

Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday, 15th July, 2015, 9.30 am

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Lisa Brett (Chair), Matt Cochrane (Vice-Chair), Karen Warrington, Peter Turner, Sally Davis, Alison Millar and Liz Hardman

Co-opted Voting Members: David Williams (Diocese of Bath & Wells)

Co-opted Non-voting Members: Chris Batten and Edward Joseph (B&NES Youth Parliament)

Officers : Richard Baldwin (Divisional Director, Children & Young People Specialist Services), Lesley Hutchinson (Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) and Jackie Deas (Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance)

Cabinet Members in attendance: Councillor Michael Evans

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Liz Hardman declared an 'other' interest to the Panel as she is a governor at The Link (Aspire) School.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

7 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Michael Evans, Cabinet Member for Children's Services addressed the Panel. He spoke of how he had visited a number of establishments since embarking on his role.

Radstock Children's Centre Advisory Board - He was encouraged by their positive attitude.

First Steps Nursery – He made the visit alongside Ben Howlett MP which he said was enlightening.

Youth Parliament – He said it was interesting to see the interaction between the young people.

Schools Forum - He was pleased to hear Academy Headteachers looking to work collaboratively.

Ensleigh – He viewed plans for the new Primary School and noted that there was no drop off area currently, a lack of trees on the site and that the fencing proposed had a slight prison feel to it.

NUT / ATL Representatives – He said that this was a positive meeting.

He informed the Panel that the new Primary Schools at Somerdale and Ensleigh were due to open in September 2017 and that the competition to sponsor them was due to commence soon.

He said that his career had been in teaching, both in this country and Singapore and that he had independent school experience.

He said that he was concerned that as a Council and as Councillors we are sometimes too reactive.

He said that he would like to introduce some work within schools that encouraged the institution of marriage.

He stated that he was opposed to all ability classes and that he would like to see a system whereby all pupils were able to given an award for work throughout their academic year.

On the matter of Parental Choice / School Autonomy he said that he would like to have some performance figures listed within the brochure for Secondary Schools.

He said that he also wanted to have school information easily available to the public, including Value Added figures.

He stated that Headteachers should be able to control the hiring and dismissal of staff by themselves.

Councillor Liz Hardman offered her congratulations to Councillor Evans on his new role. She asked how the Children's Centres transition funding was being used and how had these cuts in services affected staff.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that the funding had been used so far to hire some staff on short term contracts, enable some building adaptations and provide training for staff.

He added that in broad terms it had been acknowledged that it had been a difficult time for all parties on this matter, but that now the staff feel comfortable with the current situation.

Councillor Liz Hardman said that in terms of equalities she offered a note of caution on his proposal to focus on marriage. She added that she was aware of schools having their own gifted and talented programmes.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services commented that he would like to see schools introduce a Physical Fitness Leaving Certificate to encourage children to become healthier.

The Chair said that she did not think that services within the Council were solely reactive and that the work of the LSCB shows a focus on intervention and that the Connecting Families shows that a great deal of prevention work takes place. She asked if he had any thoughts on the options paper that had been produced regarding Improving Youth & Community Services to the East of Bath.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services replied that that project was not being advanced at the current time.

Councillor Peter Turner commented that he believed that good communication skills are key for employers these days and should be addressed within school.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his update.

8 PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

The Divisional Director Children & Young People, Specialist Services introduced this item to the Panel on behalf of the People and Communities Strategic Director.

Stonewall Education Equalities Index 2015

He said that he was pleased to report that Bath and North East Somerset and its schools and learning settings had been named as best at tackling homophobic and trans-phobic bullying and for celebrating difference and diversity by Stonewall. He added that it is critically important that our children and young people are supported to be comfortable 'in their own skin' and that they accept and value others as their equals.

He said that the work in B&NES is very much led by children and young people and our schools and learning settings are to be commended for their commitment to both the subject and child-young person-centred leadership.

Primary and Pupil Parliaments

The Primary and Pupil Parliaments for 2015 have now been completed. Both events were very successful and the outcomes from each event will be reported to you at a future meeting and will inform the refresh of the Children's and Young Peoples' Plan.

Review of Emotional/Behavioural Services and Alternative Provision

He informed the Panel that a review of these services had begun as a result of increasing demand and an increase in levels of emotional distress amongst children. He said that permanent exclusions had reached 24 for this academic year and that the range of services provided seems unable to meet the complexity and volume of need. He stated that the review will be completed in late November and could come to the Panel after Christmas.

Attendance

He said that attendance figures had improved over the year and we have worked well with secondary schools in particular to ensure that those children educated off-school site for part or all of the week are well supported. He added that this attention to attendance and high levels of attendance were key attributes of keeping children and young people safe as well as attaining educationally.

Disadvantaged Pupils

He explained that lots of work had been undertaken in schools across the Local Authority to ensure that our Free School Meals (FSM) eligible children do well. He said that we are hopeful that we will see a significant reduction in the attainment 'gap' particularly in GCSE's and we will be able to report on this later in the year.

Ofsted Inspection

He informed the Panel that the Council did not receive the 'call' on 6 July and therefore we continue to be vigilant for a visit from 4 September onwards.

The Chair asked if the Council were involved in the Bath University work known as 'Attachment Aware'.

The Divisional Director Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that Mike Gorman, the Council's Headteacher for the Virtual School for Children In Care was at the centre of this work and felt sure that the Panel could be given further information at a future meeting.

Councillor Sally Davis asked for the Pupil Parliament dates for 2016 to be circulated as soon as they were known so that Panel members and other Councillors could attend.

Councillor Peter Turner commented that he would be interested in the results of the Review of Emotional/Behavioural Services and Alternative Provision.

The Chair thanked the Divisional Director Children & Young People, Specialist Services for the update.

9 LSCB ANNUAL REPORT & WORK PROGRAMME

Reg Pengelly, the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board introduced this report to the Panel. He explained that the Board is a multi-agency body that monitors and co-ordinates the safeguarding and welfare of children. He said that there are also a series of sub-groups that undertake separate work outside the main body of the Board.

He said that the Board's quarterly meetings had been reorganised this year so that each meeting had a lead theme.

He stated that Private Fostering had been an area which the LSCB had sought to highlight and develop in 2014 - 15. He said that new guidance and advertising materials had been produced for distribution to key establishments such as GP surgeries and nurseries. He added that during this year the Strategic Director for People and Communities had also written to all independent and Language Schools in the area to remind them of their responsibilities to self-report any arrangements that might constitute Private Fostering with 'host' families.

He spoke of how this year has seen the implementation of the Care Act 2014. He said that the Act principally improves things for adults but it includes improvements for children, especially those with special educational needs and disability. In particular, the Care Act places the Safeguarding Adults Board on a similar statutory footing to the LSCB. He informed the Panel that he was also now the Chair of the LSAB.

We believe that this legislative alignment now presents a unique opportunity to explore closer collaboration between both Boards. To that end we have held a joint Development Day and are now planning to implement some exciting new approaches. Closer collaboration across both Boards should at least strengthen the "Think Family" ethos in which professionals consider the wider implications of an individual's needs in the context of risk implications for other members of their family.

He stated that he planned to visit all member agencies within the next 12 months to discuss further their role within the Board.

He emphasised that early intervention is paramount and said that the impact of preventative work is already being seen and must be maintained.

He informed the Panel that the Board had carried out a Schools Safeguarding Audit in October 2014. Early analysis of the self-assessments indicated that most schools are compliant with safeguarding requirements as detailed in Keeping Children Safe in Education (April 2014). However it is important that schools continue to prioritise early interventions, follow through with the CAF process, make referrals to the Council and prioritise multi-agency training for staff.

He said that the Board were looking to increase the involvement of children & young people within its work.

The Chair commented that she welcomed the report and its focus on good governance. She did however feel that it lacked in stating any milestones or

outcomes that it wished to achieve, she also felt the structure was not accessible. She asked if the agencies involved sent a high level representative.

Reg Pengelly replied that a senior level representative is required to attend meetings of the Board.

Councillor Matt Cochrane asked if the lack of primary and secondary head teachers attending the LSCB was a temporary issue or something that the Panel could help encourage.

Reg Pengelly replied that the LSCB had recently recruited both a primary and secondary head teacher to join the LSCB and they attended the June 2015 meeting.

Chris Batten asked if any further comment could be made regarding the rise in Looked After Children as stated on page 13 of the report.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that a peak can now be seen for young people aged 14 – 16. He added that in some cases this had led to early adoption of children.

The Chair said that she welcomed the early interventions focus and asked how first referrals were made.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that the primary source of referrals was via the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). He added that last year around 500 CAFs were completed with only 8 – 10% of those turning into referrals. He said that most were resolved through early intervention.

Reg Pengelly said that with regard to the report structure that Ofsted are quite constrictive over this. He added that the intention would be to make subsequent reports have more of a focus on what was new and the difference that had been made, but that the level of detail in the report set the legal and local context.

The Chair said that she welcomed the fact that Mr Pengelly was now the Chair of both the LSCB and LSAB. She asked how many children were living with carers who have mental health needs.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that he believed through data from the JSNA there were around 500 families identified with mental health needs, domestic violence or substance abuse.

Reg Pengelly added that a serious case review had not been required in the past three years.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what financial assurances were there that the Board could continue to carry out its work.

Reg Pengelly replied that there was an historical under spend within the Board.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance added that the risk register that is about to be developed will look at the financial arrangements of the Board.

The Chair asked if profile data was available.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that it is available and has been shared at previous meetings. He added that CSE is at the centre of the majority of our work.

The Chair asked if the Board were satisfied that enough support was available to victims of CSE.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that it was and added that the Council has signed up to a Barnados project for counselling and support.

The Chair asked if the Board were aware of the IRO concerns with regard to care planning arrangements.

Reg Pengelly replied that they were aware.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the Panel could see the results of the schools audit that was carried out by the Board.

Reg Pengelly replied that he would be happy to share that information with the Panel.

The Chair asked if any bodies were not taking up the offer of training and development.

Reg Pengelly replied that a Section 11 Audit has taken place and that there is a national framework for achieving the correct training. He added that the Board do monitor and challenge how training is delivered. He said that the Board also actively learn from Serious Case Reviews when they take place across the country.

The Chair asked if the work of the Policy, Procedure and Performance sub-group (PPPG) has had a positive impact on the Board.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that the sub-group has further developed data and performance reporting and scrutiny, to support the identification of children and young people who may be at risk of specific harm and evidenced the LSCB's impact and pro-activity.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance added that multi-agency audits take place to analyse procedures and that the board are looking to gain further feedback on this in the future.

The Chair asked how the Council tracks families that we have concerns about.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that families are not obliged to notify us if they move authorities. He added that this is one area where early help work should be advocated.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how we monitor children who are placed 'At Distance'.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that some children are placed in special residential schools and some with relatives who live outside the area.

Councillor Alison Millar asked if B&NES remained responsible for those children.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that they do until any court proceedings are complete. He added that keeping the same social worker was key in these cases in spite of some of the distances.

The Chair asked if any further information could be given as to why just under 25% of case conferences were not convened in accordance with the procedures.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services replied that this can be due to school holidays and a judgement is required on what information is available. He added that in most cases officers would want to share their report with the family before a conference took place.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance added that if there are any delay to a conference that work with the family would remain ongoing, families are not left unsupported.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she was pleased to see that the Board was monitoring the outcomes for Looked After Children as she was concerned over their potential to enter the justice system. She added that she had read recently that 61% of girls that had entered the justice system had been in care.

Councillor Alison Millar asked what constitutes a private fostering arrangement.

Reg Pengelly replied that this is when a child is being looked after by somebody outside of the family. He added that should this arrangement last longer than 28 days then it must be registered with the Council. He said that knowledge about the duty to register was not widely known.

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services added that leaflets have been issued to schools, nurseries etc. on this matter and an article was within this month's Council Connect magazine.

The Chair concluded the debate by commending the work of the LSCB and thanking Reg Pengelly for attending the meeting.

10 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that the report sought to raise awareness of the work of the IRO service as part of the array of services to children, young people and families provided by the Council and to provide assurance that the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities are reviewed and monitored.

She highlighted to the Panel the steady improvement that had been made on the timeliness of reviews since 2009/2010 when it was 55%. Figures for 2014 / 15

showed 96.8% in Quarter 1, 96.4% in Quarter 2, 95.8% in Quarter 3 and 93.3% Quarter 4.

She stated that participation and feedback from children and young people was strongly encouraged.

Councillor Liz Hardman said that she had noted the increase in the number of BME children in care.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance replied that this does require further interrogation.

Edward Joseph asked if the recent cuts had had an effect on the number of children being placed in care.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance replied that early help measures may be part of the reason for the reduction in numbers and this would require ongoing scrutiny before knowing if this was a direct cause.

Councillor Matt Cochrane asked whether there were specific reasons that we struggle to fill the full roster of IROs and whether the Panel could help fill this quota.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance replied that this is an issue throughout the South West as the role requires a great deal of experience.

Edward Joseph commented that he was pleased to hear that feedback from children was listened to.

The Chair asked for the requirement for IROs to have independent legal advice through the Local Authority to be arranged within the next six months. She added that she also supported the view stated in paragraph 6.2 of the report regarding the Permanence Panel that *'The IROs will have useful information to contribute to some case discussions and would welcome being invited to contribute by whatever means are most helpful'*.

The Divisional Director for Children, Young People, Specialist Services asked if this would be through a physical presence or a mechanism to contribute.

The Chair replied that a mechanism would suffice. She also asked for a review in six months' time of the new challenge process.

Edward Joseph asked how will young people become enabled to feel confident to make complaints.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance replied that they support all children and young people to complain and are looking to improve how children and young people understand what outcomes children want from a complaint.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked when more information relating to the BME children in care figures could be shared.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance replied that a 6 monthly update IRO report was due to be completed for the six month period ending in September and efforts will be made to address this issue therein September.

Councillor Alison Millar asked to be updated on the number of missing care plans.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance replied that progress has been made on this area and all should now be up to date.

The Panel noted the report.

11 CARE LEAVERS SUPPORT UPDATE

The Divisional Director for Children, Young People, Specialist Services introduced this item to the Panel. He said that B&NES offers a good package of support to its young people.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the Panel could receive a progress report on NEETs in September.

The Divisional Director for Children, Young People, Specialist Services replied that the Council was in touch with a high number of young people and that there will always be a difficult cohort to work with. He added that the service will always look to improve its figures.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what was meant by the term 'In touch'.

The Divisional Director for Children, Young People, Specialist Services replied that it was a very broad term and that a range of mechanisms can be used including social media. He said that he was aware of one particular case that used text messages a great deal.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what happens regarding the 39% that are not accounted for.

The Divisional Director for Children, Young People, Specialist Services replied that some young people will declare that they have a job or in receipt of training when they are not.

Edward Joseph asked if there was any correlation to be made between the figures for young people 'Not in touch' and for young people in unsuitable accommodation.

The Divisional Director for Children, Young People, Specialist Services replied that it was reasonable to suspect that such a correlation exists.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance said that they would look to see if any of those figures could be matched up.

12 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Divisional Director for Children & Young People, Specialist Services gave a presentation to the Panel at the beginning of this item to show the range of work areas covered by Children's Services, a summary is set out below.

Children's Social Care Services
Youth Offending Service
Youth Connect, Connecting Families
Early Years and Children's Centres
Education-related Services
Commissioning and Planning
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

He informed them that 92% of Children in Care attended a good / outstanding school.

The Local Picture

- Total young person population of 38,000 (0-19yrs)
- Child Protection Plans - 123
- Looked After Children - 141
- Children in Need - 634

Keeping Children Safe is Everybody's Business

- Children's Safeguarding is one of the key duties for Local Authorities.
- It is high profile. Service failure in this area represents major reputational risk.
- Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). This holds all responsible organisations to account for children's safeguarding.

Current Issues for Children's Services

- Child Sexual Exploitation and children "missing"
- Safeguarding Adolescents in the on-line/24-7 world
- The importance of 'Early Help'. (Nationally, for every £4 spent on safeguarding, only £1 is spent on early help)
- Ofsted Inspection and its fitness for purpose
- Partnership working in times of austerity
- School system planning and coherence
- SEND Reform – implications

Councillor Karen Warrington asked if the slides could be saved onto the Councillor's dashboard.

The Chair stated that she was hoping to theme future meetings where possible.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked for an update on Children's Centres prior to May 2016 as proposed on the workplan.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance asked for the Annual Report on Children's Services Compliments and Complaints 2014-15 and Care Bill -

Implications for Children report to be received by the Panel in either September or November 2015.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked the Chair to consider alternating the times of the meetings.

The Chair said that she would consider this proposal for future meetings.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services