

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Eileen Quick (Chairman), Marion Mills (Vice-Chairman), Sayonara Luxton, Edward Wilson, Wesley Richards and Charles Hollingsworth

Also in attendance: Olivia Falgayrac-Jones and Nisha Jayatilleke (both NHS England)

Officers: Kevin McDaniel, Hilary Hall, Andy Carswell and Nikki Craig

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Pryer and Mrs Airey, and from Mr Loudon.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2018 be approved as a true and correct record.**

Arising from the minutes, the Chairman asked if the Panel's recommendation to Cabinet about the inclusion of a flowchart in the parent handbook regarding applications for school places was being looked in to. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that this had become an officer action and would be implemented.

### SCREENING AND IMMUNISATION

The Deputy Director – Strategy and Commissioning informed Members that various performance reports had noted that the takeup of immunisations in children living in the Royal Borough was below the Council's target, and takeup rates were lower than other local authorities. The Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was currently being revised and takeup was also coming through as an issue in this work. Colleagues from NHS England had been invited to give a presentation to Members about child immunisation rates.

Olivia Falgayrac-Jones, Director of Commissioning, introduced the item and explained that NHS England and Public Health worked collaboratively to commission immunisation services. The joint working was to increase coverage of services and to reduce health inequalities amongst residents. The objectives of this working agreement were to roll out childhood flu vaccinations up to school year 5; roll out HPV vaccinations to men who have sex with men; continue the roll out of bowel scope to the agreed trajectory; and to roll out FIT in bowel screening; the last two of these objectives would help with early detection of bowel cancer.

The work programmes carried out through this joint arrangement were explained to Members. Olivia Falgayrac-Jones explained that although the joint arrangement had retained governance of child health information and services, the Healthy Child Programme – which encompassed health visitors and school nurses programmes – was now coordinated by local authorities. The Head of Public Health would report in to the Leadership team on a quarterly basis to show progress and to address any concerns.

Nisha Jayatilleke, Consultant in Public Health, introduced herself and explained that she led a team of staff on screening and immunisation programmes across the Thames Valley region. Data had been collected for 2016/17 and 2017/18 to show the uptake of immunisations for

children at age 1, 2 and 5, and there was some data available for 2018/19. The figures showed that there were upward trends in takeup for all immunisations at age 1 and 2, and for the majority of immunisations at age 5. There had been a decrease in the percentage of children aged 5 being given the DTaP/IPV booster; Nisha Jayatilleke explained that some children would have this immunisation at a younger age, so although they were immunised against the disease they were not counted towards the official statistics.

Responding to a question from Cllr Hollingsworth, Nisha Jayatilleke explained that the data relating to children aged 1, 2 and 5 was collated through GP practices in the Royal Borough. Statistics relating to school-aged immunisations was collated and arranged through the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. Nisha Jayatilleke informed the Panel that takeup rates for the HPV vaccine in girls in school years 8 and 9, and the tetanus and diphtheria pertussis vaccine for all children in school year 9 had been one of NHS England's best. Members were told that the HPV vaccine protected against cervical cancer, and was offered to girls before they became sexually active. A successful catch-up programme was carried out to vaccinate girls up to the age of 20 who were in school years 8 and 9 before the vaccine was introduced. Nisha Jayatilleke informed Members that a work programme focused on cultural and religious barriers was being undertaken, as these had been identified as being the main reasons for parents not wanting their children to be immunised.

The Chairman asked if any GP surgeries or geographical areas had been identified where immunisation takeup had been low. Nisha Jayatilleke said that some deprived areas that needed additional support had been identified. However in terms of individual GP practices, takeup rates tended to fluctuate. This was partly down to the way that surgeries recorded the information, and staff had been given additional training on coding. For example a child may be given four vaccinations in a single sitting, but this may only be recorded as one vaccination. Members were informed that a new IT system had been introduced, which meant that surgeries were no longer required to produce evidence of which vaccines had been given out. The IT system would also help flag up if a child was due for an immunisation when a parent went in to the GP surgery for a routine, unrelated, appointment. Nisha Jayatilleke informed Members that work was taking place to help fill out incomplete immunisation histories, which was a particular issue with families who had moved from abroad. She stated that if a family could provide proof a child had had a particular immunisation it would be unlikely they would require it again; however there was also little harm, or risk of side effects, if a child were to receive a second vaccination.

Members were informed that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was in the process of being updated, and it was hoped that this work would be completed by January.

The Chairman thanked Olivia Falgayrac-Jones and Nisha Jayatilleke on behalf of the Panel for attending the meeting and congratulated their teams for an excellent set of figures.

Olivia Falgayrac-Jones and Nisha Jayatilleke left the meeting at 7pm.

## ANNUAL COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Head of HR and Corporate Projects introduced the item and explained that she would update Members on figures that were relevant to children's services, rather than the report as a whole.

The Council had received 644 complaints in 2017/18, compared to 665 the previous year. Of these 37, or 5.6 per cent, related to children's services. Members were informed that there was a three-stage complaints process; progression to stage 2 meant an independent person would be tasked with investigating the complaint, and progression to stage 3 would entail a panel needing to be assembled to resolve the complaint. Of the 37 complaints made about children's services in 2017/18, three were progressed to stage 2 and none to stage 3. A request had been made to progress to stage 3, but this would not be resolved until 2018/19 and was therefore not included in the figures. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects said

the themes of complaints followed a similar pattern to previous years, with the most common types of complaint being a perceived failure to follow policy, perceived lack of action, or attitude of staff. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects informed Members that 16 per cent of complaints against children's services were fully upheld, compared to 25 per cent in 2016/17. However there had been a reduction in the number of complaints that were responded to within the relevant required timescales. Members were informed that the Complaints Team were now using a new IT system that would automatically alert them when a complaint was close to its response expiry date.

Regarding complaints about the Council made to the Local Government Ombudsman, Members were informed that there had been 11 referrals for cases relating to children's services and that none of them had been put through to a full investigation by the Ombudsman. Five of these had been referred back to the Council and the remainder had been closed. The Head of HR and Corporate Projects told Members that a case could be referred to the Ombudsman at any stage of the complaints process. Members were told that examples of learning from complaints made about children's services were included in the main report.

Regarding compliments, Members were informed that the number received by children's services had increased to 97 compared to 56 the previous year. The Chairman noted the number of compliments received by youth services in particular, and stated she was delighted at the overall number of compliments to be received by children's services.

Cllr Wilson noted that responding to complaints in a timely manner was an issue and asked for more information on this. The Director of Children's Services explained that the Council had taken time to understand the root causes of residents' grievances and the issues involved in order to help reduce the number of complaints in future, but this had necessitated having to take more time than was outlined in the statutory timescales. The most complex cases, involving social care, took the most amount of time to resolve. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that there had been a cultural shift in social care to better understand the issues affecting residents and provide staff with the appropriate training as a result. However he also stated that a number of complaints were from residents who disagreed with, or disliked, the professional judgement of officers.

Cllr Richards asked about the representations made by young people in section 7.17 of the main report and asked if these were different from complaints. The Director of Children's Services explained that representations related to young people raising an issue or concern in their statutory review, which could be raised as a complaint if they wished. The use of the word representation was encouraged as it sounded less adversarial than complaint. It was noted that one young person had registered a complaint about children's services.

Responding to a question from Cllr Hollingsworth, the Director of Children's Services stated that for a complaint to be closed, the complainant had to be satisfied that their complaint had been resolved and it could only be closed after they had confirmed this was the case.

Cllr Wilson noted in the appendix to the LGO report that it was stated 69 per cent of complaints against the Council were upheld. However Members noted that this figure did not include complaints to the Ombudsman that were either incomplete or invalid, referred back to the Council, or closed after the Ombudsman's initial enquiries. Cllr Wilson stated that the figures in the appendix were therefore misleading and suggested that the Council should write to the Ombudsman to point this out. This was unanimously agreed by the Panel.

The contents of the report was noted by Members.

## ANNUAL REPORT ON COMMISSIONED SERVICES

The Deputy Director – Strategy and Commissioning introduced the item and explained that the report looked at Council services that were commissioned by external providers. The most

relevant provider for this Panel was Achieving for Children. Members were reminded of the performance indicators that each service area was given at the start of the year. The Deputy Director – Strategy and Commissioning explained that although not all indicator targets had been met with regards to children’s services, overall performance standards had been. Having a consistent approach to managing contracts, improved management of services and revising benchmark standards had all been identified as ways of improving experiences for residents.

Cllr Wilson stated that commissioning services was the right course of action as it improved services for residents. However he stated his belief that residents may be confused about the specific functions of each provider and may not be aware of the purpose of Optalis, Volker etc. The Chairman also stated her belief that outsourcing services to the new providers had led to improvements in quality of service.

Cllr Wilson asked if it could be explained which services Achieving for Children excelled at providing. The Director of Children’s Services stated they were good at quality assurance with regards to social care, and reminded Members that since the transfer of services to Achieving for Children the number of children with Child Protection Plans had reduced. Staff confidence had also improved, with a recent survey showing that 96 per cent of staff knew exactly what their job role entailed and 66 per cent professing that they felt their jobs were making a positive difference to children. This had been evidenced from a letter from a judge at Reading Family Court, who had praised the Council after noticing an improvement in the way social care cases were managed. The Director of Children’s Services said that the new culture of working in an environment that focussed solely on children’s services had aided this process. The Deputy Director – Strategy and Commissioning added that outsourcing to organisations that had a specific focus on their service area had proved beneficial to staff and residents across all service areas, not just children’s services.

The Director of Children’s Services stated that using fewer agency staff had had a positive effect as it provided better continuity of services for residents, and provided cost savings for the Council. This meant there was greater capacity and capability to help residents.

Cllr Wilson stated his belief that the report needed to clearly outline the reasons why services had been outsourced to different providers, and explain to residents what changes would come into effect over the forthcoming year. He also stated that the report should outline the improvements to children’s services that had been made by Achieving for Children.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Members noted the report and:**

- i) Endorsed the commissioning function’s priorities for 2018-2020.**
- ii) Requested an annual report 2018-19 to Cabinet in October 2019.**

### WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman informed Members that the Adult Learning Joint Meeting would be taking place at Slough Borough Council at 4pm on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October. She stated that she and the Vice Chairman, along with officers, would be attending and that other members of the Panel were welcome to attend.

The contents of the Work Programme was noted by the Panel.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.55 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....