

TITLE OF REPORT: Performance Management and Improvement Framework Year-End Performance Report 2023/24

REPORT OF: Dale Owens, Chief Executive

SUMMARY

To report to the Committee the Council's Performance Management and Improvement Framework year-end report for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report also provides an overview of performance relevant to the role and remit of this committee.

Purpose of the Performance Management and Improvement Framework

1. The Performance Management and Improvement Framework (PMIF) enables the Council to know how it is delivering against the Thrive agenda. It has a clear focus on priorities, delivery, measurement, and analysis of impact. It is based on Thrive and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and incorporates an organisational 'health check' balanced scorecard.

Background

2. The Council's performance framework was agreed by Council on 27 May 2021. The draft measures were considered and agreed by Cabinet in October 2021, with further updates to several measures agreed by Cabinet in subsequent reporting cycles. The reporting of 2022/23 performance was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committees in June and agreed by Cabinet in July 2023.
3. The PMIF aims to:
 - Enable the Council to know whether it is achieving its priorities (Thrive).
 - Ensure that the Council's resources are being deployed effectively.
 - Make both short- and long-term effective decisions, and the Council's approach to resource allocation and budget setting.
 - A whole systems approach – embedded in our partnership working to deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Year-end reports

4. The analysis of performance for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, against each of the six policy objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the balanced scorecard is set out at Appendix 1. Areas of relevance to this Committee are highlighted in this report, however, the entire PMIF is provided to enable members of the committee to see the full picture of performance across all priority areas at Appendix 1. Please note that the current version attached at Appendix 1 is a draft, as the performance data and analysis is regularly being updated due to the iterative nature of the framework.

5. The performance reports outline the challenges, achievements, actions, and resources for each policy objective. It also contains performance data including strategic and operational measures and is informed by qualitative and quantitative assessment to inform policy and resource decisions.
6. Some data is not available at this stage. Indicators are released throughout the year, some annually which do not coincide with this reporting cycle. Where provisional data is available this has been provided. The report sets out the current performance for the strategic and operational measures, where data is available, at the year-end stage.
7. Cross-cutting key areas already being highlighted are:
 - Budget pressures continue to provide a significant challenge across the Council.
 - Continuing demand pressures being faced by services with increased complexity and conflicting priorities in many areas.
 - There are ongoing issues with recruitment and retention across all areas.
 - Many services across the Council are working closely with key partners and local communities to deliver support to residents in need.
 - The cost-of-living and high interest rates are continuing to impact the financial challenges already facing some residents.
 - The economic climate continues to make things difficult for many businesses in the borough, as well as the global economic and political uncertainty impacting level of business investment.
 - Many services are actively engaging with customers to improve their offer and/or customer experience.
8. An overview will be provided at the Committee meeting, however, below are some of the key areas to highlight:

Challenges include:

- Continued challenges in recruitment and retention across a range of roles in the service and particularly in senior posts
- In March 2024, there were 527 children in our care, a rate of 136.9 per 10k population. This is higher than National, Regional and Statistical Neighbours. Rates of children entering care have however reduced in 23/24, from 59.2 per 10k in 2022/23 to 54 per 10k in 2023/24. This is higher than comparators.
- New services and intensive support services have been developed with a focus on supporting young people and families on the edge of care. These are starting to have impact as evidenced in the reduced rate of children entering the care system.
- Placement sufficiency remains a challenge and reflects the national position. There have been lower numbers of new foster carers recruited in Gateshead than in previous years which has led to an increase in use of Independent Fostering Agency

placements, putting pressure on the budget. Identifying homes for children with the most complex needs remains challenging.

- Over the last year, the number of children and young people with EHCP's have increased from 1,513 at March 2023, to 1,780 in March 2024. The EHCP rate per population in Gateshead is now in line with the North East average and slightly above the national figure.
- The proportion of EHCP's completed (excluding exceptions) was 79.5% for 2023. This is a reduction compared to the previous year but better than regional comparators.

Areas of excellence and improvement include:

- Workforce stability remains an area of strength with few social work vacancies and low use of agency social workers. This supports our ambition to have manageable social work caseloads
- Whilst overall rates of children in our care remain higher than comparators, there has been a slowing down in children entering the system and more children leaving the system in the last 12 months than the previous 12 months, demonstrating the positive impact on edge of care strategies and support services.
- For those children who are in our care, 76% have been in the same placement for two or more years which compares well with comparators.
- For those children who are in our care, the stability of placements is strong. 6.1% of children in our care have experienced 3 or more moves in the last 12 months, which compares favourably with regional and statistical neighbours.
- The new vulnerable adolescent service is having a positive impact on reducing children missing from home and care and there has been improved rates of children in receipt of a Return to Home Interview, where 83% accepted a return home interview in 2023/24 compared to 60% in 2022/23.

Actions include:

- Service has ambitious plans in 2024, to continue to strengthen the multi-agency early help offer through piloting an integrated approach in and through our family hubs strongly linked to localities and 'wrap around support' to clusters of schools. This will support our commitment to inclusion; delivering support in communities and identifying and responding to children's needs early.
- Support our children and young people on the edge of care to remain at home and when we do need to care for them, to support a return home to birth family or connected carers at the earliest opportunity when it is safe to do so. To achieve this, we aim to develop and implement the reunification strategy for Children in Care, strengthen our edge of care offer and routinely embed Family Group Conferences (FGC) and Implement the Family Network Pilot (FNSP).
- Development of a Post 16 strategy for promoting and strengthening opportunities for young people into education employment and training with a focus on those in vulnerable groups.

- As part of the budget approach and MTFS, there is a clear plan of interventions to support a reduction in areas relating to placement costs for children in our care and the need for home to school transport - both areas of budget pressure. This includes a focus on interventions to support children to remain safely within their families by intervening early, alongside a revised & refreshed Placement Sufficiency Strategy and a new SEND Strategy & Improvement Plan.

Review of framework

7. Over the coming twelve-month period the current PMIF will undergo a review to ensure that the information provided by the framework continues to add value to decision making process and reflects advancements in technology and the introduction of the Office for Local Government.

Recommendations

8. Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - Comment on the year-end report at Appendix 1 and identify any areas for further scrutiny.
 - Recommend the performance report to Cabinet for consideration in July 2024.

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