

Appendix 1

Acting Director of Children's Services, London Borough of Havering

Brief Progress Synopsis

Overview

Since October 2019, Robert has continued to focus upon leading, supporting and developing the essential conditions required to secure and grow Service outcomes in a manner which delivers value for money. A refreshed senior leadership team has been secured, and is driving an updated practice model which continues to translate the Service's vision and transformational "Face to Face" programme into effective operational delivery and improved outcomes. Some key outcomes include further reductions in the numbers of children in care, those subject of child protection plans and children and families subject to high cost legal care proceedings in a manner which prioritises a robust safeguarding approach to all work. Early help provision has been supported to mature and better aid early intervention successes. This area has made purposeful use of a growing number of volunteers and resulted in the Early Help Volunteering Service being awarded the Public Sector Children's Team Award at the national Children and Young People Now Awards.

Additionally, he has continued to cultivate and strengthen strong partnership working with children, families and young people, Elected Members, educational leaders, corporate colleagues, statutory agencies and wider stakeholders. For instance, this includes successfully launching and agreeing new priorities for the new Havering Safeguarding Children's Partnership and overarching Tri-Borough BHR arrangements, and gaining strong buy-in/engagement for the new Adolescent Safeguarding approach via effective service design and creative task and finish activities which have delivered a shared set of objectives.

Robert has also made effective working relationships with key regulatory agencies such as Ofsted, the DfE and wider Government agencies and added value to Havering through his positive partnership involvement with Director of Children's Services networks within the sub-region, London and nationally. This activity has provided opportunities that have aided learning, provided horizon scanning opportunities and continued to positively raise the profile of the Borough.

Importantly, the Service response to the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis has been extremely effective both as it relates to universal Education provision and statutory social care services to protect children at risk of/experiencing significant harm, those in care and care leavers and families requiring welfare support. Schools and early year providers were proactively supported to deliver safe and appropriately risk assessed provision during "lockdown" for the children of keyworkers and the vulnerable, and as services return more widely, a "new normal". This was also the case for social care casework which delivered high quality support to maintain positive outcomes in extremely challenging circumstances and high rates of timely visiting. Schools were also fully supported to get pupils back into education in a safe way.

Children's Services were led to fully engage in the wider corporate emergency planning to the pandemic and contributed across all relevant Bronze and Silver responses to manage the early stages of the crisis, formulate new "emergency response" offers for those shielding and support the ongoing recovery.

Further key achievements during the past 12 months include:

- Growth of the Children's permanent workforce to meet its target of 85% together with a reduction in staff turnover.
- Implemented strengthened Quality Assurance functions which includes a new framework and audit tools, a regular Director's audit moderation panel, implemented a new approach to audit for managers and delivered external practice assurance reviews for MASH/Assessment and Leaving Care Services. ("Mocksted")
- Strengthened Children's Services governance arrangements via refreshed operational and strategic boards.
- Despite the demand for services remaining high with increasing complexity and placement market conditions, the 2019/20 in-year forecasted overspend was reduced through the robust application of demand/budget management and initiatives such as increasing the percentage of successful "Troubled Families" claims and via the delivery of lower cost high quality in-borough semi-independent provision.
- Delivered significantly improved performance in relation to key service indicators of success including timeliness of assessments, completion rates of personal education and health plans, levels of supervision and visits to vulnerable children during the pandemic.
- Completed a comprehensive review of the Borough's Corporate Parenting Strategy and related management and elected member training which is to be rolled out following Cabinet approval of the Strategy.