

Additional Questions from 13 September 2023 meeting

Agenda Item and Question	Response
Agenda Item 7 – Quarter 1 Performance and Resources Report (PRR)	
<p>Children we have in 3 or more foster placements in 12 months (performance measure 7): This is on the increase and in red at present, but amber is projected. Could you please explain why this is on the increase and how you plan to get the provision to amber, and then aim to green?</p>	<p>This outcome measure references stability of <u>'all'</u> children we care for placements so not 'solely' in reference to fostering. For clarity, it is the turbulence within the private/external residential market that mostly impacts on outcomes and performance in this area.</p> <p>As the PRR noted, there has been an increase in this measure after a period of stability, although performance remains broadly in-line with national averages; regionally other local authorities have average 15% so WSCC are still under the average at 13%. This is positive. The service has robust quality control measures in place regarding this KPI due to our rigorous permanence planning arrangements as noted in our recent Ofsted ILACS inspection.</p> <p>Since April 2023 there has been one external residential provider who decided to close a group of their children's homes nationwide, abruptly and quickly; with over 100 placements being removed from the market nationally in a matter of days. This impacted on several of our children's placements, requiring them to move unexpectedly, leading to several forced moves which were not in the service's control and which otherwise would not have taken place. This is the primary reason for the increase in the KPI to 13%. Given the financial modelling and manner that the private sector now delivers its operating model; it is likely that local authorities such as WSCC will continue to observe these patterns and trends more frequently in the market across 2023/24.</p>

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	<p>To further strengthen our commissioning activity the service is currently developing our work with a number of smaller and not-for-profit organisations within the private/external residential market, in addition to further development of WSCC owned (inhouse) resources.</p>
<p>Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) placed in Mainstream (performance measure 57): In this new measure, the target for the percentage of children with an EHCP placed in mainstream is set at 37%, (it's assumed this is based on an assessment of the percentage who would be well placed there).</p> <p>The current number is reporting at 53.1% and is therefore green. However, given the capacity issues with our special school places, does this figure actually highlight that too many children who should ideally have a special school placement are being placed in mainstream settings and therefore should not be green rated?</p>	<p>The figure of 53.1% includes all children and young people in post-16 whereas the figure presented is for school age children.</p> <p>Latest available data shows we have 2,436 (35%) children with EHCPs in mainstream (including maintained, academies, free schools, and independents) and 2,807 (41%) in Special schools or alternative provision.</p>
<p>Portfolio Financial Pressures - There are two stand out pressures: Placement costs for Children We Care For without disabilities, and Home to School Transport totalling £20.5 million. Even using the Social Care Sustainability Reserve, it still results in huge pressure on the portfolio budget. I accept the unpredictable nature of these costs – but we must find ways to reduce these pressures. Can you confirm what</p>	<p>There is increasing pressure on both budget lines within the Children and Young People's Budget.</p> <p>For the placement budget, the senior leadership team therefore considers a set of mitigating actions to reduce these pressures whilst always maintaining appropriate levels of service to ensure that all statutory requirements are being met. The actions taken</p>

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ideas are being explored to address these budget pressures?	<p>are ongoing and reviewed regularly by the Directorate leadership Team.</p> <p>Mitigating actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular senior management review of all high-cost placements• Increase in the number and availability of in-house placements to reduce the need for high-cost options.• Increase in the use of kinship placements to reduce the pressure on other placement options. <p>Work is also underway to combat the number of external residential placements at significantly higher than average cost, the Children’s Commissioning Service is designing and building a suite of new commissioning tools, which include a Market Position Statement to further strengthen and develop our Placement Sufficiency Strategy. It is anticipated that this will increase the utilisation of local private markets and be delivered in a more cost-effective manner in the next financial year.</p> <p>There is also a review of Home to School Transport budget being carried out with the aim of looking at several different savings possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent Travel Training increase take up.• Single occupancy/multiple occupancy associated risks.• Multiple drop off points to homes vs local pickup/drop off points.• Route maximisation software – saves on time and fuel.• Personal Transport budget – parents/carers get mileage payment.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scrutiny and sign off process for home to school transport – check if at each annual review and/or transition point is transport still needed?• Income generation – use the transport fleet during ‘off peak’ period to bring in income i.e. providing transport services more widely.