

Sandwell Children's Trust Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board

23 August 2021

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Introduction

- Context
- Update on our progress over the past 12 months (Annual Review) - key highlights
- Impact and Response to Covid
- The future – our ethos, our six strategic priorities (Transformation Programme) and continued drive to deliver practice improvement across all of our services

Context: Trust to date- brief overview

- Full inspection in 2017- Inadequate
- 15 visits / inspections from our regulators
- Assurance visit- 3rd March 2021
- Fostering Regulatory Inspection July 2021
- Full inspection expected in late 2021/ early 2022

Annual Review 2020/21 – Looking back over the last year

Key areas of focus 2020-21

- Managing Covid- crisis response
- Working differently
- Keeping children safe
- Workforce- stability and well-being
- Partnerships
- Preparing for full inspection
- Addressing key areas where practice weakest
- Covid recovery

Our People

- '12 Reasons' to work in Sandwell- recruitment and retention of frontline workers
- Pandemic- further impacted on staffing- shielding, self-isolating, caring responsibilities
- Overall- noticeable reduction in permanent and agency staff – national, regional, local challenges
April 2020 and 31 March 2021
 - SW permanent headcount has increased by 5.29 to 140.23 (v establishment total of 222.5)
 - SW agency headcount has decreased by 22.8 to 47.2 (21% of actual)
- Care management-impacted hardest- range of factors- number of decisive actions taken
 - Strengthened leadership capacity
 - Re-establishment of the Peripatetic team from across the Trust (13 SWs and 4 non-qualified)
 - Creation of a Brief Intervention Team (1 Team Manager and 7 SWs)
 - Covid funding of £500k secured to recruit an additional 6 Managers, 6 Social Care Assistants and 6 Business Support to increase the support provided to social work activity
- Noticeable increase in stability within other service areas

Our Practice- some key headlines

- Continued visits to children- virtual and face to face increasing incrementally
- Practice quality- evidenced via audits- 83% Requires Improvement
- Steady performance against the contract KPIs in most areas
- 85-90% assessments completed on time (better than our comparators)
- Initial Child Protection Conferences timeliness- consistently high
- Short and long term placement stability continues to improve
- Key issues- permanency planning; Care proceedings; Pathway Plans & Personal Education Plans completion rates

Our Practice – Ofsted Assurance Visit

Positives:

- No child found to be at risk of harm
- Good response to the pandemic – children and staff well supported
- Evidence of good work and practice in each service
- Good quality audits and moderation with a positive audit framework
- Good work from education services and schools
- Leadership – we know ourselves well

Areas for improvement

- Child protection planning and intervention
- Pre-proceedings and court work; permanency for children
- Oversight and identification of issues and action to resolve them
- Children's emotional wellbeing and available help for our care leavers

Response to Covid & Financial Impact

Our Response to Covid

- Continuous evaluation, including external oversight- Improvement Adviser, DfE
- Children at the heart of everything in spite of the challenges
- Sandwell has been amongst the areas 'hardest hit'- personal impact on staff
- Leadership approach to manage emerging situations- business continuity plans and clear communication through the Trust – staff safety and children safety our priority
- Despite challenges- face-to-face visits a starting point for all our children, early identification and regular review of our most vulnerable

Financial Impact - Covid Expenditure Summary

	2020/21 Full Year	2021/22 Q1 only
	£'000	£'000
Staffing Costs	227	293
Placement Costs	1,323	191
Overheads	370	30
Total Funding Received	<hr/> 1,920	<hr/> 514

Financial Impact – Summary

Staffing

- 2020/21 – additional capacity to cover Trust staff who were self isolating / unable to work
- 2021/22 – additional capacity to support Care Management

Placements

- 2020/21 – to manage increased demand from children needing to be in our care or for whom step down to lower cost alternatives was delayed
- Increased IILA payments in line with the increase in Universal Credit
- 2021/22 – managing demand & increased costs from providers due to Covid . Also shortage of suitable available placements, eg foster carers unable to care due to Covid risk.

Overheads

- 2020/21 – PPE and hand sanitisers for all staff ; technology to enable staff to work remotely
- 2021/22 – Continued IT costs to allow phased transition back to office working incorporating socially distanced working, additional cleaning, hybrid meetings, larger meeting rooms

Focus on the Future



Transformation Programme

Underpinned by our ethos

Six Strategic Priorities



Priority 1 (P1)

People



Priority 2 (P2)

Practice



Priority 3 (P3)

Partnership



Priority 4 (P4)

Prevention



Priority 5 (P5)

Meeting Need
& Measuring
progress



Priority 6 (P6)

Striving for
Excellence

Improvement Plan – Overview

People and Practice

- Strengthen staff recruitment, retention and career development of, including wellbeing
- Assessments and plans, including permanence planning
- Management oversight, IRO challenge and resolution
- Strengthen services for children in care and care leavers- emotional health and wellbeing

Partnerships and Prevention

- Early help and prevention- every level- right interventions at the right point

Meeting Need and Measuring Impact

- The 'value of care'- right plan for child as well as 'value for money'

Striving for excellence

- Transforming the future
- Embracing flexible working
- Culture of creativity, continuous learning and improvement

Opportunity for Discussion