



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 JANUARY 2017**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J D HOUGH (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors B Adams, Mrs J Brockway, S R Dodds, B W Keimach, Ms T Keywood-Wainwright, C R Oxby, Mrs S Ransome, Mrs L A Rollings, Mrs N J Smith, M A Whittington and Mrs C A Talbot

Added Members

Church Representatives:

Parent Governor Representatives: Mrs P J Barnett

Councillors: D Brailsford were also in attendance.

attended the meeting as invited guests.

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes (Executive Director, Children's Services), Kieran Barnes (Head of Virtual School, Looked After Children), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W J Aron, A G Hagues, Mrs H N J Powell, L Wootten, R Wootten and Mrs S Wray

Apologies for absence were also received from Mr S Rudman and Mr P Thompson (Church Representatives) and Dr E van der Zee (Parent Governor Representative).

The Chief Executive reported that, under Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillor Mrs C A Talbot had been appointed to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor W J Aron for this meeting only.

50 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

51 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**52 JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION OF THE MULTI-AGENCY
RESPONSE TO ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN LINCOLNSHIRE**

Consideration was given to a report which set out the findings from the joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Lincolnshire. The inspection included an in depth focus on the response to children living with domestic abuse.

Members were informed that the inspection took place over three weeks in October 2016, and involved 15 inspectors who were onsite for one week. The inspection identified a number of key strengths including a clear understanding of the needs of the community, and the working relationship at a partnership level was good and effective. Officers were pleased that the authority's direct work with children had been identified as an area of exceptional as an exceptional area of good practice. It was reported that the inspectors had been very impressed with the children's safety plans which had been produced by the children themselves. It was really positive for the staff to get this feedback.

Some key areas for improvement were also identified, such as the Police backlog with the Stop Abuse forms was a significant concern. It was noted that there were a number of other key issues for the Police highlighted by the inspection. The inspection also identified a need for improvement with information sharing. It was noted by the inspection that the Council's electronic recording system (Mosaic) did not support effective practice, however officers were already aware of this and it was confirmed that the new case management system had been implemented.

Members of the Committee were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether the Council was aware of the backlog with the Police and the completion of the forms before the inspection took place. Members were advised that officers were made aware of the backlog days before the inspection. Assistance was offered by the Council, but in order to access the police systems staff would need to be police vetted and this process would not have been completed quickly so it was felt that the police needed to address this themselves. Assistance had also been offered post inspection, but the Police had stated that they would be putting additional resources in place to resolve the back log.
- In relation to the quality of risk assessments, it was noted that the authority had contacted the Police about this prior to the inspection, and suggested that an audit was carried out to give some assurance. This offer had been reiterated following the inspection.
- It was reported that the inspection had stated that the Police should notify school nurses and health visitors of every domestic abuse incident they

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attended. However, this would be between 8,000 – 10,000 incidents per year and could overwhelm these services. There was a need for appropriate risk assessments in order to make this manageable, but this recommendation would be considered by LSCB in the response to the inspectorates.

- It was queried whether there was any receptiveness from the Police for taking on the Signs of Safety model for their risk assessments. A benefit could be seen in making the schools aware, but this was one of the things that the partnership needed to work through.
- Members were advised that it was unclear whether there was a capacity issue with the Police, or whether it was a cultural issue, and this answer would need to come from the Police.
- It was noted that one of the issues with Addaction was that this was a relatively new contract and not all of the policies and training had been put in place yet. The particular operational issue was home visits to assess the storage of medication in the home where there are young children. Addaction had not yet had the opportunity to respond.
- One member expressed disappointment in the report and commented that multi agency working should be a concern to everyone. All key agencies needed to attend the meetings as they would all have different evidence of what was going on. It was queried whether there was more the authority could do as it was responsible for safeguarding. It was noted that the Safeguarding Children Board was the mechanism for calling agencies to account and that there was a safeguarding board scrutiny committee.
- In terms of IT equipment and social workers, members were advised that practitioners' IT skills had now accelerated past what the infrastructure was capable of. It was commented that social workers should be videoing life story work with children, or taking photos of drawings done by children, but the current system did not allow for this type of information to be gathered and recorded in this format. The skills and confidence of staff in using IT was now greater than the capabilities of the IT systems. One member commented that it was likely that officers would get member support for requests to upgrade the system to allow this information to be recorded.
- Concerns were raised in relation to information sharing as in some instances it was difficult to get information from other partners. It seemed to depend on individuals regarding how much information was obtained from other partners.
- Members were concerned that the Council's officers were spending a lot of time chasing others for information.
- It was commented that people from different agencies would adopt a state of passiveness within a multi-agency meeting and did not tend to take the lead, and would wait to be asked to speak rather than volunteering information. It was acknowledged that generally the social worker was looked at to lead the discussion about risk, and then everyone would agree with the social worker. However, in child protection conferences when Signs of Safety were used, it was more likely that the parent would speak first and the social worker last.
- It was noted that the current IT equipment and system did not support applications such as Skype. It was suggested that the IT strategy may be something that needed to be looked at with members.

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- Concerns were expressed by members that people were able to log into the system to view their records and amend it. However, members were advised that there would be a 'footprint' in the system and it would be possible to see if a record had been amended and who had amended it. It was noted that other agencies were not able to access the information. However, it was acknowledged that the system could be improved.
- It was noted that there were other legal orders which could be used, even when the victim did not want to make a statement. Social workers should be challenging police to utilise these other orders, particularly where there are children present.
- Members were advised that district councils were a key partner, as they were the housing authority, lead for anti-social behaviour, and key participants in community safety partnerships.
- It was commented that the Police were commonly in and out of schools so it should not be difficult for the Police to involve the school.
- It was felt by members that there was a need for a little bit of passion from everybody, at every level when it came to safeguarding to make sure that something was being done. It was suggested that a lot of people were scared of 'safeguarding' and there was a need to normalise asking questions when a school thought there could be safeguarding concerns with a child. At the next leadership conference with head teachers, how to give confidence back to the work force to have these sorts of conversations would be covered. There would also be a wider roll out of Signs of Safety.
- If social workers had appropriate caseloads, then this helped to create a system which was safe.
- Members were informed that at any one time there were approximately 151,000 under 19 year olds in the county. Of these, around 600 of these were Looked After Children and 350 child protection cases (circa). It was noted that in terms of Looked After Children, Lincolnshire had significantly lower numbers than its statistical neighbours.
- It was noted that whilst the numbers were comparatively small, there were still incredibly complex cases. The easiest cases were those children adopted at a young age in to a different environment. However, Lincolnshire was increasingly seeing late entrance into care, where children had been successfully parented until age 12/13 and then they start engaging in risk taking behaviours; have substance misuse problems; mental health issues etc. and parents struggled to meet their needs.
- It was commented that the voice of the child was powerful and could help parents to understand impact of their behaviour on the child's life.
- It was suggested that the age of some of the staff attending the multi-agency meetings could have an effect, as they were younger, they may not have the confidence to speak up. Elected members could have a role in helping to build confidence about the importance of sharing information.
- It was queried whether the culture of compensation was stopping agencies from doing the work they should be doing due to fear of being accused of doing something wrong. It was acknowledged that social workers could have a difficult time, and could often have aggression directed at them from a

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variety of sources (including the internet). However, staff did feel supported by management and it was not thought that this affected their decision making.

- In terms of next steps, it was reported that the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Boards Scrutiny Sub Group had met on 11 January 2017 and had considered this report. The action plan would be shared, but it had not yet been signed off by partners. The Sub Group would keep track of all the actions for all agencies.
- It was queried whether there could be an update on the implementation of the action plan so far at the Committee's next meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made in relation to the findings from the joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Lincolnshire be noted.
2. That an update on the action plan be brought to the next meeting of this Committee on 10 March 2017.

53 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - KEY STAGE 4
DISADVANTAGED AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Committee received a report which summarised the work of the Key Stage 4 School Performance Working Group and provided an overview of the effective practices currently operating in Lincolnshire; an overview of effective practices operating beyond Lincolnshire and provided recommendations to further promote and champion improved educational outcomes for children living with disadvantage and Looked After Children at Key Stage 4.

It was reported that the School Performance Working Group was established in June 2016 to explore current practice and potential mechanisms for further improving the education outcomes for children experiencing disadvantage. In September 2016 the focus was extended to include Looked After Children interventions. The Working Group included Councillors D Brailsford, Mrs J Brockway, S R Dodds, J D Hough, Mrs H N J Powell and Mrs L A Rollings.

Members were provided with the opportunity to comment and ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that the group had worked very well, and there was some good practice in Lincolnshire. There was a feeling from head teachers that the system which was in operation in the county was exciting and worth continuing to develop.
- It was queried whether the authority could look at some concept of innovation and explore destinations and outcomes for young people post 16 – the current system focused on educational achievements at 16 years and this was not the time that all children excelled and achieved their potential.
- There was an expectation that young people would be able to re-sit maths and English exams at college if they didn't achieve a C grade or above.

- It was suggested that some case studies should have been included in the report.
- There was a need to remember the emotional needs of children as well as the academic side.
- It was commented that the report did not really mention the selective system.
- A lot of disadvantaged children were in a situation where they had to travel to college, possibly to somewhere they might not have been to before and travel for some communities was a challenge.
- The challenges of narrowing the attainment gap were compounded in schools which had high numbers of disadvantaged children. Some great work had been done with closing the gap, but there was a need to ensure that staff from those schools where performance was poorest attended the conferences. As an authority, it was suggested that there was a need to engage with these schools. It was agreed that Recommendation 4 should be strengthened to reflect these concerns.
- It was commented that there was a need to get children reading from a young age.
- It was reported that validated data for Key Stage 4 had been released and it showed that the number of pupils eligible for free school meals in London had reduced from 28% to 17%.
- It was suggested that more work needed to be done at the point that a child was identified as disadvantaged, but there was also a need for innovative ideas, to give a child the taste of success. Waiting until they reached 16 was often too late. Whilst these concerns were acknowledged, members were reminded that the scope of the working group was Key Stage 4.
- It was also commented that the rigorous testing of children at a young age was a backwards move. The monitoring required by Ofsted was also detrimental as staff were spending time filling in forms rather than focusing on play and development. It was noted that in Scandinavian countries, monitoring started at age 7. It was noted that children developed in different stages and in different ways.
- It was thought that there was a lot more that schools could be doing to support Looked After Children. If a child had challenging behaviour, one of the reasons was likely due to them being labelled a failure.
- It was suggested that there was a need for more resources in children's centres, as if a child was not achieving a good level of development at 5 years old, it could be difficult for them to catch up.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made in relation to the report be noted.
2. That the 13 recommendations in the report be agreed for further work to promote the outcomes for all pupils including those experiencing disadvantage and Looked After Children at Key Stage 4, subject to the wording for recommendation 4 being amended to reflect the concerns about teacher attendance.

The Committee received an update on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel. It was reported that the Panel last met on 15 December 2016 and received a six monthly update on the Independent Reviewing Service. It was a legal requirement for every child who was looked after to have an Independent Reviewing Officer appointed to them under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. All Independent Reviewing Officers were social workers and the statutory duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer included:

- Monitoring the performance of the Local Authority of their function in relation to the child's case
- Participating in any review of the child's case; and
- Ensuring that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case were given due consideration by the appropriate authority

The Committee was advised that there had been a number of challenges for the Service in the past six months, including an increase in the number of Looked After Children and recruitment challenges. Between April 2016 and September 2016, the Independent Reviewing Officers carried out a total of 737 review meetings for children who were looked after, which was a slight increase when compared to the same time the previous year. However, there was still a need to increase the number of children who actually attended their reviews and the development of regular "keep in touch" days had given young people the opportunity to raise issues in a more relaxed way.

It was highlighted at the meeting that not all foster carers fully understood the Signs of Safety approach and the benchmarks being used in reviews. The Panel suggested that an explanation of these should be provided to Foster Carers, which officers agreed to look into.

The Panel had also received the V4C Children in Care Council Annual Report. The V4C was in the process of moving to a new operating model. There were currently monthly meetings of the V4C Executive but this would be changing to three quadrant meetings a year from January 2017. Instead the V4C would meet in each quadrant at least 7 times per year and in addition there would be three Big Conversation meetings. The next Big Conversation meeting would be on Wednesday, 15 February 2017 at the Myle Cross Centre from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. This session would look at LAC communication with social workers, developing carer and LAC profiles, and transitions to leaving care. Councillors were welcome to attend and were advised to contact the Senior Scrutiny Officer if they would like to attend.

Members were informed that the next Panel meeting would be held on 16 March and on the agenda there would be Barnardo's Leaving Care Service 6 monthly update, the Corporate Parenting Strategy Review and the Annual Report for Looked After Children.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained in the report and the update given, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

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- It was a national requirement that an initial health assessment was carried out when a child became looked after, and this must be carried out by a doctor. Further annual assessments could be done by a nurse. However, it was noted that a child was able to decline a health assessment. Officers acknowledged that there was still too much of a delay in terms of getting an initial assessment carried out. There was not as much of a problem regarding the timelines for annual reviews.
- There was a need for more doctors who were willing to carry out the initial health assessments.
- It was commented that it was sometimes hard for Looked After Children to know who they could trust, and it was queried whether there was any way to minimise the number of people that a child had to deal with. It was noted that generally there was very little flexibility, but as Lincolnshire was now part of Partners in Practice officers would like to look at whether there was a different way of implementing the care plan regulations. It was noted that the Panel would receive regular updates on this work.

RESOLVED

That the work of the Corporate parenting Panel be noted.

55 CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY'S GUIDE TO SCRUTINISING
CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Due to time constraints, it was suggested that consideration of this report be deferred to the Safeguarding Focus Group with Social Workers due to be held on Friday, 10 March 2017 so that these questions could be looked at in detail with social workers. Any issues which arise from this discussion would be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee.

It was commented that it was hoped that this focus group would also pick up on the issues with the multi-agency approach.

RESOLVED

That this report be considered by the Safeguarding Focus Group with Social Workers on 10 March 2017.

56 DfE INNOVATION JOINT FUNDING BID WITH COMPASS

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to comment on the DfE Innovation Joint Funding Bid with Compass prior to it being considered by the Executive Councillor Responsible for Children's Services.

Members were advised that the report sought to make recommendations regarding an Expression of Interest submitted to the DfE innovation fund by LCC Children's Services in partnership with Compass Outreach Service. The proposal was to adopt an integrated Services Model between social care, health and public health to deliver

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immediate and effective responses to address significant attachment and trauma needs of children, young people and their families/carers.

It was reported that if the bid was successful, it would bring £500,000 of additional funding into Lincolnshire to develop and implement the model and also provide additional support from Compass Outreach Service to embed the necessary infrastructure and 'culture shift' required to deliver the service effectively.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- One of the biggest issues facing Looked After Children, was that placements sometimes broke down. Members were pleased that this service would focus on problems caused by attachment issues.
- It was queried how many children this service would be expecting to work with per annum. Members were advised that these details had not yet been finalised, but had identified a percentage of children that it was expected this service would have a positive impact on. This level of detail would be finalised in the next round of bidding.
- It was also queried what additionality this would bring to the services already being provided by staff. It was noted that this would be an emotional wellbeing service in principle. The bid was for additional funding that the authority otherwise would not have, and would provide an opportunity to work with some of the children who were currently in need of this type of support.
- The planned emotional wellbeing service would initially be a preventative service but this service would focus on young people with very challenging behaviours.
- It was queried what this service would look like, and whether a specialist would need to be employed to work with groups of individuals. It was commented that these young people did very well when they received one to one support.
- Members were advised that Compass Outreach Service was based in Norfolk. It would have a more therapeutic approach. It was noted that this bid was in conjunction with Norfolk and Suffolk as they were also Signs of Safety authorities.
- There was an increased number of late entrances to care, and the authority was working hard to support this group and effectively manage risk. The authority needed to review what it was doing to meet the needs of this cohort.
- This would be a very targeted service, for those in care or on the cusp of entering care, and it was about doing something different, to see if working with these young people therapeutically would have a different impact.
- This service would target the 14-19 age group. Those who were 17/18 were able to go into supported accommodation, but those under 16 had to go into foster care although placement decisions were based on assessed need.
- A bid had also been submitted to the Executive requesting an opportunity to examine the authority having its own supported accommodation for the really challenging groups with its own wraparound therapeutic service as well.

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- Concerns were raised as to who would receive and use the funding if the bid was successful. The Committee agreed that the funding could be used by partners. It was confirmed that the £500,000 would come into the Council directly and the Department for Education would commission and fund Compass to provide evaluation.
- Members were advised that it was not the intention of this funding to carry out work into why there was an increase in the number of late entrances to care. However, this may be something that would be looked into at a later date either locally or nationally.
- It was noted that if the bid was successful and the service worked, it would be less expensive to operate than what was currently in place.

RESOLVED

1. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor responsible for Children's Services as set out in the report.
2. That the comments made be passed to the Executive Councillor responsible for Children's Services in relation to this item.

57 REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the budget proposals arising from the Provisional Local Government Settlement, announced on 17 December 2016 and the implications for the following commissioning strategies: Readiness for School; Learn and Achieve; Readiness for Adult Life; and Children are Safe & Healthy.

Members were advised that nothing had changed since the proposals were last presented to the Committee. However, it was noted that that the commissioning strategy – Children are Safe & Healthy would have some significant cost pressures due to the increased number of Looked After Children, and an increase in Regulation 24 placements and Special Guardianship Orders.

The Committee was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that not all children's centres were used equally, and it was acknowledged that footfall could be very different in different areas. It was queried whether services provided in children's centres could be moved to other buildings, such as village halls, to improve access to them.
- Concerns were also raised about maintaining the quality of services, such as PEEP, in children's centres. It was noted that the quality of PEEP would be closely monitored and officers were waiting for tenders for a new early year's contract, which included the delivery of PEEP groups, to come back in. It was highlighted that if there were no tenders within the financial envelope, then this would be a cost pressure for Children's Services with no suggestion to reduce services.

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- Concerns were raised about the decommissioning of the careers guidance service and the lack of support now available to young people. It was noted that NEETs would continue to be tracked and the impact of decommissioning the careers guidance service would be monitored.
- Concerns were raised about the cost pressure arising from the additional school transport costs from the closure of the Mablethorpe site of Monks Dyke Tennyson College, as it had been previously reported that money had been assigned to cover this cost. It was noted that this was not a new cost pressure, but there was a need to formally agree the permanent cost pressure through the corporate budget process so that it was included within the Children's Services base budget for 2017/18.
- It was commented that some of the service reductions being proposed were not consistent with other things which had been discussed such as careers guidance and support for vulnerable young people at age 16/17.
- It was noted that none of the decisions to reduce services were easy, but these were the least worst options. Safeguarding had been prioritised by the authority and the Executive supported this approach.
- In relation to concerns about careers guidance, it was commented that schools taught citizenship, so there were still opportunities which could be utilised.
- It was thought there was a conversation that needed to be had about how to deal with children's centres where footfall was low. Staff were working on how to increase footfall in some of the children's centres.
- In relation to the reductions in the employers pension contribution, it was clarified that this was not a reduction in the amount paid into the fund, but was a service area reduction to take account of the reductions in numbers of staff, instead an increased sum would be paid into the pensions fund from the corporate budget. Therefore it would be a corporate payment rather than coming from service area budgets. This change would be cost neutral to the council and employee.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made in relation the proposed budget changes for the Commissioning Strategies – Readiness for School; Learn and Achieve; Readiness for Adult Life; and Children are Safe & Healthy be passed on to the executive at its meeting on 7 February 2017.
2. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recognise and support the requests for additional funding to finance the cost pressures within the 'Learn and Achieve' and 'Children are Safe and Healthy' commissioning strategies for 2017/18.

58 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider its own work programme for the coming year.

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It was reported that the only additional item was the request to receive an update on the action plan for the Joint Targeted Area Inspection at the meeting of the Committee on 10 March 2017.

RESOLVED

1. That the work programme, as presented, be noted,
2. That the content of the Children's Services Forward Plan, as presented, be noted.
3. That an update on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Joint Targeted Area Inspection be brought to the meeting of this Committee on 10 March 2017.

The meeting closed at 1.05 pm