

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on
21 March 2022

- (Present) Councillor T Long (Chair)
Councillors Greaves, McDonnell, Mussell, Sims and Sweeney
- (Not Present) Councillors Barton-Ainsworth, A Johnson, Osundeko and Preston
Mr Williams (Roman Catholic Church Representative)
Mr D Thorpe (Church of England Representative)
Miss A Kirman, (Parent Governor – Primary)
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36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Johnson, Osundeko and Preston and Miss Kirman, Mr Thorpe and Mr Williams.

37 MINUTES

- * Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022, be approved and signed.

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of interest from Members were made.

39 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

No Declarations of party whip were made.

40 NHS ST HELENS CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (CCG) RESPONSE TO THE CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SPOTLIGHT REVIEWS

A report was submitted by the Assistant Director for Children's Integrated Health (Integrated Commissioning) for NHS St Helens CCG, which updated Members on the CCG's response to the Scrutiny Spotlight Reviews on the mental health and wellbeing of children in the borough.

In December 2021, Members of the Children and Young People Services (CYPS) Scrutiny Committee held a spotlight review to consider children's mental health and wellbeing services in the borough that were commissioned by NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The Review's report and recommendations were agreed at a meeting of the CYPS Scrutiny Committee held on 31 January 2022 and submitted to NHS St Helens CCG following the meeting. The CCG's response to the recommendations was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

NHS St Helens CCG emphasised that Children and Young People's (CYP) mental health needs and provision remained a key priority for commissioning intentions for 2022/2023. In addition, the CCGs children's commissioning team continued to contribute to, and align local place work streams to the CYP Programme priority of Mental Health provision under the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), which it was anticipated would formally replace the CCG in July 2022. A focus for the ICB and Provider lead

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throughout 2022/23 would continue to be the appropriately resourced provision for CYP who required support from Community Eating Disorder Services across the region. NHS St Helens CCG had also noted that there were currently several workstreams across the wider St Helens Cares system which were considering the issue that easily accessible, up to date information was made readily available to both service users and partners. The CCG felt it important that work to address information needs was not done in isolation but aligned with current system wide thinking and proposals, and so would ensure that the recommendations from the Committee were included. The information currently available through the CCG website Children's services contained information, which was downloadable and printable if required.

Members of the Committee were asked to note that it was agreed that children's mental health and wellbeing services remained on the CYPS work programme, with an update to be provided to the Committee in the next twelve months.

A query was raised with regard to the concerns voiced previously about services having a joined-up approach to look out for early signs of eating disorders in young people to give them the necessary help and prevent them reaching crisis point.

It was confirmed that work was taking place to ensure that services continued to send out information. There was a training offer and also strong links with 0-19 and school nurses and also there were emotional wellbeing drop-in services which are undertaken by school nursing and also the Resilience Teams. The Resilience Teams were liaising with primary care colleagues in terms of highlighting a whole range of possible needs for young people including eating disorders and offering support for young people and their families.

It was questioned what measures were being taken to include parents and families who did not have access to IT equipment or knowledge of how to use it to access information and be directed to help.

It was confirmed that it was difficult to keep information up to date in terms of paper leaflets as the information could change quickly and those leaflets could be out of date very quickly. However, doctors, schools and other agencies were encouraged to share information with their service users to ensure that up to date relevant information was available and accessible.

A query was raised in relation to Wellbeing Champions in schools and if there was an increase in referrals via those Wellbeing Champions.

It was confirmed that there was a mixed response currently. Schools who had the Wellbeing Champions in place and worked with the Resilience Teams were more likely to refer than those who do not have as extensive a system in place. It was acknowledged that there was more work was to be done.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the report be noted; and**
- (2) children's mental health services remain on the Scrutiny Work Programme and an update be brought to a future meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee.**

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41 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021-22

The Quarter 3 Performance Report was presented by the Assistant Director for Education & Learning and the Assistant Director for Integrated Safeguarding & Quality Assurance.

The Council acknowledged that effective performance management arrangements were critical to supporting decision making during these challenging times and work continued to ensure the development of the Performance Framework and performance management processes across the Council.

The impact of the pandemic in Quarter 3 2020/21 needed to be considered when reviewing the 12-month performance trend in Quarter 3 2021/22. Equally in many areas the impact of the pandemic on performance was yet to be fully realised and understood. However, given the effect of the pandemic on St Helens to date there was the strong likelihood that existing inequalities may be widened, presenting potential risks for future performance in relation to the outcomes the Council is seeking to deliver.

A query was raised with regard to caseload and the fact that this was a major issue in a lot of the issues identified within the report and presentation.

It was confirmed that caseload was an issue, however the numbers were in general average in terms of national statistics. Some of that was due to a blockage in duty in the system where cases were not able to be moved along as quickly as they should have been. There was a plan in hand as to how to move those cases through the system.

Recruitment and retention of staff was an issue, however pay rates were competitive but it was still difficult to recruit permanent staff. It was hoped that with restructuring pay rates across the board, it would start to align to encourage staff to come to St Helens.

It was queried whether a strategy was in place in terms of actions, targets and deadlines to try to address recruitment and retention of staff.

It was confirmed that a neighbouring borough who had similar issues to St Helens in terms of recruitment and retention had been nominated for an award for good practice in this area and it was hoped that a visit to that borough could be made to gain information with a view to seeing if any of the good practice could be adapted for St Helens services.

A query was raised with regard to the drop-in care leavers staying in education, employment and training, and what are the issues with regard to keeping these young people engaged.

It was confirmed that Covid-19 had an impact in terms of some isolating, family isolating and concerns around mixing. Those children were identified however, and were committed to returning in September to education and training. There had also been an increase in Fit Notes being issued by GP's, however this had been challenged by social care representatives where appropriate.

Members expressed concern about the progress regarding Voice of the Child.

It was acknowledged that there had been a decrease in progress, however work was being undertaken to make improvements. An area which was identified as needing work was the understanding by social work teams as to the child's situation, how they have felt

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and their experiences and impact of trauma they have been through and how best to report on this.

Concerns were also raised with regard to the number of teenage pregnancies, and it was queried whether the areas where the mothers were living could be picked up on with a view to directing resources to where it was most prevalent if there was a pattern.

It was confirmed that there was work to be done and that looking at maternity services in terms of collecting data may be an option to explore.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the performance position at Quarter 3 2021/22 for Priority 1 – Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life be noted;**
- (2) **the actions planned by the Children and Young People and Integrated Health and Social Care Directorates to address specific areas for performance in relation to Priority 1 be noted; and**
- (3) **the issue of increasing teenage pregnancies be put forward as a potential item for the 2022/23 to consider.**

42 **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS**

A presentation was provided by the Assistant Director for Education & Learning on the support for schools. The presentation covered the following areas:

- Covid monitoring dashboard – confirmed covid numbers;
- School covid monitoring dashboard – Primary sector;
- School covid monitoring dashboard – Secondary sector;
- Key changes to policy – Covid 19;
- Current and next steps;
- School improvement;
- Ofsted inspections Autumn 2021;
- What is working well, What needs to happen, Impact;
- What next?; and
- Celebrating success.

A query was raised with regard to the improvement offer what work was done specifically to develop staff skills to meet needs of care leavers and help them get the most from their education.

Members were informed that Virtual School had a lot of resources and information fed through this medium which is focussed on looking at looked after children and the reasons they are looked after, their needs and how to develop their ambitions. Those schools also get a Pupil Premium for such children which should be spent on putting in support for each of those children to help meet their needs.

A query was raised with regards to schools setting a balanced budget for 2022/23 and it was agreed that this information would be circulated following the meeting when available.

* **Resolved that the presentation be noted.**

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43 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Lead for Practice Improvement which updated Members on the Children's Services improvements. The Improvement Plan highlighted the following priority areas:

- Key findings;
- Four key priorities;
- Immediate action;
- What's gone well in February;
- What are we worried about; and
- What needs to happen.

Members queried what evidence of actual strategies with targets and timelines was available to measure progress.

It was confirmed that there were multiple layer strategies which were being worked on and implemented, however there were many strands to each of those strategies and a lot of information. This could be provided to Members if needed.

It was emphasised that staff voicing their concerns and issues was important and information on what could be done to support staff would be useful to circulate to Members to give them a better understanding of what needed to change.

* **Resolved that the report be noted.**

44 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The CYPS Work Programme was provided to Members. A work programme planning session would be held at the start of the new municipal year.

Access to Dental Appointments was put forward for consideration in the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee and it was suggested that a possible joint piece of work could be done with the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee on that topic.

It was suggested that a piece of work on teenage pregnancy rates be considered for the work programme.

Members also suggested work be considered on commissioning and quality assurance for care and support for children with disabilities be put forward for consideration for the next municipal year.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the report be noted;**
- (2) **consideration be given to include an item on the future work programme regarding Access to Dental Appointments in conjunction with the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee;**

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- (3) consideration be given to include an item on the future work programme with regard to teenage pregnancy rates in the borough; and**
- (4) consideration be given to include an item on commissioning and quality assurance for care and support for children with disabilities.**

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