes of the Bridges team and were heartened by the positive outcomes they had delivered for children and families.

Future of the Team

Staff explained to Members they would like to see the service expanded to cover children under the age of 11. Staff wanted to expand and reach more children and young people in order to make a difference to them to reduce complex needs at a later stage.

Staff asked for a speech and language specialist practitioner to be in every locality team rather than covering 2 teams each.

Taw View

Councillor Hellyer joined a number of staff and 2 service users at Taw View to discuss the Bridges service and hear how the service works. Staff began by explaining their roles, how the team is structured and the work of the Bridges service.

Feedback and comments from staff included:

- The difficulties from the Education Inclusion Officers in North Devon to find suitable alternative (AP) and specialist provision in schools. Because of the lack of AP,

Agenda Item 11

families feel like children need to have an EHC Plan or permanently excluded in order to get support which has long term implications.

- The delays to EHC Plans and waiting lists for CAMHS are having an impact on children and families and the work they do.
- That Early Help and Family Intervention Teams have a criteria of not being open to children or young people with Autism (ASD) meaning those children cannot access support until they reach a crisis point.
- There is a lack of affordable accommodation in North Devon that meets the needs of children and young people.
- The impact of the turnover of social workers for families doesn't promote stability or help families to build relationships with professionals. Staff gave an example of one family who had 16 social workers.
- The availability of social workers - whilst understanding some staff who work for the Council don't necessarily live close to Devon or to their cases and commute, this reduces their ability to visit children and families, particularly in an emergency situation.

During the meeting, Councillor Hellyer and staff were joined by a young person and their parent to provide an insight into the service from a family's perspective. They highlighted that the 6-month period goes very quickly, and they would have liked to have seen it extended to provide more support to their family.

The family highlighted the many different services and social workers that previously had supported them. They listed how many different people or agencies were involved and then how difficult it became when those staff changed. The parent commented that it became difficult to remember who each professional was and what role they had and the services they provided.

Bridges quickly built trust with the family, making them feel comfortable and welcome. In respect to outcomes, the young person has remained at home and is now working with a personal advisor in the P&T Team.

Devon Young Carers

Councillors joined the Devon Young Carers Council for part of their agenda, specifically the item called “What does ‘making time for Young Carers’ really mean? This was a discussion with young carers and staff about what life was like for them in Devon and what could help to give them space and time.

Discussion with Councillors included the following areas:

- Awareness of young carers – it was recognised that each young carer journey is different, and some do not want to register as a young carer. It was important for schools to know who the young carers were in their school so that young carers could be included, and schools understood the young people well. This would also ensure an appropriate level of checking in and catching up with the young carer, at a level they were comfortable with.
- Consideration of young carers at schools – the young carers raised particular concerns around equipment, homework, uniform, timeliness and that there isn't consideration given to young carers if they come to school without the required equipment, uniform or if they are a little late because of something that has happened at home. The fact that school uniform and equipment is expensive and sometimes has to be bought from specific shops compounds some of the issues that young carers face.
- The variation of consistency of support for young carers at school and college – whilst some schools are very supportive and inclusive of young carers, this is not consistent in every school. Some schools have specific support networks for young carers, but some do not.
- The importance of a check in – the 3 young carers felt it was important for a trusted person at school or college to regularly check in with them and check they were ok. Most importantly, this would be after holidays and breaks.
- Local support groups – Again this is dependent on the local area and schools. Some schools and local areas have local support groups but it is not consistent across Devon. Councillor Sanders highlighted a local support café in Tavistock and 1 Young Carer highlighted the lack of support groups in North Devon.
- Relationships with Social Care and Health Services – young carers particularly felt that communication with social services and health services was poor and they were not told what was happening with cared-for Adults. Adult Social Care and the NHS did not consider the needs of the young carer when making plans or creating provisions in enabling the family as a whole.
- Referrals into Devon Young Carers – 80% of referrals come from schools and there is very little engagement from Adult Social Care or Health services (e.g. Drug and substance misuse services) in identifying or signposting potential young carers. An example was given that NHS discharge notes ask if there is someone at home to care for a discharged patient but doesn't consider if that person is under 18 and would be caring for a patient alone.



Agenda Item 11

Permanence and Transitions (P&T) Teams

Recruitment and retention of staff

Across their visits, staff were very clear that more staff and resources were needed to deal with the number and complexity of the cases they were facing. Social Workers and Personal Advisors in the P&T teams requested more staff, teams needing to be “strengthened” and smaller caseloads to ensure they could manage their caseloads effectively. An example being ETE Personal Advisors, of which there is 1 in each locality holding over 100 cases each.

Staff were aware of the issues facing many local authorities in trying to recruit to Social Worker posts and reflected that falling public sector pay against private sector pay in recent years was a hinderance to attracting staff. Staff felt that an improved pay offer for staff and better incentives to work in the public sector would help attract potential staff.

Members when speaking to both permanent and agency staff recognised the benefits of both for individual staff. Staff did highlight the differences between permanent and agency salaries to Members, which Members were aware of.

Although Members are aware of the high agency rates across the service. However, in the teams that Members visited they noticed the stable teams across the County.

Staff also stressed that there is always more to the Council could do to offer apprenticeships to young people, including our own care leavers, to recruit them into the workforce.

Working for Children’s Services in Devon

Many staff reported a good working culture and working relationships in their teams. Member visits to P&T teams coincided with Reaching for Independence training.

Staff stated that they felt valued and effective, with supportive managers.

Staff enjoyed the ability to work flexibly with some home and office-based working, with the addition of making visits to children and families. This created a good work/life balance for the staff who Members spoke to.

Staff reported that the number of their cases were manageable but felt there had been an increase to their complexity which meant they were not becoming manageable. Due to the caseloads and complexity of issues, staff reported that they felt a lot of their time was spent ‘fire-fighting’ rather than the day job because of the lack of provision and support for young people.

In addition, staff who were accruing a lot of flexitime/TOIL highlighted to Members that there was not enough time for them to take their owed hours because of the demands of the job.

Management and supervision

Staff across the County reported that they felt managers had too many staff per manager to supervise and that this was detrimental to their own supervision and auditing.

As a result staff reported that at times, supervision was focused on tasks, to do lists, cases and case management and there also needed to be time for reflective practice and support from team managers. An example being that managers asked if a number of visits had been made but didn't focus on the quality of the visit and the outcomes from the visit.

Improvements could be made to ensure personal supervision considered the emotional support needed for staff who are dealing with complex cases.

Availability of affordable housing

As Members primarily visited our Corporate Parenting Teams, much of the conversation around operational issues related to our looked after children and children in care.

Staff reported that their "biggest challenge" was securing affordable housing that met the needs of children and young people who were care leavers and supported more in house provision of accommodation. Staff felt in house provision would be most cost effective and more efficient, reducing the need to find accommodation and then negotiate costs both with providers and internally.

Staff across the County have to liaise with 8 District Councils for their housing functions and highlighted that some are more conscientious than others with their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Due to the lack of provision locally, children and young people are moved away from their communities to other parts of Devon or completely out of county. If they are moved out of Devon, children and young people keep the same social worker or personal advisor. This means many staff spend a lot of their time out of county making visits to other parts of the country, reducing their efficiency and ability to visit other young people.

Whilst our care leavers and young people may be registered on Devon Home Choice and staff wanted this promoted to young people, they were not placed in a priority band so that they could access housing when it comes available. Staff reported that some councils give care leavers automatic Band B status to support them in securing accommodation. Whilst there was some discussion on this in Devon, it was very early.

Office Location (Follaton House staff)

Staff at Follaton House raised concerns about having to move to Estuary House, Newton Abbot in the near future. Members understood this to be soon but a date had yet to be agreed. Whilst staff were supportive of the move to have all teams in the South locality co-located in the same space and reducing office space with the rise in hybrid working, they raised concerns about the already well-known parking issues at Estuary House. Members knew from previous visits that staff already at Estuary House struggle to find parking, and staff felt that moving the teams from Follaton House would compound existing issues.

Agenda Item 11

Likewise, staff were also concerned about news that South Hams District Council would soon charge for parking at Follaton House.

Staff also raised concerns that there is no public access to Estuary House and that it would be difficult for them to meet with young people and families like they can do at Follaton House.

Staff questioned the move to Estuary House as the lease for the building ends in 2024 and staff were concerned about having two office moves in a short space of time.

Provision of Mental Health services

Staff in North Devon reported the post pandemic delay in accessing the provision of Mental Health services. One PA estimated that 80% of his cases needed consistent mental health support. Issues were also reported in transferring cases across the County and from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Service and the delays that ensued in the transfers.

Members heard that the main concern was that there was no second chances given to young people if they miss their appointment and no understanding from services about the complex needs of our care leavers.

As a suggestion, staff asked for in house mental health services to be created so that we were less reliant on other services and young people could have better access.

Additional comments

- Members and staff across all sites discussed the Staying Close bid and welcomed the possibility of more supportive accommodation for care leavers.
- Members and Staff spoke about the increasing number of Council's passing motions and policies which treat Care Experience as a protected characteristic. Members noted Plymouth City Council's [recent motion](#) and [Councillor Rob Hannaford's motion](#) at the Council meeting on 25th May 2023.
- That the Council should offer '[Ask Jan](#)' Memberships to any care leaver. This a programme of advice, support and benefits from the Rees Foundation to assist care experienced people. These memberships cost £60.
- The increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Devon and the need for a dedicated workforce for these children. Members and staff discussed the national transfer scheme and that the Government's reimbursements do not necessarily cover all of the Council's cost.

Children and Families Team (County Hall)

Whilst meeting with the P&T Team at County Hall, Members also took the opportunity to meet with the Children and Families Team there, key feedback points included:

- The need for permanent staff for stability within teams, staff felt the recent turnover had been disruptive. One example was a family who had 9 social workers in 6 months and

now refused to engage with new social workers because of the need to re-tell their story over and over.

- Staff reflected the lack of preventative provision and early help over many years. Staff felt the earlier decisions to scale back preventative or early help services has had a direct correlation to the scale and complexity of cases they now face.
- The need to ensure there are enough experienced social workers in the service to support the team. In the team that spoke to Members, out of the 10 staff they were mostly new to social work and reflected their own inexperience.
- A request to reinstate a shared box of resources in Room 220 that had previously been there. Staff highlighted that the box was used for visits and they had found it useful to have but no longer exists.

Fostering (Follaton House)

Whilst meeting with the P&T Team at Follaton House, Members also took the opportunity to meet with the Fostering team there, key feedback points included:

- That the team were a strong service, and applying restorative practice in the team and working with families, but had low morale.
- The team included just 1 agency member of staff, the rest were permanent.
- The shortage faced nationally in foster parents (around 25,000) and the need for Devon to continue to promote fostering. Councillors visited during Fostering Fortnight and recognised the promotional activities going on to support it. Staff also highlighted the success of the Devon County Show, where 16 contacts were made to potential fostering families.
- An option for further support or promoting fostering would be to review the fees and allowances that Devon offers to foster parents to ensure they are competitive and appropriate.
- Feedback from in-house fostering families is that the level of support is good and the Mockingbird scheme has been successful so far where the constellation has been set up.

4) Options / Alternatives

The report is the summary of a number of visits made by the Children's Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny does not make decisions and this report does not propose any alternatives.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

As above, there are no specific considerations in regard to consultations, representations and technical data in this report.

The details of the site visits are listed in the appendix.

Agenda Item 11

6) Strategic Plan

The alignment of all Scrutiny activity with the strategic plan is detailed on the Scrutiny work programme. Visits increase and develop member knowledge and the 'critical friend' challenge of Scrutiny contribute to the Council achieving its strategic plan.

Improving Member knowledge on key issues contributes to the Council's commitment to being a trusted, inclusive and innovative Council. It ensures good decision making and that the Council listens and learns.

Members periodically undertake site visits and meet with staff and service users to gather feedback and make recommendations for change. The site visits conducted in this report align to the Strategic Plan priority of 'Be ambitious for children and young people' by supporting the Council's improvement journey. The report also aligns to the Council's plans to transform, develop and improve children's services and embrace the positive benefits of a diverse workforce and create an environment that is inclusive and safe for all staff.

7) Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations in this report.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations in this report.

10) Equality Considerations

There are no specific equality considerations in this report.

11) Risk Management Considerations

The activity of the Children's Scrutiny Committee contributes to the mitigations for:

Ineffective Member Scrutiny

defined as: 'Due to ineffective scrutiny, the level and quality of service management may drop, leading to financial mismanagement or harm to staff and/or citizens and reputational damage e.g. Grenfell.

Member Effectiveness

defined as: 'Inadequate member effectiveness due to a lack of training, support and knowledge leads to a lack of challenge to corporate officers and/or poor decision making,

resulting in a negative effect on the County's citizens (poor value for money, poor service delivery, harm, etc).'

The findings of this report do have regard to some risks identified in the service's risk register including but not limited to:

- Social Care workforce recruitment and retention
- Social Work staff including Corporate Parenting, Fostering and Contact Service Teams
- Children's Services Improvement / Post ILACS Improvement
- Market sufficiency – looked after children and care experienced young people placements.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

Members also wished to place on record their thanks to the officers involved in leading the visits, namely the Heads of Service who facilitated the visits, along with the staff who supported the various visits at different sites.

Members wish to thank the service users who also took time out of their day to meet with them.

Upon reflection of the visits, it was clear to Members that all of the staff they met were passionate and committed to working with children and families. They welcomed the opportunity to speak to Members and Members welcomed their honesty and openness.

The Committee should continue to carry out further visits as part of their work programme to broaden Member's understanding of front-line teams and gathering feedback from staff.

Maria Price

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation:
Councillor Andrew Saywell

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper – NIL

Date

File Reference

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Charlie Fisher (Scrutiny Officer)

Telephone: 01392 383681 or charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk

Address: G31, County Hall, Exeter.

Agenda Item 11

Appendix - Details of Visits

7th March 2023 – MASH - County Hall, Exeter

The following councillors undertook the visit to the MASH, where they met Sarah Hunt (Head of Service - Single Front Door, MASH, Assessment and EDS), Eleri Taylor (Service Manager - MASH / Front Door Services) and met with 15 members of staff across social care, police and health teams.

- Cllr Su Aves
- Cllr Frank Letch

28th March 2023 – Bridges - County Hall, Exeter

The following councillors undertook the visit to County Hall, where they met with Rebecca Bennett (Service Manager) and 8 members of staff:

- Cllr Su Aves
- Cllr Frank Letch
- Cllr Linda Hellyer
- Cllr Margaret Squires
- Cllr Jeff Wilton Love

13th April 2023 – Devon Young Carers, Exeter Community Centre

The following councillors took part in a Devon Young Carers Council meeting, meeting with 2 staff and 3 young carers:

- Cllr Su Aves
- Cllr Rob Hannaford
- Cllr Frank Letch
- Cllr Philip Sanders

15th May 2023 – Oaklands Court, Tiverton

The following councillors undertook the visit to Oaklands Court, Tiverton, where they met Gemma Wilson (Service Manager – Looked After Children) and 6 staff:

- Cllr Frank Letch
- Cllr Margaret Squires

16th May 2023 – County Hall, Exeter

The following councillors undertook the visit to Oaklands Court, Tiverton, where they met Gemma Wilson (Service Manager – Looked After Children) and 8 staff:

- Cllr Frank Letch
- Cllr Philip Sanders
- Cllr Carol Whitton (Local Member and Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Member)

18th May 2023 – Taw View, Barnstaple

The following councillors undertook the visit to Taw View, where they met Gemma Wilson (Service Manager – Looked After Children) and 3 members of staff:

- Cllr Linda Hellyer
- Cllr Andrea Davis (Local Member and Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Climate Change)

Cllr Linda Hellyer also met with Bridges, meeting 7 members of staff and 2 service users.

24th May 2023 – Follaton House, Totnes

The following councillors undertook the visit to Follaton House, where they met Gemma Wilson (Service Manager – Looked After Children) and 5 members of staff from P&T. Councillors also met with Emma Nobes (Service Manager – Fostering and Promoting Stability) and 2 members of staff from Fostering.

- Cllr Julian Brazil
- Cllr Phil Bullivant

LDS/23/11
Children's Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday 19th September 2023

Report of the Children's Scrutiny Committee: Report of the Children's Standing Overview Group meeting of Thursday 22nd June 2023.

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

- (a) take action as outlined in the report including the addition of any highlighted issues of concern to the future work programme:
 - i) A report on Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education is prepared for the Children's Scrutiny Committee on 19th September 2023.
- (b) accept this report as an accurate record of the issues explored in the meeting ensuring transparency in scrutiny activities.

2) Background / Introduction

The Standing Overview Group of the Children's Scrutiny Committee meets with the purpose of bringing rigour and understanding to complex issues across different services and the NHS which could not meaningfully explored at public Committee. This is an informal information sharing and member development session where issues are presented to the councillors to raise awareness and increase knowledge.

To bring transparency, and ensure that Scrutiny is not 'carried out behind closed doors' a short report is brought back to committee to highlight pertinent issues and to take forward any actions or recommendations that have arisen.

3) Main Body

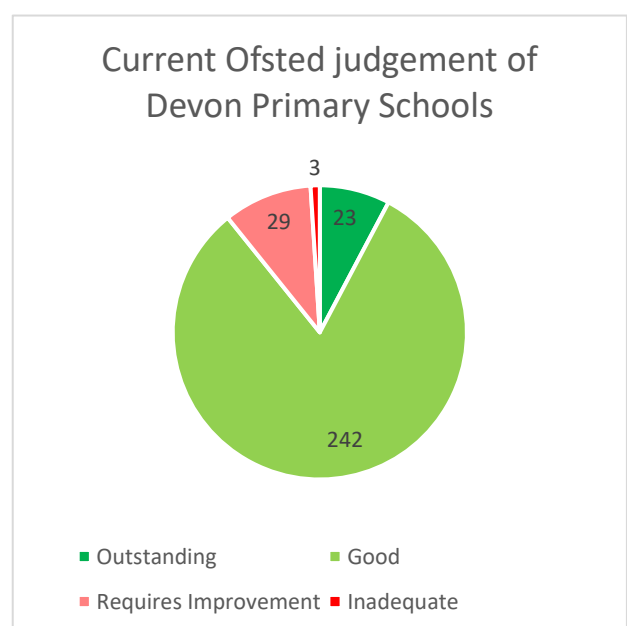
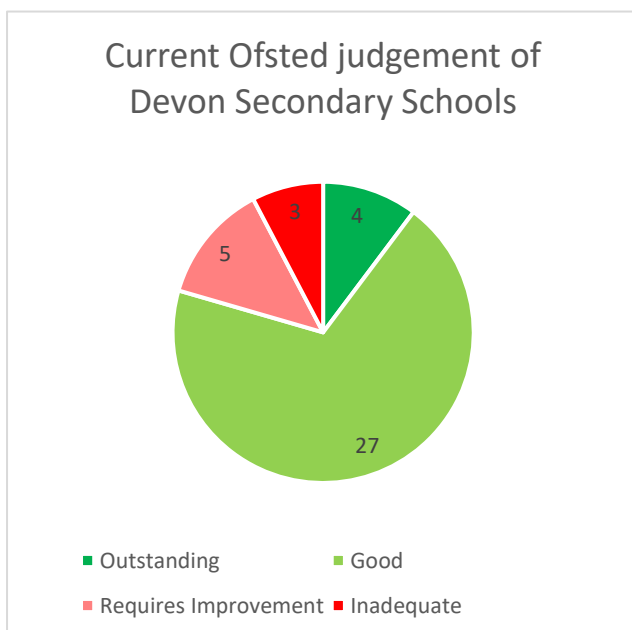
Head of Education Update

The Head of Education (Strategy), Matthew Shanks appraised Members on the Committee of the latest data and information to share on behalf of himself and Rachel Shaw, Head of Education (Delivery).

Agenda Item 12

Pertinent points and data raised during the presentation included:

- Both Interim Heads of Education were part time in their roles and were with the Council until December 2023. Outside of their work with the Council, their substantive careers were CEOs of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in Devon.
- Social Mobility in the South West – research shows that the South West has the worst educational outcomes for disadvantaged young people in the country. The Council has signed up to support the work of this group along with neighbouring authorities.
- The Devon CC area has 51,862 boys and 49,545 girls of school age across primary and secondary schools. Figures highlight that the current year 6 is a large cohort and secondary schools will need additional places but primary schools will need fewer places.
- 18.9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, with the highest figure being Atlantic Academy (41%) and the smallest being Colyton Grammar (6.5%).
- 5.2% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- 5053 (5%) children and young people of school age have an EHC Plan and 14,724 (14.5%) receive SEN support.
- There are 461 educational institutions in Devon - 413 are schools and 371 are state funded schools. There are 162 maintained schools and 209 academies/free schools. There are 197 schools in 26 MATs, where the average size of a MAT is 8 schools, and 80 schools in 28 federations.
- In terms of published Ofsted outcomes:
 - i) Secondary Schools – 4 Outstanding, 27 Good, 5 Requires Improvement and 3 Inadequate. Devon schools are slightly below the national average for Outstanding but above the average for Good.



- ii) Primary Schools – 23 Outstanding, 242 Good, 29 Requires Improvement and 3 Inadequate. Likewise, Devon schools are slightly below the national average for Outstanding but above the average for Good.
 - iii) Many schools rated 'Outstanding' have not been inspected for some time due to Government policy. The current inspection framework has raised the bar for what schools need to do to get an Outstanding rating.
- Attendance:
 - i) Overall attendance at primary school is higher than last year and was currently at 94.2% against a target of 96%.
 - ii) Attendance at secondary is similar to levels last year and but lower overall at 88.8%, which is lower than the national average.
 - iii) Both primary and secondary attendance had large dips in December 2022 when Strep A was a concern. Seasonal working, strikes, parents working from home and apathy towards school are seen as reasons for the lower attendance.
 - iv) Compared to other authorities, Devon's absence and persistent absence rankings haven't fallen from 2020/21 to 2021/22.
 - Suspensions – there a large number of suspensions taking place. Although this is also a national issue, Devon's ranking compared to other authorities have continued to fall from 2019/20 to 2021/22.
 - There have been 150 permanent exclusions across Devon schools in this academic year so far (up to 26th May 2023). In 2021/22, with 108 permanent exclusions, our exclusion rate (0.11 per 100 pupils) was almost double the national exclusion rate (0.05 per 100 pupils).
 - Elective Home Education (EHE) – sometimes parents elect to home educate their child for a number of reasons. There has been an increase of 1752 pupils in March 2022 to 2214 in May 2023.
 - Children missing education (CME) – children of school age who are not receiving any education. There has been a rise in CME from 61 in March 2022 to 99 in May 2023.
 - Alternative provision – there are 292 pupils currently receiving alternative provision to support their learning.
 - Education other than at school (EOTAS) – there are 263 pupils receiving education other than at school.
 - Members were given an overview of the SEMH Partnership Project with schools with funding for projects to help reduce suspensions.
 - The current areas of concerns reported by schools include mental health, attendance, dissatisfaction amongst parents, increasing levels of SEND, lack of access to services, recruitment, finance, and Ofsted.

Agenda Item 12

Discussion and questions with Members included the following areas:

- Clarification of 'hard wired' partners – schools having a vested interest in the performance of other schools and children as if it was their own school.
- The difficulty of getting schools into 'hard wired' partnership and Devon's position on this – The Head of Education (Strategy) stated our aim is for schools to work together, support each other and share resources to make them more effective. There is piece of work ongoing, although not yet a formal policy, to support partnership working.
- Clarification of an IEB – Independent Education Board. This is when the Diocese or Local Authority appoint a Governing Board to support maintained and federation schools in their future direction.
- How does the local authority hold MATs accountable for elective home education (EHE) and exclusions? - Our role for EHE is the same for maintained or academies in terms of checking up, safeguarding and ensuring inclusion. In terms of exclusions with MATs, we would write to the regional director and feedback during our weekly or fortnightly conversations with the DfE for them to take forward with MAT leaders.
- Assessing and checking up on children who are EHE – Parents have to be checked that they are capable of educating their child at home and the responsibility falls to the parent to ensure their child is receiving a suitable education. Local Authorities have no duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education but can intervene if it appears children are not receiving a suitable education or if there are safeguarding or welfare concerns. With EHE and CME pupils, the Council has a 0.5 FTE officer and we complete safeguarding checks around every 2/3 years.
- The current financial situation in schools and schools losing teaching assistants and support staff to ensure budgets are not overspent and how to initiative conversations to share resources.
- Councillors requested that a further update or report be reported to Scrutiny on elective home education and children missing education and the possibility of communicating with schools to gather feedback on their current challenges.
- The work of the previous Cabinet Member in the f40 Group and asking Cllr Leadbetter for an update this work.
- The English as an Additional Language team (EAL) – the team provide a good job despite the lack of resources. Google Translate is utilised in schools as a way to communicate with children and parents.
- The importance of Children's Services, children and young people and Education to the Council, although it is not normally the highest priority for the public or the electorate.

4) Options / Alternatives

The report is the summary of a Scrutiny Standing Overview Group meeting. Scrutiny does not make decisions and this report does not propose any alternatives.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

As above, there are no specific considerations in regard to consultations, representations and technical data in this report.

6) Strategic Plan

The alignment of all Scrutiny activity with the strategic plan is detailed on the Scrutiny work programme. The issues raised in the report and the benefit of developing member knowledge and the 'critical friend' challenge of Scrutiny contribute to the Council achieving its strategic plan.

Improving Member knowledge on key issues contributes to the Council's commitment to being a trust, inclusive and innovative Council. It ensures good decision making and that the Council listens and learns.

The discussions outlined in the report contributes to the Council's strategic plan priority of 'Be ambitious for children and young people', for example:

- Promote high standards in all schools and help to address any areas of weakness.

7) Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations in this report.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations in this report.

10) Equality Considerations

There are no specific equality considerations in this report.

11) Risk Management Considerations

The activity of Scrutiny Standing Overview Groups contributes to the mitigations for:

Agenda Item 12

Ineffective Member Scrutiny

defined as: 'Due to ineffective scrutiny, the level and quality of service management may drop, leading to financial mismanagement or harm to staff and/or citizens and reputational damage e.g. Grenfell.

Member Effectiveness

defined as: 'Inadequate member effectiveness due to a lack of training, support and knowledge leads to a lack of challenge to corporate officers and/or poor decision making, resulting in a negative effect on the County's citizens (poor value for money, poor service delivery, harm, etc).'

The findings of this report do have regard to some risks identified in the Council's risk register relating to Education and Learning services such as:

- Schools Funding
- Insufficient Capacity in Education and Learning Services to ensure the quality of education and safety of children subject to elective home-schooling.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

The report outlines the topic(s) covered at the meeting of Thursday 22nd June 2023, highlights the key points raised during discussion and details any agreed actions.

The report is formally reported to the Children's Scrutiny Committee in the interests of openness, transparency and good decision making.

Maria Price

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation:
Councillor Andrew Saywell

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper – NIL

Date

File Reference

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Charlie Fisher (Scrutiny Officer)

Telephone: 01392 383681 or charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk

Address: G31, County Hall, Exeter.

Appendix

Attendance

Scrutiny Members: Councillors Su Aves (Chair), Philip Sanders (Vice Chair), Tracy Adams, Phil Bullivant, Ian Hall, Frank Letch, Pru Maskell, Lois Samuel and Ms Christina Mabin.

Children's Services Officers: Matthew Shanks (Head of Education (Strategy)).

Scrutiny Officer: Charlie Fisher.

Report of the Children's Scrutiny Committee: Report of the Standing Overview Group meeting of Monday 17th July 2023

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

- (a) accept this report as an accurate record of the issues explored in the meeting ensuring transparency in scrutiny activities.

2) Background / Introduction

The Standing Overview Group of the Children's Scrutiny Committee meets with the purpose of bringing rigour and understanding to complex issues across different services and the NHS which could not meaningfully explored at public Committee. This is an informal information sharing and member development session where issues are presented to the councillors to raise awareness and increase knowledge.

To bring transparency, and ensure that Scrutiny is not 'carried out behind closed doors' a short report is brought back to committee to highlight pertinent issues and to take forward any actions or recommendations that have arisen.

3) Main Body

Ofsted Annual Conversation (Self Evaluation)

The Interim Deputy Director and Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing, Steve Liddicott, and the Interim SEND Strategic Director, Jackie Ross, appraised Members on the Committee of Annual Conversation between Ofsted and Devon County Council which took place in May.

The presentation provided to Members covered the key priorities for Devon, Strategic Leadership, Strategic Improvement, and next steps before covering service areas and topics such as SEND, Education, Exploitation, Social Care, Quality of Practice, Regulated Settings, Practice Reviews, Supported Accommodation, and Innovation.

Pertinent points in the report provided and officer comments included:

- The conversation is a two-way conversation over the course of half a day. Ofsted provide some questions in advance for us to cover and cover questions from monitoring visits and inspections. It also provides us with an opportunity to update them on developments within the Council and services.
- Services are focusing on similar aims – preventing the need for children and young people being escalated up the system by improving the early support.
- Focusing on a sustainable permanent workforce – Officers commented that 17 Vacant Posts in SEND have been filled and there is a need to add additional capacity to respond to customer feedback and complaints.
- Work with schools to provide extra sufficiency, the ordinarily available offer in Schools and an initiative to have 12 more SEND resource provisions across the County every year for 3 years, starting in September 2024.
- Improved analysis and data to identify where the needs are across the county and how we can meet them.
- The placement and transport panel ensures that headteachers are involved in decisions around placing children.
- There is more managerial oversight of children who are educated other than at school (EOTAS).

Discussion and questions with Members included the following areas:

- How we do know about the quality and impact of our practice – Officers advised that Ofsted asked us about this and the presentation provided to Members gives an indication of this for each part of the service including key indicators, strengths and developments. The audit process is an objective way of showing this. At the time of the annual conversation, it was a fairly new audit process but officers are now accelerating the roll out of the process to collect more feedback and data from around 10 audits a month to 50 a month.
- The next monitoring visit will be at the end of September or Early October.
- Clarification for Members on the Audit process – A series of questions some based on factual information but looking at how the social worker has conducted themselves, how they have engaged with the family, the information they have recorded and the clarity of the plans they have made. We are now working in a participatory manner and discuss with staff the ways of working. This now gives us more insight into training needs for staff and information on the quality of practice.
- Investing in staff to create the right culture – We now have an increasingly permanent senior leadership and management team. This stability will feed through to the front line of staff to ensure we are investing in staff who want to stay and work in Devon.
- Ofsted's reflections back to Devon as part of the conversation – At the time of meeting, the formal notes/minutes had not been received. The conversation was positive, following on from the April monitoring visit and continuing to talk about the progress identified in that visit. Ofsted also used the conversation to contribute to their decisions on which topics to focus on in their next monitoring visit.

- Members asked about the Hart's Ladder of Participation as highlighted in the report – Officers responded that the Council believed it was low on the rungs (levels) meaning that co-production with parents and young people wasn't good enough.
- Resource bases and having more children with SEND staying in mainstream schools – how are we ensuring there is the right support and training in place? Officers commented that it is a catch 22 situation but officers would contact schools and support services in advance to address concerns. We also need ensure all services are working together to support children in schools.
- Education Psychologists recruitment is still continuing, and we have recruited another 2 more recently.
- Rather than being a particular strength or weakness in Devon, exploitation was a key theme with Ofsted that they were raising with all local authorities as part of this round of annual conversations.
- The reflections of the Cabinet Member – Councillor Leadbetter highlighted the amount of work going on within the service the work we were able to share with Ofsted and his reflection was the conversation was positive.

As this was the last meeting of the Interim SEND Strategic Director, the Chair thanked her for all of her work at the Council to improve services on behalf of the Committee.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service Annual Report

The Interim Deputy Director (Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing), Steve Liddicott, and Interim Service Manager for QARSS and LADO, Annal Russell, appraised Members on the Committee of the 2022/23 Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report. The report covers the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Pertinent points in the report provided and officer comments included:

- There is a statutory requirement for the service to produce an annual report for the Corporate Parenting Strategic Board, which will receive the report at its September meeting.
- The IRO service works in a collaborative, restorative approach and contributes to Devon's improvement journey by ensuring that children and young people in care have timely care and permanence plans.
- The report set out the profile of children in care in Devon during the year. A total of 1191 children and young people spent some time in care. There has been a steady increase in the number of children in care. The report detailed their profile's including gender, background, length of time in care, placements and legal status.
- IROs produced 1783 individual records of children's meetings as well as writing bespoke letters.
- Face to face meetings and visits is becoming standard practice once again and specific expectations for those placed in unregistered placements.
- Caseloads have increased from 55 to 65 children, which is towards the higher end of the 50-70 caseload outlined in the IRO handbook.

- There were 154 formal escalations in the year, up from 94 in the year before. Most arise from a lack of progress in the implementation of care plans, no permanence plan, no assessment for review, changes to social worker, contact with family members, financial issues and lack of life story work. There were also 129 informal escalations.
- Achievements within the year including that all children are allocated a named IRO within 48 hours of notification to the service of coming into care, the timeliness of reviews being held within statutory timescales (97% of child in care review meetings held within timescales), a stable workforce and a refreshed issue resolution policy resulting in increased activity.
- IROs share information and best practice across national and regional links.

Discussion and questions with Members included the following areas:

- The importance of Restorative Practice and ensuring staff can undertake the relevant training sessions – Officers commented that there are many ways that we are strengthening restorative practice in the service including one of the IROs acts as a link and meets regularly with Restorative Practice Coaches. IROs tend to be previous highly experienced managers and social workers so restorative practice is a natural ability already embedded in them. Officers commented that the IRO service is a leading service in terms of embedding restorative practice.
- Progress within the last 18 months has shown an improved trajectory in terms of issue resolution and resolve differences.
- There are 14 posts in the IRO service, 2 of the posts funded from COVID recovery will become permanent and Officers stated there were 4 applicants for these posts.
- The re-shape in Children’s Social Care is aimed to have smaller social work teams to ensure that managers have clear oversight over their staff and children and young people. This means there will be more managers at Team Manager level to ensure better supervision and improvements in practice.
- Support for Carers – Within the fostering budget for this year, there is some additional money to increase the fostering allowance and support payments. Cabinet will be asked at its August meeting to give all foster carers a small uplift straight away and there will be a further discussion about longer term use of the additional money.
- The 311 days (or 44.4 weeks) on average that it takes for a child to enter care to receive a placement order. Members asked if that was an acceptable length of time? Officers advised that there is a national target reduce care proceedings to an average of 26 weeks but a combination of pressures in local authorities and courts have meant that the averages has gone back up. Officers commented that whilst Devon is above the 26 week target, it is only marginally above statistical neighbours and national averages as many local authorities are finding it difficult as well.
- The categories of need for children coming into care – They are assigned when children first come into care. Some are literal e.g. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are in the ‘Absent Parent’ category. Abuse and neglect is almost always the largest category in local authorities.
- Members welcomed the increase in health assessments.

Devon Information and Advice Service (DiAS) Annual Report

The Schools, Planning, Pupil Placement and Commissioning Manager, Simon Niles, and Information, Advice and Support Lead, Amy Carey-Jones appraised Members on the Committee of the 2021/22 Devon Information and Advice Service (DiAS) Annual Report.

The report covered the period from April 2021 to March 2022 and is the first Annual Report of the service that has been commissioned. The report is detailed in order to cover in enough detail to Members what the service is, the statutory framework, and what the service is commissioned to do.

The report covers an overview, service delivery, training, the Ambassador Volunteer programme, strategic activity, an overview of activity in 2021/22, outcomes and impact, key messages from parents, carers and young people and recommendations for development.

Pertinent points in the report provided and officer comments included:

- Every local authority has a statutory requirement to commission impartial advice and support for children and parents for SEND. Devon's DiAS team are commissioned to fulfil this role, jointly commissioned from the Education, Social Care and Health.
- There was a significant increase in activity in 2021/22 linked to the increases to the numbers of children and young people with SEND Support, EHC Plans, Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education and mental health issues which Members have been aware of.
- It is important to note that the service is impartial to support parents and children.
- The service are being used strategically due to their reach in terms of talking with families and children and feeding back key messages.
- Key messages from parents and childrens and young people were shared with Members including:
 - the lack of parental confidence in the availability of SEND support in schools leading to parents requesting an EHC needs assessment.
 - Communication from schools about what is provided and what can be provided due to lack of resources available in schools.
 - School behaviour policies not being as inclusive as possible for children with additional needs.
 - Parents feel that SEND support services are effective.
 - Families' concerns with the catch 22 position of children who are not attending school due to lack of support but children aren't able to get support unless they are in school.
 - Families caught between systems waiting for advice e.g. health and joined up approaches in education and social care.
 - Families hope that assessments and diagnosis will lead to further support but not receiving anything additional once their child gets a diagnosis.
 - Many of the messages from children are similar to those from parents and carers.

Discussion and questions with Members included the following areas:

- The increases in activity in the service and if this has continued into 2022/23 – Officers commented the increases have slowed but are still increasing. The increase in children and young people supported was partly due to a new children and young people’s worker who directly supported this increase and increased the offer of support available.
- DiAS volunteers help to support staff to enhance the service and parents to get their voices heard e.g. meeting support.
- The Ambassador Volunteers are overseen by a Volunteer Co-ordinator, jointly managed between DiAS and the Parent Carer Forum. The Ambassador Volunteer’s role is largely around signposting and disseminating information to parents and back to DiAS and the Parent Carer Forum.
- Discussion around children with autism (ASC) and the challenges of engaging children back into school and those who remain electively home educated.
- There will be new statutory guidance upcoming on attendance at school.
- Both Information, Advice and Support Leads sit on the SEND Improvement Board to support the improvement of services and feed in the view of families and children.
- The service’s staff are permanent.
- Additional funding from health has been received as part of the commissioning agreement.
- Officers will soon be meeting to discuss the future commissioning agreement for the service.
- Members asked officers if families believe they were independent – Officers responded that the service is impartial and discuss options with parents and families without expressing their own opinions. Officers felt the service is generally welcomed and doesn’t receive many corporate complaints.

4) Options / Alternatives

The report is the summary of a Scrutiny Standing Overview Group meeting. Scrutiny does not make decisions and this report does not propose any alternatives.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

As above, there are no specific considerations in regard to consultations, representations and technical data in this report.

6) Strategic Plan

The alignment of all Scrutiny activity with the strategic plan is detailed on the Scrutiny work programme. The issues raised in the report and the benefit of developing member knowledge and the ‘critical friend’ challenge of Scrutiny contribute to the Council achieving its strategic plan.

Improving Member knowledge on key issues contributes to the Council's commitment to being a trust, inclusive and innovative Council. It ensures good decision making and that the Council listens and learns.

7) Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations in this report.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations in this report.

10) Equality Considerations

There are no specific equality considerations in this report.

11) Risk Management Considerations

The activity of Scrutiny Standing Overview Groups contributes to the mitigations for:

Ineffective Member Scrutiny

defined as: 'Due to ineffective scrutiny, the level and quality of service management may drop, leading to financial mismanagement or harm to staff and/or citizens and reputational damage e.g. Grenfell.

Member Effectiveness

defined as: 'Inadequate member effectiveness due to a lack of training, support and knowledge leads to a lack of challenge to corporate officers and/or poor decision making, resulting in a negative effect on the County's citizens (poor value for money, poor service delivery, harm, etc).'

The key points in this report do have regard to some risks identified in the service's risk register relating to Children's Social Care services including Post ILACS Improvement.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

The report outlines the topic(s) covered at the meeting of Monday 17th July 2023, highlights the key points raised during discussion and details any agreed actions.

The report is formally reported to the Children's Scrutiny Committee in the interests of openness, transparency and good decision making.

Maria Price

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation: Councillor Andrew Saywell

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper – NIL

Date

File Reference

Contact for enquiries:

Name: Charlie Fisher (Scrutiny Officer)

Telephone: 01392 383681 or charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk

Address: G31, County Hall, Exeter.

Appendix

[Attendance](#)

Scrutiny Members: Councillors Su Aves (Chair), Philip Sanders (Vice Chair), Phil Bullivant, Christine Channon, Ian Hall, Frank Letch, Pru Maskell, Jeff Wilton Love and Ms Christina Mabin.

Cabinet Member for Children and Schools: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Officers: Steve Liddicott (Interim Deputy Director – Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing), Jackie Ross (Interim SEND Strategic Director), Anna Russell (Interim Service Manager for QARSS and LADO), Simon Niles (Schools Planning, Pupil Placement and Commissioning Manager) and Amy Carey-Jones (Information, Advice and Support Lead).

Scrutiny Officer: Charlie Fisher.