

Lancashire County Council

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 7th September, 2016 at 4.30 pm
in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston**

Present:

County Councillor Gina Dowding (Chair)

County Councillors

Mrs S Charles	D T Smith
D Lord	C Dereli
G Gooch	J Gibson
M Otter	A Cheetham
M Dad	S Pryn

Co-opted members

Terri Hacking, Burnley and Pendle Children's
Partnership Board

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Alice Marquis-Carr, Debra Wilson, Elaine Shinks, Micah Bimson and County Councillors Dr Misfar Hassan and Lorraine Beavers.

The Chair welcomed the following presenting officers to the Committee:
Jane Booth, Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board
Louise Taylor, Corporate Director, Operations and Delivery
Barbara Bath, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Residential YOT

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interest in relation to matters appearing on the agenda.

3. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

Resolved: The Committee noted the appointment by Full Council on 26 May 2016 of County Councillor Gina Dowding as Chair and County Councillor Susie Charles as Deputy Chair for the following municipal year.

4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference

The Committee were presented with a report which set out the constitution, membership and terms of reference of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2016/17.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

5. Minutes from the meeting held on 20 April 2016

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on the 20 April 2016 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the chair.

6. Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board - Annual Report

Jane Booth, Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), presented the Committee with the Annual Report for 2015/16 which set out the priorities for the LSCB and areas identified for future work.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment and raise questions and a summary of the discussion is set out below:

A query was raised in relation to data around dentistry. It was confirmed that there was a statutory requirement for health assessments which included dentistry for looked after children and performance data from these health assessments was received at each Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) meeting. Committee members noted a request for further information on the monitoring of the uptake of the dentistry service for children and young people and in particular for looked after children.

Members were informed that in relation to interfamilial sexual abuse, a task and finish group has been established to look at data available from child protection plans and initiatives. In addition, the types of referrals and numbers of cases supported through Early Help was being considered along with the provision of training. The task and finish group would be reporting back recommendations to the Board in the New Year and it was also identified to organise an awareness raising campaign once this work had been completed.

The Committee were advised that, as a response to the recent Ofsted inspection, a review had taken place which identified the following:

- Adoption of a new approach to audit with the implementation of three virtual audit teams in three localities. In addition, there were plans in place to hold a number of multi-agency audits per year.
- A full multi-agency data set was confirmed to be in place and a Quality Assurance group established reporting to the Board.
- Further strengthening of the routine Section 11 audit (safeguarding) and enhancement to the challenge of those audits which would be done every third year to challenge evidence from the self-assessments.

It was confirmed that there was a national requirement for notification on female genital mutilation cases. This area of work linked to community engagement and there continued to be a need to engage better with communities to support this area of work.

There were reported to be ongoing concerns around Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The Health and Wellbeing Board had previously agreed to review the service but the Committee was advised that a wider national review of this service was underway. Members were reassured that the LSCB were continuing to receive updates on this service.

It was reported that as part of the Pan Lancashire review on mental health, there was a task group set up to look at vulnerable children and their different needs. It was suggested that there was a need for investment in research or alternative therapies to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or medication currently available.

Resolved: The Committee:

- i. Considered and commented on the content of the Annual Report and identified actions to take.
- ii. At the January 2017 meeting, consider what information to be received around children and young people's health for the meeting in April.

7. Fostering and Adoption

Barbara Bath, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Residential YOT presented the Committee with a report detailing the background to the Fostering and Adoption Service.

The report outlined the services delivered by Fostering and Adoption in Lancashire and provided information on the challenges faced by the service.

The most significant challenges continued to be the sufficiency of foster carers and the adoption of the more challenging to place children.

Committee members were advised that the marketing to support foster carers recruitment would benefit from a review from this Committee to identify other potential resources which could be used and how the influence of the Committee could support the marketing and promotion of foster caring.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment and raise questions and a summary of the discussion is set out below:

Members were informed that on average, people think about becoming a foster carer for two years before proceeding to the application process. In addition, previous marketing for foster carers was viewed to be more of a job advertisement rather than vocation but it was confirmed that this has now been revised in light of this feedback.

A query was raised on Activity Days and it was confirmed that although these are not running currently in Lancashire there are regional days continuing which Lancashire County Council (LCC) is linked into. In addition, the Adoption 22 group were reported to be organising a combined day at Preston North End for adopters and children to meet which was also being linked into.

Fostering teenagers continued to be a challenge. Workshops have been run within the fostering service for existing foster carers rather than as a recruitment exercise which was well received and remains a focus area.

It was confirmed that in BME communities, the proportion of foster carers and looked after children is reflective but this also continues to be an area of focus.

In relation to the issues around recruitment of foster carers, it was highlighted that the Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) have significantly better resources around the marketing of services to enable more recruitment of foster carers. It was also reported that they market an offer of better support although access to support is actually comparable to what is offered by LCC. But due to a lack of sufficient foster carers within the local authority, LCC are then required to buy in services from the IFA's where the costs are significantly higher.

A query was raised on the difference in payments from local authorities and IFA's to foster carers and members were advised that although agency foster carers receive an increased weekly rate, this was the only payment received. Whereas local authority foster carers were reported to receive additional payments for birthdays, holidays, Christmas etc. which assisted in narrowing the pay gap.

Members were informed that the numbers of children coming into care has increased which has further implications on number of foster carers needed. It was suggested that it may be of benefit to look at this situation in different ways by identifying additional support requirements such as a respite model or where there are those who would like to become a foster carer but unable to do so on a full time basis to agree to work and support young people to stay with family.

Resolved: The Committee:

- i. Considered and agreed areas for review within the Fostering and Adoption Service
- ii. Confirmed work to be completed by the sub groups on the marketing of foster carer recruitment and to review possible complementary services such as a respite model
- iii. To confirm nominations for the sub groups with Wendy Broadley

8. Youth Offending Team - Sub Group Update

The Committee were presented with the final draft report of the YOT sub group.

Resolved: The Committee approved the recommendations outlined in the YOT sub group report – scrutiny spotlight review.

9. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Sub Group Update

County Councillor Susie Charles provided the Committee with a verbal update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) sub group progress.

A SEND Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 work plan had been formulated outlining the areas of focus for SEND in relation to the MCA over the next 12 months. A working group has been established with the first meeting planned for 26 September 2016. Anita Lindon, Mental Capacity Act Coordinator, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Team, Lancashire County Council was reported to be a member of the working group and would be able to advise and guide the work undertaken.

SEND have agreed to provide a copy of the updated work plan to the SEND sub group following each working group meeting along with copies of any other relevant documents related to this area of work. As part of the working group, SEND would make enquiries as to the progress of other local authorities in relation to the implementation of the MCA within SEND services enabling developments and process to be compared.

Resolved: The Committee noted that a further update will be provided to the January meeting and subsequently on a quarterly basis until the review is concluded.

10. Update from the Chair

County Councillors Gina Dowding and Susie Charles reported to the Committee that they have met with County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson who has confirmed that he would be looking to attend future meetings.

There was reported to be considerable changes to the Child Sexual Exploitation staffing as a result of an internal review which highlighted a need for more staff.

Louise Taylor, Corporate Director for Operations and Delivery, confirmed that although this area of work was not highlighted in the Ofsted report, it was felt this was required from looking at national best practice and the growing level of concern in this area.

11. Work Plan

Wendy Broadley, Scrutiny Officer, presented the Committee with the work plan which included the sub group work undertaken.

Resolved: The Committee commented and noted the report.

12. Recent and Forthcoming Decisions

The Committee's attention was drawn to forthcoming decisions and decisions recently made by the Cabinet and individual Cabinet Members in areas relevant

to the remit of the Committee, in order that this could inform possible future areas of work.

Resolved: Committee noted the report.

13. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business declared.

14. Date of the Next Meeting

Next meeting of the Committee to take place on the 18 January 2017 at 4.30pm, Cabinet Room C, County Hall, Preston.

I Young
Director of Governance, Finance
and Public Services

County Hall
Preston