



Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1XJ on Tuesday, 30 January 2018

Present:

Katharine Garcia (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)
Katharine Garcia, Toni Coombs, Beryl Ezzard, Steven Lugg, Bill Pipe and Kate Wheller

Officers Attending: John Alexander (Senior Assurance Manager - Performance), Sarah Baker (Group Finance Manager), Andy Frost (Community Safety and Drug Action Manager), Cathy Lewis (Communications Officer (Internal)), Nick Jarman (Interim Director for Children's Services), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), Mary Taylor (Designated Safeguarding Manager), Sally Wernick (Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality - Adults) and Fiona King (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(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:
Tuesday, 13 March 2018

Apologies for Absence

1 Apologies for absence were received from Derek Beer, Kevin Brookes and Pauline Batstone (Chairman).

In the absence of Cllr Batstone the Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

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 12 October 2017 were agreed and signed.

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.

Domestic Abuse - Inquiry Day

5 The Committee considered a report by the Transformation Lead for Adult and Community Services Forward Together Programme which highlighted the objectives of the recent Inquiry Day that had been held and showed that whilst there were pockets of good practice further progress was needed to deliver the changes that were required.

Members noted the importance of having a robust approach with the right strategies

in place and were pleased to see a concerted effort being made to achieve a joined-up approach to domestic abuse. The Community Safety and Drug Action Manager highlighted work being undertaken with partners to develop a whole family approach and the mapping of service pathways for victims. Officers were working closely with partners including those from the voluntary sector.

One member, whilst recognising the importance of being joined-up, highlighted how at times when discretionary spend was dropped, for example bus services, this impacted on areas such as domestic abuse as abuse was usually contained in a whole package of issues. He would like to see the County Council joined up in policy in respect of domestic abuse.

Following a discussion about data protection and the sharing of information, the Interim Director for Children's Services noted members' comments and concerns and advised that there was now a multi-agency safeguarding hub in place where information, data and intelligence could be shared and which had made major strides forward.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality – Adults, undertook to provide members with an update from the Pan Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategic Group on their Action Plan to understand how different agencies were working together and how successful they were.

Recommended

That the Cabinet be asked to support to commit to further targeted activity, with key partners to tackle domestic abuse and improve outcomes for vulnerable adults and children.

Reason for Decision

To monitor and comment on the work of Adult and Children's Services and their partner agencies, including the Community Safety Partnership 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.

Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance

6 The Committee considered a report by the Transformation Lead for Adult and Community Services Forward Together Programme which notified members of the County Council's duty to notify the Government of any potential victims of human trafficking or slavery.

The Community Safety and Drug Action Manager highlighted to members that this was a complex and fast evolving area and that officers had worked with partners to develop a Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance. The document provided guidance for staff on how to fulfil the statutory duty to notify Central Government if they encountered a potential victim of modern slavery. It also set out how partners would organise themselves in the event of a modern slavery operation. The Protocol and Guidance was a working tool for practitioners and would need to be updated regularly by officers to incorporate any changes in legislation or guidance and in light of any practical experience gained whilst using it. Regular updates would also be required to the contacts and services listed in the document.

One member was concerned that the UK Border Force was not included in the list of agencies under a duty to notify the Government of any suspected victims of human trafficking or slavery. The Community Safety and Drug Action Manager advised that Home Office staff within UK Visas and Immigration, Border Force and Immigration Enforcement were required to comply with this duty. They were also engaged in various partnership work to tackle modern slavery. Members felt it was important to

mention in the Protocol and Guidance that other agencies, in addition to those referenced in the covering report, needed to make a notification.

The Lead for Safeguarding and Quality – Adults advised members that she was the nominated slavery lead for the Authority and confirmed that the Border Force did sit on the Anti-Slavery Partnership. Following a concern from a member about an issue in his division, the officer undertook to discuss it further outside of the meeting.

In response to a concern about a minor being deported as a result of slavery, the Interim Director for Children's Services advised that if there were young people that were immigrants, they were by definition looked after children and therefore were the responsibility of the local authority, in their role as the Corporate Parent.

Recommended

That the Cabinet be asked to adopt the Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance, with the inclusion that there were other agencies who needed to comply with the duty to notify.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the County Council met its statutory duty to notify central government of any potential victims of modern slavery.

Elective Home Education and Attendance Scoping Report

7 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Children's Services which set out the issues, suggested scope and methodology for the Committee to explore Elective Home Education.

The Interim Director for Children's Services advised members that the right of access was very circumscribed in respect of elective home education unless there was a safeguarding concern. There was very little evidence of children coming to harm through home education per se.

There were some concerns around home education in relation to safeguarding, when some parents withdrew children from school because of bullying and a considerable amount of informal activity was done around this. There were extensive opportunities of sources of intelligence and any work needed to be proportionate to the scale of the problem as there was still plenty to do within the Council's own school service and children's service.

Members' discussed particular issues within their divisions and felt that if they had evidence of numbers of children being home educated in Dorset that it would be really helpful. The Director noted the importance of remembering that the law placed responsibility on the parent/carer to get their children to school and the role of the Council was to ensure that the parent/carer obeyed the law. There was a wealth of good quality information available for parents from the County Council's Attendance Service.

Members' discussed home education from a school transport appeal perspective where bullying was cited quite regularly. All members could do in these situations was to operate the County Council's policy. The Director noted that bullying was a safeguarding standards issue in schools and with appropriate evidence the Local Authority would bring this to the attention of the Governors of a particular school. However, it was important to note that there was very little evidence of case reviews for children coming to harm whilst being home educated.

Member's agreed it was important to establish the scale of the potential issue and requested a summary report of data to give them a view of what was going on in

readiness for their meeting on 5 July 2018.

Resolved

That the Committee to receive a report at their 5 July 2018 meeting to establish the scale of any potential issue with Elective Home Education.

Reasons for Decision

1. To enable Members to be sufficiently informed in order to decide how best and in what order to approach this subject.
2. To emphasise the need to conduct this work on the basis of what we know or need to know about Elective Home Education.

The Council's Approach to Social Worker Recruitment and Retention

- 8 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Children's Services which provided an overview of the approach and activities which had been put in place to ensure the delivery of a strategy for the effective recruitment and retention of social workers within Children's Services.

The Interim Director for Children's Services made reference to the caseloads for front line teams due to insufficient number of social workers for children that required a service. A consequence of this was taking too many children into care which had resulted in a major overspend. The Cabinet had recently agreed to an additional £1m of funding to recruit additional social workers in order to help manage risk safely and avoid taking too many children into care. He also referred to a marketing campaign which was ongoing that was already attracting good quality social workers. With regards to the County Council becoming an 'employer of choice', it was recognised that the cost of living in Dorset was a barrier and officers were currently working on a supply of pop up accommodation which would be available for people that wished to take advantage of it. One member made reference to accommodation being available in some of the hubs around the County which could be a consideration.

Following a question from a member regarding the work with Bournemouth University, the Director advised that this was still intact and there was an ongoing strong relationship with them.

Noted

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report, January 2018

- 9 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Children's Services which set out performance against the 2017-18 Corporate Plan and population indicators for the Safe corporate outcome. The report also included performance measures which showed the Council's services' contribution and impact on outcomes, risk management information relating to outcomes and population indicators, and some value for money information relating to the three service directorates.

Attention was drawn to the suggested areas of focus for the indicators on rates of crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse in Dorset, the number of people killed or seriously injured on Dorset's roads and the rate of Children in Care.

Reference was made to the slight decrease in the number of children leaving local authority care after a special guardianship order.

Following a discussion about persistent absenteeism, the Interim Director for Children's Services advised that the duty was with the school to secure attendance and that this formed part of the Ofsted Inspection process for schools. Members also discussed how persistent absence could also be an indication of underlying safeguarding issues. One member highlighted the value of local knowledge when

putting statistics together. For example, particular schools could have higher levels of recorded absence because of local policies on what constitutes absence.

Following a comment about first time entrants into the justice system the Director undertook to provide further information outside of the meeting.

Noted

Road Collisions Task and Finish Group

10 Cllr Wheller, provided members with an update on the work she and Cllr Lugg had been involved in with updating the Road Casualty Reduction Plan. She undertook to circulate the note to members outside of the meeting.

One member commented that the Police and Crime Commissioner was looking to replace fixed speed cameras with average speed ones.

Noted

Emergency Planning Update

11 Cllr Lugg advised members that the main outcome of his work with Emergency Planning was to introduce briefings for all members of all tiers. However, there were now only 4 Emergency Planning officers, and he undertook that he and Cllr Brookes would keep members updated when arrangements were in place.

Noted

Work Programme

12 The Committee considered its work programme and gave consideration to the inclusion of a number of items which had been discussed earlier in the meeting:-

13 March 2018

- Update on Workforce Development (Adult Social Workers)
- Early Intervention and Prevention Outcomes Report
- Traffic Collisions Report

5 July 2018

- Update on whole family approach
- Domestic Abuse update
- Elective Home Education Report

One member highlighted to members that Personal Independent Payments (PIP) which the committee had discussed in January 2017 and written to the minister for Disabled People, Health and Work was now going back for review.

Resolved

That the Committee's Work Programme be updated accordingly.

Questions from County Councillors

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