

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 15 March 2022

Wards: All

Subject:

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer

Contact officer: Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report summarises the performance information for 2021/22, up to 31st January 2021, as set out in the accompanying document, the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2021/22.
- 1.2. Information on Q4 (January to March 2022) will be made available at the next scrutiny meeting in April 2022.

2 DETAILS

Exception Report

- 2.1. The following indicators are marked as amber or red.

No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
16	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks.	R	Nationally a target of 26 has been set for an authority to conclude court proceedings and to achieve a court decision. We always strive to meet the nationally set target of 26 weeks. Due to small number of children in proceedings in Merton, delays with one family can skew our figures. A range of influences impact on the duration of court proceedings – some of which are outside of the authority's immediate control. These

			<p>include court availability, the availability and timeliness of expert witness input, and the desire to engage effectively with the wider family network to explore alternatives (where appropriate and safe to do so).</p> <p>The service has monthly court and PLO tracking meetings. On a quarterly basis, representatives from the Children and Families Court Advisory Services (Cafcass) attend. These meetings allow the authority to raise concerns about timeliness.</p>
22	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	R	Merton places a large proportion of children with in-house foster carers. There is always room to improve and we are currently planning a refreshed communication strategy for the new financial year.
30	Reception year surplus places	R	See commentary below.

Commentary

Indicator 30: Reception surplus places

- 2.2. This indicator is the total school reception roll against total operating admission numbers. Between October and December 2021, the percentage of surplus places has increased from 10.6% to 12.1% (which is outside of our target range of 5-10%).
- 2.3. There is no official national benchmark on an appropriate level of surplus places. Surplus places across schools provide more choice of school places, but since schools are largely funded based on numbers on roll, surplus places have a negative impact on the school budget, and therefore potentially teaching and learning. In the late 1990s the Audit Commission recommended that a surplus of 5-10% would enable the appropriate balance of choice and to economically provide sufficient school places, and this is still considered a reasonable estimate of best practice and so has been used for this indicator.
- 2.4. With a greater fall in demand for reception year places due to the migration impacts of Covid, we narrowly missed the 10% target maximum

for 2020/21. Members scrutinised the School Places Strategy document at a recent meeting.

Amendments, Corrections and Data Caveats

2.5. We are currently not able to report accurately against the following indicator:

Indicator Number	Descriptor	Commentary
21	% looked after children in foster placements who are placed with in-house foster carers	We have under-reported this indicator due to recording issues. The correct figures are as follows (incorrect figures in brackets): Q1 – 63% (48%) Q2 – 58% (50%)
8	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Data reporting is currently unreliable. The way in which Mosaic is currently configured does not allow an easy analysis of quoracy. The QA and Practice Development Team review quoracy as part of their service.

3 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2020/21.

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