

## **Lancashire County Council**

### **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

#### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 13th January, 2021 at 10.30 am in Skype Virtual Meeting**

##### **Present:**

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

##### **County Councillors**

L Beavers	A Gardiner
Mrs S Charles	J Mein
A Cheetham	E Nash
S Clarke	J Potter
M Dad	J Purcell
B Dawson MBE	M Salter
J Eaton BEM	P Steen

##### **Co-opted members**

County Councillors Lorraine Beavers and Bernard Dawson replaced County Councillors Nikki Hennessy and Sobia Malik respectively for this meeting.

Stephen Whittaker attended in place of Dr Sam Johnson.

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from County Councillor David Smith, Mrs Janet Hamid and Simon Smith.

#### **2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

County Councillor Peter Steen declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a governor of Bacup Maintained Nursery.

County Councillor Jennifer Mein declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a governor at Ribbleson Avenue Infant School, St. Ignatius Primary School and Preston College.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020**

**Resolved:** The minutes from the meeting held on 16 December 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

### **4. Shaping the future of multi-agency Early Help in Lancashire**

The Committee received a presentation and update from Sarah Callaghan, Director of Education and Skills, and, Debbie Duffell, Head of Service Early Help, Children and Family Wellbeing on the Early Help Offer for Lancashire informing Members that Early Help meant providing support as soon as a problem emerged, at any point of a child's life from the foundation years to the teenage years. Early Help could also prevent further problems arising.

It was noted that the model of Early Help delivered by Lancashire County Council strengthened the focus on outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families by prioritising children and families with the most needs. It delivered an Early Help offer for families across the county in neighbourhoods, multi-agency support teams around schools and family support at home. It ensured that the Early Help Service offer aligned with education provision at a locality basis recognising that most children accessed childcare and went to school. It complemented the Family Safeguarding model and other joint working opportunities.

It was noted that in terms of delivering Early Help to children, young people and families it was vital for them to have access to provision of the right support, at the right level at the right time. Regarding Family Intensive Support which was about responding to families with more complex needs and where there were developing risks for children, a lot of resources had been put aside for this.

It was noted that Lancashire County Council did things well in terms of delivering Early Help Support. The county council had been able to demonstrate the impact that its Early Help offer had made through its engagement with the national Troubled Families Programme.

It was noted that there was a key focus on ensuring Lancashire County Council worked alongside colleagues in delivering the new Family Safeguarding Model in Lancashire. There was a workforce development programme in place to improve practice in Early Help and align practitioners with the Family Safeguarding Model. The development programme would also strengthen Early Help Partnership arrangements.

Members were informed that the team would establish joint management oversight arrangements with social care for the new service arrangements. The Early Help Partnership strategy would be reviewed and updated based on the Early Help remodelling, Family Safeguarding Model and Early Years Strategy. The team would embed the closer support for school approach, delivering early

intervention pathways. The remodelling and audit action plans would be implemented including a new Quality Assurance and Performance Framework.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- There was concern over what the impact Covid-19 had been in terms of family breakdown, domestic violence and mental health issues. The committee enquired if Lancashire County Council had front loaded resources to try and meet the steep increase in demand regarding these issues. It was noted that since the pandemic these issues had been exacerbated. There had been increased referrals regarding home education and vulnerable families had become more vulnerable. The team had moved Early Help Partnership Officers into school improvement. The Early Help Team was in the process of recruiting two Children's Champions, one for primary schools and one for secondary schools. The team met weekly with health colleagues and education teams so that the right services were in place to support families. More resources would be put into Early Help particularly around children with Special Educational Needs.
- There had been a lot of changes to how the Early Help Team delivered support to children, young people and families. A lot of support provision had now been moved onto digital platforms but it was noted that face to face family support was still maintained.
- The Early Help Team must support its partners in order to support their growth of capacity and confidence to deliver Early Help.
- The committee was informed that there were various ways for identifying when Early Help was needed. One way was through referrals from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The MASH considered what the Early Help needs were and what level of support was needed. Once the decision was made the MASH would send the family the right service for support. Another pathway into Early Help was through district social care teams. There was a pathway for children and families to come out of statutory services and come to Early Help. There was also a pathway where families could refer themselves. There were 24 neighbourhood centres still open in Lancashire where people could walk into and ask for support. The Early Help Team was a consent based service. There was a request for a flowchart showing what pathways were being used by families.
- It was noted that the Troubled Families Programme was due to end in March 2021. Members were informed that the programme was a success. The Government still wanted to invest in it and it would be extended for another year. The Lancashire Early Help Service was responsible for the delivery of the programme.
- It was noted that the Troubled Families Programme was a payment by results model and the Early Help Service could only secure investment if it was able to demonstrate the impact it was having. The implementation of the new service model was not reliant on the Troubled Families Programme income.

- The Children and Family Wellbeing's budget was made up of a contribution from the local authority and a contribution from Public Health Grants. The service was in a sustainable position. The service had a finite resource and there was a limit to what capacity it could deliver.
- There was concern around Elective Home Education and the committee enquired what Lancashire County Council was doing to lobby Government to change the rules to ensure children and young people were being properly educated. The service got monthly updates on the number of people being home educated. These people were also refined by other vulnerable factors like being eligible for Early Help, free school meals, did they have an Education Health and Care Plan or were they on Child Protection. The local authority had to visit the families within six weeks of starting Elective Home Education to make sure they were receiving their education entitlement. The service was looking at Elective Home Education with regards to vulnerable groups and was revising its protocol.
- The committee was pleased that Lancashire County Council was using good practice from other authorities.

**Resolved:** The Education and Children's Services Committee noted the update report on the Early Help offer for Lancashire.

## **5. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021**

The Committee received a report which provided information on the single combined work programme drafted for all of the Lancashire County Council scrutiny committees.

The meeting on 9 February would focus on the Early Years Sector regarding the impact on private providers supporting vulnerable children and families, including an update on the Early Years Strategy and School Improvement Model. There was a request for the funding pressures on the Early Years Sector to be included. There would also be an update on the recommendations from the Schools Causing Concern Task Group.

A special meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee had been arranged for Tuesday 2 February at 2:00pm to receive a briefing from West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group, Southport and Formby CCG and Southport & Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust on their Shaping Care Together Programme and the transformation of hospital and community services provided to children in West Lancashire and Sefton.

**Resolved:** That the work plan presented be noted.

## **6. Urgent Business**

There was no Urgent Business.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next virtual meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee would take place on Tuesday 9 February 2021 at 10.30am.

L Sales  
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall  
Preston