



Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1XJ on Thursday, 19 January 2017

Present:

Pauline Batstone (Chairman)
Mike Lovell, Toni Coombs, Beryl Ezzard and Daryl Turner

Members Attending

Trevor Jones, County Councillor for Dorchester
Deborah Croney, County Councillor for Hambledon
Robert Gould, Leader of the County Council
Rebecca Knox, County Councillor for Beaminster

Officer Attending: Sara Tough (Director for Children's Services), John Alexander (Performance and Policy Manager), Paul Beecroft (Communications Officer (Internal)), Vanessa Glenn (Assistant Director for Care and Protection), Jay Mercer (Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships), Patrick Myers (Assistant Director - Design and Development), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), Sally Wernick (Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality - Adults), Tim Wells (Senior Manager - Prevention and Partnerships), Tom Wilkinson (Children's Services and Interim Chief Pensions and Investments Manager) and Fiona King (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

For certain items, as appropriate

Ann Evans, Citizens Advice Bureau
Andrew Kerby, North Dorset District Council.

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on:
Wednesday, 15 March 2017

Apologies for Absence

1 Apologies for absence were received from Steve Butler and Mike Byatt.

Code of Conduct

2 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

3 The minutes from the meeting held on 5 October 2016 were agreed and signed.

Matter Arising

Minute 16 – Looked After Children – In relation to unaccompanied asylum seeker children, the Cabinet Member for Learning, Skills and Children's Safeguarding updated members following a report to Cabinet the previous day. She provided a summary of the progress to date to resettle 13 children, and highlighted that the number could increase up to 54, together with the care provided. However, it was made clear that the resource and cost received had been assessed for each child and was not realistic. She would therefore make representations to Government to improve the scheme in line with the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme which was fully funded. Cabinet would consider removing the County Council from the voluntary scheme if it was not fully funded.

Public Participation

4 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

Update on Ofsted Recommendations

5 The Director for Children's Services updated members on the progress of the Ofsted recommendations. She advised that they remained on track and work was ongoing to update documents to ensure there were clearer and specific delivery dates. More detail on the progress was due to be discussed at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board and she assured members that this was being reviewed regularly.

The Director felt they were now in a confident position with regard to addressing the recommendations as required by Ofsted.

Noted

Progression of Early Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and Post 16 residential placements

6 The Committee considered a report from the Director for Children's Services which updated members on the significant improvement in the 2016-17 academic year on timescales for new Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships updated members on the national picture, progress on the strategic development plan and a review of the progress in more detail. He highlighted the focus on financial implications especially in respect of schools. Members' attention was drawn to the section of Post 16 Placements and the Mental Capacity Act in the report following a discussion at their last meeting on 5 October 2016.

The Chairman, in her role as the Member Champion for Diversity (including Disability), highlighted that a number of the reports noted that an Equalities Impact Assessment was not applicable and she felt that this need to be sharpened up.

Following a question from the Vice Chairman about inspections, the Director advised members that they had just been notified of an Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) 5 day SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Inspection on 23 -27 January 2017. The nature of the inspection would be quite broad, it was not just on special educational needs but also child protection issues, education attainment and opportunities available. The inspection was not just of a specific team or teams it was how Dorset as a local area performed. Once the outcome was known the Director undertook to report back to this Committee.

Following a question from the Chairman concerning out of county provision and whether this was the best or only provision available, the Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships advised, that here were some very specialist needs that were not provided for in Dorset and there was a strategic review of provision in Dorset ongoing.

One member expressed concern that in relation to a particular issue in her area, there were not enough special educational need places in the local community schools

currently being provided for. The Director undertook to discuss this further with the member outside of the meeting.

Noted

Apprenticeships in respect of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

7 Members considered a report by the Director for Children's Services regarding the development of a full range of opportunities for work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships for care leavers in order to increase the number who were in employment, education or training as recommended by Ofsted at their recent inspection.

The Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised members that whilst the delivery of the new whole apprenticeship scheme for Dorset County Council sat with the Human Resources department this report focussed on the opportunities available for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. Currently there were no LAC on a DCC apprenticeships but there were a number of LAC on apprenticeships outside of the County Council. Further work was ongoing to promote LAC securing an apprenticeship.

The Chairman expressed an interest in the approach to develop a young persons' interview skills, as although LAC were guaranteed an interview, they had not as yet been successful in securing an apprenticeship.

The Director advised members there was an opportunity for this Committee to influence in this area, it was also a high priority for the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Cabinet Member for Learning, Skills and Children's Safeguarding advised members there needed to be a whole system approach to corporate parenting and there was a challenge to the whole council that they were corporate parents first and foremost. She highlighted the importance of assessing the needs and requirements in the interviews for this particular group of children. She drew members' attention to the timetable in the Director's report and advised that this would be a blueprint for the work to be taken forward. Shared discussions from other meetings to date had produced really encouraging outcomes in terms of LAC.

Following a question from a member about virtual school pupils, the Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised that this was a concept that had been in place for the past 10 years and was led by a virtual headteacher. The role would coordinate the education of LAC in relation to achievements, SEN, attendance and any activity relating to their educational achievement. They were involved in care planning and pathway planning and this was all done through the schools that these children attended. The Assistant Director for Care and Protection added that LAC faced more challenges than some of their peer groups in mainstream schools. Virtual schools gave LAC additional help, guidance and support.

In response to a question about budget implications in respect of the public sector duty, the Group Finance Manager advised that the apprenticeship levy was half a percent on the employers pay bill. The money raised from this was recirculated to the paying authority for them to then invest in expanding the numbers. For example in Dorset County Council there would be around 92 apprenticeships and LAC could take part in this scheme.

One member felt that with the variety of services that the County Council provided we should be able to accommodate the needs of our LAC. Although she recognised that many were totally unprepared and for some a major challenge sometimes was just getting out of the house.

The Vice Chairman felt that members needed to accept their responsibility of being a corporate parent and following the next elections part of the next induction should include a session emphasising what this entailed.

The Director felt there was an opportunity for this Committee to see the direction of travel in terms of children seeking apprenticeships. The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance noted that a report later on the agenda provided a level of outcomes focused monitoring information against those key priorities contained in the Corporate Plan to track progress. However, where required, more detailed reports could also be provided on specific topics. These would help support the Committee to more fully understand what actions were currently being taken, either by the County Council or by partner organisations, towards better outcomes.

Resolved

That members endorsed the established reporting process and the opportunity to seek further information on specific topics as required.

Reason for Decision

To provide an update on the activity taking place to promote apprenticeship opportunities to Care Leavers and Looked After Children.

Family Partnership Zones

- 8 Members considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which informed members of the establishment of Family Partnership Zones and described their multi-agency partnership approach. Members were advised that a programme of engagement within each zone was now underway.

The Assistant Director for Design and Development highlighted anti-social behaviour (ASB) and noted how this was monitored. It was not easy to identify areas of ASB undertaken by children and young people by the data. The aim of reducing the number of LAC was very reliant on family partnership zones being effective across the whole system.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Kerby, the Chairman of the Dorset Community Safety Partnership and member for North Dorset District Council to the meeting. Cllr Kerby had expressed concern about ASB and work was ongoing with the community safety partnership to try and draw some conclusions. He undertook to share that report with this Committee at its next meeting on 15 March 2017.

The Assistant Director informed members of a report that went to the recent People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding hate crime. He highlighted the correlation of data now and data in the summer, which showed an increase in July and August 2016 of these type of incidents and in some areas a particular trend.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities in her role as Chairman of the Pan Dorset Community Safety Partnership advised members of the work that had been undertaken to try to identify links between drug and alcohol abuse which were not necessarily recorded by the Police.

Following a question from the Chairman about the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) the Director advised that the team had moved into Poole Police Station in early January 2017 and were also sharing space with Bournemouth. All teams were working collaboratively and sharing information, the quality of which was very helpful. The MASH promoted a family approach, not just working with the children but with the entire family. She also confirmed that children and families could self-refer.

Noted

Personal Independence Payments

- 9 Members considered a report from the Citizen's Advice Bureau which highlighted an investigation in to Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

The Chairman welcomed Ann Evans, the Advice Services Manager from the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) in Dorchester to the meeting. She drew members' attention to the research and campaign work part of CAB which looked at what problems people were having and recorded things that appeared unfair.

All work was evidence based and showed that a high number of problems were being experienced with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) which had taken over from the disability living allowance. She highlighted that this was a national problem but was hugely affecting people within Dorset. The poor quality of medical assessments being carried out was also highlighted. This resulted in months of waiting for an appeal and virtually every appeal the CAB attended was won, which reflected the poor decision making by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The whole system was disadvantaging people and the CAB were still seeing the same number affecting the most vulnerable people in local communities.

One member highlighted the people with terminal illnesses and the delays they experienced in getting the hospital consultants to sign the forms to say they were eligible to apply for PIP.

The County Councillor for Dorchester, who also represented West Dorset as a liaison member for the CAB, felt this was a very powerful report and hoped that the County Council would lend its support to the problem.

The Director undertook to liaise with the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services to see if collectively they could gain support. As it was a national issue she would see if the Association of Directors for Children's Services (ADCS) were also picking this up. She also felt that a joint letter to Department for Education (DFE) and Department of Health (DoH) could be a useful route.

The County Councillor for Dorchester felt sure that the Dorset MPs must be aware but to date no effective action to bring about a positive change had been made. The Chairman urged the CAB to bring it to the Dorset MPs attention.

The Chairman suggested writing to the DWP drawing this report to their attention and asking for their comments. One member suggested contacting the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with reference to hospital administrative delays.

The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance acknowledged that this particular issue clearly demonstrated how the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees were taking interest in a much broader view of outcomes across Dorset, rather than just those issues or services that were delivered directly by the County Council. The potential for the County Council to lend its support in calls for improvement in the PIP process was about being outcome focussed, looking for better outcomes for individuals. This demonstrated a great strength in organisations joining together.

Resolved

1. That a letter be set to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) setting out members' concerns.
2. That the Director raise the issue with the ADCS.
3. That the Director write a joint letter with the interim Director for Adult and Community Services to DFE and DoH.

Domestic Abuse - Key Areas of Challenge

- 10 Members considered a report by the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services which looked at the key areas of challenge for both Children's and Adults Services and provided members with some background information on domestic abuse in Dorset.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality proposed that members received regular updates on the work of the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards along with updates on the progress of the Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategic Group action plan at future meetings.

Following a question about the work including the District and Borough Councils, the Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality confirmed that each of the districts had an individual co-ordinator.

One member was surprised that Dorset had such high figures, the officer noted the importance of understanding what was triggering it and prevention was key. It could be that officers were not focussing efforts where they should be.

The Director commented that a good starting place was to understand the scale of domestic abuse in Dorset and information from the MASH would be really helpful. The majority of enquiries at the hub were domestic abuse reports, high risks were followed up but the majority were not so serious but would help officers to respond in a different way using the family partnership zones.

One member felt that as this was the first of many reports for this Committee to monitor it would be helpful to see how members could continue its work and focus on such topics outside of the formal meetings and then bring information back to the Committee for debate and identify recommendations to the Cabinet.

The Chairman made reference to elderly care abuse which she felt was a 'grey' area. The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality felt it was simply not just about a breakdown with carers but abuse and there were complex elements involved.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality undertook to lead an Inquiry Day to look at domestic abuse and invite people from the statutory and voluntary agencies as well as colleagues from the Districts and Boroughs. Cllr Kerby felt it would be helpful to use the Community Safety Partnership as a vehicle for this as district members were also part of this. It would also be useful to have some input from organisations that were working well, some hospital data would be helpful also.

The Chairman undertook to support the officer with the scoping of the day and the Director would suggest a colleague to represent Children's Services.

Resolved

1. That members receive updates on the progress of the Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategic Group action plan.
- 2 That an Inquiry Day be arranged to look at domestic abuse with an update for members at the next meeting on 15 March 2017.

Reason for Decisions

To monitor and comment on the work of the Adult and Children's Services and their partner agencies to be satisfied that they were working together effectively to improve the safety of adults and children and to prevent and reduce incidents of violence and domestic abuse.

Corporate Plan: Outcomes focused monitoring report

- 11 Members considered a report from the Lead Director which provided members with a summary of the 'Safe' indicators along with a detailed analysis.

One member commented that the format of Appendix 2 was excellent but felt it should include longer timelines. In respect of the lack of benchmark data for the 'crime indicator' he felt the Police should be able to assist with this. He highlighted the importance of members being able to access current data on a daily basis. The Policy and Performance Manager explained this could be accessed online in the form of the Dorset Outcomes Tracker. It was important that the data was owned by the directorates and kept as up to date as possible. He undertook to raise this as an issue at the Planning and Learning Group to ensure that the most up to date data was readily available. Members felt it would be helpful to have a training session on the use of the outcomes tracker.

Noted

Work Programme

- 12 The Committee considered its Work Programme and gave consideration to the inclusion of a number of items. The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance advised members that the work plan provided a guide for members of potential areas for overview and scrutiny work, but it was for elected members to decide upon those topics that they believed to be of greatest value to focus on.

The Committee referred to other outcome priorities under the safe outcome which fell under its remit and cited those who were Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) on Dorset roads. The Committee was eager to understand more and, in particular, review the various causes and forces that gave rise to such incidents to establish whether there were any common themes, or location data. It was agreed that highways officers would be asked to build upon their previous informal briefing session and provide a briefing report for members to start discussions at their next meeting on 15 March 2017. Additional items for this meeting would also include an update on Domestic Abuse/Violence, a report on Adult Abuse – Carer's Abuse, an update on Apprenticeships – transition, and a report from the Community Safety Partnership.

Noted

Questions from County Councillors

- 13 No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.10 pm