

## **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 6.30pm in Meeting Room 3, Darby House, Telford, TF3 4JA.**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs. K. Guy (Chair), C. Turley, A. Mackenzie, J. Loveridge, J. Pinter, R. Scammell, and Co-optees Mel Ward, S. Rayner.

**ATTENDING:** Cllr. P. Watling, Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families, A. Mason, Independent Chair of Telford and Wrekin Local Safeguarding Children's Board, J. Collins, Assistant Director, Education and Corporate Parenting, K. Perry, Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services, F. Bottrill, Scrutiny Group Specialist.

#### **CYPSC-8 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to the amendment that Cllr. J. Loveridge and co-optee M. Ward had sent apologies.

#### **CYPSC-9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr. G. Green and Co-optee A. Atkinson

#### **CYPSC-10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

#### **CYPSC-11 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND THE USE OF AGENCY STAFF**

The Chair welcomed the officers to the meeting and asked K. Perry, Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services to present the report.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services explained that the Children in Care Dashboard has been a standing item on the Committees agenda and a copy of this was circulated to Members. In addition to this members had asked for information on the recruitment and retention of social workers and the use of agency social workers and the implications for Children in Care. It was explained that over the last 18 months the vacancy rate for Social work posts has fluctuated between 7% and 18%. The most recent rate as at the end of September 2014 was 18%. It was explained that there are a number of complex reasons for this:

During this period the number of social work posts in Children and Family Services has risen from 75 to 84. Half these are new posts – the remainder is due to the movement of the leaving care function to Adult Social Care.

During this period approximately 20 social workers have resigned and left the council, in addition 8 have been promoted within the council, 6 have moved sideways to another children's social care post in the council. Of those who have resigned and left the council, about half moved to more suitable posts (location or role) outside the Council.

Whilst the council has a good pool of applicants for basic grade social work posts it is difficult to attract applicants of suitable calibre for more experienced practitioner and Team manager posts.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services said that to respond to these issues the Council is currently refreshing the elements of the workforce strategy for the recruitment and retention of social workers. The council will continue to advertise for more senior posts but in addition to this will seek to recruit the best newly qualified social workers and "Grow our Own" through developing a social work career pathway through to senior. This will also ensure that social workers develop with the culture the council wants. In order to achieve this the Council has:

- Participated in 2 cohorts of "Step up to Social Work" a regionally supported national programme which selects the most highly qualified graduates to be trained as social workers. Each local authority offers placements to 5 students per co-hort.
- Taken additional year students on placement and make sure this is a good experience. Students are very keen to apply for jobs in the local authority where they have their final placement. Three excellent appointments were made through this route last year.
- Provide work experience / and or career advice to potential applicants e.g. social workers moving into the areas or wanting to return to or enter for the first time. There have been 4 successful appointments via this route.
- Develop a role of Advanced Social Work Practitioner whose express purpose is to provide additional support to newly qualified social workers.
- Introduced a Marker Factor payment of £1500 per year for Team Managers and for social workers with 2 years plus experience.
- Pilot "fast track to SSW". Of the 5 selected last year 3 have since SSW posts in Telford. This was a learning experience and the Council is now able to provide better support.
- Develop a robust recruitment day which consistently receives good feedback from candidates, which involved role play, written test and children and young

people's panel alongside traditional interviews.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that the Regional Children's Board identified leadership as an issue and he saw that this is an issue for middle tier managers. This is part of our strategy to "Grow our Own". He said it is really good to see students who have trained here now as staff. The stability of staff here is better than in other areas.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services added that the Council has kept and developed some very good staff.

The Chair asked if the vacancy rate was 18% in September – when will this reduce?

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services replied that this is partly dependent on whether more staff leave – either through resigning or through maternity leave. She explained that there will be 19 staff starting between October to the end of January. This recruitment process started in July. There should not be any vacancies in January but some social work posts are held against SSW posts.

A.Mason asked the demand for the service is being managed?

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services responded that Children's Services was working with partners so that they understand the work of Family Connect. Some referrals did not need the specialist skills of social workers. The case loads of social workers can be reduced by stepping down support e.g. to a health visitor, school nurse or family intervention worker.

R. Aveley said that he thought this was excellent work that the service is getting the social workers it needs. However, he added that it will be difficult for the service to reduce costs and remove the need for contingency funds.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services replied that the spend on agency social workers is reducing. It was reported that the number of agency social workers over the last 18 months has ranged from 1 – 10. At the end of September there were 10. Agency social workers are used to cover vacancies, maternity leave and long term sickness as necessary to maintain caseloads at a safe level. The overall position is predicted that the service will not be in balance by the end of the year. Some of the costs of agency social workers is paid for from the vacant posts. Part of the approach is to over recruit. Many of the workforce are women aged 25-40 and it is prudent to plan for maternity leave.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that the team met with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Enterprise on a monthly basis to see how the service is performing. This is a robust discussion. The costs do fluctuate and it is not possible to give a timescale on when the budget will be in balance.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services added that the need for agency staff is because the service does not have unallocated cases.

This is why it is so important to manage referrals in and referrals out. Community social workers have a remit to support other lead professionals and give advice so that referrals are not made to Family Connect and automatically expecting a social worker assessment. Reviews were carried out for 'Children in Need' cases who are not on Child Protection Plans or in care to check if they are receiving the support at the right level. It was reported that there was a very useful team meeting recently looking at performance and work flow. The model was very powerful and showed where the problems are. Children need the right care at the right time. It was recognised that it is important to check with the Lead Professionals after 3-6 months that the support is still in place without the Social Worker and that families have not disengaged.

S. Rainer asked if people who have left the profession are being encouraged to return e.g. through offering part time work?

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services responded that the feedback has been that the most important factor in encouraging people back to work is the support and supervision that is offered. Some people find the job more demanding and there is a risk of 'burn out.' It was reported that the Council is very flexible and Children's services does have quite a few part time workers.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that a big pressure for social workers is the coverage in the press which blames social workers.

S. Rayner asked if there is access to pastoral support?

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services said that staff have access to the Council's counselling service. It is important for staff to remain dispassionate but it is upsetting work and people need to be able to talk about it.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that peer support from colleagues is very important.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services added that it is important for staff to be able to ask for help. If something is not working they must be able to say and that no one will blame them.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer for attending the meeting. The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services left the meeting.

## **CYPSC 12 – SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EDUCATION RESULTS**

The Chair welcomes the Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting to the meeting and asked him to present the reports.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting explained that he would combine the reports in School Improvement and the Education Results. He explained

that the Educational performance for Children in Care has been difficult to draw together as the Key Stage 4 results were released at the end of the previous week and the results were provisional. The results are available through the Educational Performance Analysis System 3 or 4 days before the statistical release but these were withdrawn 3 times. He provided an overview of the results which showed that Key Stage 1 was doing well particularly Years 1 and 2 in primary school. Reading is showing an improvement, and writing is 1% point above the national average. Maths was the same as the national average for the second year running.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting said that there is a big debate about the teaching of reading with a push on phonics. Year 1 pupils showed a 10% point improvement on last year. This is a really significant improvement and will improve the results in Year 2 next year. It was highlighted that Year 2 results were also a success and that this should be celebrated.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that it is inspiring to see how hard teachers and pupils are working.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting gave the example of Millbrook school which had been rated as 'Requiring Improvement' by Ofsted but following training and investment the school has turned around and is now 'Good' HMI Inspectors are now using this school as an example of good practice. He went on to report on performance in Key Stage 2 which showed that the percentage of pupils gaining a Level 4 or above in reading, writing and Maths is 78% - this is the first time this has been at the same level as the national average. Level 4B in reading, writing and maths is only one percentage point below the national average. Level 5 has dipped to one percent below the national average but is still higher than last year.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting explained the Ofsted measure on progress. While a child might not get a Level 4 it is important to recognise progress.

The Chair said these were quite positive results.

Cllr. C. Turley asked if there was any effect on result for schools where there were high numbers of children who spoke little English?

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting responded that children who have English as an additional language can make remarkable progress and gave Millbrook School as an example.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting set out the Key Stage 4 results which he said does not look not nearly as positive. He commented that this is an early statistical release and some schools submit remarks when they have checked the data. He explained that the methodology for measuring the headline figure of 5 A-C including English and Maths has changed in three ways:

- Only the 'first' entry for any GCSE exams counted as opposed to the previous methodology where the 'best' entry was counted.

- Only two vocational subjects from an approved list counted; previously there was a much wider range of vocational subjects which were considered to be equivalent to a GCSE.
- The threshold for a grade A-C in English and maths were increased. In English the threshold for a Grade C is roughly equivalent to the threshold for a grade B three years ago.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting gave the example of one school which still entered all children in Year 11 for GCSEs and 47% got grade C or better. Last June the same children sat the exam and 61% got Grade C or better but the league table shows the 47% as this was the first entry result. He gave another example of a school that continued to offer a wide range of vocational qualifications. Last year 90% of students got grades A-C including vocational qualifications. This year the result for the school was 34% as many of the courses were not included. There has been a debate in the press as nationally results have gone up for the last 21 years – some questioned if this is the results going up or standards slipping. There has been a 5 percentage point drop nationally from 2012/13 to 2013/14. Telford and Wrekin's results have gone down to 51.2% grade A\*- C passes including english and maths. This is below the national average of 56.1%. It was highlighted that other in other areas the results have gone down even more and it was noted that the changes in methodology have a disproportionate effect in challenged areas.

A. Mason asked if schools are withdrawing vocational courses as a result of the changes?

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting replied that it has had this effect. Schools can still provide these courses but it will not count towards the schools results. All 14 West Midlands authorities apart from Herefordshire saw results go down.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that it is disappointing for students as the results show they are under achieving but they are not.

S. Rayner asked about the poor results in English

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting replied that the results showed under performance in Telford and Wrekin in english and maths but english was worse. He explained that although the minimum grade children aim for is Grade C – schools need to teach to B standard. Schools are pairing up with Teaching Schools to help improve. Phoenix School paired with a teaching school in Shrewsbury which shows that intervention can work.

When looking at the Ofsted ratings for schools it was highlighted that Telford and Wrekin are currently 5% points above the national average for Good or Outstanding Schools. The Local Authority provide support for schools so they do not go down a category and also if they require support to move up a category.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that the School Improvement service is trusted by head teachers and staff and also work extremely well with Governors. He said he had seen this as a Governor is an extremely challenging area in Telford and Wrekin.

M. Ward supported this and said that the School Improvement Team has always been very supportive and constructive.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting highlighted the Ofsted comments on the schools that 'Required Improvement'. This illustrated the positive work of the School Improvement service.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting then explained the results for Children in Care. He brought to the attention of the Committee there had been an error in the previous reporting of the Key Stage 2 reading, writing and maths combined at level 4 which had showed that 13% of children in care achieved this – this should have shown 31%. It was recognised that the correct attainment was not good but it was noted that in 2014 this had risen to 38%. The Key Stage 4 measure for 5 A\*-C including English and maths was 26% for Children in Care which was better than the national average of 20%. It was noted that because of the change in methodology outlined earlier this will have also affected the results for Children in Care.

When looking at the results for Children in care by type of school it was noted that it was important to look at the numbers of children and the percentages could be misleading due to low numbers. The results showed that Children in Care are closing the gap and performance had exceeded predictions.

The Chair asked if there is data for progress for Children in Care.

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting said that a data analyst post has been appointed and the post of Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care will focus on this level of detail.

### **CYP SC 13 – MONITORING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES**

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting reported on the implementation of the recommendations:

Consultation on School Catchment numbers: The consultation exercise on primary school attendance areas in north central Telford was conducted during the last academic year and has now been completed. The solution which was agreed satisfied all parties and addressed the problem of having too many primary aged pupils in the Hadley area. This is likely to be re-visited at a later date in the light of planned housing growth in the area. The School Organisation Team always consults widely on proposed attendance area changes and tries to find solutions that are

acceptable to the vast majority of those affected.

Admission Appeals Meetings: Following the Scrutiny Committee Inquiry about the attendance of head teachers as admissions appeal meetings there have been a number of discussions with officers and Head teachers to ascertain whether this would be feasible for us to adopt. In order to gain a full sense of the practice across the West Midlands the Admissions Team has conducted some research through the regional admission forum. Whilst there is no preferred pattern it seems that there is a wide degree of variance across local authorities with some inviting Heads to attend and some not doing so.

There is a further meeting to discuss admission appeal hearings with the legal section of the council next week. Colleagues from the legal section act as clerk to the appeals and oversee the procedure used.

Academies Protocol: The discussions to develop a protocol for Academies is ongoing and as an initial step the School Improvement Service have revisited the Securing School Improvement Protocol to take account of the Local Authority's statutory responsibility for standards across all schools in the Borough. The draft suggestions will be subject to further consultation with Head teachers and the relevant professional associations. There was a discussion about the role of Scrutiny if an Academy's performance is poor.

#### **CYP SC 14 POLICY ON FINING PARENTS FOR TAKING CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME**

The Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting circulated the Council's policy on Penalty Notices. This states that taking children out of school without authorisation from the Head teacher the local authority must issue a penalty notice and the level of the fine is nationally prescribed. It was explained that the Council has accrued income but the regulation state this must be used to improve school attendance for example money can be given to schools to give attendance awards. The court proceedings only begin if the fine is not paid. It was discussed that the issue behind many parents taking their children out of school is the huge increase in the price of holidays outside the school term. Holiday companies should be challenged on this.

#### **CYP SC 15 SCRUTINY REPORT ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

The Chair confirmed that the report had been circulated to all members of the Committee who had supported the report and recommendations. The Chair also reported that he had had two very productive discussions with the FE college principals and that they were both very supportive of the report. The report was being brought to this meeting for formal approval.

**RESOLVED: The Committee approved the Scrutiny Report on Youth Unemployment.**

**CYP SC 16 CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair said he wanted to discuss with the Committee the implications of the recent report on Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. The Jay report highlighted the lack of scrutiny of this issues and the failure of the Scrutiny Committee. The Chair said he had spoken to the Cabinet Member who would encourage the Scrutiny Committee to undertake some work in this area. However, the Chair noted that if this work did go ahead, it would be necessary to put aside the work the Committee had planned and that there would have to be clear aims and objectives.

R. Aveley said that there had been cases in Telford and asked why the Committee should focus on it now?

The Chair responded that this was a valid question but there is a role for Scrutiny to look at mistakes that have been made and what has improved.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that CSE has been a priority for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. A huge amount has been done in Telford and Wrekin. What is missing is a public outlook – identifying good practice and the reaction of partner organisations. It is important to get an outward facing public view that Scrutiny can provide. The LSCB has multi-agency scrutiny as a core part of the business.

A.Mason said the LSCB would welcome the work of Scrutiny. It would re-assure the Board that there is public scrutiny. There has been a lot of publicity on this issue and there needs to be assurance that multi-agency working is effective.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said if he was asked can he guarantee that it is not happening in Telford and Wrekin he could not say that but he can say that there are pathways for young people who are at risk and how we respond to them.

R. Aveley commented that Scrutiny should not look at current cases and does not have legal powers to do so.

Cllr. C. Turley said that he was aware it is still an issue.

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said that Scrutiny could bring everyone together.

A.Mason said that the LSCB is challenging partner organisations and that the police are happy for this work to take place.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist reminded Members of the statutory power of the Committee which related to the Local Authority. Other organisations could be asked

to participate in the review on a voluntary basis, unless the Council's constitution was changes to give the Committee power to scrutinise external organisations. This would still not cover all the organisations. E.g. police.

Cllr. A. Mackenzie said he agreed that the Committee should scrutinise this issue.

S. Rayner suggested that the Committee should look at previous reports and the lessons learnt?

Cllr. A. Mackenzie agreed that the Committee should focus on lessons learned from Operation Chalice and the Rotherham report.

R. Aveley suggested that a sub-committee should look at this issue. He expressed his reservations about the Scrutiny Committee getting involved in an issue that the police may be investigating and the safeguarding board is already looking at.

The Chair said that the Scrutiny Committee has a statutory duty to vulnerable young people and it was highlighted in the Jay report that Scrutiny in Rotherham was unwilling to challenge.

Cllr. A. Mackenzie said that there have been successful prosecutions in Telford but we can still learn from other areas.

The Chair said that it will be important that all organisations agree to take part on a voluntary basis and that the Committee should talk to senior officers but also front line staff.

Cllr. A. Mackenzie said that it is important to go to the staff that are dealing with these issues and working with the children.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families asked that the Committee did not approach victims to take part in the review. They have experience abuse and been through the criminal justice system.

Cllr. J. Pinter said it is important that the Committee understand why this is happening and to understand more about grooming.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families said it is also important to find out how best to work with parents and inform them.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist asked the Committee when the review should start and how long it would take. It would take time to set up the meetings with partner organisations and it would be likely to be the new year before any formal meetings could be held. If the Members wanted to undertake further work it was unlikely this would be concluded before the elections in May 2015.

**It was agreed that the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee will undertake a review of child sexual exploitation. This will start in the 2014/15**

**municipal year and continue into 2015/16.**

Members requested hard copies of the reports discussed at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.08pm.

**Chairman:**.....

**Date:**.....