
Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 19 October 2010
Subject: Quarter One Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Anita Lewis Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Summary: The report highlights the Quarter One performance for the Children's Services Directorate, including relevant Corporate Health Indicators.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Karen Oellermann, Head of Partnerships, Performance and Workforce Development
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Quarterly Performance Report ensures that progress on the delivery of the Council's priorities is monitored.

Financial:

There are a number of performance indicators within the full corporate suite that have a financial link – most notably the amount of debt outstanding and the percentage of Council Tax collected. There may be financial implications relating to investment decisions to improve performance.

Legal:

None.

Risk Management:

Areas of ongoing underperformance are a risk to both service delivery and the reputation of the Council.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

The corporate performance suite includes indicators on sickness absence within the Council and the number of Carlisle Management Solutions agency staff.

Equalities/Human Rights:

It is important that consideration is given to all our Central Bedfordshire communities when considering public facing performance indicators – particularly vulnerable groups.

Community Safety:

There are Children's Services indicators that relate to ensuring children and young people are kept safe.

Sustainability:

None

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Committee notes and reviews Quarter One performance.

Background

1. The Council's framework for performance management supports the delivery of the Council's priorities.
2. Those indicators that Directors have identified as 'critical' make up the quarterly performance suite and these now include a wider Corporate Health set relating to people and financial management.
3. This focus on a smaller set of 'critical' indicators in key areas has been recognised in the Audit Commission Annual Governance report. The report states that 'the Council produces relevant and reliable data and information to support decision making and manage performance'.

Performance Summary

4. **Corporate Health Performance Indicators**
An expanded set of Corporate Health indicators is now being reported. In order to better understand the Council's overall corporate health performance, these indicators are reported both at the Directorate level and the overall Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) figure. These indicators are measured across the council.
5. Sickness absence across CBC is currently on track to meet the target of 8 days lost per employee. The Quarter 1 figure is an improvement on the same period for 2009/10. Children's Services sickness absence is well within the target and the Directorate is performing well within the Council.

6. The Council has demonstrated an intention to better understand the use of agency workers supplied through Carlisle Managed Solutions and has developed a new performance indicator to track this. It is worth noting that the largest group of agency workers in the Council are currently care workers. The Director receives a monthly report on the number of social workers employed through the agency and this is reducing as new appointees are moving into new permanent posts.
7. Undisputed invoices paid within 30 days has seen a large improvement in performance when compared with Q4 09/10 but a small decline when compared to Q1 09/10. The Financial Services improvement plan is currently reviewing the processes that were brought together from the three legacy councils and additional training and workshops are planned across the council to aid better understanding of the Procure 2 Pay process. Currently in Children's Services performance stands at 79% against a target of 90%. A systems review is ongoing to improve performance in order to meet the target.
8. We are continuing to monitor the levels of debt outstanding. The Council is currently reviewing the 'Reminder Issuing Process', a partly manual based system, to explore the potential to automate the whole reminder process. This may serve to improve the reduction of the amount of debt outstanding. Across Children's Services performance is variable and ongoing work is required to establish where the call in of debt is required.
9. **Children's Services**
On the safeguarding indicators, our performance is largely good in the light of increased pressures. Timing indicators have been achieved or exceeded target. Despite the impact of sustained referral pressure, the rate of conversion of referrals to assessment has increased. Work is on-going to ensure that sufficient social workers are recruited and that early action is taken by other professionals to enable further improvement. National results released later in the autumn will evidence the influence of increased pressures on local authorities across the country.
10. The impact of low numbers requires some comparisons between years to be made with caution. This is the case with short term placement stability where, whilst the outcome is within target, progress has declined slightly. The difference compared to the same time last year is one child. This indicator is still well within the target range and children are moved based on their carefully assessed needs.
11. On school performance two new local indicators have been introduced. These will show inspection judgements and our local response at an earlier stage than has been previously reported. They will measure to what extent the Council is focusing its efforts on those schools that are neither good nor outstanding rather than adopting a blanket approach to outcomes in schools.

12. The Ofsted Monitoring Report for Derwent Lower concluded that the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. The school and Local Authority Statements of Action for the Mill Vale have been produced and sent to Ofsted and will be implemented and monitored by the School Improvement service from September onwards.

Conclusion and Next Steps

16. That the Committee notes and reviews the performance for Quarter one.

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Quarter 1 Performance Report)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Executive 28 September 2010 - (Quarter 1 Performance Report)

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands