



Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1XJ on Thursday, 5 July 2018

Present:

Pauline Batstone (Chairman)
Katharine Garcia, Derek Beer, Kevin Brookes, Toni Coombs and Bill Pipe

Officer Attending: Claire Shiels (Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships), David Alderson (Senior Adviser, Learning and Inclusion), John Alexander (Senior Assurance Manager - Performance), Sarah Baker (Group Finance Manager), Melissa Craven (Communications Lead - Children's Services), Andy Frost (Community Safety and Drug Action Manager), Ian Grant (Programme Co-ordinator), Sylvia Lord (Adviser, School and Learning Service), Karen Maher (DSAB Business Manager), Michael Potter (Project Engineer), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), David Webb (Service Manager - Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service) 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:
Thursday, 11 October 2018

Apologies for Absence

24 Apologies for absence were received from Lesley Dedman, Steven Lugg and Kate Wheller.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman

25 **Resolved**
That Katharine Garcia be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of 2018-19.

Code of Conduct

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

Terms of Reference

27 Members noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Noted

Minutes

28 The minutes from the meeting held on 13 March 2018 were agreed and signed.

Public Participation

29 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.

Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

30 The Advice Services Manager from the Citizen's Advice Bureau attended and updated members on their clients' experiences of Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Unfortunately since attending a previous meeting of this committee, the Citizen's Advice Bureau had not seen any real improvement in the quality of assessments nor the mandatory reconsiderations of decisions and clients were waiting about twelve months for a tribunal hearing to be held. In respect of mental health assessments clients had reported that their experience at their assessments was not always reflected in the final report and that poor assessments were still continuing. However, there had been a slight improvement in the amount of travelling clients had to make for their assessments and tribunals.

Advisers were now having to tell clients that it was unlikely that any changes would be made to their assessments prior to an appeal. Locally most appeals were being overturned and the figure nationally was about two thirds that were being overturned.

One member reflected that not all disabilities were obvious and asked if clients could take someone with them to their assessment. The Advice Services Manager confirmed this was acceptable and that the Citizen's Advice Bureau recommended that people were accompanied.

The Chairman noted that she had been impressed with those persons involved with the tribunals that she had attended.

The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance noted that the statistics were concerning and that it would be interesting to see the national picture to help ground the outcomes required. The Advice Services Manager undertook to supply some national information for members and officers. She highlighted the need to be careful to not passport people between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the County Council.

In respect of the previous letters that had been sent to the Minister and copied to the Dorset Members of Parliament (MPs), the Advice Services Manager felt that the response received was rather meaningless. The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance suggested to send another letter from the Committee, advising of the update members had received and to also include some national statistics.

Resolved

That the Chairman draft a letter to the Minister on receipt of the statistics from the Advice Services Manager and that it be copied to all Dorset MPs, including Bournemouth and Poole.

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report - July 2018

31 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which included the most up to date available data on the population indicators within the 'safe' outcome and also included information on performance measures, risk management information.

The Senior Assurance Manager highlighted that the biggest issues for this period were around child protection. Work was ongoing to safely reduce the number of children in care and the number of children subject to a child protection plan. The Senior Assurance Manager highlighted to members two graphs in the report that showed that both of these figures had reduced as at the end of 2017. However, the rate of re-referrals to children's social care had risen slightly, as had the rate of children becoming subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time. The children in

need rate had also risen and a sharp increase in persistent absence in secondary schools was also highlighted.

Road accident data was also included in the report and members noted the continuation of a gradual drop in people killed and seriously injured on Dorset roads.

One member expressed concern regarding the increase of number of children coming back into care. The Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships explained that the figure was not about children coming back into care, but about referrals back into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and that there was a lot of work being done to ensure that the work of the MASH, social care teams and Family Partnership Zones were working better.

Following a question from a member regarding the impact on the budget of the number of children actually in care along with more expensive packages of care in place, the Assistant Director explained that a lot of had been done to reduce the numbers and that the more 'difficult' packages were reviewed regularly. There was a small area of younger children now in high cost placements, where in the past this was predominantly teenagers. The intention was to ensure that when high cost therapeutic placements were used that these were intended to try to improve outcomes for children to avoid issues continuing long term.

Members also considered the Annual Report for the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017-18. The report summarised and communicated the key elements of the work of the committee, it's purpose, the work it had been directly involved in along with the outcomes that had been achieved to strengthening the Council's operating framework as a direct result of its involvement.

Noted

Early Intervention and Prevention

32 The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships which informed members about how well the Council's investment in early intervention and prevention was working and delivering the results that were expected.

The Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships advised members that they were now 3 years into a 5 year transformation programme and that early intervention and prevention was a way of working and not a single service. The County Council's role was one of influence and working together as it had very few dedicated resources. It could not be underestimated the need for cultural change and a critical factor was to ensure there were professionals in place across the whole organisation who would be lead professionals for families. The evidence for return on investment in early intervention and prevention was strong but there was more need to ensure that the county council saw a reduction in demand as a result of this investment.

The next steps would be to keep the vision alive and to ensure that all partners remained on board. Work was ongoing to strengthen the governance and accountability to evidence the impact of collective efforts. Although real progress had been made it was critical that this continued to deliver and a real impact began to be seen on outcomes.

The Assistant Director highlighted persistent absence, and noted that work had been taking place to ensure that better conversations were taking place around this. This was predominantly a secondary school issue with a reduction being seen in primary schools. She highlighted the good community work that was happening in

Christchurch.

In response to a question from the Chairman about the possibility of transition time between schools being a danger time, the Assistant Director advised that schools themselves had good transition programmes in place but for particular groups there was additional support in place from Family Partnership Zone family workers.

Following a discussion on school exclusions, it was noted that these were greater in secondary school age children. However, members were advised that there had been a shift upwards in the number of exclusions in the early primary years and there was now more provision in place for these children when they were excluded. The Senior Adviser and Virtual School Head advised members that there was a lot of work ongoing with school improvement and SEN. Some of the younger excluded children already with a vulnerability were given practical suggestions whilst others were referred to psychologists and offered therapy interventions. Some of the most common reasons for exclusion in primary age children were behaviours e.g. persistent, aggressive and violent behaviours. With older children exclusions were less likely to be for persistent poor behaviour but increasingly for more drug related offences. The aim was for schools to be as inclusive as they could and assess every case on its merits but some schools had a 'zero tolerance' for drugs in their policies which could be a challenge.

Members asked that a report on school exclusions be presented at their next meeting to include the number of 11-18 year olds permanently excluded from school for drug related issues, the number of pupils who had their exclusions lifted and the number of pupils excluded for behaviour issues.

In response to a question about targeted youth work, the Virtual School Head advised this took place in schools as well as outside of school with the younger person and their family where a range of support was offered. Family Partnership Leads for specific areas were the appropriate contact for any queries.

One member queried how families knew about self-referral and was advised that posters were available within communities as well as information posted on the Dorset For You website. It was acknowledged that more could be done. Concern was also expressed that after a number of years the council was still not serving the most vulnerable children in the County.

Resolved

That further information on permanent exclusions, including the number of 11-18 year olds excluded for drug issues, the number of exclusions for poor behaviour and the number of students that had their exclusions lifted be presented to members at their meeting on 11 October 2018.

Elective Home Education Update

33 The Committee considered a joint report by the Senior Adviser and Virtual Head and the Alternative Provision, Exclusions and Elective Home Education Adviser which updated members on the Dorset Elective Home Education process and numbers and the impact of the work of the Dorset Elective Home Education Team.

Officers drew members attention to the legislative framework for this work, stressing the role the local authorities had in this area and that while local authorities had general duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, this did not bestow on local authorities the ability to see and question children subject to Elective Home Education (EHE) to establish if they were receiving suitable education. Officers had found that the best way to support these families was to engage with them and this was the model of service delivery.

A map showing home educated pupils mapped by Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) and Family Partnership Zones was circulated to members.

Following a question about why parents chose elective home education, the Senior Adviser advised that the national figures for children moving into elective home education had gone up by 200% nationally over the past couple of years. Reasons were numerous and national research had identified that these included lifestyle choices as well as the pressure on some headteachers to achieve results; SEN support issues; parental disagreement with the school, particularly in primary schools; or perhaps to avoid permanent exclusion in secondary schools. There was a national consultation out at present on EHE, to which officers had responded, to reinforce the need for home visits.

Members expressed an interest in seeing the Dorset profile of why parents chose home education and the Virtual School Head said officers would be able to provide some anecdotal based evidence. To try to ensure that children did not fall through the gap members were advised of the properly structured way that schools had to ensure formal notification of home education and that there was a very clear 'children missing education' process.

One member expressed concern that home educated children were not able to sit their GCSEs in local schools. Officers advised that they thought the nearest examination centre at present was at Southampton. The Chairman felt it would be helpful to learn of the numbers of students affected by this.

To try to ensure that children were receiving a satisfactory education officers were looking at the Family Partnership Zones to try and engage with some of the families. A lot of time was spent talking with parents, carers etc for those families considering home education to ensure they fully understood the implications. The Assistant Director noted the need for members to remember that for many families this was a positive choice.

In respect of children with SEN being home educated, officers advised there were around 12. If a child had an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the local authority had a duty to keep this in place, the funding for which ended when the child left the school.

The Chairman asked for officers to provide an analysis of the reasons for EHE including any gypsy and traveller families data, if available, at a later stage.

Following a discussion about 17 year olds that 'drop out' of education the Assistant Director advised there were a range of services available and made reference to the 'Ansbury' information, advice and tracking service which identified and followed up young people to support them back into education, employment or training as appropriate.

Members were concerned about safeguarding issues that affected these young people if they refused home visits and the Virtual School Head and the Assistant Director outlined that when notifications were made a range of data was provided and where there were concerns referrals were made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Resolved

That officers circulate information regarding availability of examination centres. To also provide an analysis of reasons for EHE, including Gypsy and Traveller families data where available.

Update on the Whole Family Approach

- 34 The Committee considered a report by the Business Manager for the Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board which set out a number of objectives including the proposal to hold a 'listening' event in order to develop a map of current arrangements to inform the next steps/plans in adopting a 'whole family' approach across Dorset.

The Business Manger advised members there was a whole systems approach aimed at achieving positive, long term and sustainable outcomes for individuals and families by working effectively with partners and agencies across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole.

Following a question from the Vice-Chairman regarding the event on 3 October 2018, the Business Manager advised that invitations had not yet been sent and would request that members be included.

Noted

Domestic Abuse – Update

- 35 The Committee considered a report by the Transformation Lead for Adult and Community Services Forward Together Programme which summarised the findings from the Domestic Abuse Inquiry Day held in October 2017 in order for members to scrutinise community safety work, particularly in relation to domestic abuse.

The Programme Co-ordinator updated members on the progress that had been made since the Inquiry Day and shared this with members. Reviews that had been undertaken showed that information sharing now worked quite well.

The Chairman felt that any further Inquiry Days on other specific areas of community safety could be something which the new Council could focus on. She felt it would be useful in perhaps a year's time to gather information from victims to gauge if things had improved. The Community Safety and Drug Action Manager felt this could be helpful as they were trying to ensure that a coherent system was in place.

The Vice-Chairman highlighted to member a 'Safe Space' event in Poole on 12 July 2018.

Noted

Causes and Forces of Road Traffic Collisions - Road Safety Plan

- 36 The Committee considered a report by the Collision Reduction Team Leader which summarised the outcome of investigations and presented members with a new document which outlined the work undertaken regarding road safety and future challenges.

One member commented on the number of older people who tended to disregard road safety rules and noted that it was not only young people who were sometimes guilty of poor driving. He felt this occurred regularly, especially in rural communities.

The Chairman made reference to hard standing areas for road safety cameras especially on narrow rural roads/lanes, but was not sure what could be done, apart from promoting community speed watch. The Collision Reduction Team Leader agreed that this presented a number of potential hazards and was discussed with members within the working group.

Resolved

That the Committee supported the updated Road Safety Plan 2018.

Reason for Decision

To continue the development of an Outcomes Based Accountability approach in better understanding of what the County Council can do to influence performance.

Approval of the Youth Justice Plan for 2018/19

37 The Committee considered a report which included the draft Youth Justice Plan for 2018-19. The Plan provided a summary of the performance, structure, governance, resources and future priorities for the Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service.

The Service Manager for the Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service advised members of the approval process. As a pan Dorset Poole and Bournemouth would also need to approve the Plan. He had been advised to update the Plan next week following the Joint Target Review inspection, but he did not expect there to be too much change.

Members thanked the Service Manager for a very comprehensive, easy to read report.

Recommended

That Cabinet be asked to recommend the County Council to approve the Youth Justice Plan for 2018-19.

Reason for Recommendation

The draft Youth Justice Plan meets statutory requirements. The Plan reviews achievements in the previous year, details the structure, governance and resources of the Youth Offending Service, and sets out the priorities for 2018-19.

Work Programme

38 The Committee considered its work programme and added a report and presentation on school exclusions as agreed earlier in the meeting.

Following a comment from a member regarding the possibility of making arrangements with local schools to enable children to take exams, the Assistant Director for Commissioning and Partnerships advised that she would need to clarify the legislation and the County Council's position on this in readiness for the October meeting.

The Chairman made reference to moving to the new Council and that there would be just two more meetings of this committee in its present format.

The Senior Assurance Manager felt it would be helpful for members to be aware of what the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee were working on in readiness for the new Council.

Noted**Questions from County Councillors**

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