

Lancashire County Council

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 14th March, 2018 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

County Councillors

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| I Brown | H Khan |
| A Cheetham | J Parr |
| L Cox | J Rear |
| A Gardiner | D T Smith |

Co-opted members

Councillor Stella Brunskill, Children's Partnership Board - Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Rossendale

County Councillor Jean Parr replaced County Councillor Nikki Hennessy for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Joe Cooney and David Howarth; and Councillors Gail Goodman and Zara Khan.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes from the meeting held on 31 January 2018

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on the 31 January 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Children's Services Inspection and Review

The Chair welcomed John Readman, Interim Executive Director of Education and Children's Services; Debbie Duffell, Head of Children and Family Wellbeing Service; Grant Murdoch, Subject Matter Expert (Children) Programme Office;

Victoria Gent, Head of Service Children's Social Care – East; Halima Sadia, Social Worker; Lisa Sowden, Children Social Care Team Manager - East; and Wenda Tyrer, WPEH Team Leader, Children and Family Wellbeing Service – Lancaster District; to the meeting.

The report presented highlighted the key findings of a range of inspections that had taken place in Children's Services in the last year. It gave an overview of strengths and areas of developments. It also delineated governance structures and plans in place to support effective improvement going forward.

Since February 2017 there had been 13 different external inspections or reviews of Children's Services. There had been 4 monitoring visits by Ofsted, 2 looking at services for children looked after, 1 at Children in Need and 1 looking at the multi-agency safeguarding hub arrangements.

The Committee was informed that from April 2017 to February 2018 the Children and Family Wellbeing Service had supported 5,087 families made up of around 15,417 children and young people. Children's Social Care dealt with 1,908 Children in Need, 1,314 children subject to a child protection plan, and 1,949 Children Looked After. Also there was around 90 children open to the leaving care service. Other key service areas were the Fostering Adoption Residential Service, the Youth Offending Service, and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Service.

Regarding rural areas Members Were informed that the Children and Family Wellbeing resources were deployed around all districts in the County including the rural areas. There was also an outreach model for rural areas. The Team also worked very closely with colleagues in Children's Social Care and was looking to integrate those resources.

It was reported that there were ongoing challenges around recruitment and retention of social workers. Campaigns were in place around recruitment and was definitely improving. It was confirmed that a robust recruitment and retention strategy was in place in Children's Social Care. Regarding retention of children's social workers, the average length of retention fluctuated across the County. It was highlighted that there was a number of support mechanisms in place for retention of staff and advanced practitioners in place to work alongside staff on more complex issues.

After feedback from Ofsted the Committee was informed that police referrals were still very high. The Police were working closely with LCC around their part in child protection.

On the Improvement Plan it was noted that one of the areas, 'to develop and implement a delivery plan for the Residential Strategy and edge of care response', was delayed in its progress due to delays in building works. At its March meeting Cabinet approved additional capital investment to complete the building works.

Members were informed that the next Ofsted inspection would be a four week full inspection potentially sometime between May 2018 and July 2018.

It was acknowledged that the quality of work had improved and this was having a positive impact on the children. Also work with Education had improved greatly.

Resolved: That the;

- i. Report presented be noted
- ii. A quarterly briefing note on improvement activity and impact be received.

5. Forced Marriage

Victoria Gent, Head of Service Children's Social Care – East; and Lisa Sowden, Children Social Care Team Manager – East, presented a report considering the national and local picture in relation to forced marriage.

It was pointed out to the Committee that forced marriage was a very small percentage of the work done in Children's Social Care and currently the majority of cases of forced marriage fell within East Lancashire.

There were good legal frameworks in place that the Team could utilise as a Local Authority to safeguard children and young people at risk of forced marriage.

Regarding the national picture there was a joint Foreign Office and Home Office funded team that supported services within and outside the UK in regards to forced marriage. This was the Forced Marriage Protection Unit and it was very helpful with the Children's Services Social Care Team. In terms of where cases originated from on a national level, around a quarter of them originated from the North West. There was a reduction in the number of notifications nationally and this was replicated in the number of applications the Team had made for orders as a Local Authority. In the last two years Lancashire had received 17 Forced Marriage Protection Orders.

Members were advised that children and young people were also supported through Child in Need Plans and Child Protection Plans. If the risks were very high, the children could enter the care of the Local Authority in order to safeguard them.

Regarding the monitoring of cases, children and young people were monitored via whatever process they were in at that current time, i.e. a Child in Need Plan, a Child Protection Plan or a Child Looked After. In addition there was ongoing monitoring through the police.

As the majority of case occurred in the east of the County, it was reported that there were incidences where families had crossed borders but when this happened LCC would notify the relevant authority. There was a protocol and

procedure in place in how to hand the work over to the neighbouring authority. Multi-agency working and working with other local authorities had improved greatly.

Members stated that more emphasis should be placed on education and working with secondary schools. There was a strong School Safeguarding Team in place that was working strongly with both primary and secondary schools.

Resolved: That the;

- i. Report presented be noted; and
- ii. A briefing note be provided annually on Forced Marriage.

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

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

The April meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee would be a joint meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee on SEND following the Ofsted joint local area review.

A SEND workshop had been confirmed for 15 May. The workshop would include a full breakdown of the review process and would include representation from health, schools and SEND officers.

There would be a Bite Size Briefing on Teen Suicide on 30 April.

Regarding the Committee meeting on 22 May the topic of Children's Partnership Boards would be moved back to a later date. In its place, Domestic Abuse would be on the agenda. There would also be an update report on Troubled Families.

The Committee was update on the progress of the '**Supporting Pupils in School with Medical Conditions**' Task Group. The group had met on 7 March with head teachers, representatives from CCGs and parents. The group was planning to meet them again in early May.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report and comments be noted.
- ii. The topics to be considered at the next scheduled meeting be confirmed.

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 11 April at 2:00pm in Cabinet Room C (The Duke of Lancaster Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston