

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 24 OCTOBER 2014**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J D HOUGH (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors B Adams (Vice-Chairman), W J Aron, 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, S M Tweedale, L Wootten, R Wootten, Mrs S M Wray and C L Strange

Added Members

Church Representatives: Mr S C Rudman and Mr P Thompson

Parent Governor Representatives: Mrs E Olivier-Townrow

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell and D Brailsford attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Stuart Carlton (Assistant Director Children's Early Help), Andrew McLean (Service Manager Commissioning), John O'Connor (Service Manager Education Support), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Rachel Wilson, Lynn Brammer (Interim Commissioning Team Manager), Caroline Mogg (CSE Co-ordinator) and Andrew Morris (LSCB Business Manager)

38 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Carolyn Spray, the deputy lead inspector from the Ofsted inspection, who was in attendance to observe the agenda item in relation to item on the Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding: A Review by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman also informed the Committee of the recent death of Councillor John Hicks, who had been a member of this Committee since his election in June 2009. The Chairman paid tribute to the work of Councillor Hicks over the years and his dedication in supporting Children and Young People, and asked that the Committee stand for a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Hicks.

The Committee held a one minute silence in memory of Councillor Hicks.

39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J P Churchill, Mr C V Miller (Parent Governor Representative) and Mrs G Wright (Church Representative).

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The Chief Executive reported that under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, he had appointed Councillor C L Strange to the Committee, in place of Councillor J P Churchill, for this meeting only.

40 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

41 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2014

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to a number of corrections in the attendance.

42 FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS AND SAFEGUARDING: A REVIEW BY THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider the Executive Response and action plan arising from the recommendations of the Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding Task and Finish group.

The Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services was in attendance to present the Executive Response and action plan to the Committee. Members were reminded that the final report of the Task and Finish Group had been presented to the Executive at its meeting on 1 July 2014, where it was commented that this had been a good piece of work. The Executive Councillor commented that she was really pleased with the report and review which had been done. In terms of the recommendations, some had already been completed and some were still ongoing. It was commented that the work which had been done provided a good reflection of what the frontline was like.

It was reported that the vast majority of recommendations had been accepted in full. However, it was noted that there had been a couple of recommendations which were only partially accepted as they were in relation to things that the Council could only influence partners to act on, rather than requiring them to act on the recommendations.

Each recommendation was discussed and comments and issues raised in relation to each recommendation were as follows:

Recommendation 1

- There was a need to strengthen the wording in order to provide assurance that the recommendation would be acted upon and managed correctly;

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- A survey would be undertaken with parents to ensure that the information was being received;
- There were no financial implications from this recommendation. However, it was noted that an additional £400,000 of funding had been received to recruit more social workers;
- The budget for 2015/16 would be considered at a future meeting of this Committee, but safeguarding children would continue to be a priority for the Authority, and would be protected from cuts;

Recommendation 2 & 3

- A Member commented that they had attended some very good sessions on adoption and corporate parenting, and would like some more information in relation to neglect. It was queried whether the training on neglect could be extended to Councillors;
- Queries were raised regarding the amount of 'in service' training which was received and it was confirmed that social workers were required to undertake a specified number of days' training every year;
- Concerns were raised in relation to teachers responsible for Looked After Children, as they had reported that they had found it difficult to contact social workers due to sickness absence. It was noted that it was important to look at what people were reporting and test perception against reality. Members were advised that the sickness rates in this area were much lower than in other areas of the Council;
- There were approximately 400 Looked After Children registered with the Authority, and another 400 Looked After Children who had been placed in Lincolnshire from other authorities;
- There was a comprehensive training programme for social workers, and there was an expectation that they would continue to access training and development;
- Any issues that needed to be escalated should be sent to the Executive Director;
- All frontline staff would receive training on neglect, and this would be monitored through the appraisals process and professional development. It would be ensured that staff accessed training which was appropriate and timely to their role. It was noted that the training would be available to all staff, but it would be prioritised for some areas. It was agreed that the wording would be strengthened to make it more explicit that that this training would be part of the core training for frontline staff;
- There was a need to look at both international and national best practice in relation to neglect;
- It was requested that the neglect strategy be brought to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration;

Recommendation 4

- It was queried whether the Closing the Gap conference was the best place for this to be considered, and whether it would reach the desired range of people. Members were assured that this was not just about a one off conference, but that the format of Head Teachers briefings had changed and were also used as an opportunity to share best practice. It was also noted that previous conferences had been very well attended;

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Recommendation 5

- There was a need to recognise the importance of writing to schools, and this would be followed up at Head Teacher briefings. It was also noted that this would be included in the action plan;
- It was requested whether members would be able to see a sample of the letter, as there was interest in how this would be delivered in schools;
- It could be helpful to look at examples of good practice and try and work them into headteacher briefings;

Recommendation 6

- Work was ongoing with partners in relation to capturing the voice of the child. It was noted that the recommendation was about encouraging partners to continue to work on this;
- It was felt that it was not explicit enough in the action that signs of safety briefings were about capturing the voice of the child, and it was commented that the authority was under-selling what it actually did;
- There was a need to ensure that good practice was carried out throughout the system;
- Members were advised that the wording of the action could be amended to make the methodology that supports capturing the voice of the child more explicit. It was also noted that the authority had been awarded funding as part of an innovation bid to implement signs of safety, and so Lincolnshire would be part of a national programme;

Recommendation 7

- The SAFE hub was located at Grantham as that's where the police headquarters was located, and it was also quite a central location. It was not located there in response to any problem profile;
- Staff being co-located and working together had benefits in terms of best practice;
- There was equal responsibility for funding, as the Grantham Hub was based in Police premises and the Lincoln hub was located in county council premises. Neither organisation wanted finance to be a barrier to this;
- Members hoped that the benefits would be replicated throughout the county;

Recommendation 8

- No further comments to add;

Recommendation 9

- It was queried whether it would be possible for the Terms of Reference of Support Panels to be circulated to the members of the Committee. The Executive Director was happy to share this information, but it needed to be noted that the changes were about enhancing the purpose and function of support panels, rather than a fundamental change;
- The majority of Task and Finish Group members attended at least one Support Panel;

Recommendation 10

- It was commented that this was a robust action, but members would like to see some data on this action, such as how many staff had accessed the training;
- There was a need to ensure training for all new staff at the Customer Service Centre (CSC). It was reported that all Children's Services CSC Staff were

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specifically trained to answer calls in relation to Children's Services, and unlike other CSC staff did not move around to provide cover in other areas;

- There would be no changes to the training provided unless approved by Children's Services DMT following the transfer of service to Serco;

Recommendation 11

- There was a whole raft of measures underway to improve the recruitment and retention of frontline social workers;
- There was beginning to be a move away from 'growing our own' as it was thought there were better and more effective ways of recruiting. Officers were looking at opportunities for working with other universities in the region;

Recommendation 12

- In the East Midlands, officers were working with innovation fund money to carry out work into encouraging more social workers;
- Vacancy rates were tracked, and for Lincolnshire, were quite low. However, it should be noted that since the additional money had been provided for recruitment of more social workers, the vacancy rate would rise as the authority would be seeking to increase the number of social workers that it employed. This work to increase recruitment was now underway;
- This review had quashed the myth that social workers were not supported in their work;
- There was an underlying concern that the degree courses offered by universities bore little relation to the work that qualified social workers were asked to carry out. It was noted that the practice placements were a key aspect of the course;
- Part of the strategy was to go out to work with other universities. However, there was a national debate over the quality of social work courses;
- Alternative universities were being explored to determine what they offered in terms of work placements;

Recommendation 13

- This referred to the reports which were written by the social workers in relation to a child;
- Action was already being taken in relation to this recommendation, and it may be revisited in a year or two to determine whether it was having the desired effect;

Recommendation 14 & 15

- No further comments;

Recommendation 16 & 17

- Implementation of this recommendation was still on scheduled for April 2015;
- Mobile technology should be available to all frontline staff from April 2015;
- It was requested whether a report relating to the trials could be brought to this Committee for information;
- Remote technology was key to being able to work more effectively and efficiently;
- It was suggested whether 2/3 members of the Committee would like to speak with frontline staff in the future and then report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED

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1. That the Executive response and action plan be received;
2. That the first monitoring update on the action plan be brought to the 24 April 2015 meeting.

43 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the content and progress of the original and supplementary action plan, and a progress report on the introduction to schools and implementation of recommendations from the inclusion review in December 2013.

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:

- In relation to recommendation 5, it was confirmed that when there was a proposal to expand the capacity at a school, then the school would be visited. A school would also be visited if a planning application for a new housing development was received;
- There was a need to define what was meant by 'consider a planning application';
- The intervention before exclusion strategy was working;
- Members were informed that a response had not yet been received from the Secretary of State;
- The number of children who moved schools mid-term and the reasons for doing so were monitored. It was noted that this information was recorded but not published;
- Not all children wished to carry on at school after 14 years of age as they did not feel that the standard curriculum model was suitable for them. There was a need for other alternative curriculum models, such as that at Hill Holt Wood, where students could do a variety of activities;
- It was important to ensure that, regardless of the curriculum model, children still had access to numeracy and literacy learning;

(At this point in the meeting Councillor Mrs L A Rollings declared an interest as she was a teacher at an academy in Gainsborough)

- It was important to put some support in place before the child got to the point of exclusion;
- Some children demonstrated extremely disruptive behaviour from primary school age;
- Some schools attracted pupils with a background of being excluded, instead of them being evenly spread across all schools;
- There was a desire to have more outreach work, where people would work with the child in the school. An option being considered was whether a child

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could be taken away from the school for a set amount of time, or even one day per week to enable staff to work intensely with that child on their behaviour;

- It was thought that more localised work on this, where children were worked with in smaller groups, would be beneficial;
- Concerns were raised regarding the cost of transport being a barrier to this type of work. Officers were working on ways to overcome this;
- Parents did not need to involve the local authority in relation to mid-year moves, however, 85% of parents did;
- It was thought that the impact of the implemented actions would be evident within two years, as it would take some time to gather demonstrable evidence of change.

RESOLVED

1. That comments on the content and progress of both actions plans and the content of the Inclusion Review update report be noted;
2. That the actions arising from the recommendations of the Inclusion Review continue to be monitored;
3. That a report be received in September 2015 detailing the impact of the Inclusion Review action plan on pupil exclusions;
4. That the trend in exclusions continue to be monitored as a measure of impact of any immediate and long-term proposals that might be agreed;

44 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL UPDATE

The Committee received an update from Councillor D Brailsford, Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel in relation to the work of the Panel. It was reported that at the meeting held on 5 June 2014, the Panel considered a range of reports, as indicated by the minutes which were attached as a n appendix to the report. This included a report on the outcome from the CQC Review of Health Services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding in Lincolnshire, which as mentioned in the previous update at the July meeting, highlighted a number of issues and concerns relating to health services for Looked After Children. The Panel also considered an update on the Government's programme of adoption reform which was aimed at addressing the length of time a child waited to be adopted, the falling number of annual adoptions and the recruitment and subsequent support to adoptive parents.

The Panel also received the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy, which applied to all councillors, for comment. The final version was brought to the meeting held on 18 September 2014 for approval.

Also at the Panel's last meeting, it considered the annual report from the Barnardo's Leaving Care Service and an update on Barnardo's "Beyond Care Campaign" to improve the accommodation and support given to young people as they left care across the country. An update about this Panel meeting would be provided at the January meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. The Panel also met Kieran Barnes, the new Virtual Head for Looked After Children. Kieran's role would be to promote the

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educational achievement of all the children looked after by Lincolnshire County Council.

The Panel would next meet on 11 December 2014 where it would be considering an update on the response to the CQC Review of health Services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding in Lincolnshire, and the Annual Report on the Educational Attainment of Looked After Children.

Members of the Committee were provided with the opportunity to ask questions in relation to the information presented and the minutes of the Panel, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether the link to the video referred to in minute 6, which had been produced by the National Children's Bureau, could be made available to members of the Scrutiny Committee. Officers agreed to send the link to the Committee;
- Officers responded to a number of queries regarding Looked After Children (LAC) taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and it was noted that Looked After Children did not have to be part of a group in order to take part, and that most would receive 1:1 help throughout. However, a group was put together of Looked After Children from different schools for the Gold Award. Members were advised that a dedicated LAC group was formed due to the dedicated support that was required;
- It was clarified that the frustrations experienced by foster carers in obtaining specialist equipment for a disabled child had been an isolated incident;
- Councillor L Wootten advised that there were a number of small errors in the minute related to her visit to the Beacon Residential Children's Home in Grantham. It was reported that the home actually looked after 7 children and not 15 children;
- It was queried how many children placed for adoption were returned to foster care. Cllr Brailsford agreed to look into this and would let the Committee know. It was clarified that the numbers of children returned to foster care after adoption were very low, and it was often during the child's teenage years that the adoption would break down. However, it was emphasised that this was a rare occurrence.

RESOLVED

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee not the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

45 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider its own work programme for the coming year.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme and advised that there was one amendment to the work programme. The All Age Autism Strategy for Lincolnshire

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would be coming to the 16 January 2015 meeting for pre-decision scrutiny prior to an Executive decision on 3 February 2015. The report would also be considered by the Adults Scrutiny Committee in January 2015.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the Work Programme, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be agreed subject to the above amendment;
2. That the content of the Children's Services Forward Plan, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be noted.

46 CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following items of business contained exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

47 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Consideration was given to a report and presentation which provided the Committee with an update of the work currently being undertaken by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and its sub groups around the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Officers responded to a number of questions from the Committee in relation to the information contained within the report and presentation.

RESOLVED

That the exempt report and comments made be noted.

48 EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH A
DISABILITY COMMISSIONING REVIEW

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee received an exempt report in relation to Early Intervention Services for Young Children with a Disability Commissioning Review which was due to be considered by the Executive on 4 November 2014.

Officers responded to a number of questions and queries in relation to the information contained within the report.

RESOLVED

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1. That the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive as set out in the exempt report;
2. That the additional comments agreed be passed to the Executive for consideration.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm