

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2017

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Sameem Ali, Alijah, Collins, Hewitson, T Judge, Lone, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan, K Simcock and Stone

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mrs B Kellner, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford

Ms M Neall, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative

Ms J Gudgeon, Primary sector teacher representative

Councillor S Newman, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Sheikh, Assistant Executive Member for Children's Services

Apologies:

Councillor Taylor

CYP/17/31 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017.
2. To receive the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 27 June 2017.
3. To receive the minutes of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group meeting held on 27 June 2017.

CYP/17/32 Placement Sufficiency Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services which introduced a review of the Council's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2016 – 2019. The Strategic Director of Children's Services and the Strategic Head of Children's Social Care introduced the report across its main themes.

In response to Members' questions, the Strategic Director of Children's Services explained the processes through which children and young people became Looked After, including the support available to families and children through the process, and the process for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). He also clarified that demographic information was gathered in relation to the children and young people.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Head of Children's Social Care reported that the proposal to reduce one of the partnership residential homes from

six beds to four beds was because research showed that smaller units were more effective in supporting children and young people. The Strategic Director of Children's Services reported that the needs of young people placed in children's homes were now more complex than they were previously.

Members discussed approaches to reducing the number of children and young people becoming Looked After. The Strategic Director of Children's Services reported that a range of evidence-based interventions were being used, including Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), Family Conferencing and Families First. The Strategic Head of Early Help outlined the role of Early Help and work that had taken place in this area. The Chair noted that the Committee would be receiving a report on MST at a future meeting.

The Executive Member for Children's Services welcomed that the number of Looked After Children had reduced and that adoption and SGOs had increased. She advised that there was still a need for more children to be fostered by Manchester foster carers and to further increase the use of SGOs.

The Committee discussed how internal foster care recruitment could be increased. The Strategic Head of Children's Social Care reported that a lot of regional partnership work was taking place to improve this and that the Fostering Team had been asked to look at what the most successful local authorities were doing to increase recruitment.

The Chair asked why there had been an increase in the number of referrals to Children's Services in June 2017. The Strategic Director of Children's Services advised that there were seasonal trends related, for example, to the school calendar. The Strategic Head of Early Help reported that the increase in referrals would be analysed. In response to a Member's question she also outlined how referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) were monitored. A Member recommended that information on referral figures across previous months, including the spike in referrals in June 2017, be incorporated into a paper to be considered at the Committee's September meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

The Chair noted that, as recommended in the report, the Committee had considered the content of the report and explored the progress the Council was making in meeting its 'sufficiency' duty to provide a sufficient number and range of high quality placements and accommodation options for 'Looked After' children and young people. She emphasised the importance of Early Help, Edge of Care services, multi-agency work, including work with education, and the use of a range of therapies in reducing the number of children and young people who entered the Looked After system and required placements.

Decision

To recommend that information on referral figures across previous months, including the spike in referrals in June 2017, be incorporated into a paper to be considered at the Committee's September meeting.

CYP/17/33 Complex Safeguarding

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services which provided a progress update on how the Council and partners were responding to complex safeguarding issues. It covered Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), including the work of the Phoenix Protect Team, and outlined future plans involving the development of a complex safeguarding hub. The Strategic Director of Children's Services, the Strategic Head of Early Help and the Community Safety Lead provided an overview of the report.

A Member requested further information on the multi-agency work to disrupt and enforce against activities leading to CSE. The Strategic Director of Children's Services advised that he could not go into detail as this work was still ongoing but he was encouraged by how well the different agencies were working together on this. The Chair requested that further information be provided to Members, when it was appropriate to do so.

A Member asked what was being done to monitor whether schools were following best practice on sex and relationships education (SRE) and CSE education and whether safeguarding audits could be used for this purpose. She advised that it was important that this education showed the positive side of healthy sexual relationships, in addition to the dangers of CSE and other types of abuse. The Strategic Director of Children's Services reported that work was taking place through the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) and through education to promote the Curriculum for Life, which he advised was about building confidence and resilience and equipping young people for adult life, and that this, along with having support networks, made young people less vulnerable to CSE and other risks.

The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that all schools, except for independent schools, were legally required to provide SRE. She suggested that the Committee considered a report on the Curriculum for Life at a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

A Member requested further information on I Matter. The Community Safety Lead informed Members that this was a resource developed by Healthy Schools, in consultation with young people, which aimed to improve young people's self-esteem and included information on a range of topics including CSE and hate crime. She advised that I Matter had been launched in October 2016 and had been taken up by many Manchester secondary schools. She informed Members that work was currently taking place to develop a similar resource for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

A Member asked how the under-representation of boys within the cohort of children receiving a service from Protect was being addressed. The Strategic Head of Early Help reported that two male Early Help Practitioners based in the Protect and Integrated Gang Management Unit (IGMU) Team were undertaking some excellent engagement work with young men and also that the service was working in partnership with a range of organisations, such as the Men's Room.

A Member expressed concern that the future development of work on CSE was

being linked to gang affiliation. She advised that it was important to also reach young people who were at risk of CSE through other routes, particularly young people from minority groups, including those attending faith schools which might not provide young people with information on CSE. It was agreed that the Member would meet with the Strategic Director of Children's Services outside of the meeting to address these issues.

A Member asked what Prevent training was available for primary schools teachers. The Community Safety Lead reported that a range of resources were available on Prevent. The Member advised that, in addition to the resources available, training should be made available on how to address the issues with young children in an age appropriate way.

The Chair noted that, as recommended in the report, the Committee had explored the progress the Council was making in responding to CSE and service improvement. She further noted the importance of bringing together safeguarding services for children and vulnerable adults, promoting awareness of CSE in the community, supporting teachers in both primary and secondary schools in dealing with CSE and Prevent, encouraging liaison between different organisations, learning from other local authorities, tackling the under-representation of boys in Protect work and working effectively within minority communities on Protect and Prevent.

Decisions

1. To note the report and recognise the importance of bringing together safeguarding services for children and vulnerable adults, promoting awareness of CSE in the community, supporting teachers in both primary and secondary schools in dealing with CSE and Prevent, encouraging liaison between different organisations, learning from other local authorities, tackling the under-representation of boys in Protect work and working effectively within minority communities on Protect and Prevent.
2. To note the multi-agency work to disrupt and enforce against activities leading to CSE and to request that further information be included in a future report, when it is appropriate to do so.
3. To receive a report on the Curriculum for Life at a future meeting.

[Councillor Alijah declared a personal interest as she had a research interest in safeguarding and was a member of the Sex Education Forum's Advisory Group.]

[Councillor K Simcock declared a personal interest as the Director of Programme at the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace.]

[Councillor Sameem Ali declared a personal interest as she was working with schools in the south of England regarding CSE.]

[Councillor Lone declared a personal interest as a Trustee of the Henna Foundation.]

CYP/17/34 Post-Ofsted Improvement Plan Update: Ofsted Monitoring Visit

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services which outlined the content of the Ofsted monitoring visit letter addressed to the Strategic Director of Children's Services dated 6 July 2017. It also summarised actions being taken by the Council in response to the issues raised by the monitoring

visit that required ongoing improvement. The Strategic Director of Children's Services introduced the report across its main themes.

The Executive Member for Children's Services expressed disappointment at the letter, stating that the letters from the previous three monitoring visits had been more positive whereas this one focused on the areas which needed to improve; however, she advised that the Council was already aware that these were the areas most in need of improvement and already had plans in place for addressing these issues. A Member reported that she had been surprised by the findings within the letter, as she felt the information provided by officers to previous Scrutiny Committee meetings had presented a more positive image.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services reported that he shared Members' disappointment about the areas of concern within the letter but outlined the improvements which had been made since children's services had been judged 'inadequate' in 2014. He advised that the Council was aware that quality of social work practice was an issue and had been working to address this, starting with an investment to increase social work capacity. He outlined other actions being taken to address the concerns in the letter, including engaging with partners on referral thresholds and how different agencies could work together to most appropriately meet a child's need, and work to improve outcomes for care leavers.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services further informed Members that the Local Government Association had carried out a review of leadership and governance arrangements the previous week and had reported that the Council had made progress since 2014, which was significant in parts, and had a plan which it was working on. He advised that the service was now narrowing its improvement work down to focus on the areas which most needed further improvement. In response to a Member's question, he reported that the earliest date that Ofsted could carry out its full inspection was September 2017.

The Chair expressed concern at the letter and advised that the pace of change would need to improve more quickly. She advised that she and the Executive Member and Assistant Executive Member for Children's Services would visit the Youth Offending Service and Social Work teams across the city to discover what the issues were.

The Chair recommended that the Ofsted Monitoring Visit letter and the action plan to address the issues raised be referred to the Ofsted Subgroup. She further recommended that an additional meeting of the Subgroup be arranged for 12 September at 2pm to consider this issue and that all members of the Committee be invited to attend. The Chair of the Ofsted Subgroup advised that the Committee would need to amend the Subgroup's Terms of Reference as this was not currently within its remit.

Decision

To hold an additional meeting of the Ofsted Subgroup on 12 September at 2pm to consider the Ofsted Monitoring Visit feedback in more detail, to amend the Terms of Reference of the Subgroup so that this falls within its remit and to invite all members of the Scrutiny Committee to attend.

CYP/17/35 Overview Report

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

Decision

To approve the work programme.