
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 26th June 2014

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Overview of the work carried by the Directorate of Children's Services

Purpose of Report

1. To enable Scrutiny Committee to gain an understanding of the range of work and responsibilities undertaken by the Directorate of Children's Services.

Background

2. The work of the Directorate is delivered through a wide and varied statutory basis and many elements of the service are highly regulated. There are considerable risks associated with service delivery within the Directorate relating to harm to vulnerable children, attainment and aspiration and reputational risk to the Council.
3. The Directorate of Children's Service is working in the context of:
 - a) Increased demand for service
 - b) Higher and increased regulatory and statutory requirements upon the Directorate
 - c) More expectations of our performance by regulators such as OfSTED and the general public
4. In order to explain the nature of provision this report now goes through the main service areas in each of the three divisions of the Directorate together with the Director Support Team (Asset Management).

Education Services Division

5. Education Services has a portfolio of statutory duties provided to schools and young people. On behalf of the Council, Education Services undertake statutory duties in relation to sufficiency of places in school and early years settings, admissions, non-attendance and assessment of pupil performance, monitoring and challenging the performance of schools and settings. Other statutory duties include special educational needs, educational achievement of looked after children, monitoring the wellbeing and education provision for children whose families have elected to home

educate and to provide education for pupils who are at risk, or are excluded from schools. There is a range of school improvement support available on a traded or part-traded basis. There are some specialist services available for children with learning and physical disabilities.

Educational Quality Services

6. Educational Quality Services provides support to teachers, managers and governors in settings that are subject to regulation by OfSTED. As well as helping to ensure that the quality of education in the borough is as good as possible, these services support individual settings that are at risk of adverse OfSTED judgements, or which have received adverse judgements and need to make accelerated progress in order to gain a judgement of "good". The local authority itself is subject to inspection in this area

Integrated Youth Support

7. Integrated Youth Support provides a range of services for young people - Youth Service, Information Advice and Guidance, Youth Offending Service, Teenage Pregnancy. These services are all targeted on the most vulnerable young people where there is a risk of significant harm or vulnerability associated with offending, worklessness and poor aspiration and achievement. There is a growing problem within the borough of young people who are not engaged in positive activities e.g. education, training and/or employment, drifting into harmful and criminal activities.

Education Traded Services

8. A relatively small amount of provision to schools is traded. As such it is schools that meet the cost of this, not the Council. We are seeking ways in which we can optimise the returns from this trading so as to reduce the need for savings in other areas. It should be noted that some element of trading will ensure that local services are available at immediate notice when schools require support; such as when they are judged as *requiring improvement* or *inadequate*.

Children and Families Division

9. Children and Families has a portfolio of services which provide support to children, young people and their families. This includes universally delivered provision through to targeted support for children in need, vulnerable children and those with additional needs. The emphasis is on early identification of need and providing integrated support when extra help is required. Children and Families also lead on parenting support and the provision of specialist services for those children for whom the Council has a statutory responsibility relating to child protection and children in care.

Social Work Services

10. Social Work Services support and provide protection to the most vulnerable children and young people in the Borough. Safeguarding those children is the Directorate's highest priority. This service responds to concerns that a child is in danger of significant harm and undertakes child protection enquiries with Police colleagues. The service provides support to children who are subject to a child protection plan and

children who are on the edge of care, or who are taken into care, and become the responsibility of the local authority and to whom the Council has a corporate parenting responsibility.

Looked After Children Services

11. Looked after Children Services make a range of provision to those young people in the care of the Council which includes the provision of a range of placement options such as fostering and adoption. The service manages five Council run children's homes and is responsible for commissioning placements from independent sector providers to meet the needs of looked after children. There are a range of support services for care leavers and the management of supervised contact arrangements for children in care with their birth families.

Family Support Services

12. Family Support Services are predominantly engaged in the provision of early help and preventative activities to reduce the risk of children experiencing significant harm or neglect and/or entering care. Many of the services are provided through our network of Children's Centres, parenting programme management and targeted family support. In addition the nationally funded Troubled Families programme is also located in this part of the division. This is a "high profile" project subject to scrutiny by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Included within this portfolio is the management of our Adventure Playground.

Quality and Partnership Division

13. Quality and Partnership is concerned with supporting the Directorate's work to comply with internal and external performance review, scrutiny and regulatory frameworks, and promoting our work in partnership with other agencies, especially in order to improve the safety, health and well being of children and young people.

The Safeguarding & Review Unit

14. The Safeguarding & Review Unit (S&RU) fulfils a diverse range of functions in supporting the Directorate of Children's Services, the Council and the work of Dudley Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB). The unit focuses on reviewing the safety of children, particularly those in need of protection, and securing good outcomes for children in care. It is responsible for providing independent chairing of child protection conferences, statutory looked after reviews, foster home reviews and complex strategy meetings, and support to inter-agency working arrangements in respect of safeguarding children & young people.

Health and Well Being

15. Health and Well Being contains a range of Council provided and traded services. Catering and Client Services and a large part of Educational Psychology provision are traded.
16. This part of the division also includes our Parent Partnership Service, elements of provision for children and young people with disabilities to ensure that they and their families enjoy the best possible health and well being, and coordination of our partnership activity with all other agencies, including the NHS, schools and the police.

Commissioning

17. The Commissioning function supports all areas of Children's Services to strengthen commissioning and procurement practice at all stages of the commissioning cycle. It also includes specific commissioned services including the Travel and Transport Service and Dudley Grid for Learning, and our General Management Team.

Workforce Development

18. The Workforce Development Service supports the whole Directorate in order to ensure that our personnel are properly prepared and enabled to carry out their duties and to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

The service focuses on:

- Implementing and creating effective strategies to ensure successful workforce development
- Developing effective cross divisional and partnership working practices
- Linking workforce development to identified current service priorities
- Establishing clear information about the skills of current workforce and use gap analysis information to plan further development
- Clear leadership development

Policy, Performance and Information Services

19. The Policy, Performance, and Information Service teams deliver services to the public and employees. They include the executive support team which provides business support to the Director and Assistant Directors, policy development and implementation, performance management and reporting, including data capture and analysis, supporting and challenging the performance of others and supporting the use of IT systems, information governance and effective use of technology, coordination of activity on internal and external inspection, review and audit, equality and diversity, and quality assurance and development.

Director Support; Asset Management

20. The work of this service includes fulfilling a number of key statutory obligations including ensuring that all minimum standards for the maintenance, access to and health and safety of school premises are adhered to and to ensure effective place planning to provide sufficient pupil places for all primary, secondary and special schools, instigating the statutory processes around alterations to maintained schools,

closure of schools and transfer of land upon a change of school category. The Service also ensures that all capital investment work to the Council's assets including refurbishment and new build is delivered in an innovative and up to date approach whilst considering all relevant legislation and industry guidelines.

Finance

21. The Directorate of Children's Services has a Local Authority net budget of £70.6m for 2014/15 financial year. Within the budget of £70.6m, £11.4m is non-controllable, giving a controllable budget of £59.2m. The local authority budget funds activity across all of the divisions.
22. The Directorate also receives various grant funding for work on areas such as; Troubled Families (£350k), Youth Offending Service (£570k), SEN Reform (£361k), Adoption Reform (£258k), Music Education Hub Grant (£372k) and Education Services Grant (£5,140k). All values quoted are for 2014/15 financial year.
23. The final main source of funding is the Dedicated Schools Grant. For 2014/15 financial year the total grant is £235.7m (including academies). Of this £26.4m of the grant is allocated to the central services outlined above, largely funding activity within the Education Services Division. The remainder of £209.3m is to fund the activity of schools.

Law

24. The key legislation underpinning the Directorate are the Children's Acts 1989, 2004 and 2006, Education and Inspection Act 2006, Children and Families Bill 2014

Equality Impact

25. The work of the Directorate of Children's Services supports parents, families, communities and partner agencies in providing safe homes and environments, security and stability for all children and young people in the Borough. In partnership with schools the Directorate contributes to the raising of attainment and aspiration for all children and assists in narrowing the gap between all children and vulnerable groups. It has a major role to fulfill in relation to adulthood.

Recommendation

26. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report and determine from the information provided if there are any additional areas of scrutiny which they would wish to identify as a focus for the 2014/15 municipal year programme for scrutiny.



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