

Lancashire County Council

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 18th October, 2017 at 2.00 pm
in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston**

Present:

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

County Councillors

N Hennessy	H Khan
I Brown	J Potter
A Cheetham	J Rear
J Cooney	D T Smith
B Dawson	P Steen

Co-opted members

Councillor Zara Khan, Children's Partnership Board -
Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancs

County Councillors Bernard Dawson, John Potter and Peter Steen replaced Loraine Cox, David Howarth and Andrew Gardiner respectively.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Co-optee non-voting members Gail Goodman, Children's Partnership Board Fylde, Wyre and Lancashire North; and Stella Brunskill, Children's Partnership Board, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley and Rossendale.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes from the meeting held on 6 September 2017

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on the 6 September be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Tracking of Care Leavers - Overview of New Process

The Chair welcomed Audrey Swann, Head of Education for Looked After Children, to the meeting.

The report presented explained that it was the Local Authority's responsibility as corporate parents to support Lancashire's children looked after (CLA) and Care Leavers, and to enable them to become independent and successful adults. A key element of this was access to education and training that would lead to positive outcomes. A review of the current offer of support was in process to develop more effective systems and practices.

Regarding persons who were coming up to 18 and had been in care all their lives, Members enquired if the Council was encouraging them to aim high and pursue university once leaving school. Of the 171 school leavers a high proportion of these had only been in care a short time. Those who came into care late, appeared to do less well educationally. There was around 35 young persons in university at the moment. Each young person who entered higher education was allocated a bursary of £2000 over 3 years from the Council. It was reported that the Council had a commitment to support a person in care, who went to university up to the age of 25.

It was noted that when children in care moved or dropped out, the Council faced a number of challenges in getting those young people back into education as quickly as possible.

The Council had a duty to utilise the statutory Personal Education Plan process and meetings to identify reasons why a child in care was not thriving in school. Those involved in every PEP meeting included the social worker, carer and the school.

The Committee was informed that connections had been established with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) through the Employment Support Team to aid care leavers with employability, skills and apprenticeships. The Employment Support Team had been working individually with young people who had been referred to them and that a case worker would be assigned to a young person. The Team had also established contacts with businesses and job centres. In addition to this, opportunities were provided for care leavers to work for the Council.

The Committee was informed that County Councillor Andrea Kay, Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee and County Councillor Ian Brown, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board were developing a pilot scheme in the Wyre District looking at alternative pathways to support children looked after and aid their aspirations, liaising with the armed forces, the police, the fire and rescue service, Fleetwood Town football club and the YMCA to see how apprenticeship opportunities can be formulated for them.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted.
- ii. Committee members identify potential opportunities in their own divisions/district to increase supported employment and training for children looked after and care leavers across Lancashire.

5. Homelessness Protocol and Supported Accommodation

The Chair welcomed Tracy Poole-Nandy, Head of Service Children's Social Care – Central, to the meeting.

The report presented explained that the homelessness protocol for children aged 16 – 17 years was aimed to support and enable children considered to be homeless to secure appropriate assessment and accommodation. The protocol was established to ensure a streamlined process to assess and meet the needs between housing and social care.

Supported accommodation was a separate area of need which was currently included with the homelessness protocol for children aged 16 – 17 years in an attempt to support the transition of children into adulthood and independence. Support thereafter was however only provided to children who had been looked after or were relevant by means of leaving care legislation. A presentation was delivered to the Committee, a copy of which is set out in the minutes.

There was a statement of commitment to all Lancashire's children to make them feel safe, to do well, to be happy, to be healthy and to be listened to.

The Committee was informed that the needs of the children were being met in terms of providing beds and accommodation. It was explained that bed and breakfast accommodation could not be used to accommodate young people under the age of 18, even in emergency situations, and that alternative arrangements must be sought from housing partners via the Emergency Duty Department.

Regarding cross border children residing in Lancashire, it was reported that they were the responsibility of the home authority and not this Council. However, if a child had come to significant harm whilst residing in Lancashire, it was this Council's statutory responsibility to investigate such an incident.

Members enquired how the new protocol was monitored and how its success would be measured. It was reported that regular multi-agency meetings were held to ensure accountability. District Councils were very much on board from a housing perspective. Success would be measured through feedback from the districts and partner agencies. It was noted that about 40 young people had been rehomed this year and that feedback from these cases in relation to the new protocol was very positive.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2017/18

The work plan for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the 2017/18 year was presented. The topics included were identified at the work planning workshop held on 21 June 2017.

It was reported that the task and finish group on Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions had been agreed by the Internal Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2017.

County Councillor Hasina Khan raised a number of points in relation to the recent publication of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report and requested for this to be added to the work plan.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted; and
- ii. Consideration be given for the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report to be added to the Committee's work plan in relation to the points as raised by County Councillor Hasina Khan.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will take place on Wednesday 6 December at 2:00pm in Cabinet Room C (The Duke of Lancaster Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

I Young
Director of Governance, Finance
and Public Services

County Hall
Preston