



Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 13th, March 2023 at 6pm
At Saltwells Education Development Centre
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley**

Agenda - Public Session (Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Apologies for absence
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2023 as a correct record (Pages 5 to 21)
5. Public Forum
6. Action Tracker/Future Business (Pages 22 to 26)
7. Children's Services Improvement Update (Pages 27 to 43)
8. Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23 (Pages 44 to 55)
9. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days-notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).





Chief Executive

Dated: 2nd March 2023

Distribution:

Councillor P Bradley (Chair)

Councillor D Bevan (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Bayton, H Bills, S Bothul, D Borley, A Hughes, P Lee, K Lewis, A Millward, M Qari, S Ridney and S Saleem.

Invitee: Councillor R Buttery – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Co-opted Members with voting rights on matters concerning education: -

C Collins – Special Schools Representative

T Reid – Worcester Diocesan Board of Education Representative

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Minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

**Thursday 19th January 2023 at 6.00 pm
in the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor P Bradley (Chair)
Councillors H Bills, D Borley, S Bothul, A Hughes, P Lee, K Lewis, A Millward, M Qari and S Ridney.

Invitee:

D Madden – Local Government Association

Officers:

A Cartwright (Head of Service Consultant in Public Health), J Dean (Interim Head of SEND), C Driscoll (Director of Children's Services), L Jones-Moore (Principal Accountant), I Newman (Director of Finance and Legal Services), M Spittle (Head of Access and Prevention – Adult Social Care), E Thomas (Lead Education Advisor), J Wood (Interim Service Manager – Children's Commissioning), A Wright (Virtual School Head Teacher) and K Buckle (Democratic Services Officer).

36. **Apology for absence**

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor C Bayton.



37. **Appointment of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members appointed for this meeting of the Committee.

38. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor A Hughes declared a non-pecuniary interest as the parent of two children who had special educational needs and had attended specialist nursery provision.

Councillor P Lee declared a pecuniary interest as he was engaged as a Dudley Foster Carer.

Councillor K Lewis declared a pecuniary interest as an Early Years Provider.

39. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2022, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed.

40. **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

41 **Opening Remarks of the Director of Children's Services**

In view of the recent Ofsted Inspection, the Director of Children's Services provided Members with a brief outline of the comments of the Inspectorate referring to improvements in services since 2021 and the overall judgment that although some services still required improvement the inspection had been overall more positive in the detail.

The report received from Ofsted recognised a number of strengths including the effective front door system operated at the Multi Safeguarding Hub; Children's Services provided a good response to children missing from a children's home or private fostering; the strengths of the Virtual School were good and effective; Adoption Services were well organised; Children in Care received a good service; most care plans were well written; permanency support was stronger due to working in partnership; there was a commitment to corporate parenting; there was a strong emphasis on growing your own Social Workers and there were six apprentices who were care leavers.

There were five areas that required re-inspection which included the need to increase advocacy for children and young people; the need to focus on those in registered care homes and whether to commence legal proceedings on a more-timely basis; there was the need to focus on assessments and care plan supervision.

Workforce capacity remained problematic, however considerable work had been completed during the previous 12 to 18 months, and although that work had resulted in some success with regard to recruitment, vacancies remained an issue.

Members would receive further updates at future meetings.

On the morning of this meeting the DfE had undertaken a further formal review and were extremely pleased with the trajectory of travel within services.

The Chair referred to the positive work that had been undertaken in relation to services since 2019 and the end of the Dudley Improvement Board meetings as that was no longer required.

Councillor S Ridney referred to the positive presentations made by Social Workers at the Dudley Improvement Board.

Resolved

That the information reported on at the meeting, be noted.

42. **Action Tracker/Future Business**

The Chair updated Members in relation to the Action Tracker referring to the Corporate Quarterly Performance Report that had been emailed to

Members for their consideration, comments and questions, and the letter that had been forwarded to the Members of Parliament of the Borough in relation to immigrant families and asylum seekers.

The visits to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and Brierley Hill Family Centre were mentioned and it was noted that further visits would be arranged.

It was reported that a visit for Members to the Leapfrog facility in Netherton had been arranged to take place on the 27th, April 2022.

Resolved

That the information contained in the Action Tracker and Future Business for the Committee, be noted.

43. **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Members considered a joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Legal, and the Director of Children's Services on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26 as approved by the Cabinet on 14th December 2022, with the emphasis on those proposals relating to the Committee's terms of reference, specifically Children's Services.

The Director of Finance and Legal Services presented the report submitted referring to the Government Funding with the Chancellor delivering his Autumn Statement that provided a high level of national allocations. The detail of Dudley's allocations had been received on 19th December 2022 and would be presented to the Cabinet on 16th February 2023 and to full Council on 6th March 2023.

Members were referred to paragraph 30 of the report submitted, and Members noted that the summary forecast spending of £30.4m had raised to £3.10m by 2025/26, the resources figure estimate had raised from £300m in 2023/24 to £318m in 2025/26. Following the receipt of Dudley's allocations the forecast resource figure would be £2.1m better in each year.

- (a) The Chair referred to the new emerging pressures in relation to managed step down from external residential placements, and the movement of external placements into internal residential placements which in total resulted in unachievable savings of £800,000, and the looked after children placements net forecast pressures on external residential placements.

The Director of Finance and Legal Services clarified that those pressures had been assessed as unachievable pressures as far as savings were concerned.

- (b) The Chair referred to the more cost effective internal residential placements which also provided consistency for looked after children.

The Director of Children's Services referred to the long-term strategy for children to remain safely with their families for longer periods of time and two methods for achieving that aim, one of which was being placed with a loving foster carer, stating that recruitment of additional foster carers remained a priority.

It was noted that pressures remained in relation to residential placements in so far as specialist provision was concerned, as that would require huge support with heavily regulated provision. It was stated that the system nationally was broken with staff calling on 300 plus providers each time that specialist provision was required and demand and cost pressures remaining.

- (c) The Chair suggested that in order to attract foster carers a Council Tax Reduction Scheme could be offered to those carers as an incentive.
- (d) Councillor P Lee referred to the retention of Social Workers and the requirement to provide incentives insofar as salaries were concerned.
- (e) Councillor A Millward also reiterated the need to retain Social Workers.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that there was a memorandum of understanding with other Black Country Authorities in relation to the salaries of Agency Staff not exceeding a certain amount, however certain Authorities received the authority to exceed the cap and it was anticipated that the Department for Education would make an announcement in relation to the national problem of recruitment and retention during the new year.

It was noted that the Directorate had introduced a market forces payment of £7,000 in 2022 that had made a slight difference in relation to Assessment Services, however that had not impacted on Safeguarding and Support Services and as the shortage of Social Workers remained a national problem further work would be investigated in Dudley to try and address the issue.

- (f) In response to a question from the Chair in relation to salary scales in other Authorities, the Director of Children’s Services advised that not all Authorities would share that information.
- (g) Arising from a question from Councillor S Ridney in relation to no savings being identified for the 2023/24 municipal year regarding Family Safeguarding, the Director of Finance and Legal Services referred to the projected savings in future resulting from keeping children with their families reducing child placement costs, and in relation to the placement budget a comprehensive breakdown would be provided to Members.

In relation to the cessation of the voluntary sector contract that had produced a saving, it was noted that the work contracted had not been undertaken and the contract had come to an end.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposals for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26, as set out in the report and Appendices to the report submitted, be received and noted
- (2) That the Director of Finance and Legal Services be requested to investigate the possibility of offering a Council Tax Reduction Scheme to Foster Carers.
- (3) That the Director of Finance and Legal Services be requested to provide Members with the detail surrounding the savings against the base budget for children’s placements.

44. Home to School Transport Policy

A report of the Director of Children’s Services was submitted on the Home to School Transport Policy. Appended to the report submitted were the Consultation on the proposed changes to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council’s Transport Policy for children and young people, Home to School analysis and feedback, the aged four to sixteen proposed Transport Policy, the proposed Post sixteen Transport Statement, the Parent Carer Forum’s Transport Consultation response, an email from a parent containing comments on the aged four to sixteen proposed new Transport Assistance Policy and feedback from a parent on the proposed aged four to sixteen proposed new Transport Assistance Policy.

The Interim Service Manager, Children's Commissioning provided a brief presentation on the Home to School Transport Consultation, referring to the objectives of the Consultation, the proposed changes, feedback to the Consultation and key messages.

A summary of the Consultation and the next steps were referred to and included completing changes to processes and procedures, supporting the new polices in consultation with parents during January and February 2023; producing implementation, communication and engagement plans during the months of January to March 2023; developing terms of reference and governance engagement arrangements for the new Stage 2 Appeals Panel; publication of the Transport Assistance Policy by 3rd April 2023 and the implementation of the four to sixteen Transport Assistance Policy by 3rd April 2023 and the post sixteen Transport Statement by 4th September 2023.

- (a) The Chair referred to the recommendations contained within the report submitted and stated that although he understood the objectives of the proposed changes, he was of the opinion that Elected Member involvement within the appeal process should remain from both a democratic and moral stance.
- (b) The Chair also stated that he was pleased that the best practice of another authority in relation to travel training had been considered as part of the proposed changes to the Policy, and sought clarification on whether that aspect of policy would cover those children and young people who had complex needs.

In response the Interim Service Manager, Children's Commissioning stated that each application for transport assistance would be considered individually on its own merits.

The Director of Children's Services elaborated on the response stating that complex needs covered a wide range of needs including those which were significant, however some young people would require the opportunity to live independently in a wide stream environment. There was also the requirement to focus on those who would benefit from that opportunity, in order to make the best use of those resources that were available to the Directorate.

- (c) In response to a question from Councillor A Hughes, the Interim Service Manager, Children's Commissioning reported that there would be transitional support for those children under the age of five who currently received travel assistance, and work was underway to provide locally based provision to support children across the Borough.

- (d) Councillor A Hughes sought assurances that should the appeals process change that each case would be considered in the appropriate manner.

The Director of Children's Services provided assurances that senior Officers who were to consider appeals would fully understand the new Policy and decisions would be based on the appropriate legislation.

- (e) Councillor A Millward expressed concerns with removing Elected Members from the appeals process stating that they would always carry out their fiduciary duties whilst considering the financial position of the Local Authority.
- (f) Councillor H Bills stated that Officers reaching decisions on other Officers decisions would not be the correct process for appeals and Elected Members must continue to be involved with the appeals process which would guarantee natural justice.
- (g) Councillor M Qari requested confirmation on how the Local Authority would discharge their equality duties especially in relation to those with protective characteristics and were those details covered by the new Policy.

The Interim Service Manager, Children's Commissioning stated that there was no evidence previously presented to demonstrate that the Policy had disadvantaged any person, with the new Policy improving on the current one ensuring it was clearer and easy to understand and apply.

It was also stated that by examining previous Ombudsman cases it had been evidenced that those cases that had been successful had been due to not having clear and transparent decision-making processes in place.

The Director of Children's Services referred to the work that had been and would continue with the Dudley Parent Carer Forum in relation to the new Policy.

The Director of Children's Services referred to the need to have a clear appeals process as there were currently some inconsistencies in relation to decision making in relation to appeals which were not in line with the current Policy and the requirement to strengthen the Policy.

There had been a wide Consultation period and it had been broadly published, although 58 responses had been received which was a low response rate, however it was noted that the public could not be forced to respond to the Consultation.

It was reported that an Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken in relation to the current Policy which would apply to the new Policy, and that Assessment would remain in place, with the new Policy being refined and improved.

- (h) Councillor M Qari recommended that a new Equality Impact Assessment be undertaken in relation to the new Policy.
- (i) Councillor D Borley requested details of what support was available to post 19 young people as far as travel assistance was concerned. In response the Director of Children's Services stated that regarding those young people with special educational needs and disabilities there was the requirement to meet educational needs up until the age of 25 years, and under the Children Act there was the requirement to meet broader needs from the age of 18 years, with most following the Care Assessment process, however as far as transport assistance was concerned, the majority of colleges provided transport, with the onus of providing transport not resting solely with the Local Authority.
- (j) In response to a question from Councillor A Hughes in relation to the consultation process, the Interim Service Manager – Children's Commissioning stated that there had been a public Consultation in relation to the new proposed Policy and that process included attendings schools to inform parents and carers of the Consultation, with parents and carers being engaged with within different forums.

It was noted that the Consultation period had been extended to 90 days to offer wider engagement.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted on proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy following the feedback from the consultation exercise and recommended next steps, be noted.
- (2) That the significant proposed changes to the draft Policies, in light of the feedback from the consultation exercise, be noted.
- (3) That the work outlined in the section entitled 'Next Steps' with the objective of completing implementation from April 2023 contained within the report submitted be supported.

- (4) That the Director of Children's Services be requested to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the new proposed Home to School Transport Policy.
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45. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement Update.**

The Committee received a report on the progress of the SEND improvement journey.

The Interim Head of SEND presented the report submitted referring to the significant changes in the service since 2019 and the Written Statement of Action that had now been accelerated into a progress plan.

It was reported that areas had been identified for improvement that sat in specific workstreams and the need to ensure that there were clear impact plans.

It was noted that in November 2022 the local area was subject to a six month review of progress and the outcomes of that review were contained in the report submitted. Following that review by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission a letter had been received in relation to both the good progress areas and those areas which still required the impact to be assessed on the ground with the need to embed processes, that may take some time before that impact can be assessed.

Surveys were actively being completed to monitor progress and there was the requirement to investigate the next assessment framework in order to plan for the next Inspection.

The SEND operational performance was working well, assessment processes were being conducted on a timely basis following the detailed work conducted with the SEND team who were now focused on the assessment process, and the work in relation to strengthening Education Health and Care needs assessment process to ensure that decision making was transparent and robust and the assessment was through and supported the output of high quality Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's). The positive feedback from the Parent Carers Forum was referred to.

EHCP's had become more timely with all being issued by the end of December and within the 20 week timeframe, with plans being scrutinised in order to provide better outcomes for children.

It was accepted that there were concerns in relation to the increase in demand for EHCP's in the main relating to the early years cohort of children, however it was believed that national and regional areas were witnessing an increase in numbers.

The need continued to ensure that mainstream education was meeting the needs of children earlier and remained all inclusive.

Mention was made of the Department for Education Grant Funding that was available in order to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The application for funding was to be made on 23rd January 2023, notification of the outcome of the funding application would be received in March 2023.

- (a) The Chair commented positively on children remaining in mainstream education with the relevant support, referring to his recent meeting with headteachers.
- (b) Councillor A Hughes referred to the continuing demand in relation to specialist support and Officers responded stating the need to prevent reduced hours in school for those receiving specialist support, and continuing work on inclusive pathways together with ensuring children were not excluded from education and the support required to ensure children's specialist needs were met.
- (c) Councillor A Hughes expressed concerns that some children were not fully supported in mainstream provision and the individual needs of children should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Head of SEND provided assurances in the above regard, referring to parent's expectations and stating that the new funding would assist with that specialist provision that was required.

Councillor H Bills referred to the funding required by schools in order to remain all-inclusive in mainstream provision.

- (d) Councillor A Millward referred to the high number of children with SEND compared to neighbouring areas and the larger proportion of children who were primary age with SEND which would produce an upward trend in those requiring specialist support.

In response to a further question the Head of SEND advised that some families with SEND children may obtain Disability Living Allowance and the majority of requests for assessments were received from schools.

Resolved

- (1) That the current progress of the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) outlined in the report submitted, be noted.
- (2) That the contents of the SEND Operational Performance Data, as contained in the report submitted, be noted.
- (3) That the contents of the School Inclusion Update, be noted.

46. Dudley Virtual School – Summary of Annual Report 2021/22

Members considered a report on the programme of activities, systems and processes that were being developed to improve outcomes and enhance learning for children in care.

The Virtual School Headteacher and Lead Education Advisor presented the report submitted, referring to the support and delivery arrangements and academic outcomes for the early years cohort of children and the data analysis work conducted in relation to those children.

It was noted that the academic gap between children in care and all Dudley pupils had widened from 2019 to 2022 by 3.1%.

During the pandemic speech and language skills were impacted upon and screening tools were developed in order to examine teaching interventions work with schools and nurseries together with the Early Years Teams.

Details in relation to Year One Phonics as contained in the report submitted were referred to and it was noted that better outcomes were achieved by Dudley pupils as compared with the national and regional children looked after.

The cohort of the Key Stage Two children was referred to and it was noted that there were 35 children in the Year 6 Cohort, with 77% being educated in Dudley schools and 23% out of Borough. In this age group 60% had been identified SEND including 43% with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP's) and that high number had impacted on the outcomes for that year group.

The Year 11 Key Stage Four three year unvalidated outcomes as contained in the report submitted were referred to and it was noted that improvements achieved over the preceding three years had been consolidated this year with the return to external examinations. The percentage of young people achieving strong passes in English and Maths had been consistent across the last three years, having risen from 6.1% in the 2018/19 academic year.

It was stated that not all children undertook GCSE's and there had been a focus upon young people who had experienced a change in their educational settings.

Details in relation to Post 16 apprenticeships were outlined.

There had been an increase in level three studies with children in care wishing to access higher level education, apprenticeships or university supported by a Post 16 Advisor.

It was reported that the full cohort of children in care had an increasing number with identified SEND, 25% with EHCP's which represented a slight increase. The percentages of those receiving Dudley provision and those on roll out of Borough were outlined.

In relation to the quality of educational provision 81% of children in care cohort were in good or outstanding schools.

The attendance to schools by children in care had improved closer to pre-pandemic levels, demonstrating a further improvement from the last academic year with the proactive work implemented to support that cohort of children being recognised.

Work with schools and designated meetings taking place in order to support staff and young people continued.

It was reported that the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET's) Graph indicated that there had been no NEET's in the previous year and as part of the Department for Education (DfE) pilot new initiatives had been introduced with Post 16 providers in order to provide individual support systems to young people.

It was stated that from the recent Inspection PEP's had been assessed to be of good quality, with young people's views being a thread throughout the Plans, with 95% of PEP's being of good quality or outstanding.

In relation to learning development work was conducted closely with Colleges and with other Authorities Virtual Schools.

There had been a programme forged from the partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Virtual Schools across the Black Country has seen the Literacy Transition programme launched.

The work conducted in relation to primary literacy was outlined and the nurturing resilience programme which contained elements of raising attainment for disadvantaged young people.

Processes were investigated in order to target more vulnerable learners in different ways.

The Trauma Information and Attachment Aware Schools offer would be supported by the ARC tools and training provided by either AC Education or KCA, creating a tailored model for each setting. This would help to support schools and their staff to be more supportive and knowledgeable on how to support children and young people.

Aspirational work was being conducted with University's to provide outreach enrichment activities.

The benefit from mentors via the Spring Forward initiative was referred to.

There was to be a graduation event the following week for those care leavers who had obtained their degrees and were now in full time employment.

The Arts Offer and Sports Link had been extended.

In relation to workforce development an annual conference was to take place on 12th July 2023 at Dudley College.

- (a) The Chair commented positively on the creative work of the Virtual School and Members applauded the service for all of their work.
- (b) Councillor S Ridney expressed her thanks for the Member of the Virtual School who attends Working Groups.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the Dudley Virtual School – Summary Annual report 2021 – 2022 including the actions to improve outcomes for Dudley children looked after pupils, be noted.
 - (2) That the Virtual School Headteacher be requested to submit further reports to the Committee that include an insight into the types of support that had been effective for looked after pupils.
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47. **Feedback Report from the joint meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Working Group, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Working Group and the Children's Corporate Parenting Board Working Group.**

Members considered a report of the Chair was considered providing feedback from the joint meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Working Group, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Working Group and the Children's Corporate Parenting Board Working Group held on 15th December 2022.

Resolved

- (1) That the short-term crisis interventions that the Council provide be noted, and that Public Health be tasked to research into good and innovative practises in other parts of the country, in respect of the long-term strategy to tackle the cycle of poverty embedded in parts of Dudley's Communities to assist with the development of the Dudley Strategy, and to report back to a future meeting of the joint working group.
- (2) That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health provide a detailed Ward by Ward breakdown of the percentage of children living in poverty within the Dudley Borough.
- (3) That a clear set of Key Performance Indicators and robust monitoring of the council's activities on poverty reduction be agreed as part of the Dudley strategy.
- (4) That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health provide a list of the Schools in the Borough taking part in the National Breakfast Club Scheme and the companies schools work with to provide breakfast club supplies.

- (5) That the Leadership of the Council be recommended to write to Central Government, as a matter of urgency, to request additional funding during the current cost of living crisis to assist families. It is acknowledged that the Government have to date made money available to assist families with fuel and food however as the crisis deepens, more families who would traditionally not have found themselves in relative poverty were now struggling. Demand on the voluntary sector was growing and resources were not keeping pace.
- (6) That the Housing and Communities Directorate be reminded of their Corporate Parenting role and responsibilities and be a named and active key partner within the Dudley Strategy.
- (7) That a report on the role and responsibilities of the Private Sector Housing Team; what powers of enforcement they have at their disposal and an understanding of how they put the child at the centre of the work they undertake, be submitted to a future meeting of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee Working Group.
- (8) That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health, to pursue the arrangements of a meeting with the Department for Works and Pensions, to raise concerns of the impact of the change in benefit eligibility and to consider the possibility of sharing data and to notify a school when a child was eligible for free school meals.
- (9) That a further report on ideas and initiatives Dudley could utilise to develop healthy High Streets and provide advice on whether fast-food delivery organisations require a special license to deliver food, be submitted to a future meeting of the joint Working Group.
- (10) That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health, provide the joint Working Group Members with a copy of the delivery plan in relation to the Family Hub Funding.
- (11) That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health, provide an update on the number of schools enrolled on the Apprenticeship Levy.
- (12) That Public Health undertake research and benchmark with other Authorities in relation to the Car Free Streets Scheme and provide a report outlining the advantages and disadvantages to a future meeting of the Working Group.

- (13) That a further report to review the data and progress made in relation to Mental Health needs and support for children and young people, be submitted to the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee in 12 months and included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- (14) That the Acting Director of Public Health and Wellbeing provide a briefing note on the services commissioned and provided by Cranstoun.

48. **Questions from Members to the Chair under (Council Procedure Rule 11.8)**

No questions had been received.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm

CHAIR

Action Tracker – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Subject (Date of Meeting)	Recommendation/action	Responsible Officer/Area	Status/Notes
Closing Remarks of the Chair (13 th June 2022)	Minute 11 – The Chair referred to the various visits that had been requested, including to the MASH and Family Centres, and it was noted that those visits were currently being arranged by Children’s Services.	Directorate of Children’s Services (C Driscoll)	Ongoing
Annual Report 2021 – 2022 (5 th September 2022)	Minute 20(3) – That a tracking exercise be undertaken, and Members be advised of the number of those Post 16 entering the Youth Justice Service who had experienced problems at school.	Service Director of Education, SEND and Family Solutions	To form part of the next Education Report submitted to Committee.

Serious Violence Statutory Duty and Strategy (9 th November 2022)	That all Elected Members be provided with details of support services available to tackle violence and serious crime.	Head of Service Consultant in Public Health – (A Cartwright)	Draft mapping forwarded to the Chair, Violence Reduction Partnership are working on a catalogue to include all services available.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (19 th January 2023)	That the possibility of offering a Council Tax Reduction Scheme to Foster Carers be investigated.	Head of Finance and Legal Services	Email response to Members on 9 th February 2023
	That Members be provided with the detail surrounding the savings against the base budget for children’s placements.	Head of Finance and Legal Services	Email response to Members on 9 th February 2023
Home to School Transport Policy	An Equality Impact Assessment be carried out in relation to the new proposed Home to School Transport Policy.	Director of Children’s Services	Emailed to Members on 25 th January 2023
Feedback Report from the joint meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Working Group, the Health and Adult	A report be submitted on good and innovative practices in other parts of the country, in respect of the long-term strategy to tackle the cycle of poverty embedded in parts of Dudley’s Communities to assist with the development of the Dudley Strategy.	Director for Public Health	Report is due in June 2023

<p>Social Care Scrutiny Committee Working Group and the Children’s Corporate Parenting Board Working Group.</p>	<p>That a detailed Ward by Ward basis breakdown of the percentage of children living in poverty within the Dudley Borough be provided.</p> <p>That a clear set of Key performance Indicators and robust monitoring of the Council’s activities on poverty reduction be agreed as part of the Dudley Strategy</p> <p>That a list be provided of the Schools in the Borough taking part in the National Breakfast Club Scheme and the companies schools work with to provide breakfast club supplies.</p> <p>That the Leadership of the Council be recommended to write to Central Government, as a matter of urgency, to request additional funding during the current cost of living crisis to assist families.</p> <p>That the Housing and Communities Directorate be reminded of their Corporate Parenting role and responsibilities and be a named and active partner within the Dudley Strategy.</p>	<p>Head of Service - Consultant in Public Health</p> <p>Director of Public Health.</p> <p>Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children and Young People</p> <p>Director of Public Health</p>	<p>Due June 2023 (awaiting census data analysis)</p> <p>To be confirmed by email by the Director of Public Health due March 2023</p> <p>Information requested and to be provided by the end of March 2023 by email to Members.</p> <p>Letter forwarded to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 14th February 2023.</p> <p>Email confirmation to Members</p>
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	<p>That a report be submitted on the role and responsibilities of the Private Sector Housing Team: what powers of enforcement they have at their disposal and an understanding of how they put the child at the centre of the work they undertake.</p> <p>To pursue the arrangements of a meeting with the Department for Works and Pensions, to raise concerns of the impact of the change in benefit eligibility and to consider the possibility of sharing data and to notify a school when a child was eligible for free school meals.</p> <p>That a further report on ideas and initiatives Dudley could utilise to develop healthy High Streets and provide advice on whether fast-food delivery organisations require a special license to deliver food.</p> <p>That a copy of the delivery plan in relation to the Family Hub Funding be provided to Members of the joint Working Group.</p>	<p>Director of Housing and Communities</p> <p>Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p> <p>Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p> <p>Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p>	<p>Report</p> <p>To email Members the outcome of those discussions. Meeting arranged for 3rd April 2023</p> <p>Report due September 2023</p> <p>Emailed to Members on 8th February 2023</p>
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	<p>That an update be provided on the number of schools enrolled on the Apprenticeship Levy</p> <p>That Public Health undertake research and benchmark with other Authorities in relation to the Car Free Streets Scheme and outline the advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>The data and progress made in relation to Mental Health needs and support for children and young people be reviewed.</p> <p>That a briefing note be provided on the services commission and provided by Cranstoun.</p>	<p>Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p> <p>Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p> <p>Head of Service Children and Young Peoples Public Health</p> <p>Acting Director of Public Health</p>	<p>Email to Members due March 2023</p> <p>Report to be submitted in 12 months (due November 2023)</p> <p>Report to be submitted in 12 months (due November 2023)</p> <p>Emailed to Members on 8th February 2023</p>
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Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 13th March 2023

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Children's Services Improvement Update

Purpose of report

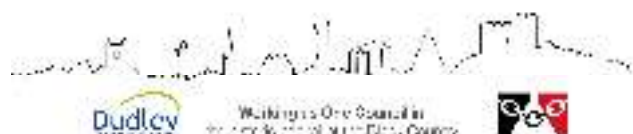
1. The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the improvement actions set out in the 2022/23 Improvement Plan, and in the oversight of the Dudley Children's Improvement Partnership.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended:
 - That this updated report is received by the Committee for information and comment
 - That the Committee notes the outcome of the Ofsted ILACS inspection from November 2022, and that this shapes the next development plan
 - That the Committee notes the recommendation of the Department of Education that Dudley Children's Services is no longer in need of support and supervision

Background

3. The Committee received the previous report on 13th June 2022, which set out progress against the five areas of the 2022/23 Improvement Plan. These are listed below for ease of reference:
 1. Restorative Model of Practice
 2. Whole System



3. Learning Organisation
4. Partnership Working
5. Workforce

The improvement journey for the authority was shared with Ofsted in their full inspection (October and November 2022) of the Children's Directorate. Their findings were published on 13th January 2023, and identifies that Dudley is an authority that requires improvement to be good. This was in line with the self-evaluation presented to the inspecting team, who found that:

'senior leaders are under no illusions about the services and practices which require improvement. The Chief Executive, Lead Member and the children's services leadership team are aware of the challenges faced in ensuring Dudley's most vulnerable children are kept safe and enabled to thrive'.

At the same time, Hertfordshire were working alongside the Authority and completing a diagnostic exercise – auditing of children's records and the progress made alongside extensive staff interviews. This was undertaken as part of our preparation to adopt Family Safeguarding and was a helpful triangulation alongside the Ofsted report. Hertfordshire found that there was an open, reflective and optimistic workforce; that there was a stable and visible leadership, and where the impact of the practice model was bringing about change, although this was not yet consistently in place.

4. Children's Improvement Partnership:

The Dudley Children's Improvement Partnership has been overseen by the DfE appointed Improvement Advisor, Alastair Gibbons. The Partnership has continued to meet bimonthly and to specifically review the progress made in respect of delivering improved outcomes for the children of Dudley.

It is of note that the Partnership Meeting of 18th January 2023 confirmed the decision to conclude the partnership. This followed the recommendation of the Chair, noting the Ofsted judgement that had been received and in the light of the onward plan set out by the Directorate. This was an important decision on the part of the partnership, recognising the confidence in the foundations for improvement that have been set across the Directorate, as well as the commitment to partnership working through the now established Children and Young Person's Board, the Children's Group Safeguarding People Partnership and the Family Safeguarding Board.

Dept of Education oversight through Support and Supervision:

Dudley Children's Services have been subject to support and supervision for some considerable while, and longer than might usually be expected. This oversight is formally reviewed on a 6 monthly basis, and is reported to the Children's Minister.

On January 19th 2023, the authority met with the DfE alongside the Improvement Advisor. In his 3 monthly Advisor Report, Alastair Gibbons had set out that leadership, organisation and performance were now much stronger, and that this provided a foundation for delivering transformational practice and cultural change.

The DfE letter (report) back to the authority notes the substantive progress made; it recognises that the service is aware of the continued challenges, particularly in relation to recruiting and retaining social work staff. However, they were positive in relation to the onward plan that we have in place and recognised '*the significant amount of effort that leaders have committed to improving services for children and families in Dudley*'.

The decision with regards to the formal oversight through support and supervision is a Ministerial decision. The DfE have confirmed their recommendation that this intervention through Support and Supervision should now be ended.

Family Safeguarding:

This is a model of children's social work where adult facing workers are also in the team, with expertise in substance misuse, poor mental health and domestic abuse. It was developed in Hertfordshire, and they are supported through the DfE with a national team to facilitate this model across other authorities; we are the 19th local authority to formally implement this model.

We had previously taken some steps towards multi-disciplinary working in the development of our two **Family Comes First** (FCF) teams, designed to work with families where children were on the edge of care. Implemented in January 2022, the service transferred from Early Help into children's social care in July 2022. This development was based on learning from a peer authority, and had a clear focus on enabling children to remain with their families. The close collaboration and commissioning with key partners has enabled money mentors, substance misuse workers

and emotional well being staff to be deployed alongside social worker and family support workers.

In the year since their inception, the FCF teams have worked with 219 children in total. The teams have built their skills during this time and this has supported their capacity to work with children when their needs change – for example, at the outset, if there was a need to consider child protection, the team would not continue working with the family; this is no longer the case and the team has the skill and confidence to continue their work rather than change teams and social workers.

Over the 12 months, the total number of children that have needed to become looked after from the FCF teams has been 9, which is a positively small cohort. Of all children identified as being on the edge of care and worked with through FCF, 93% of the children did not need to become looked after. This too is strong evidence of the effectiveness of a whole family, multi-disciplinary approach.

Family Safeguarding, a model that builds on the multi-disciplinary way of working, has been seen to reduce the number of children in need of protection and the number of children who are in need of becoming looked after. Importantly, it is also attractive to staff and has a good track record in staff retention.

The Council has provided the financial support to enable the model to be adopted; the DfE has supported the service through the deployment of the Hertfordshire team; the staff are keen to progress this way of working – Hertfordshire diagnostic notes that *'there is an excitement for Family Safeguarding and an expectation that it will make a difference'*

Forward plan:

Ofsted has set out 5 areas of improvement for the authority, and these are listed below for ease of reference:

- The quality, consistency and timeliness of all assessments, plans, supervision and the recording of management decisions and their rationale
- The early consideration of the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline for children at risk of harm
- Management oversight of children in unregulated settings
- The promotion of advocacy and participation opportunities for children in care and care leavers
- Frontline workforce sufficiency

The sufficiency across our children's workforce at the front line remains an area of substantive challenge. The Ofsted Report noted the comprehensive workforce development plan is in place, but recognises the risk posed to this in the fragility of the current workforce. Our monthly Workforce Board in January 2023 noted that we have a 18% social worker vacancy level at this point, and a 12-month turnover rate of 19%. This inevitably means a change of social worker for a child and their family.

The deployment of the Market Forces Supplement (November 2022) for key roles has delivered impact, but this has not been as effective in the core service area for Support and Safeguarding, which remains the most difficult area for recruitment.

We have recruited alternatively qualified staff into our teams, in order to support where some tasks do not require a social worker. This has been well received and has formed part of the work, alongside FCF, for future planning of multi-disciplinary teams.

We are attending Compass Jobs Fair in March, to build on the reputational and recruitment success of last year. We have worked closely with colleagues in the Region in the consistent use of our shared Memorandum of Practice; this is strengthened in agreeing that authorities will not take staff on an agency basis who have resigned from permanent positions in other authorities.

We have a Workforce Board that continues a sole focus on social work. It is evident that we need to consider retention support to staff who remain loyal to the community here in Dudley. We are also looking to develop the social work career path, enabling progression to Advanced Practitioner in each team. We have achieved more recent success with a search model for recruitment and are working with HR Colleagues on maximising each of these opportunities. None the less, it does require swift and responsive action from across all parts of the authority to support effective and timely deployment – the compliance checks in recruitment, the IT kit in arriving at the Authority, the responsive management tools to support retention.

The workforce development plan continues and more widely, our forward plan is informed, but not confined by the Ofsted actions. It is set in our wider redesign and in the implementation of Family Safeguarding. There are three key pillars that set the structure of the next phase of our continued improvement:

1. To deploy Family Safeguarding, supported through the national practice team. This will include close working with Walsall and

Telford & Wrekin, two other authorities in our region who have adopted the model

2. To deliver our Directorate redesign, supporting a more seamless experience for our families – right place, right approach, right service. There will be reduced points of transition for children and the greater capacity for children to stay with their families
 3. To make best use of the leadership training programme deployed across the Directorate. A formal programme has been designed with the DfE and alongside our OD; it is financially supported through a grant. The impact will be reviewed through the Improvement Advisor, but importantly, in the development it has also shaped future leadership training across the authority. In addition, we have made good use of a national programme and 10 of our team managers or emerging team managers have accessed the Pathways Programme
5. This report is provided for information and update.

There are no representations made in the completion of the report, and no conflict of interest identified.

Finance

6. There are no financial implications that are specific to this update. The resource identified to support the implementation of Family Safeguarding has been previously addressed.

Law

7. There are no additional legal implications in receiving this report.

Risk Management

8. There are no additional material risks identified in receiving this report

Equality Impact

9. This report is by way of an update for the Committee; there is no identified impact on children or families with protected characteristics.
10. This updating report does not identify the need for equality impact assessment.

11. This report is to update the Committee on the impact of the Improvement plan. There has not been additional consultation with children or families in completing the report.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

12. There are no HR implications in this report

Commercial/Procurement

13. There are no commercial or procurement matters that are specifically raised in this updating report

Environment/Climate Change

14. The updating report submitted does not demonstrate an impact on the environment

Council Priorities and Projects

15. This updating report does not have additional impact in relation to the Council Plan. However, the impact of the work is aligned with the priorities in ensuring Dudley is a Safe and Healthy Borough



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

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Children first and at the heart of all we do

Childrens Services Social Care

Social Worker - Workforce Development Strategy

Version 1 - Final

Catherine Driscoll – Director of Children’s Services

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	
2	Workforce Profile	
3	Capacity	
4	Capability	
5	Culture	
6	Communication	
7	How will we measure the success	

1. Introduction

Quote from Catherine Driscoll, Director of Children's Services

'I want Dudley Children's Services to be recognised as a great place to work where people are valued and supported to develop their skills and experience in order to improve outcomes for our children and young people.'

Vision

We want Dudley to be a wonderful place for children and young people to grow up and where they will be happy, healthy, safe and benefit from a good inclusive education.

Aim

For every child and young person, we work with, we make their lives better.

Social Work workforce aims

This is a three-year Workforce Strategy for Social Workers and there are three key pillars to this strategy which are Capacity, Capability, Culture and Communication. To become the employer of choice for social workers, developing a highly motivated and effective workforce where we:

Capacity

- Recruit and retain sufficient qualified social workers in order to sustain and improve outcomes for children, young people and families
- Invest in our future social work workforce through student placements and an effective Assisted and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme

Capability

- Have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time
- Continuously develop our existing workers for both their current roles and future careers in Dudley by building and maintaining relevant knowledge, skills, experience and confidence
- Ensure excellent People, Practice and Performance Management, developing the conditions for great social work to flourish and a great place to work

Culture and Communication

- Continue to develop a learning culture where improved communication, feedback and focus on quality, helps us to improve outcomes for children

2. Workforce Profile and Measures / Targets

Over the past few years, we have experienced a gradual loss of permanent staff which has led to an increase in demand for agency social workers. This not only compromises quality service delivery but also increases the cost-of-service provision and detracts valuable resources away from services for our children and young people.

An overview of the Social Worker Workforce Profile and the established Measures / Targets are attached at Appendix 1

3. Capacity

Our aim is to have a stable and committed Social Work workforce that provide consistent quality service to children and their families underpinned by a restorative practice of working and where children and families benefit from meaningful relationships that promotes improved outcomes

To improve the capacity of our Social Workers, we need to:

1. Recruit and retain sufficient qualified social workers in order to sustain and improve outcomes for children, young people and families

Our aim is that children and families benefit from consistent and meaningful relationships with their social worker and tell their story by 'saying it once'. We want children and families to receive the support and intervention that is impactful and timely. Recruitment and retention is a critical component in securing capacity.

Success measures:

- Increase the number of Permanent Social Workers including Team Managers and IRO's within Dudley MBC and therefore reducing the number of Agency Workers
- Retain the permanent workforce and therefore reduce the number of staff leaving the Council
- Ensure that social workers have the capacity to work with children and families in a meaningful way that is reflective of their caseload and work allocation allowing for the development of meaningful and trusting relationships leading to improved outcomes

2. Invest in our future social work workforce through student placements and an effective ASYE programme

Our aim is that Dudley offers an increase in the number of high-quality placements to student social workers and that they secure permanent employment with us and as part of the ASYE programme and they are fully supported throughout.

Success measures:

- Increase the overall number of student placement available in Dudley
- Student's report having a positive experience whilst on placement in Dudley including access to comprehensive support and development opportunities
- To have a high proportion of students subsequently undertaking their ASYE programme with Dudley
- The retention of ASYE/NQSW for a period of 12 months following completion of the ASYE programme

We will consider and review the introduction of a range of benefits and total reward offers that are attractive to staff while providing value for money, to help us attract, retain and motivate Social Workers

A core element of this strategy is to ensure that we offer our social workers competitive and fair rates of pay in recognition of their skills and contribution to the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society. We must also remain competitive with neighbouring authorities.

We will work closely with our Communication and Recruitment Teams to review and streamline our current marketing approaches ensuring we are targeting our resources in the most effective way.

4. **Capability**

Our aim is to ensure that all our Social Workers have the ability to undertake their role and provide excellent services to children, young people and families of Dudley

To improve the capability of our Social Workers, we need to:

1. Have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time

To achieve this, we need to:

- Develop and embed workforce planning processes
- Identify workforce required to meet demand and service objectives
- Identify skills and experience
- Inform learning needs analysis
- Identify increase or decrease in student/ASYE programmes and ensure capacity is available to support this
- Identify future career progression ambitions through the My Annual Review (MAR) process
- Identify future leadership capability.

Success measures:

- Defined workforce requirements forecast for 2022/23 and 2023/24 by March 2022
- Succession plans identified for critical posts by June 2022
- 100% target pipelines for student placements, social work apprenticeships, ASYE and aspiring managers identified and implemented by September 2022
-

2. Continuously develop our existing workers for both their current roles and future careers in Dudley by building and maintaining relevant knowledge, skills, experience and confidence

Our aim is to ensure that the workforce is suitably skilled and knowledgeable which allows them to work with children and their families underpinned by restorative practice principles leading to improved outcomes for children and young people

Success measures:

- Staff have access to regular quality supervision with their line manager which includes individual annual reviews (MAR) to identify and enhance career development opportunities
- Staff have access to group supervision that promotes their learning and development and reflection
- Staff have access to a range of learning opportunities and evidence-based research that are linked to their career aspirations and that increase their knowledge base

3. Ensure excellent People, Practice and Performance Management, developing the conditions for great social work to flourish and a great place to work

Our aim is that we provide staff with an environment that promotes openness, transparency, support and challenge where staff will have access to the relevant and necessary tools and resources to support them in their day-to-day work and that their development is promoted

Success measures:

- Staff are provided with opportunities to feedback their experiences of working in Dudley and feel able to participate in a range of engagement sessions that are made available
- There is an increase in the number of staff participating in staff surveys and their feedback is considered and informs future planning
- Staff report that the systems and processes available support their work with children and families

We need to ensure that there is a transparent process to support high performance and address under-performance, supported by an effective performance management framework.

Through our 'Child Friendly Dudley' agenda we have the highest ambitions for our children and young people. Our values and beliefs are founded on Restorative Practice principles which provide us with a framework for our organisational culture and practice

In Dudley we believe that families are the experts in their own lives and that when we offer families high support and high challenge whilst providing them with the right resources and support, most families will make good decisions for their children.

Our Restorative Family Led Framework promotes the fundamental principle that families and their networks are of primary importance and the most important and influential on improving outcomes for children.

We believe that if we work with families in a restorative way we keep children at the heart of decisions that affect them, we can support and enable families to effectively resolve their own problems at the earliest opportunity. Providing the right amount of support for the right children at the right time, will ensure that the local authorities intervention in family life, only occurs when necessary but is timely, appropriate, and proportionate when needed.

5. Culture and Communication

Our aim is to ensure that we have the right culture across our workforce.

To achieve this, we need to:

1. Continue to develop a learning culture where improved communication, feedback and focus on quality, helps us to improve outcomes for children

We will provide and promote an environment that supports a culture of continued learning and improvements in the quality of practice

Success measures:

- Staff surveys and feedback from them outline that they feel listened to and supported in their work
- The number of children allocated to them allow for staff to provide good quality practice to children and young people
- Reduction in the overall number of common theme complaints received
- Overall improvement in our audit activity- more audits judged good
- Staff have opportunities through learning circles to reflect on their practice
- Formal two-way communication and engagement structures are in place

It is essential that we have a culture of success across Childrens Services in which staff feel supported, empowered and equipped to work to high standards and have a strong voice to influence service developments and service delivery

Staff will be encouraged to be proactive in taking responsibility for their own learning and where possible support the learning of others and are driven by strong and high aspirations for our children and young people.

We need to clearly define our culture to enhance staff engagement and in doing so, ensure that changes to our culture are Responsive, Innovative, Trusted and Ambitious

In Dudley we are establishing and embedding a restorative culture across our children's workforce, giving colleagues the understanding, confidence and practical skills to work in a relationship-based way. Restorative practice focuses on the principles of doing our work in a manner that promotes high support and high challenge.

Our values and principles reflect our belief that outcomes for our children, our communities and our organisation are improved when we work with and alongside people and avoid doing things to them. Restorative practice provides the foundations for our core value and principle and guides how we work with families, each other and our partners.

Restorative practice is a value-based way of being, that is needs led and strengths focused. It embodies a set of core beliefs, principles and behaviours that promote a way of being with people that actively and explicitly promotes change by working with people on a high challenge, high support basis.

Dudley's organisational values and principles are being developed as 'core' guiding policy to reflect the key Restorative Principles of-

- Being Curious and Questioning
- Being Open minded
- Being Respectful
- Being Reflective
- Challenging – with honesty and openness
- Being Solution Focused
- Being Emotionally Literate
- Being Patient and Supportive

It is envisaged that these principles are expressed and clearly understood by everyone in the organisation and provide a concurrent and underpinning theme for our policies, procedures and practice expectations ensuring that our communities, partners and workforce have a shared understanding of our values and principles.

Approved by:	Date
Workforce Board	28 March 2022
Shared with:	
Elected member	
Review:	
To be undertaken by the Head of Service, Safeguarding, Practice and Quality Assurance	

SOCIAL WORKER STRATEGY - WORKFORCE PROFILE DATA (As at September 2022)

SOCIAL WORKERS	Establishment (FTE)	Permanent (FTE)	ASYE (FTE)	Agency (FTE)	Vacancies (FTE)	Turnover (%)	Average Caseload (Numbers)	Sickness Days Lost (FTE)	Complaints (Numbers)	Compliments (Numbers)	Response Times (Average Days)
Aug-21	129.44	77.26	7.00	31.40	13.78	20.0					
Sep-21	129.44	75.45	7.00	29.40	17.59	20.0					
Oct-21	129.44	75.85	7.00	31.02	15.57	18.0					
Nov-21	132.44 (1.)	68.66	16.00	26.02	21.76	17.0					
Dec-21	132.44	76.66	16.00	27.75	12.03	17.0					
Jan-22	135.44 (2.)	77.66	16.00	36.13	5.65	17.0		18.28			
Feb-22	135.44	84.66	16.00	36.25	5.53	22.0		18.83			
Mar-22	135.44	86.54	15.00	36.75	4.15	17.0		20.57			
Apr-22	135.44	81.85	15.00	38.75	7.34	17.0		23.31			
May-22	135.44	91.85	15.00	39.37	4.32	17.0		23.79			
Jun-22	144.96 (3.)	80.71	15.00	39.37	16.88	21.0		26.52			
Jul-22	148.96	83.11	8.00	42.37	15.48	20.5		26.93			
Aug-22	148.96	93.72	8.00	37.62	9.62	20.5		26.25			
Sep-22	148.96	92.72	8.00	36.62	11.62	19.6		27.29			

Notes

1. Increase in Establishment due to the Family Comes First transfer of posts
2. Increase in Establishment due to inclusion of the Dudley Exploitation Hub
3. Increase in Establishment due to inclusion of the Childrens Disability Team
4. Increase in Establishment due to inclusion of Families Comes First Team

WORKFORCE MEASURES / TARGETS

This is a three-year Workforce Strategy for Social Workers and the following Measures / Targets have been established:

- To have one Student in each Social Worker Team
- To have one Practice Educator in each Social Worker Team
- To achieve 85% of Permanent Social Workers
- To meet the Corporate Sickness Target (10.5 days)
- To achieve 12% Turnover Rate for Social Workers
- To reduce the number of Common Themes from Complaints (Communication and Timeliness of Responses – Adoption Restorative Approach)
- To increase the number of Compliments
- To improve Communication and Timeliness of Responses to Enquiries

SOCIAL WORKERS	Permanent Starters	Permanent Leavers	Supervisions
Oct-21	2	1	46
Nov-21	6	4	54
Dec-21	0	2	44
Jan-22	3	3	48
Feb-22	3	1	47
Mar-22	0	6	44
Apr-22	0	3	49
May-22	2	3	53
Jun-22	2	7	50
Jul-22	2	1	39
Aug-22	0	2	26
Sep-22	4	4	26

Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 13th March 2023

Report of the Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23

Purpose

1. To consider the annual scrutiny report for 2022/23.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee receive and comment on the attached annual report.
3. That the Committee identify any items that need to be rolled-forward for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2023/24.

Background

4. The Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules, as set out in the Council's [Constitution](#), require that an annual overview and scrutiny report is submitted to the Council.
5. The Committee's annual report for 2022/23 is attached as an Appendix. Minutes and outcomes of all Scrutiny Committee meetings can be accessed online via the [Committee Management Information System](#). Subject to any amendments, the Annual Report will be presented to the Council on 17th April, 2023.
6. The Council has recognised the importance of retaining an annual review and report process. This is to ensure that the arrangements continue to align themselves to the needs of the Council and that the scrutiny arrangements remain adaptable and flexible to changes in circumstances.

Draft Annual Scrutiny Programme 2023/24

7. Work to develop the Annual Scrutiny Programme at this stage needs to allow for flexibility given any potential changes arising from the annual meeting of the Council. All Scrutiny Committee Chairs/Vice-Chairs, Officers and others will be invited to contribute to the development of the Annual Scrutiny Programme.
8. The views of the Committee are invited on any items that need to be 'rolled forward' to the next municipal year or any items they would like to suggest for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2023/24.
9. A meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs has been scheduled to take place on 30th March, 2023 to discuss the Annual Scrutiny Programme.

Finance

10. The costs of operating the Council's scrutiny arrangements are being contained within existing budgetary allocations.

Law

11. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation and associated Regulations and Guidance.
12. Scrutiny powers relating to health are included in the Health and Social Care Acts 2001 and 2012, and associated Regulations and statutory guidance. The Police and Justice Act 2006 gives the Council powers to scrutinise the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables local authorities to scrutinise other partners. Much of this legislation is consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

Risk Management

13. The Council's scrutiny and governance arrangements are contained in the Council's Constitution which will ensure that the Council considers any ongoing material risks as part of the Council's Risk Management Framework.

Equality Impact

14. Provision exists within the scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken of the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

15. Overview and Scrutiny work is primarily administered within the resources available to the Democratic Services Team with support from Directorates and other Officers as required. Any proposals to develop the Council's overview and scrutiny functions have to be set in the context of the resources available and the organisational capacity to support scrutiny work.

Commercial/Procurement

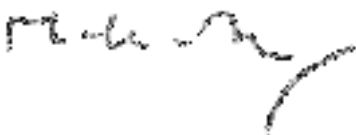
16. This report has no impact on the Council's potential to commercially trade. Individual items included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme may have commercial implications, which will be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Environment/Climate Change

17. Individual items included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme and associated reports to Scrutiny Committees will consider any implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate Change and achieving Net Zero target by 2041.

Council Priorities and Projects

18. Items within the Annual Scrutiny Programme and the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees contribute to the delivery of key Council priorities including the Borough Vision, Council Plan and Future Council Programme.



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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Annual Report 2022/23

List of Background Documents

[The Council's Constitution](#) – Article 6 and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules

Scrutiny Reports and Minutes available on the [Committee Management Information System](#)



**Chair -
Councillor
Paul Bradley**

Annual report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

2022/23 Municipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Daniel Bevan**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters relating to Children's and Young People Services in the Directorate of Children's Services and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Re-Visit Update

Throughout the Municipal Year Members considered reports on SEND as follows: -

On 13th June 2022 a report was received on the findings from a recent SEND re-visit and next steps together with the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP). Appended to the report was the SEND revisit findings letter, the SEND APP and the SEND Improvement Programme Communications and Engagement Strategy.

On 5th September 2022 Members received a report on the current progress of the SEND APP, the SEND Operational Performance data and a School Inclusion update. The joint area SEND revisit in Dudley findings letter was appended to that report.

On 19th January 2023 a verbal update was provided in relation to the Ofsted Inspection when improvements to services since 2021 were referred to and the overall judgment that although some services still required improvement the inspection was overall more positive in the detail.

Outcomes:

- *The Service Director of Education, SEND and Family Solutions was requested to provide details of the work undertaken in relation to Post 19 provision for young people with complex needs, once structures and co-produced work was implemented.*
- *The Director of Children's Services was requested to submit the APP to a future meeting.*

Corporate Quarterly Performance Report

Throughout the Year Members considered reports on key performance indicators within the Directorate of Children's Services and noted the Directorate's performance against those indicators.

Outcomes:

- *There was a request that the Service Director of Education, SEND and Family Solutions be requested to provide details of those areas within the Borough where Time for Two's placements were not being taken up for Members to promote placements in their Wards.*
- *The Director of Children's Services was requested to report on the further analysis assessing the outcomes for children supported by Families Come First and My Safety Plans.*

Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Members considered a report that had been emailed to them prior to the meeting and uploaded to the Council's Committee Management Information System (CMIS) requesting Members to provide comments and questions prior to the meeting.

Outcome:

- *The report was approved for publication in line with statutory requirements.*

Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2021-2022

A report was submitted on the role and appointment of the Independent Children's Safeguarding Scrutineer detailing the work of the Partnership to engage with children and young people. The priorities for 2021/22 were considered by Members.

Outcomes:

- *There was a request to advise Members of the number of children in care who had been placed out of Borough.*
- *The Service Director of Education, SEND and Family Solutions was requested to undertake a tracking exercise and advise*

- *Members of the number of those Post 16 entering the Youth Service who had experienced problems at school.*
- *A joint meeting of the Children and Young People and Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee and the Children's Corporate Parenting Board Working Group would be arranged to consider child poverty and obesity as soon as practicably possible.*

Integrated Early Years, Family Hubs and Start of Life in Dudley.

A report was submitted to the November meeting of the Committee on the details of the progress of the Local Authority 's work on the development of the Integrated Early Years' Service Family Hubs and Start of Life.

Outcomes:

- *The delivery of the Integrated Early Years' Service following remodelling work to bring three distinct teams into a single leadership and management model was acknowledged.*
- *The delivery of the new Family Hubs and Start of Life programme in Dudley linked to grant conditions and funding over the financial years 2022 to 2023 and 2024 to 2025 was to be facilitated by Officers.*
- *There was a request that a visit to the Leapfrog Specialist Nursery Provision in Netherton be arranged.*

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2021/22

Details of the Dudley Safeguarding Service statutory responsibility for overseeing and ratifying the care plans for children and young people in care via the activity of the IRO's was presented to Members. The service was also duty bound to provide the Committee with an annual report outlining the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that would enhance young people's experiences.

Outcomes:

- *The report would be utilised to inform strategic planning for the Dudley children and young people in care population.*
- *The report is to be used to hold the Safeguarding Service to account in the ongoing delivery of services to children and young people in care.*

Serious Violence Statutory Duty and Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Acting Director of Public Health and Wellbeing providing information on the new statutory duty upon Local Authorities and other specified authorities in relation to serious violence and to report on the current activities to meet that duty. The Safer Dudley – Preventing and Reducing Serious Violence in Dudley Strategy for 2023 to 2026 was appended to the report.

Outcomes:

- *It was requested that once developed Members be further consulted on the Serious Violence Strategy.*
- *The work of the Safe and Sound Board in undertaking their statutory duty around prevention of serious violence on behalf of the Local Authority was supported.*
- *The Head of Service Consultant in Public Health was requested to forward to Elected Members details of the support services available to tackle violence and serious crime.*

Medium Term Financial Strategy

A joint report was submitted of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Legal, and the Director of Children's Services on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26, with the emphasis on those proposals relating to the Committee's terms of reference, specifically Children's Services.

Outcome:

- *The Director of Finance and Legal Services was requested to: - investigate the possibility of offering a Council Tax Reduction Scheme to Foster Carers and provide Members with the detail surrounding the savings against the base budgeted for children's placements.*

Home to School Transport Policy

Members considered a report on the Home to School Transport Policy. Appended to the report were the Consultation on the proposed changes to the Transport Policy for children and young people, the Home to School analysis and feedback, the aged four to sixteen proposed Transport Policy, the proposed Post sixteen Transport Statement, the Parent Carer Forum's Transport Consultation response, an email from a parent containing

comments on the aged four to sixteen new proposed Transport Assistance Policy and feedback from a parent on the proposed aged four to sixteen proposed new Transport Assistance Policy.

Outcome:

- *The Director of Children's Services was requested to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the new proposed Home to School Transport Policy.*

Feedback from the Joint meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Working Group, the Health and Adult Social Care Services Scrutiny Committee Working Group and the Children's Corporate Parenting Board Working Group

Members having considered the feedback report ratified the actions suggested by the joint Working Group as follows: -

Outcomes:

- *the short-term crisis interventions that the Council provide be noted, and that Public Health be tasked to research into good and innovative practises in other parts of the country, in respect of the long-term strategy to tackle the cycle of poverty embedded in parts of Dudley's Communities to assist with the development of the Dudley Strategy, and to report back to a future meeting of the joint working group.*
- *the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health provide a detailed Ward by Ward breakdown of the percentage of children living in poverty within the Dudley Borough.*
- *That a clear set of Key Performance Indicators and robust monitoring of the council's activities on poverty reduction be agreed as part of the Dudley strategy.*
- *That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health provide a list of the Schools in the Borough taking part in the National Breakfast Club Scheme and the companies schools work with to provide breakfast club supplies.*
- *That the Leadership of the Council be recommended to write to Central Government, as a matter of urgency, to request additional funding during the current cost of living crisis to assist families. It is acknowledged that the Government have to date made money available to assist families with fuel and food however as the crisis deepens, more families who would traditionally not have found themselves in relative poverty were now struggling. Demand on the voluntary sector was growing and resources were not keeping pace.*

- *That the Housing and Communities Directorate be reminded of their Corporate Parenting role and responsibilities and be a named and active key partner within the Dudley Strategy.*
- *That a report on the role and responsibilities of the Private Sector Housing Team; what powers of enforcement they have at their disposal and an understanding of how they put the child at the centre of the work they undertake, be submitted to a future meeting of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee Working Group.*
- *That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health, pursue the arrangements of a meeting with the Department for Works and Pensions, to raise concerns of the impact of the change in benefit eligibility and to consider the possibility of sharing data and to notify a school when a child was eligible for free school meals.*
- *That a further report on ideas and initiatives Dudley could utilise to develop healthy High Streets and provide advice on whether fast-food delivery organisations require a special license to deliver food, be submitted to a future meeting of the joint Working Group.*
- *That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health, provide the joint Working Group Members with a copy of the delivery plan in relation to the Family Hub Funding.*
- *That the Head of Service – Children and Young Peoples Public Health, provide an update on the number of schools enrolled on the Apprenticeship Levy.*
- *That Public Health undertake research and benchmark with other Authorities in relation to the Car Free Streets Scheme and provide a report outlining the advantages and disadvantages to a future meeting of the Working Group.*
- *That a further report to review the data and progress made in relation to Mental Health needs and support for children and young people, be submitted to the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee in 12 months and included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.*
- *That the Acting Director of Public Health and Wellbeing provide a briefing note on the services commissioned and provided by Cranstoun.*

Other Items Considered by the Scrutiny Committee in the 2022/23 Municipal Year

Scrutiny Committee

- Education Outcomes Update
- Annual Scrutiny Programme 2022/23
- Children’s Services Improvement Plan Update
- Dudley Virtual School Annual Report

Ongoing Items to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

Items that have been considered by the Committee but are incomplete requiring further scrutiny and inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2022/23 are listed below: -

- Corporate Quarterly Performance Reports
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report
- Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report
- Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report
- Integrated Early Years, Family Hubs and Start of Life in Dudley
- Serious Violence Strategy
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Education Report
- Dudley Virtual School Annual Report
- Social Care Improvement Updates

Items suggested for inclusion in the work programme for 2023/24: -

- Good and innovative practices in other parts of the country, in respect of the long-term strategy to tackle the cycle of poverty embedded in parts of Dudley's Communities to assist with the development of the Dudley Strategy, be reported to a future meeting of the joint working group should it be re-appointed.
- That a report be submitted on the role and responsibilities of the Private Sector Housing Team: what powers of enforcement they have at their disposal and an understanding of how they put the child at the centre of the work they undertake.
- That a further report on ideas and initiatives Dudley could utilise to develop healthy High Streets and provide advice on whether fast-food delivery organisations require a special license to deliver food, be submitted to a future meeting of the joint Working Group should it be re-appointed.
- That Public Health undertake research and benchmark with other Authorities in relation to the Car Free Streets Scheme and provide a report outlining the advantages and disadvantages to a future meeting of the Working Group should it be re-appointed.

- That a further report to review the data and progress made in relation to Mental Health needs and support for children and young people, be submitted to the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee in 12 months and included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.