

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 14 NOVEMBER 2014

SUBJECT OF REPORT: PERFORMANCE & FINANCIAL MONITORING

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICERS PRESENTING: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, STRATEGY,
COMMISSIONING AND PERFORMANCE

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

Note the financial and performance information presented in the report and to comment on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel requested regular performance and financial management monitoring reports to help members evaluate the extent to which the Council and its partners are achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services and to provide appropriate challenge, praise and suggestions to improve performance.

The Council's Performance Management Framework includes a requirement for regular (at least quarterly) formal monitoring of our financial and performance position so that appropriate remedial action can be taken if needed.

The Panel's June 2014 meeting agreed the content of subsequent 2014/15 monitoring reports and this report presents information on the extent to which family preference is being met in the allocation of school places and how this varies by pupil characteristics.

2. INSPECTION AND IMPROVEMENT

Since the last performance and financial monitoring report to this panel was written there have been two items published on the Ofsted website relating to North Somerset Council services or schools. These are summarized below.

In June 2014 Ofsted wrote to North Somerset Council in relation to the focussed set of inspections of 17 primary or infant schools that took place during March and April,

prompted by the relatively low proportion of schools that were good or outstanding. The inspections allowed Ofsted to assess the council's role in supporting and promoting improvement in schools. The outcomes of these individual inspections were reported in the June performance and financial monitoring report to this panel. Ofsted's letter to the identifies council strengths, such as:

- North Somerset has developed a strong partnership with its primary schools. The development and implementation of the authority's 'learning exchange' is understood by all schools as the key tool to enable schools to improve the quality of their provision and their effectiveness.
- Almost all of North Somerset's primary schools have elected to exercise their preference for purchasing local authority services. School leaders and governors are positive about the benefits, which they regard as providing best value for money.
- Schools are confident that North Somerset's advisers understand the performance of schools in their area. A range of monitoring activities track performance and identify where further support is required. Consequently, North Somerset is well informed about its schools and knows where improvement and intervention are required.
- Schools are fully aware that the information gathered by the authority's advisers is used to risk assess each school's performance. Schools welcome the transparency which leads to these assessments. Headteachers appreciate that performance information is discussed and shared openly with them and, on occasion, the governors. The discussions are generally robust and lead to appropriately tailored support and intervention activities that are matched carefully to each school's improvement priorities

Areas for development by the council that were identified by Ofsted included:

- North Somerset draws upon the expertise of local leaders of education to support improvement in the area, yet a number of headteachers of good and outstanding schools report that their own strengths have not been fully utilised.
- While many governors are confident that they know and understand the authority's strategy for school improvement, others are less clear.
- A few schools indicated that the local authority's level of challenge was not rigorous enough.
- The inspections revealed some common areas for improvement. These included improving the quality of teaching and thereby raising pupils' achievement. The key teaching aspects identified as needing strengthening included: a stronger focus on the performance of specific groups of pupils, particularly the most able, and ensuring that marking helps pupils improve the quality of their work.

Ofsted summarized by saying: 'the growing proportion of good and outstanding primary schools in North Somerset largely allays our initial concern and presents an encouraging picture. Almost all of the schools inspected or contacted praised the effectiveness and impact of the authority's school improvement service. The 'learning exchange' initiative is almost universally acknowledged by headteachers and governors as being a successful strategy that is leading to improvement. The positive inspection outcomes and the evidence from the telephone survey demonstrate capacity and challenge in the system to tackle remaining weaknesses and accelerate the rate of improvement.'

Hutton Church of England Primary School was inspected in July 2014 and was judged to be good for overall effectiveness. All four sub-categories were also graded as good. Some key positive findings from the inspection report were:

- Children get off to a good start when they join Reception.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is particularly strong, contributing to pupils' above average attainment in spelling and reading.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, other pupils.
- Strong professional relationships between teachers and pupils create a culture of mutual respect within which pupils make good progress
- Governors challenge the school where necessary and support improvement measures.

The report stated the school was not yet outstanding because:

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. Some lessons do not always allow pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always communicate high expectations.
- Teachers' marking is of inconsistent quality and does not always clearly show pupils what they need to do to improve.

3. KEY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

For 2014/15 the Council revised its basket of Key Performance Indicators which are monitored quarterly by the Corporate Management Team and reported to members. There are now five key indicators for children's services and the quarter 2 performance against these key indicators is shown in Appendix 2.

Performance on two of the key indicators was better than target and it was worse than target for one indicator (see item 4). One indicator is not available for quarter 2 and the final key indicator on pupil attainment is provisional at quarter 2.

4. NUMBERS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

When a child becomes 'Looked After' the Council takes on a parenting role, either with the agreement of the parents or through a court order which gives the local authority a share of parental responsibility for that child. Children Looked After cease to be Looked After on reaching their 18th birthday, if they have not ceased previously. Trends in numbers Children Looked After are shown in Appendix 1.

Members are aware from previous reports that numbers of Looked After children increased sharply in 2012, rising from 231 on 31 March 2012 to 279 on 31 December 2012, an increase of 21%. This was partly due to a number of large sibling groups starting to be Looked After and also due to increases in the numbers of 0-4 year olds and 16 or 17 year olds starting to be Looked After. During the 3 years from June 2009 to June 2012 the number of Children Looked After had generally ranged from 220 to 240.

During 2013 there was a steady decrease in the number of Children Looked After to 204 on 31 December 2013, with relatively few children having started to be Looked After. Since then there has been a gradual, but steady increase in the number of children looked after and at the end of September 2014 the total was 233. The target for March 2015 is for there to be 210 Children Looked After. The reasons for increases and decreases in numbers of Children Looked After are complex. The Assistant Director and Service Leaders are tightly monitoring all requests for a child to be Looked After. Every Child Looked After is being reviewed to ensure that care plans are being progressed and plans to return children home wherever possible are being actioned.

5. FINANCIAL MONITORING

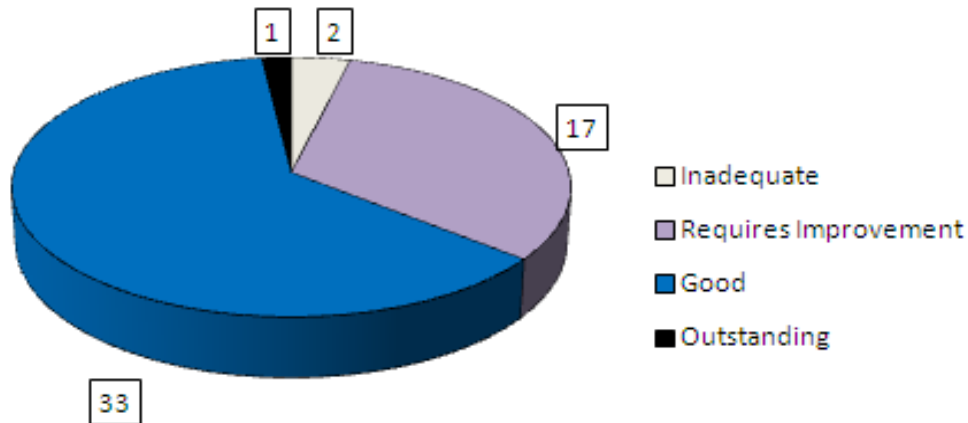
The CYPS Financial Monitoring Commentary up to 30 September 2014 is attached at Appendix 3. The Directorate is projecting to overspend its budget in 2014/15 by £1,682K (6.3%), due to increase in looked after children placements, some Medium Term Financial Plan savings not being delivered at the pace previously anticipated and the cost of covering vacancies and absence, including maternity leave, in front line teams.

6. CASE AUDITS

Case audit is an important tool to ensure quality and consistency and promote a culture of learning and improvement. There is a programme of regular case audit undertaken by managers in the Support and Safeguarding Branch, which was attached to a previous report and members of the Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) audit a case, chosen at random, monthly as a routine part of the Leadership Team meeting. In addition, the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board undertakes a programme of multi agency audits.

The audit process within the Support and Safeguarding Branch involves grading the cases sampled and a summary of the gradings for 53 cases is shown in the chart below. Overall, 64% of these case audits resulted in a good or outstanding grading. The findings from these case audits are fed back to teams and individual workers as appropriate.

Support and Safeguarding Branch Case Audits - April to September 2014



7. TO WHAT EXTENT IS FAMILY PREFERENCE BEING MET IN THE ALLOCATION OF SCHOOL PLACES AND HOW DOES THIS VARY BY PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS?

All children from North Somerset may apply for a school place and families may provide a first, second and third preference on an application form. The figures below show the proportion of children who were offered their first, second or third preference and also show this split by ethnic origin and by sex.

Children are included in the figures below if their application was received before the deadline. If their application was late, then they would have been offered their school of preference if it had space, but at this stage there would have been more chance of a school being full. If less than three preferences are stated then there is, of course, less chance of a school of preference being allocated.

Allocation of Reception Year Primary School Places for applications received on time.

	Preference Allocated			Alternative Offer	Total Number of Children
	1st	2nd	3rd		
All on time applications	87.0%	6.1%	1.9%	5.0%	2,392
White British ethnic origin	87.6%	5.8%	1.8%	4.8%	1,755
Black or other minority ethnic origin	87.9%	4.2%	1.1%	6.8%	190
Boys	86.7%	6.8%	2.0%	4.5%	1,230
Girls	87.3%	5.4%	1.7%	5.5%	1,162

Note: Ethnic origin was not recorded for 447 children by the closing date for applications.

The figures confirm that the large majority of parents obtained a place at their first preference school, but that there was a minority of parents who did not. Overall, 5.0% of children were offered a Reception Year place at a school that was not one of their three preferences, compared to 2.7% in 2013 and 6% in 2012.

It appears that Black or other minority ethnic origin children were slightly more likely to not receive one of their 3 Reception preferences than White British children.

Department for Education 2014 figures show that overall in England 95.7% of students were offered one of their top three primary school preferences, compared to 95.0% in North Somerset, 0.7% lower.

The schools that had to refuse the most first preferences were:

- Herons' Moor Academy, WsM (34)
- Castle Batch Community Primary School, Worle, WsM (27)
- Ashcombe Primary School, WsM (26)
- Christ Church C of E Primary School, WsM (24)
- St. Georges VA Church Primary School, St. Georges, WsM (22)
- Mead Vale Community Primary School, Worle, WsM (21)
- Mendip Green Primary School, Worle, WsM (19)
- St. Nicholas Chantry C of E Primary School, Clevedon (13)
- Northleaze C of E Primary School, Long Ashton (13)
- Birdwell School, Long Ashton (12)

Allocation of Year 7 School Places for applications received on time.

	Preference Allocated			Alternative Offer	Total Number of Children
	1st	2nd	3rd		
All on time applications	94.3%	4.7%	0.7%	0.3%	2,171
White British ethnic origin	95.9%	3.6%	0.2%	0.3%	1,836
Black or other minority ethnic origin	94.7%	4.7%	0.0%	0.6%	169
Boys	94.1%	4.8%	0.8%	0.3%	1,107
Girls	94.5%	4.6%	0.6%	0.4%	1,064

Note: Ethnic origin was not recorded for 166 children by the closing date for applications.

The percentage of all on time applications to secondary schools that were allocated their first preference increased by 3.3%, from 91% in 2013 to 94.3% in 2014. Only 7 children did not receive one of their three preferences.

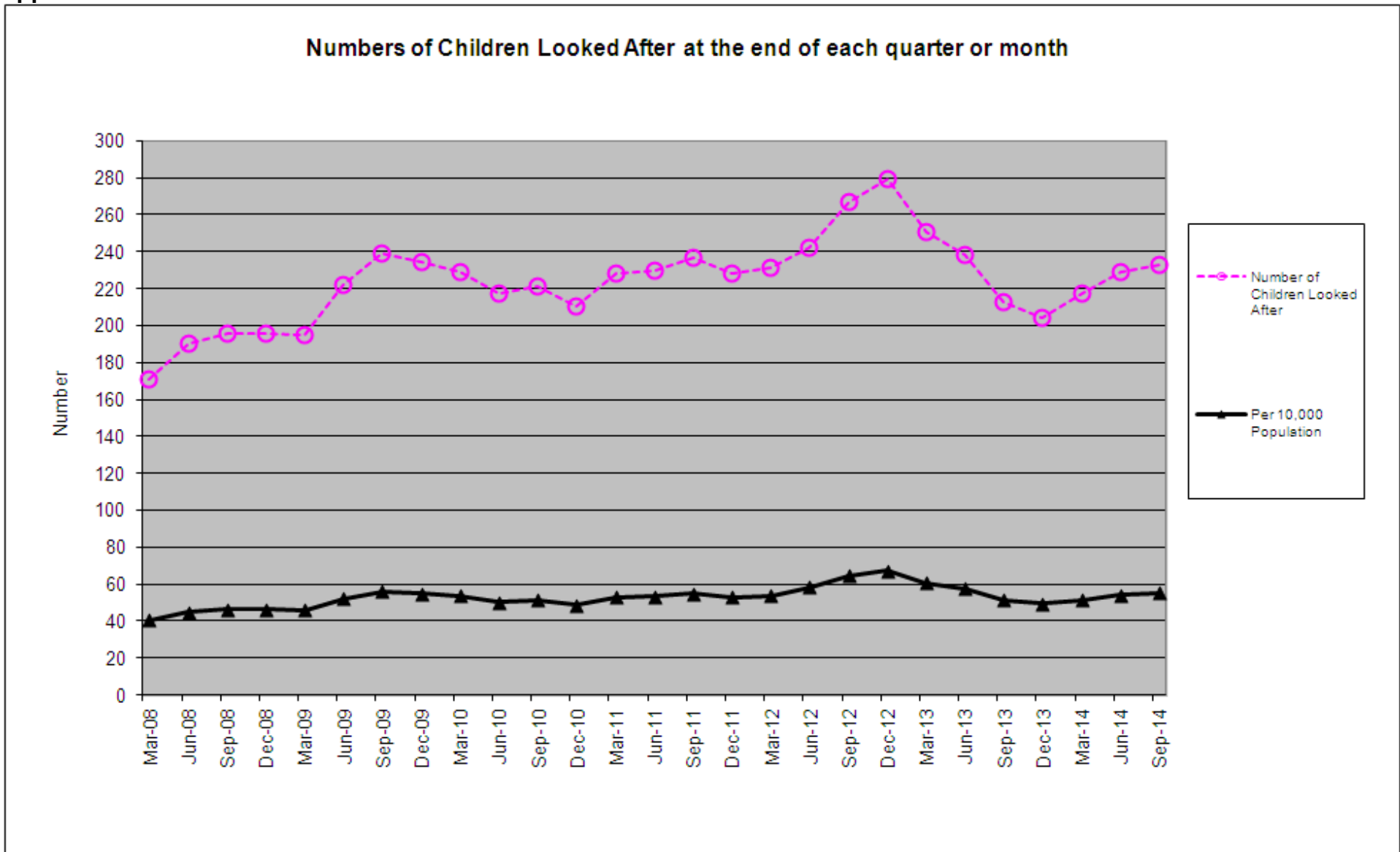
Department for Education 2014 figures show that overall in England 95.5% of students were offered one of their top three secondary school preferences, compared to 99.6% in North Somerset, 4.1% higher.

Three secondary schools in North Somerset did not offer a place to students who selected the school as the first preference. These were Priory Community School – an Academy Trust which refused 58 students, Backwell School which refused 17 students and Broadoak Mathematics & Computing College which refused 1 student.

Authors

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Appendix 1



APPENDIX 2 - Performance summary for Key Corporate Performance Indicators

	NSC 2014/15 Q2	NSC Target Q2	NSC Target 2014/15	NSC 2013/14	Statistical Neighbour LAs average 2013/14	England 2013/14	Met target?
Number of Children Looked After	233	216	210	217			N
The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for the second or subsequent time, within 2 years of the first plan end date.	3.1%	10.0%	<= 10%	9.0%	N/A	N/A	Y
The percentage of child protection referrals of children made within 12 months of a previous child protection referral	6.7%	9.0%	<= 9%	11.3%	local indicator	local indicator	Y
Percentage of children who achieve five or more A*-C grade GCSEs, including English and Maths	60.2% reported by schools 57.3% provisional DfE	60.5%	60.5%	58.5%	56.8% (provisional)	56.1% (provisional)	

Note: The indicator on participation in education and work-based learning by 17 year olds is not available as an accurate figure for quarter 2 due to the nature of the data. It will be available again for quarter 3.

