



Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset,
DT1 1XJ on Thursday, 11 October 2018

Present:

Katharine Garcia (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Kevin Brookes, Lesley Dedman, Beryl Ezzard and Kate Wheller

Members Attending

Steve Butler, Cabinet Member for Safeguarding.

Officer Attending: Nick Jarman (Corporate Director for Children's Services), David Alderson (Senior Adviser, Learning and Inclusion), Sarah Baker (Group Finance Manager), David Bonner (Intelligence, Insight and Performance Manager), Jonathan Carter (Head of Specialist Services), Melissa Craven (Communications Lead - Children's Services), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance) 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:
Monday, 14 January 2019

Apologies for Absence

40 Apologies for absence were received from Pauline Batstone (Chairman), Derek Beer, Toni Coombs and Bill Pipe.

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

Cllr Garcia paid tribute to Cllr Steven Lugg, who had been a member of this committee, but had sadly passed away in July of this year.

Cllr Lugg was elected as one of the County Councillors for the Ferndown Electoral Division on 1 September 2016. During his time on the council he served on:

- Children's and Adult Services Appeals Committee (Vice-Chairman)
- Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Staffing Committee
- Regulatory Committee
- Dorset Waste Partnership Scrutiny Group

Cllr Garcia shared with members how Steven had made great progress in promoting children in care, fostering and corporate parenting, an area of our work that he had a keen personal interest in.

Code of Conduct

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

Minutes

42 The minutes from the meeting held on 5 July 2018 were agreed and signed.

Matter Arising

Minute 30 – Personal Independence Payments – the Group Manager for Governance and Assurance confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Secretary of State, and copied to all members, at the end of August and they were awaiting a response.

Public Participation43 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.

Children's Services Care & Protection Service Improvement Plan

- 44 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which explained that the Service Improvement Plan was the primary mechanism to coordinate and monitor a concerted effort to improve the performance of Children's Social Care in Dorset County Council.

The Director advised that in 2017 Ofsted introduced a new inspection framework for Children's Services and there was a need to ensure that County Council services were of a sufficient standard to meet the criteria of the new inspection framework. It was important to note that services were not run just to satisfy an inspection but for the benefit of the children and young people and their families in Dorset. However, there was still a need to reference and evidence the services to ensure that they met the inspection criteria.

The Director then highlighted the Partners in Progress (PiP) programme which had commenced with a visit from Essex County Council. Areas where they could help were identified and a PiP conference for the workforce had been arranged for 2 November 2018.

Resolved

That members endorsed the approach being taken.

School Exclusions Update

- 45 The Committee considered a report from the Advisor from the Schools and Learning Service which updated members on the increase in permanent exclusions from mainstream schools in the last academic year. The report also highlighted what the Dorset Exclusions Officer, Alternative Provision Adviser and Children Missing Education Prioritisation Group were doing in order to challenge permanent exclusions, organise managed moves, admit permanently excluded pupils into new school placements and safeguard vulnerable permanently excluded pupils through multi-agency working.

It was highlighted that there were 14 successful managed moves in 2017-18 which enabled the young people to have a fresh start in a new school and avoid a permanent exclusion.

The Director highlighted the Children Missing Education Group and made reference to a small group of young people, with very difficult and challenging behaviours, who were out of school and were also not attending learning centres. It was really important that the County Council knew where they were and that they were safe and

also in receipt of some provision i.e. home schooling. At present there were 21 children in this group, the youngest being 8 years old. It was important to ensure that the council provided/commissioned support to these children at an early stage.

One member expressed concern about the exclusion of primary age children and asked whether the Council would have been alerted that they were possibly from a troubled family and therefore flagged up as needing additional support. The Director made reference to a presentation he had made at a Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the year on early intervention and prevention and that this programme was now in its second year of operation where such families were engaged with at an early stage. The rate of exclusions compared to other authorities was not high but officers were working actively to prevent children being excluded from school. He added that there was also a lot of work ongoing with schools to prevent exclusions.

Following a question from a member about the reasons for exclusions for children in Years 1, 2 and 3, Senior Adviser, Learning and Inclusion advised that these were principally for one off serious assaults against adults. These were sometime exceptional circumstances and sometimes with no trigger. The most important aspect of this was to ensure that there was support in place for a particular child and that exclusions were as a last result. Training for teacher colleagues was highlighted as a means to try and reduce exclusions and improve school attendance.

In response to a question about whether there was an upward trend for exclusions, the Director confirmed that there was but there was a whole range of reasons for an exclusion. There was a range of leadership and management within schools to ensure exclusions were managed appropriately. He made reference to a letter he had received from Ofsted which named schools they had concerns with regarding exclusions and had asked the Local Authority to work with them to ensure exclusions were being managed effectively.

Following a concern about drugs in relation to exclusions, the Director advised that this behaviour was not just accepted, some schools had a higher tolerance level around drugs but from the perspective of the Local Authority they needed to know who the children were and where they were.

In response to a question about whether, as there had been a reduction in youth services, schools could make a request for some extra support e.g. drug counselling. The Director advised that incidents of drug use were not increasing and that there was no evidence to suggest that the reduction in youth services was the cause of any changes in drug patterns. Family Partnership Zones were highlighted as a help in this regard.

One member queried if it was as a result of reduced funding that more exclusions took place. The Director felt this did have a bearing on this, although not exclusively related to funding, but about behaviours schools were experiencing.

Noted

Working Together on Safeguarding 2018

46 The Committee considered a report from the Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Standards which provided statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in England.

The DfE guidance set out what organisations and agencies who had functions relating to children, must and should do to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children

and young people under the age of 18 in England.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards would be replaced by safeguarding partners which would comprise Local Authorities, Chief Officers of Police and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Members were pleased to hear provision was being planned Pan Dorset which was very encouraging.

In response to a question from a member about the inclusion of GPs within the 3 safeguarding partners, the Director advised that this would be the responsibility of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which was heavily GP driven so they were very much involved and there was a need to ensure that it was high enough on their agendas. He added that the working relationship with GPs was now considerably better than it was. Under the new arrangements there would be housing functions which had a very large role to play in respect of safeguarding.

Following a discussion about the sharing of information, the Director advised that the harmonisation of information would not be part of this system but was part of the way multi-agency hubs worked. It was more about a sharing of knowledge, and part of the new Board's remit would be to ensure that information was shared.

The Director felt that a smaller group of safeguarding partners would be more effective than the rather large Safeguarding Board meetings as the appropriate decision-makers would be in attendance. He confirmed that the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive reports on the progress of this new way of working.

The Cabinet Member for Safeguarding made reference to a recent review that had taken place into how the Local Authority, the Police and Fire Service worked together. Plans were in place to see how this could be improved and a report from this would be issued shortly. He also highlighted the importance of better member engagement in the new Council going forwards.

Noted

Outcomes Focused Monitoring Report - September 2018

47 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 along with information on performance measures and risk management.

The Intelligence, Performance and Insight Manager highlighted the areas for focus to members as highlighted in Appendix 1 of the Director's report.

Following a question from a member about whether the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has had a detrimental effect on the recruitment of Social Workers, the Director advised this was not the case and that since February there had been 26 successful appointments.

Following a discussion about social worker staff across the authorities following LGR, the Director confirmed that no decision had yet been made in respect of numbers but that the number of cases transferring to Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch would be very small. He explained how social worker caseloads were currently shared between the East and West of the County and that the transfer was anticipated to be in place by February 2019 to avoid disruption.

Following a concern from a member about the road maintenance scores highlighted in the Director's report, and the apparent inability to maintain the highway infrastructure, the Intelligence, Insight and Performance Manager advised that work was still ongoing as a result of the severe weather experienced earlier in the year, but noted that Dorset was performing better than some other areas. He added that extra funding had been agreed for roads which would alleviate this risk.

Noted

Work Programme

48 The Committee considered its Work Programme

The Governance and Assurance Manager explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were in the process of bringing their work to a conclusion and that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had advised the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work that had been carried out.

Members felt it would be helpful to have an update on highway maintenance in the next Outcomes Focussed Monitoring report.

Resolved

That an update on highways maintenance be included in the Outcomes Focussed Monitoring Report for January 2019.

Questions from County Councillors

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

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 11.05 am