

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 27 NOVEMBER 2015**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J D HOUGH (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors R Wootten (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, W J Aron, Mrs J Brockway, S R Dodds, A G Hagues, B W Keimach, C R Oxby, Mrs S Ransome, Mrs L A Rollings, Mrs N J Smith, S M Tweedale and L Wootten

Added Members

Church Representatives: Mr S C Rudman

Parent Governor Representatives: Mrs E Olivier-Townrow

Councillors: attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Anita Ruffle (Group Manager - PTU) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Keywood-Wainwright, Mrs H N J Powell and Mrs S Wray.

Apologies for absence were also received from Mr P Thompson and Mr C V Miller.

The Chief Executive reported that having received notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, he had appointed Councillor S L W Palmer as a replacement member on the Committee in place of Councillor Mrs H N J Powell, for this meeting only.

42 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

43 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2015

RESOLVED

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27 NOVEMBER 2015**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**44 LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING BOARDS SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP -
UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to have an overview of the activities of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Boards Scrutiny Sub-Group, in particular the Sub-Group's consideration of child safeguarding matters.

It was reported that the Lincolnshire safeguarding Boards Scrutiny Sub-Group last met on 7 October 2015. At the meeting, the Scrutiny Sub-Group received an update from the Independent Chair, Chris Cook, on the three outstanding serious case reviews, one of which was published on Thursday, 19 November 2015. The report arising from this review would be considered by the Sub-Group at its next meeting on 6 January 2016.

The Sub-Group also received an overview of the Safeguarding Children Board's audit programme for 2015/16. An audit of domestic abuse was currently being undertaken and upcoming audits by the Board include, self-harm, Child In Need processes, 16/17 year old homelessness, and Child Sexual Exploitation.

Members were advised that the Scrutiny Sub-Group would next meet on 6 January 2016 were it was due to receive the outcomes from published Serious Case Reviews and a further update on CSE.

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:

- It was queried whether there were concerns regarding the recent report in the news that people would experience domestic violence, on average, 35 times before reporting it to the Police. It was commented that it was alarming that this was happening, and the Scrutiny sub-group would be looking at this as part of adults safeguarding scrutiny, to determine how this could be more prevalent in the press to make people feel that they could come forward sooner;
- Concerns were raised regarding the number children who were being indirectly involved in domestic violence, as all incidents would have an impact on the child. It was noted that in the majority of cases, children would be affected as these incidents took place in a family environment;
- Approximately 60% of the cases that Children's Services were dealing with involved domestic abuse as a prevailing factor. The Police would notify the County Council when they attended a domestic abuse incident where there was a child present;
- Children's Services received 8,000 of these notifications per year. However, it was noted that some would be multiple notifications for the same families;

RESOLVED

That the update presented be noted.

45 FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS AND SAFEGUARDING SCRUTINY
REVIEW - SECOND MONITORING UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update in the content and progress of the original action plan devised from the Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding Task and Finish Group of October 2013.

It was reported that two rounds of visits to the frontline teams had been completed between February and October 2015, involving 12 Councillor visits to teams around the county. Scrutiny members had not identified any concerns during these visits that would suggest that there was and reduction in the robustness of safeguarding practice in the frontline teams or issues about the levels of support frontline social workers received.

It was an extensive action plan, and there were a number of matters which had come out of the visits. In relation to the last two recommendations regarding IT advancements, there had been some delay in implementing the new Mosaic system, and therefore these recommendations would not be achieved in this financial year, as without Mosaic, the mobile technology could not be piloted;

Four frontline Social Workers were in attendance at the meeting to share their experiences and answer any questions raised by the Committee.

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:

- Signs of safety were now embedded well within the frontline teams and it was still having a positive effect in practice, and it was opening up new ways to speak to and work with families and was helping to bring out the voice of the child. Staff were able to be more honest with families and get them to look at what they thought their priorities were;
- Practitioners reported that they were feeling more confident regarding adapting signs of safety to individual families;
- It had been more difficult to implement signs of safety in the Children with Disabilities Team as the families did want to work with the authority, and parents were worried that this implied they were not able to look after their children, and it was thought that some of the language used was not appropriate e.g. the use of danger statements;
- It was generally felt that signs of safety was working really well in the teams;
- In terms of the parental survey, it was noted that these were being carried out in a different way, and a researcher was going out and doing face to face interviews. A different way of working had also been devised, and the survey's had been included as part of the closure process, and so social workers were having these conversations with families;
- It was noted that it could take up to 40 days to complete an assessment, but the timescales would vary depending on the nature of the case;

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27 NOVEMBER 2015**

- Recommendation 5 – offering parental training to all teenagers – had been completed as a letter had been sent to all schools. There was currently no intention to follow this up, as it was up to the school whether to include it in the curriculum. It was noted that the issue could be raised at a future conference, it was noted that this was about the universal offer. However, if scrutiny felt that there was a need for additional help in early help for vulnerable young girls, that was a different debate. If this was an area of concern, further work could be done on this.
- In relation to parental training, it was noted that there were huge demands on the curriculum, and it would be very difficult to include. However, it was queried whether it was possible to include this sort of material in an assembly, as had been done with other issues such as anti-bullying, and could be delivered by non-specialist PHSE staff;
- It was noted that there were a lot of resources available within schools, however, it was time that they were short on;
- Members commented that they would like to see good child development taught within schools, but it was realised that this was a national conversation;
- It was commented that the document attached as Appendix B – Safeguarding Children – A practical guide for overview and scrutiny councillors, was a very good document. It was queried what the Council did to support members to feel confident in scrutinising safeguarding. It was felt that this Committee was proactive in terms of carrying out visits, and had also held a task and finish group, and that the Service was open and inviting to members. However, there could be a need for more consistency around questions when undertaking visits, but it was important not to limit a councillors ability to ask questions when visiting.
- It was reported that there were positive relationships between all academies, except one, and the council. The Lincolnshire Learning Partnership had been established for maintained schools and academies. This was powerful, as all were agreeing to to work in a collaborative way to review the education they provided;
- What all social workers wanted was more time to spend working with the children and their families, and Mosaic should allow for this when it was implemented;
- It was felt that there was a lack of specialised care providers in Lincolnshire for children with disabilities. It was noted that some additional work was being done around training for domiciliary care;
- There was a need for a message to go back to Serco, letting them know that the problems with Agresso were not acceptable, as it was making the job of front line professionals harder. Members were advised that Serco had taken action to bring in new people, and were very aware that Councillors and senior officers were dissatisfied with the implementation of the Agresso system. The Value for Money Scrutiny Committee had requested an end date for the issues to be resolved by.

RESOLVED

That the Action Plan and Executive Comment be received;

46 SEND TRANSPORT PROCUREMENT REVIEW

The Committee received a report which invited members to consider a report on the SEND Transport Procurement review which was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services on 1 December 2015.

It was reported that a cross-departmental project Team was established in May 2015 to consider the procurement options for transport for Children with special educational needs and disabilities to special educational schools, PRU's and Pilgrim Hospital (SEND transport), in order to improve market sustainability, create greater efficiency and potentially to deliver financial savings. The report would recommend a new procurement model for implementation in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Members were advised that SEND was currently delivered through a large number of single vehicle contracts, and it was felt that efficiencies could be made. However, Lincolnshire did compare very well across other local authorities in terms of benchmarking.

The Headteacher of St Francis School attended the meeting to provide a school's perspective on the proposals. She welcomed the proposals and highlighted that it would provide greater stability and consistency for schools. It was also noted that it would provide an opportunity to build up relationships with providers. The long lead in time would allow plenty of time for discussions, provide training and for parents to gain confidence in the new service.

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:

- The need to assess the impact of every change of policy on child poverty was queried. Members were advised that access to education was seen as a means of lifting someone out of poverty;
- The Committee raised concerns around the transport of children who were not able to travel with other pupils and queried how that would work in future. It was reported that the individual needs of a child would still be considered and different arrangements would be put in place as required. It was clarified that it would be based on the Council's assessment of a child's needs in relation to transport and not that of the child, the parents or the relevant school. There would still be the safeguards and guidelines in place to try to ensure that no child was subject to a stressful journey.
- A number of concerns were raised about the costs of the transport and why they varied so much for taxis. It was highlighted that there was an issue with the costs of short journeys as some taxi firms added on a premium for shorter journeys. Officers reported that this was an issue they wanted to address as part of the new model for one provider/one school.
- It was noted that a using pick up and drop off points would not be practical, and the home to school transport model would be maintained;

- It was reported that children attending mainstream schools had been excluded from this review, and it was purely focused on those children with SEND.
- Concerns were raised about using providers from outside the county and where the provider was licensed, as if they were not licensed in Lincolnshire and there was a need to take action against them, it would go back to the licensing authority they were registered with. Officers reported that there were some providers based out of county that would be more attracted by the Council being able to offer larger volume work, and that they would therefore look to create a base in Lincolnshire. It was also reported that a full audit of the provider would be undertaken before they would be allowed onto the approved operator list and it would also be a requirement for the operator to be licensed in Lincolnshire.
- It was hoped that new providers would be attracted into the Lincolnshire market.
- A concern was raised about passenger assistants or drivers administering medication to children. It was noted that there were existing contracts where medication had to be administered daily and/or in cases of emergencies, such as treating epilepsy or providing oxygen. Training was provided to the operators and there would be a medical administration travel plan which was clear about the dosage required, which would have been signed off by a NHS nurse and parents. In these circumstances, the providers worked closely with nurse practitioners and driver and passenger assistants would receive the necessary certification. A full risk assessment would be carried out for each case;
- Concerns were raised about the distances that some children travelled and that for some children the journey times might become longer, particularly those using minibuses due to picking other pupils up en route. It was noted that there were guidelines around what constitutes a stressful journey and the journey lengths. The guidelines stated a maximum 45 minute journey for primary pupils, and for secondary pupils this was one hour and 15 minutes. However, there is no such guidance for SEND pupils. Officers highlighted that the long lead in times, which were 9 months for the first tranche and 6 months for the second tranche, would allow checks to be undertaken to try to ensure that journey lengths were reasonable before the service starts. It was reported that the use of minibuses was an issue but officers did not feel that they would always provide the best approach going forward as it will depend on the passengers' needs. Officers highlighted that they wanted to address these issues and hoped it would be easier to do so with less contracts and providers.
- It was questioned whether an in house approach was also being looked at. It was noted that a costed analysis for an in house fleet was being undertaken as part of the total transport initiative which was happening at the same time as this review. However, it was prudent to know what the outcomes of the procurement were as this would inform the business case for an in house fleet and what scale was required.
- It was reported that providers would receive safeguarding training to bring them up to a new minimum standard, along with how to use any equipment required, dealing with challenging behaviour and providing first aid;

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27 NOVEMBER 2015

- A lot of time had been spent analysing risk, and officers had tried to mitigate as many as possible, and the long lead in time was one of the best ways to mitigate the risks;
- It was commented that bigger providers would have bigger vehicles and savings through economies of scale could be seen;
- It was commented that complaints had been received from parents that their child had not been on the transport for long enough, when the route had been shortened. This was likely due to the transport provision being seen as a respite for the parent;
- It was queried whether the impact of increasing fuel prices would be factored into the contracts. Officers reported that there would be indices around fuel and minimum wage built into the pricing so that it would not be included in the tender.
- It was questioned what the main risks were with the new service. Officers highlighted that there were two key risks at the current time, which were the providers' response to the procurement exercise, and the parents' response and how they engage with the new service. Continued engagement with providers and parents would be required. It was noted that the transition period would help with mitigating these risks.
- Concerns were raised regarding the use of mini buses, however members were advised that officers did not consider wide spread use of mini-buses to be the most suitable option for the new model;
- The Committee raised concerns about the procurement of the new service, in particular around the risk that it could be more costly and not provide any savings. Officers reported that there was no minimum saving level but the maximum saving it could be was approximately £1M. It was highlighted that there was a risk that it could be more expensive but there was no requirement to award the contract, which provided a safety net.
- A longer notice period would be built into contracts as a way to build responsibilities and ownership on both sides;
- It would be important that the due diligence was carried out at the pre-qualification stage to ensure that the providers were capable of carrying out the contract, as these contract would not be suitable for all;
- In summary, the Committee highlighted its concerns regarding the potential effect on individual children particularly around increased journey lengths causing stressful journeys and that the main fundamental issue was that the children should not be significantly worse off as a result of the new service.

RESOLVED

1. That following consideration of the report, the Committee supports the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services as set out in the report.
2. That a summary of the points raised be passed to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services in relation to this item.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27 NOVEMBER 2015**

Consideration was given to an update on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel. It was reported that the Panel last met on 10 September 2015. At this meeting, the Panel received a verbal update from Councillor Marc Jones, the Visiting member for Strut House which provided short break accommodation for 5 to 18 year olds with a disability. Strut House had been judged by Ofsted as Outstanding in all areas of judgement. Cllr Jones provided some very positive feedback to the Panel about his visits to Strut House which included an overview of the facility, the staff, and the children and young people who stayed there.

It was reported that the Panel also received an update on the Virtual School where the Panel was informed of the good progress being made by looked After Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key stage 1. The Panel still had a number of concerns regarding progress of Looked After Children at Key stage 2, and in particular Key Stage 4. There had been 46 LAC entered for GCSEs, of which 12 were predicted to achieve 5A*-C including English and Maths. However, of those 12, only 4 achieved this. The Head of the Virtual School reported that each case would be reviewed and in future there would be closer and more precise monitoring of the progress of LAC.

Members were advised that the next meeting was on 10 December 2015 and the Panel would be considering the outcomes from a review on the Stability of Fostering Placements, a report from the Birth to Five Service in relation to nursery provision for LAC, and the annual reports for the Virtual School, the V4C Children in care Council, and for Looked After Children, which for the first time would be a joint annual report between Children's Services and Health.

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

- The Visiting Member role was considered to be a very important part of being a councillor;
- A significant research project on the educational achievement of Looked After Children was due to be published the following week. It was suggested that a briefing on national work would be useful for the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- It was commented that it would be helpful to LAC if they were not regularly taken out of lessons to deal with their emotional needs. One councillor commented that in their experience, children started to achieve once they stopped being taken out of lessons;
- LAC had an additional burden which could affect their education;
- It was commented that there was a suggestion that schools needed to be more caring, and social care placements educational. Education gives stability to children, and professionals should not wait for the child to become 'stable' before they learn.

RESOLVED

That the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel be noted.

48 PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report which provided key performance information for Quarter 2 2015/16 which was relevant to the work of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

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:

- Members were pleased to see that the number of child protection plans lasting more than 2 years was coming down. It was noted that there were a number of things which had influenced this, including signs of safety. However, it was also noted that one large sibling group had the ability to negatively affect the performance;
- There was concern that the indicator for the percentage of families of children with disabilities using direct payments was still underperforming, but it was noted that this could be due to families being satisfied with the service being provided, or that they did not want the additional complication of employing someone e.g. having to do CRB checks, or set up pensions. This was not a target that officers were worried about;
- It was queried what the more successful children's centres were doing differently. Members were advised that these were often where teams were co-located, and there were strong links between the teams. The focus was more on the individual families, and the informal discussions which took place naturally;
- It was queried whether any improvement was being seen in the percentage of education, health and care plans in statutory timescales. Members were advised that the changes in terms of the SEND reforms had been highly challenging, and there was a significant amount of work to do in order to bring this back into timescale. However, there was the right leadership in place and there had been recruitment to a number of vacancies. It was also noted that there 3000 young people with statements which needed to be transitioned to EHC plans, 16-25 year olds to move from their system to EHC as well as the new ones coming into the system. There had been a 25% increase in requests for an EHC plan. There was also a new appeal system if the assessment had found that the school could meet the needs of the child. 90% of those refused an EHC plan would appeal. It was estimated that it would be 18 months before significant progress was seen;
- It was queried whether it was possible to break down the complaints against schools to those made against academies and maintained schools;
- It was queried whether it would be possible to have the complaints regarding transport for SEND as an issue, so the Committee and monitor and scrutinise what was going on;
- There were two complaints processes in Children's Services, one for corporate complaints (e.g. regarding policy) and a statutory complaints process. Both processes had a time scales attached to them;
- Members were advised that further to what had been reported in the press, the online applications system for school places had not 'crashed' but it had been

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27 NOVEMBER 2015**

running very slowly. It was also noted that places were not allocated on a first come first served basis, and at the cut-off date for applications, each one would be compared equally with the policy;

- In relation to placement stability, there had been some challenges, particularly in relation to older children in care, and challenging behaviour. However, some of the performance was positive, as some children had moved home, but this was classed as a change of placement;
- A huge amount of work was taking place around the recruitment of social workers. However, officers were anxious about the quality of data which was coming out of Agresso.

RESOLVED

That the comments made in relation to the performance information be noted.

**49 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME 2016**

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

It was reported that there was one amendment to the work programme. The report on the potential closure of Saltfleetby primary School had been deferred from the 4 March 2016 to the 15 April 2016 meeting, with the Executive Councillor decision now being taken on 29 April 2016.

It was also noted that it was proposed to hold the Progress 8 workshop after the Committee meeting on 4 March 2016. Members were advised that the Democratic Services Officer had sent out electronic appointments for this.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the work programme, and the amendment noted above be agreed.
2. That the content of the Children's Services Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm