



Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1XJ on Wednesday, 5 October 2016

Present:

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

Members Attending

Rebecca Knox, County Councillor for Beaminster

Officer Attending: Vanessa Glenn (Assistant Director for Care and Protection), Jay Mercer (Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships), Patrick Myers (Assistant Director for Design and Development), Claire Shiels (Commissioning and Procurement Manager, Children's Services), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), Sally Wernick (Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality - Adults), Tom Wilkinson (Children's Services Group Finance Manager) and Fiona King (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

- (Notes:(1) In accordance with Rule 16(b) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules the decisions set out in these minutes will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of five working days after the publication date.
Publication Date: **Thursday, 13 October 2016**
- (2) 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 Cabinet to be held on **Thursday, 19 January 2017.**)

Apologies for Absence

- 11 Apologies for absence were received from Mike Byatt, Susan Jefferies and David Mannings.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

- 13 The minutes from the meeting held on 14 June 2016 were agreed and signed.

Public Participation

14 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 Petitions Scheme.

Post Ofsted Progress

- 15 Following the Cabinet meeting on 7 September 2016, members received an update on the progress of the Ofsted Action Plan.

The Assistant Director for Care and Protection highlighted to members the 18 actions from Ofsted which needed to be addressed and that each are now had a lead officer and deadline for completion.

Following a question from a member about the Multi agency hub in Poole which was due to open on 8 January 2017, the Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised that Bournemouth and Poole would also move in shortly afterwards. In respect of communications, each authority had their own IT systems and in terms of families there was a statutory responsibility for authorities to advise neighbouring authorities. This was not about joining together at present but co locating into the same space. Each Local Authority had a statutory responsibility for their own children.

In response to a question regarding licencing and child sex exploitation, the Manager for Design and Development confirmed that there was a strategy in place regarding working with taxi firms.

One member asked if officers were struggling to implement all or any of the recommendations. The Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised they were not struggling just realising that some actions would take longer to deliver than others in respect of training and development. Some actions required partners to do some of the work so there was not an immediate fix in some areas.

Following a discussion about those leaving care and the difficulties of finding job opportunities, the Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised that the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills was leading in this area and was engaging directly with partners to take on apprenticeships for looked after children and care leavers. Officers undertook to provide members with a report on apprenticeships for their next meeting in January 2017.

One member asked for clarification in relation to broadening the range of children and young people who were able to participate in the Children in Care Council and Dorset Kidz. The Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised that the view from Ofsted was that there should be a broader range of younger children and this has now been taken forward and a Corporate Parenting Officer had been appointed to work through a strategy. It was also noted that there was some research work that was being carried out with Loughborough University, based on evidence, with a view to looking at costs and how much decisions made in relation to children in care cost.

Following a question about how the integration of the new county youth workers, in the light of the cuts to youth service would work, the Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised that in the context of development of a new structure within the new family partnership zones there were discussions around a new Overview Board for each specific zone and partner agencies would be invited to join the Board to develop a joint strategy about how to deliver support to young people in specific areas. The Assistant Director for Design and Development undertook to provide members with further information on family zones at their next meeting in January 2017. Members highlighted the importance of keeping Local Members involved and officers agreed to share the profiles with members.

In response to a question regarding a link between youth centres and the County Council, the Assistant Director for Care and Protection advised that the Strategic Lead Officer for 12-25 year olds' responsibility was to make those connections around this area of work, this would be one of his key actions.

One member suggested that a Facebook page holding all this information would be really helpful. The Head of Families and Children undertook to include a reference to

social media in her report.

The Head of Families and Children advised members that they had not yet been notified when the Ofsted team would be returning but would advise members when the date was known.

Resolved

That a report on Apprenticeships and a report on Family Partnership zones be presented to members in January 2017.

Looked After Children

16 Members received a feedback report from the Chairman, following the first meeting of the Looked After Children Task and Finish Group, which was held on 8 September 2016. Her report focused on the County Council's approach to Children in Care, how to keep as many children as possible safely out of care and how to improve the situation of those children that came into care. The Chairman highlighted the impressive amount of preventative work that was being done in this area.

The Assistant Director for Care and Protection highlighted the longer term work with looked after children and noted that staff were committed to working with younger people.

One member felt it would be useful to have a list of acronyms included with the report.

Following discussion members were satisfied that everything was being done that could be done in this regard. The Assistant Director for Care and Protection commented that it was clear that this was an ongoing piece of work and officers were constantly looking at developments and research to make improvements, this report was a working document and officers would continue to work with children and families.

Noted

Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) - Timelines

17 The Committee considered a report from the Director for Children's Services which highlighted that Dorset had been under-delivering on Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) timescales for new assessments or transfers from Statements of Special Educational Needs. Members were advised that specific actions had been taken to resolve the situation, including changes to staffing structures and levels, process and decision-making.

The Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships highlighted the new responsibilities for the Authority in respect of EHCPs. To illustrate the significant increase in requests he advised that requests for EHCPs in 2014/15 were 238, with 160 being made into Plans, and for 2015/16 there were 497 requests, with 316 being converted to Plans. It was noted that not all requests were met, it depended on the thresholds of the Plan. The timescales for Plans had now changed from 28 weeks to 20 weeks and more staff had now put into these areas to prioritise the backlog. Members were advised that Dorset was not the only area experiencing problems, the same issues had been identified in other areas of the Country. Plans had already been put in place for next year to avoid this happening again.

Following a question from a member about the size of the backlog, the Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships advised it stood at about 126 requests with approximately 95 decisions pending which he estimated could take about 3/4 weeks to clear.

One member highlighted some tension between the service and the schools, from a school governor point of view. Schools felt they were not getting the support required for children with identified problems which had resulted in some forced temporary exclusions. The Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships noted the issue around mainstream children, in a small primary school and highlighted the threshold which was about whether provision was needed. He accepted there had been difficulty around delays and the high needs budget but officers were making a major effort towards training within schools and were reviewing Special Educational Needs (SEN) bases. The re-provision of learning centres was also ongoing and officers undertook to circulate more specific dates to members. One member felt that any report brought to the Committee in future should have timelines included within the detail.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality for Adults considered if there were any issues around capacity and deprivation of liberty for any of the young people. The Assistant Director for Prevention and Partnerships added that officers were very much aware of this in regard to post 16 residential placements. The Chairman felt that as this was an area of concern for members she asked that a report be brought to the next meeting of this Committee.

Resolved

That an update report be considered by the Committee at its next meeting on 19 January 2017 and to include information about Post 16 residential placements.

Domestic Abuse Scoping Paper

18 The Committee considered a scoping paper on Domestic Abuse from the Director for Children's Services. The document provided background information on domestic abuse in Dorset to aid members' discussion. Current governance arrangements, service responses and the evidence of what worked was also highlighted.

In response to a question about falling numbers of domestic abuse incidents, the Manager for Design and Development noted there was an element of incidents not being reported but there was a distinction between incidents and domestic abuse crimes, when the Police were involved. Two thirds of domestic abuse incidents had children present.

One member highlighted the relationship with schools and how there was quite often a trusted adult in school that an abused child could turn to. There was a need for recognition of the behaviour of a child and questioned whether the training of staff to better recognise the impact that schools had as the first line of defence should be a priority. The Assistant Director for Design and Development recognised that this training need could be wider than schools, officers needed to equip a wider range of people who came into contact with children. It was also highlighted that school nurses were aware of police reports and could then reach out to a particular child.

Following a question about whether there was any effect on those children in rural locations with the situation being created through the lack of rural transport, especially in regard to Post 16 young people, the Manager for Design and Development advised that while this was not known, information on a postcode basis was known and would also give this consideration in respect of assessment.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Quality for Adults, noted that in respect of the Care Record there would be an opportunity for information sharing and linking with new Integrated Case Management System (iCMS). In respect of adults there was an issue around capacity in that officers were unable to make decisions for adults. She highlighted that there was more work to be done with adults and children in conjunction with the Community Safety Partnership.

The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance reminded members of the importance that the Committee looked across the Board in respect of children and adults.

Members were satisfied that the work that needed to be done was being done and asked that a follow up report in six months be brought to this Committee for members to see if there were any additional measures that had been put in place.

Resolved

That an update report be brought back to this Committee in six months' time.

Work Programme

19 The Committee considered its Work Programme and gave consideration to the inclusion of the following items:-

- SEN Reorganisation
- An update on the Ofsted recommendations
- Progression with Early Health Care Plans (EHCPs)

It was noted that if update information was ready prior to the next committee meeting, it should be circulated electronically to all members.

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 11.50 am