

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 16 May 2018 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room G3/4, Addenbrook House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT 7

Present: Councillors K Guy (Chair); S Barnes, E A Clare, J A Francis, E J Greenaway and co-optees Sherrel Fikeis, Carolyn Healy, Mel Ward.

Also Present: Jo Britton; Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services; Tilly Heigh; Service Delivery Manager: Service Improvement, Children's Safeguarding & Early Help; Clive Jones: Director of Children's and Adult Services; - TWC, J Tangey, Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer - TWC.

CYPSC-09 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Janice Jones, J A Pinter, Hilda Rhodes, Karen Tomlinson; Co-optees Lynn Fowler, Carol Morgan

CYPSC-10 Declarations of Interest

None

CYPSC-11 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2017

The Minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record with one amendment to include Cllr Karen Tomlinson, who was in attendance for the meeting.

CYPSC-12 Children and Family Services Improvement Plan Following Ofsted SIF June- July 2016 – Further Progress Update

The Chair introduced the item and received the report and full action plan that provided additional, comprehensive information on performance following the discussion at the Committee meeting on 6 February 2018. It was proposed that this would enable the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider progress regarding the Service Improvement Plan following the Ofsted Single Inspection framework (SIF) in June – July 2016.

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children's Early Help and Support, the Director of Adult and Children's Services, the Assistant Director; Children's Safeguarding and the Service Delivery Manager for Children's Safeguarding.

The Committee noted that the Telford & Wrekin Council's SIF took place between 13 June and 7 July 2016, and the report was published on 26 August 2016. Verbal feedback received from the inspection team was that they could see that significant improvements had been made, and that the Council should '*keep doing what you are doing*' to achieve consistently good services.

11 recommendations for improvement were made and a Service Improvement Plan was presented and agreed by Ofsted on 11 January 2017. A summary of activity and impact against each of the 11 recommendations was presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 6th February 2018, together with information about the new ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) framework which would be used for future inspections. A full copy of the original action plan with updates on actions and performance was requested by the Committee and was attached at Appendix A to the report, updated with end of year performance for 2017-18.

It was highlighted that under the new ILACS framework, Children's Safeguarding/ Services anticipated an inspection during 2019. An additional two day focussed visit from Ofsted would take place at any time. The theme for the visit had been discussed with the Regional Lead Inspector and would be confirmed in the rescheduled Annual Conversation with the Ofsted Regional Director on 21st May 2018. A One Minute briefing on the new inspection framework was circulated. It was reported that the themes for the two day visit had to be selected by the Council as a recognised area for improvement. The Officers felt that this was a more proportionate response from Ofsted, more on course with day to day practice and pilot inspections so far had been 80% with frontline practitioners. The annual self-evaluation had been updated for the annual conversation on 21 May and this would focus on the Council's self-awareness and areas identified where more focus was needed.

The Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding summarised the detailed plan, addressing one of the issues that the Committee had raised previously regarding case supervision; it was highlighted that there was a keen sense of upward trajectory in terms of improvement in consistent and regular supervision. Quality assurance was key to continuous improvement and there had been a significant culture shift in understanding the importance of audit activity. Ofsted would look at a selection of cases that had been audited.

Child protection cases, children in care and child protection plans were looked at regularly in every audit undertaken and there were two types of audit; fuller audits or more streamlined audits. Management oversight was always considered. It was reported that there were two different types of supervision; an electronic recording system where a manager supervised a specific case and monthly supervision which was more reflective and developmental. More ways were being found to measure supervision. There were lots of options on a child's electronic file for managers to have a conversation with the social worker as well as regular management feedback and ongoing day to day management oversight.

There was still work to do on management oversight including oversight of IROs who were there for checks and balances. There were child protection action planning meetings that other practitioners had observed and feedback had been positive on how the meetings were conducted, how the families were included and the understanding of risk.

In terms of management oversight and IRO oversight – these had been separated out for greater transparency. If any cases came back as inadequate they were reported to the Quality Assurance meeting and continued to be on the list until they were no longer inadequate.

The Committee had a discussion and raised the following questions:

Why was there still a big variance in the IROs case loads? It was confirmed that one IRO had been in post for a month since the beginning of the year and the case load was still building. Another IRO had recently been appointed and had been in post for one month. In terms of management oversight and IRO oversight – these had been separated out for greater transparency. If any cases came back as inadequate they were reported to the Quality Assurance meeting and continued to be on the list until they were no longer inadequate.

The Committee asked if there was a large number of inadequate cases – it was confirmed that there were full case audits and other case audits with a particular focus with 4-5 key themes. The most recently audit had included 28-30 files of which 2-3 were found to be inadequate. However, it was noted that the measure of inadequate was specific to the Council and it was unlikely that the cases would not be found inadequate by Ofsted.

The Committee sought clarity on audit outcomes; it was noted that a whole raft of aspects were taken into account; outcomes for child, good engagement of families, good multi-agency working, assessment/ planning quality, statutory visits, good quality placements that children were happy in. The complexity that the Social Workers were working with was highlighted. For a case to be inadequate, there would normally have to be failure across a number of aspects.

The Committee asked about the outcomes for children – what processes were followed if inadequacy was found and how were they assured that the child was safe. It was confirmed that if any concerns about practice were raised, it would be escalated to the Service Delivery Manager who would take action immediately. This had happened a couple of times and it came to light that it was due to aspects of the case that hadn't been recorded.

The audit model was rigorous, not only did all team managers and all IROs with their Service Delivery Managers, the Assistant Director and Director of Children's Services participate but an audit was also done every quarter by the lead Cabinet Member and the Chief Executive of the Council. It was acknowledged that the shift in culture to that of receiving feedback took time. It was also good for managers to maintain a hands on approach and to have a clear understanding of the social workers approach. Triangulation was well implemented and ensured a broader, truer picture of what was going on.

It was noted that social workers valued the feedback, especially the senior managers as it provided an opportunity for reflection and for social workers to demonstrate their commitment to their job and to the families they were supporting. The Assistant Director would also write individually to social workers to acknowledge where things had gone well.

The Director of Adult's and Children's Services highlighted that learning reviews were conducted to understand why and where practice improvement was needed, and the training needs around this. It was all documented and therefore anybody could see remedial actions taken and on child's file the conversations were shared between the managers and social worker.

Ofsted would take a view on the quality of the Council's quality assurance process. A key strength in the last Ofsted was that the service was self-aware and recognised the areas that required improvement.

The Committee questioned the Council's performance in relation to return home interviews (RHI). Figures showed that although 98% of eligible children and young people were offered RHI and 96% took up the offer of RHI's, only 56% were completed on time.

The Assistant Director explained that some children went missing over 2-3 days and each one could trigger a new episode. The Council was looking at a better way of working, focussing on what was important for the children and young people and that was independent of the case holder. A resource had been allocated to undertake the independent interviews so some improvement was expected soon. Unknown cases were a particular challenge – it was a key performance measure. There were issues that were out of the Council's control; some children did not want interviews, but they had the opportunity to have them if wanted. There were children that repeatedly ran away from home and this was an indicator in terms of risk, however, there was a robust response, especially where care placements were involved.

It was noted that it was an issue in terms of complexity. Improvements had been made and interviews were completed outside of 72 hours timescale which was set as best practice. The Committee suggested that it would be valuable to see numbers of interviews that were completed, including outside of the timescale.

The Committee questioned the rates of advocacy. Officers confirmed that 100% of children that requested advocacy received it but it was hard to show in data about issue resolution. A lot of work was done to resolve issues before the formal complaint procedure was instigated. The Advocacy Service looked into issues/ areas and had discussions with the young person.

The Committee asked about the impact of the change of provider for the Independent Visitor in May 2018. The Officers confirmed that it had been delivered by the Children's Society but it was jointly commissioned with other West Midlands authorities. It went out to tender and a contract had recently been agreed. Detailed planning for what the service would look like was being undertaken and the lead Commissioning Authority recognised that they hadn't been monitoring this as tightly as it should have been. There was a new lead Commissioner in place.

The Committee questioned the low performance in terms of the strategy discussions and meetings where agencies were involved in ensuring decisions were complaint with the

Department of Health guidance 'Working Together' and informed by comprehensive information from partner agencies. Performance was 39% 2017-18 and in March 53%. Officers reported that it was a challenge in terms of partner agency presence and obtaining the required information. In most circumstances not all partner agencies would be at the table and there was under reporting. A new way of capturing this information was needed to move forward and an update would be provided when the item returned to Committee in the new Municipal year.

The Committee noted that there was an action to identify and include specific communities where private fostering arrangements were more prevalent and organisations which were likely to have contact with privately fostered children. Officers acknowledged that this was likely to have come from national data; no specific communities had been identified. The Officers welcomed the Committee's request for this information which would go to the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board.

The Committee asked about care leavers living in Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) as the Committee was of the understanding that HMOs were not appropriate accommodation for care leavers but there was now an action in the plan to review risks and for risk assessments to be carried out for people in HMOs which seemed to be a change of approach. Officers explained that it was undesirable for care leavers to be accommodated in HMOs but it was necessary that there was an action around risk assessments for any young people who were in HMOs because some wanted to remain in HMOs. The Assistant Director confirmed that she would provide the Committee with numbers of care leavers who wished to remain. Following on from this this the Committee was also keen to know about the numbers of children who wanted to remain in foster care and what action was being put in place to support the parents and child. It was noted that it was a big decision for parents ; it was their personal choice. The Committee was assured that the Council did everything it could to support the decisions. 98% of care leavers were in appropriate accommodation and HMOs were not included in this.

The Committee asked that the additional information/ updates requested be provided in 6 months' time. The Committee agreed that they were pleased with the update on Ofsted and would return to this as a substantive item after the next Ofsted inspection in 2019.

The Officers left the meeting at 6.54pm

CYPSC-13 Work Programme 2017-18

It was noted that suggestions for the work programme for 2018-19 had been sought from the Scrutiny Assembly, Cabinet Members, Senior Managers and key local organisations. The suggestions would be considered by Scrutiny Management Board on 5th June. Scrutiny Management Board would be asked to consider what the over-arching priorities for Scrutiny in 2018/19 should be and would also be mindful that 2018/19 was an election year and any

reviews would need to be completed by the end of December 2018 at the latest to enable preparation of final reports to Cabinet before the pre-election period in March 2019.

Items that had not been prioritised this year included children Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). One of the members had looked into this recently and provided an update that the figures for Telford & Wrekin were now well below the national average.

The Committee agreed that they would be interested in looking at the numbers of students taking elective home education and whether this was on the rise; nationally there had been an increase. Members felt it would be useful to see the numbers and how it was audited.

Mental health in young people; the Committee agreed that the transition between mental health services from young people to adults was a potential issue. It was noted that this was an ongoing item on the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee work programme and Joint HOSC in terms of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service 0-25s which covered Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. A note of when this item was to be considered by Health and Adult Care Scrutiny and Joint HOSC would be provided for Members.

The Committee discussed educational progress for those in receipt of pupil premium and pupil premium plus and how schools made arrangements with parents. It was acknowledged that this was within the remit of Ofsted that should be holding schools to account and therefore it would not be submitted for inclusion on the work programme for 2018-19.

CYPSC-14 Chair's Update

The Chair reported that dates had been identified for the informal meeting with the CATE team which followed up on the recommendations made during the Scrutiny Review of CSE and Multi-Agency Working. Members agreed for this to take place on 5th June 2018. The meeting with the CATE team had been postponed from March, due to the increasing pressure that the CATE team were under arising from the intense media speculation at the time.

The meeting ended: 7.48pm

Chairman:

Date:

NOTE: Subsequent to the Committee meeting an Inquiry into CSE was agreed by full Council on 24 May 2018. The Inquiry changed how things stood as it was likely that the scrutiny process from 2015/16 would be looked at by the inquiry. The Chair received advice from the Monitoring Officer that it was inappropriate for the committee to be talking to the CATE team in the way that had been planned at this stage, particularly as the terms of reference and conduct of the Inquiry had still to be set. Follow up to the Scrutiny Review on CSE would remain in abeyance until the inquiry process had run its course.