

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 July 2016 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Hilary Moore (Chair), Luke Sorba (Vice-Chair), Chris Barnham, Andre Bourne, David Britton, Simon Hooks, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Jacq Paschoud, Mark Saunders (Parent Governor Representative), Gail Exon (Church Representative), Monsignor N Rothon (Church Representative) and Kevin Mantle (Parent Governor representative for special schools)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Helen Klier, Alan Till and Sharon Archibald

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Paul Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Paul Aladenika (Service Group Manager, Policy Development and Analytical Insight), Timothy Andrew (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Stephen Kitchman (Director of Children's Social Care), Katherine Manchester (Project Manager), Claudia Smith, Warwick Tomsett (Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning), Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2016

1.1 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 8 June be agreed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Jacq Paschoud declared a personal interest in item 4 as she was a trustee of the Ravensbourne Project.

Kevin Mantel declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was a Parent Governor at Brent Knoll School, a committee member of Signal Family Support and he worked for the Government Equalities Office.

3. Children's Social Care Ofsted Action Plan

3.1 Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Social Care introduced the report to the Committee. Following questions and challenge from members of the Committee, the following key points were highlighted:

- Members of the Committee requested confirmation that the new deadlines around the review of the referral and assessment process and agreeing the new Early Help Strategy would be met. The Committee was informed that the new deadlines would be met and

they reflected the emphasis on assuring the quality of new processes and strategies. The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was on target for being in place by 1 October.

- Following questions on the nature of the delays regarding return interviews; Members of the Committee were informed that better options had been identified and Children's Social Care was now working with the Commissioning team and had identified a partner organisation that in addition to the interview would provide analysis, match funding opportunities and other on-going work. The delay in delivery timescale was therefore worth the improved service that would be provided.
- Revising some of the deadlines reflected the fact that the best possible service delivery was more important than meeting the original dates and timeframes. The revised deadlines were realistic and would be met. It was important to focus on outcomes.
- Members of the Committee highlighted concerns that sickness by one member of staff had an effect on many of the actions and questioned capacity and resilience in the team. The Committee was informed that work was being done to address this and increase capacity by improving the structure of quality assurance teams and other organisational structure changes. The changes to the MASH would also help to build resilience to the teams.

3.2 Councillor Johnston-Franklin and Councillor Paschoud addressed the Committee regarding their recent visit to frontline staff in Children's Social Care.

- They had been impressed by how hard the teams were working, their knowledge, expertise and commitment to the borough, and the quality of partnership working.
- They were however concerned regarding the physical environment and working conditions.
- Social worker recruitment and retention could be a potential area for the Children and Young People Select Committee to consider in the future.

3.3 In response to their comments the Director of Children's Social Care made the following comments to the Committee:

- Staff had been very pleased to have the visit from Councillors and the opportunity to discuss their work.
- Improving the working environment and improvements to IT capabilities were being introduced and the importance of this to staff was recognised and noted.
- The Director of Children's Social Care would be happy to extend the invite to visit frontline staff to any other members of the Children and Young People Select Committee.
- Members of the Committee were invited to visit Kaleidoscope Lewisham on 7 September 2016 to meet frontline staff and increase their understanding of the work being done.

3.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

That an invite be sent round to members of the committee to visit Kaleidoscope Lewisham on 7 September 2016 to meet frontline staff.

4. **Update on implementation of SEND Strategy**

4.1 Warwick Tomsett, Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning introduced the report to the Committee, Claudia Smith, Interim Service Manager was also in attendance. In response to questions and challenge by members of the Committee, the following key points were highlighted:

- The work being done by the Short Breaks Service in partnership with Contact A Family to signpost families to information and support, drew on information from previous studies as part of the research. There would be a consultation process including an online questionnaire which was due to be commenced in Autumn 2016.
- 14-18 year olds made up 45% of young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP) who were educated outside the borough. The numbers were reducing slightly. The reasons for young people being educated outside the borough included a lack of specialist placements within the borough for some conditions such as High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
- Lewisham had the highest numbers of children diagnosed with ASD of any London borough. There was an internal review due to be commenced looking at reasons for this including: how referrals were made and carried out; what support was available to families; and comparisons with other boroughs. Views would be sought from parents and carers.
- Service pressures for supporting young people with ASD included the impact on the Education Support Team and on Health Services for the diagnosis and support.
- A business case was currently being prepared for a 14-25 Transition Pathway Team to establish a new transition pathway. The aim is to have robust processes that start early and include the right opportunities for young people as they become adults.
- The diagnosis of SEN including ASD and Multiple Learning Difficulties were made by Multi-Agency Panels as part of a robust assessment system.

4.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

5. Early Help Strategy

5.1 Stephen Kitchman introduced the report to the Committee, Katherine Manchester, Project Manager was also in attendance. During the presentation to Committee, the following key points were highlighted:

- The Early Help Strategy was set to be completed by September 2016. It consists of four different strands of work: children's workforce development; the MASH and Referral and assessment process; early help commissioning and delivery; and early help module, Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around Child and Team Around Family.

5.2 Following question and challenge from members of the committee the following key points were highlighted.

- Persistent absence rates in Lewisham were a major concern and a priority for school improvement work alongside improving attainment. The Welfare and Attendance Team had been reorganised and improvements made to the service level agreement with schools. The council had also run an attendance conference which had been very well attended by Lewisham teachers and Heads.
- There was a difference between the approach to attendance taken at primary and at secondary level and the amount of support young people received. This could be looked at to develop a more personal approach at secondary.
- The new referral process had been welcomed by dedicated safeguarding leads at schools. The new proposals would provide a streamlined referral tool.
- Lewisham had high levels of domestic violence and this was a big priority for the Safeguarding Lewisham Partnership. The Athena Service in Lewisham provided support and advice to Lewisham residents experiencing domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Comparative statistics with other London boroughs on children's social care cases where domestic violence was a feature would be provided to the Committee.
- Budget reductions at the London Borough of Lewisham had not affected the tracking of non-attendance at schools. It was individual schools' obligation and responsibility to track absences. The Council's obligations were on the school improvement and legal side.
- To date, Head Teachers had not highlighted any post-Brexit hate crimes or incidences at Lewisham schools. Schools were required to report any incidences of racism and this was monitored closely by the Council.

5.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

That additional statistics comparing the London Borough of Lewisham with other London boroughs on the number of children's social care cases where domestic violence is a factor, be provided to the Committee.

6. Safeguarding Services 6-month report

6.1 Stephen Kitchman, introduced the report to the Committee highlighting that it provided a six-monthly overview of safeguarding and child protection services. Following questions and challenge from members of the Committee, the following key points were highlighted:

- The target number for numbers of children on child protection plans (CPP) was reviewed annually following analysis. Some performance indicators were set by the Government others were set locally.
- Neglect was the most common cause for children being on Child Protection Plans. The Early Help Strategy looked to identify those at risk at the earliest possible point such as from poor attendance at school and provide intervention to support children and families.
- The Early Help Strategy gave Children's Centres a more central role in supporting families and being part of the Family Intervention Programme. The number of families being worked with had not reduced as a result of savings being made to Children's Centre's Budgets.

6.2 RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. Child Sexual Exploitation Update

7.1 Stephen Kitchman, introduced the report to the Committee, following questions and challenge from members of the Committee the following key points were highlighted:

- There was support for current and historic victims of child sexual exploitation in Lewisham. A Child Sexual Exploitation Officer in Lewisham provided dedicated support to young people. Social workers were trained in how to advise victims. Lewisham was part of the London-wide coordinated, multi-agency Child House Model which was funded by MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime). This was designed to develop and coordinate services ensuring there was the best possible support and service for victims.
- There were high numbers of looked after children who were victims of CSE. Part of this was due to the fact that if CSE was discovered or suspected it was often necessary to remove a child and the child would therefore become looked after. It was important to continually assess risks and risky behaviour of all young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

- Work was being done to ensure that intervention was as early as possible and ensuring that processes were as speedy as possible to support victims. Any prosecution would involve the Crown Prosecution Service.

7.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

8. Select Committee work programme

8.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the Committee and highlighted the reports which were due to be presented at the Committee's next meeting.

8.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

9. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

9.1 **RESOLVED:**

There were no referrals to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

Chair:

Date:
