

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 11th December 2012 at 6.00 pm in Meeting Room 3, Darby House, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors M. Ion (Chair), G. Green, J. Greenaway, J. Loveridge, C. Turley and Co-optees S. Ali and S. Rayner.

Attending: A. Mason, Chair Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board; Cllr. P. Watling, Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families; K. Perry, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding; S. Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

CYPSC-14 MINUTES

On reviewing the minutes, Mr. S. Ali pointed out a typing error on p. 5 in the final paragraph that "bay" should read "baby". Cllr. Greenaway asked for clarification on the dip in the number of Strategy meetings / Section 47 visits completed within 24 hours at the beginning of September and the Assistant Director explained this was due to sickness which could not be foreseen. Trends in busy periods such as the first and last week of school terms could be anticipated and planned for and although the numbers could fluctuate, performance had improved considerably since the Ofsted inspection.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 5th November be confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to correction of the typing error on page 5.

CYPSC-15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. A. Mackenzie and Co-optees A. Atkinson, R. Aveley, E. Ofori and M. Ward.

CYPSC-16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CYPSC-17 OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Mason to the meeting. Mr. Mason had been invited as Chair of the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (TWSCB) as some of the recommendations on the Ofsted report related to the Board. There was a need to align the governance and reporting structures for Children & Young People (CYP) services as there was the potential for duplication between the TWSCB, Scrutiny and other Council-led Boards and there would be further discussion about this. Mr. Mason was invited to talk through the presentation circulated as Appendix B2 to

provide the Committee with a better understanding of the role, function, structure and priorities of the TWSCB. Mr. Mason then highlighted the key points from the presentation:

- The presentation opened with a poster to publicise the Board and its work, and to remind people of the deaths of the young children which had driven changes in legislation around safeguarding.
- The definition of safeguarding (giving children and young people the best possible chance in life, protection from harm or ill-treatment, ensuring health or development is not damaged, growing up safely, cared for) adopted by the TWSCB is based on the Working Together to Safeguard Children strategy with a focus on prevention.
- The Children's Act 2004 required children's services authorities to establish a Safeguarding Children Board and to promote co-operation between partners.
- The Board's scope covers responsive work (to protect children from harm), targeted pro-active work or any activity affecting children such as bullying.
- The functions of the Board include developing policies and procedures, service planning, monitoring and evaluation. A key function is to carry out Serious Case Reviews and a sub-group of the Board co-ordinates the response to unexpected child deaths.
- Board membership is designated by government and includes representatives from the authority, health, police, probation, Youth Offending Service, education etc. and community members.
- Members are responsible for representing their organisation on the Board and representing the Board back into their own organisation, for scrutinising the functions of the Board and ensuring continuous improvement.
- The sub-structure includes an Executive Group which meets every 6 weeks to keep business going, two sets of sub-groups themed around priorities and functions with a number of cross-cutting work streams and professional practices embedded throughout.
- The presentation set out the range of key activities under each priority. The pro-active and preventative work, such as the anti-bullying chatterboxes, had been recognised nationally as best practice.

Mr. Mason highlighted the Board's key role in co-ordinating work across partners and providing challenge to ensure a shared understanding. There was some cross-over with the Scrutiny Committee and the Children & Families Board in terms of scrutiny and governance, but the TWSCB had the ability to look across the whole patch and to join up partners. Mr. Mason had been appointed at the start of December but had already visited Family Connect and had been very impressed with application of technology and sharing of information.

Following the presentation members asked a number of questions and Mr. Mason and the Assistant Director provided the following additional information:

- The Board meets quarterly. Around 30 people attend meetings, but this included Board members and non-member supporting officers. Members were all named

decision-makers within the organisation they represent. Substitutions were not allowed to encourage continuity and discourage delegation to non-decision makers. Attendance and commitment was generally good, and Ofsted had commended the effectiveness of the Board. There were challenges, for example the fragmentation of health services and the establishment of the Health & Wellbeing Board meant there was no one organisation or board that speaks for health services, and all member organisations were going through a time of change which made continuity of representation more difficult. The good news was that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which would be responsible for commissioning the designated doctor and nurse safeguarding roles which the government had agreed would continue.

- The Board scrutinises a wide range of activity as a “critical friend“, and there would need to be a discussion with the Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Chairman to agree how this would align with scrutiny to avoid duplication.
- There is currently no statutory responsibility for agencies to contribute financially to the Board but guidance was forthcoming. Historically, agencies had been willing to contribute funding as well as in-kind contributions, but budget pressures within each organisation made financial planning more difficult. Funding was needed for training, the business planning and development and QA functions etc., and a Serious Case Review cost around £10-20k so there always needs to be a level of contingency.
- The Munro report would continue to have implications. The on-going reconfiguration of services had taken Munro into account and changes to the inspection regime were expected in the summer. There had been delays to guidance on Working Together guidance which it was hoped would be released by the end of the year. The Board’s work on child abuse and Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) were well recognised - and it needed to continue to be responsive and operate within budget.
- Both professional practice themes came from a serious case review. “Invisible Men” was about taking account of the role men play in children’s lives, both positive and negative. “Cultural Competence” reflects the need for a the children’s workforce to be aware of and take into account diverse needs of children and their families in assessment and care planning; Telford’s population, especially amongst children and young people, is becoming increasingly diverse
- As Chair of the Board, Mr. Mason was accountable to the Director of Children & Family Services but was responsible for working with all members. The Chair had been appointed by a panel of board partners. The initial appointment was for one year with a view to moving to a three yearly term. Mr. Mason worked as a Management Consultant and business owner, was previously a governor and vice-chair of Madeley Court school, a board member of Telford Business Partnership and had been a non-Executive member of the Telford & Wrekin PCT Board for 7 years, the last 3 as Chair, and he continued as a non-Executive member of the PCT Cluster Board until the end of March 2013 when the PCTs

would be abolished. He had had a lot of involvement with safeguarding at the PCT. The post had been advertised externally nationally.

When there were no further questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Mason for the introduction and extended a standing invitation to future scrutiny meetings to keep the dialogue going.

The Chair reminded members that the Ofsted Improvement Plan had been developed in response to the recommendations made by Ofsted following the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in the summer. The Committee had received an informal briefing on the outcome in August when a commitment had been made that the Plan would come to a future meeting for detailed scrutiny. Recommendations requiring immediate and three month action had been made by Ofsted which had now elapsed, and the Cabinet Member and Assistant Director had been invited to present progress on actions to address the recommendations.

The AD was invited to talk through the Plan circulated as Appendix B1. Progress had been made on all three month actions but there were some that had not been completed for appropriate reasons. The recommendation to define the roles and responsibilities of the community social work team was still in progress as this needed to be done in the context of, and not in isolation from, the on-going service reconfiguration. The requirement for all children to have a qualified social worker was being addressed in a way that was in the best interest of the children so that existing strong relationships with non-qualified staff were not disrupted. It was felt that these approaches were appropriate and that were Ofsted to re-visit they would agree.

The recommendations had been grouped under 8 priority themes and there was a presentation and discussion about the highlights:

- **Priority 1** related to immediate actions relating to response times to concerns which had already been addressed.
- **Priority 2** related to the reconfiguration of safeguarding services to support the child's journey. A key action was to minimise changes of social worker for the child. The service was being redesigned to move away from a process-driven structure (meaning children changed social worker through different stages) to one which balanced the need of the child for continuity and strong relationships without losing the support of specialist social workers. This is a complex piece of work which had started with a social work conference in November and there had been positive buy-in. In the meantime, there had been a very successful recruitment campaign with all but 5 Senior Social Worker posts being filled. One new senior social worker had been filled in the Family Placement team which was important for supporting the rest of the team in preventing disruptions and recruiting more internal foster carers. The council is good at retention of newly qualified staff and there had been 2 or 3 promotions into Senior Social Worker positions. Appointments would be made from the Step Up to Social Work Programme which had produced some excellent candidates. Although agency staff could be very able, there were issues with turnover, so the recruitment of permanent staff would significantly help to minimise changes of social worker. There were currently 70.6

social workers in total, of which there had been 12.7 agency workers in October, now down to 10.9 and projected to be 9 by the end of December. The target was to reduce to 6 agency workers by March 2013, 2 by September 2013 and 0 by March 2014. The Chairman said that he found this progress very encouraging.

- **Priority 3** related to the quality of **social work practice**. A new format for child protection conferences was being piloted. Child protection plans were down from 220 to 155. Fewer children were coming off plans at 3 months which was an indicator of how partnership working was improving so that only the right children were being put on plans in the first place. There are fewer children who had been on a plan for longer than 2 years - after this length of time children generally need to be off a plan or in care. The quality of assessments had improved and Family & Cohesion services were putting packages around the child to reduce the need for protection plans or care. With regard to recommendation 19, a temporary post had been agreed to increase IRO capacity but it was not envisaged this would be needed longer term as the numbers in care reduce.
- **Priority 4** related to **mental health and emotional wellbeing**. Much of this work was tied into the review of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Members asked about the timeliness and performance indicators for CAMHS interventions. The Cabinet Member explained that the target for referral to treatment was set by government at 18 weeks which was not a helpful indicator and there was a need to think about a better local indicator. Issues had been raised with the Children and Families Board about long waiting times for assessments and this was being looked at. CAMHS had now been incorporated into the Family Connect triage service from early in the new year which was a huge step forward and further work would continue. The AD said that it was also important for professionals to distinguish between mental illness and mental wellbeing so that referrals are appropriate and work was being done on this.
- **Priority 5** related to the **involvement of children and young people in service redesign**. The Care Council had worked with IROs to redesign assessment and review meeting forms to make them child-friendly. Work was also needed on the engagement of parents and an audit was being carried out to identify when parents had been involved in reviews and the reasons for non-involvement. The reviews were for the child and there is sometimes a good reason why parents do not attend review meetings is at the wishes of the child.
- **Priority 6** related to **sharing knowledge, skills and capacity**. Doctors in hospitals had received training to help them understand and tackle safeguarding issues robustly. A key piece of work was the input of social workers into the new workforce development strategy to develop career pathways and the concept of a Telford Social Worker. This was a big piece of work which would make a significant difference to the skills, capacity and recruitment of social workers and their managers.
- **Priority 7** related to **health** and the NHS had lead responsibility for these actions. Christine Morris, Senior Nurse safeguarding lead on the CCG, was leading on

health related actions in the Plan. Performance was good on the frequency of health assessments, although assessment on coming into care could be improved.

- **Priority 8** related to the **transition to independent living**. A Transition Group had been set up. The Council was working with care leavers to shape services. There had been a workshop with a presentation from care leavers about their experience of leaving care and of the support services, including care leavers who were young parents, to help shape options.

At the end of the presentation and questioning, the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and AD for the helpful presentation and commented that he felt there was much to celebrate in the progress reported.

CYPSC-18 REPORTS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION

Members considered three reports which had been circulated for monitoring.

The Dashboard of children in care performance had been circulated as Appendix C. The AD highlighted changes since the last meeting:

- The number of children in care had risen to 315 due to children from 3 large families (6/4/4) being taken into care, which showed the impact a small number of families could have on numbers and costs. They had all been placed with internal carers, except one family which was with an external carer to keep siblings together. The Cost Improvement Plan had been developed around a care number of around 300 and this was being refined. The Cabinet Member was confident that this would make a difference in terms of cost and stability of placements.
- The number of internal and agency foster carers had increased, and the upward trend was greater for internal carers.
- Following the discussion at the last scrutiny meeting, the Dashboard had been updated to reflect the actual cost of internal and relative carers from October. The average unit cost for internal care was £417 per week, as opposed to around £600 which was the average national costing discussed at the last meeting. The calculation of the cost base now included the cost of support carers, but it was not possible to adjust the calculation retrospectively. The Chairman was concerned that the presentation of costs on the Dashboard should make this clear because it looked as though there had been a sudden increase in costs. The average unit cost of relative carers was lower at £368 because generally the children in relative care were younger and the allowances were lower.
- The cost pie-chart again illustrated the need to reduce the number of residential placements. A regional framework contract for supported lodgings was almost complete.

- There were two performance areas flagged red, but these were not considered to be matters of concern. The number of adoptions varies over the year and the AD was confident that this would be improved over the whole year. The AD felt that the indicator for the number of new foster care households approved in the year was not a useful indicator because it was based around approvals and deregistration and not whether carers were providing placements. There were 19 assessments in progress which it was hoped would go to panel by the end of the year.

Cllr. Green raised the issue of how information about costs is presented to Members and the public so that they understand what is behind them, for example the reasons why children are coming into care and the fact that taking a large family into care can have a significant impact on costs. The Chairman replied that the scrutiny committee was looking at long-term strategies to reduce costs but that there could be no compromise of safety. Cllr. Watling suggested this could be taken up by the Corporate Parenting Group.

A breakdown of 2012 KS4 results for children in care by gender and schools in and out of the borough, and Telford & Wrekin children in care results compared to borough and national averages had been circulated as Appendix D and E.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the bar charts showing the achievement and trend gaps of children in care in Telford & Wrekin compared to all children in the borough and national averages for children in care at KS2 L4 plus and KS4 and that generally this showed an encouraging picture. The 2012 KS4 data showed 34.5% of children in care achieving 5+ GCSEs including English and Maths, compared to 60.7% for all children in the borough. Comparing this to the trend national averages for children in care in previous years, this showed an encouraging picture. However, it was noted that the numbers in the cohorts were small which could impact significantly on the percentages achieved and the Committee might want to unpick the data in more detail at a future meetings.

CYPSC-19 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman updated members on the work of the sub-group since the last meeting. The sub-group had met to take stock of work so far and had agreed further work which had been built into the work programme. Documents were tabled to show the actions agreed and how they were being taken forward.

It was noted that the next meeting would be at 6.00pm on Tuesday, 8th January. Confirmation on the venue was awaited and Members would be advised in due course.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm.

Chairman:.....

Date:.....