

Lancashire County Council

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 16th January, 2019 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	J Mein
I Brown	E Nash
A Cheetham	D T Smith
A Gardiner	P Steen
Ms S Malik	M Tomlinson

Co-opted members

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

County Councillors Edward Nash psc and Peter Steen replaced County Councillors Joe Cooney and Jayne Rear respectively.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor Paul V Greenall.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes from the meeting held on 5 December 2018

It was noted that County Councillor Matthew Salter replacing County Councillor Anne Cheetham had not been included in the minutes as well as apologies from Councillor Zara Khan.

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on the 5 December 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Children's Services Social Work Academy

The Chair welcomed Sally Allen, Acting Director of Children's Social Care; Adil Valli, Social Worker; Steph Vickers, Social Worker; Lisa Gee, Advanced Practitioner; Rachel Rump, Business Manager; Lisa Sowden, Team Manager; and Nathan Kay, Practice Manager, to the meeting.

The report presented provided an overview of the Children's Services Social Work Academy, including the background to the Academy, content, evaluation and future plans.

The committee was informed that the Social Work Academy was established in 2017 with the purpose of equipping social workers with the knowledge and skills they need. The primary aim was to improve the quality of social work practice across Children's Services. The Academy provided a comprehensive induction and support programme for all new social workers in Children's Services and was part of the wider recruitment and retention strategy.

It was reported that the Academy included key induction training and mandatory courses as well as the supply of the tools and technology necessary for the role. There was a training package structured around the 'Journey of the Child' supporting positive engagement with children and their families. For newly qualified social workers there was support for development through their first year in practice.

Members were informed that the newly qualified social workers felt prepared and confident when going into practice and there was a peer support network from other newly qualified social workers. They also stated that they had time to complete their portfolio. The Academy gave an insight into multi-agency roles and responsibilities and ensured a consistent approach across Lancashire. Advanced Practitioners listened and responded to feedback regarding the Academy and had implemented some changes as a result.

It was highlighted that the Social Work Academy was highly valued by those who attended and there had been very positive feedback. Managers saw the difference in worker performance and confidence and social workers had the opportunity to have their voices heard by their managers.

The committee was delighted that the Social Work Academy had been established and the work undertaken around recruitment and retention to establish a more stable workforce. However it was identified that from the employee survey there had been good, positive feedback from Children's Services but there were still areas for improvement.

Members were informed that the Academy assisted with the learning of court work and court cases. Although court skills was not part of the two week induction, it was part of the wider workforce development offer that was for all staff within Children's Services. In addition, there was reported to be training being launched in February around legal procedures, specifically involving pre-proceedings.

Regarding vacancies, members were advised that the current vacancy rate was 3.7% and there were currently 41 full time equivalent agency social workers in place. It was highlighted that this was not just because of vacancies but due to sickness and maternity leave.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report presented be noted.
- ii. A quarterly briefing note on the vacancy rate be provided.

5. Children's Services Leadership Academy Report

The report presented provided an overview of the Children's Services Leadership Academy, including the background to the Academy, content, evaluation and future plans.

The Children's Services Leadership Academy was launched in April 2018 following the success of Social Work Academy and it hosted arrange of accredited and non-accredited development programmes. The purpose of the Academy was to ensure and embed effective consistent leadership at all levels of Children's Services. The focus was to develop managerial and leadership skills, knowledge and confidence that improved both personal and organisational performance and improved outcomes for children.

Members were advised that the Academy focused on developing practitioner resilience. It supported recruitment and retention, staff morale, and the health and wellbeing of the workforce.

It was reported that there had been excellent feedback for all courses hosted within the Leadership Academy. Knowledge, skills and confidence had increased significantly. Retention of practice managers and team managers had improved.

The committee was informed that there would be a full evaluation of the Leadership Academy taking place in April 2019. The evaluation would help shape the content of the Leadership Academy going forward and the Children's Services Workforce Strategy Board would discuss and agree the priorities for April 2019 onwards.

In addition, all staff in Children's Services were being prepared for the National Assessment and Accreditation Scheme and Learning and Development's role was to ensure practitioners and supervisors were ready and prepared for the assessment.

It was highlighted that councillor support for the Leadership Academy and the Social Work Academy was fully welcomed. Partnership working was imperative for meeting the needs of children and families and discussions on this were ongoing.

Resolved: That:

- i. The report presented be noted.
- ii. A briefing note to update members on the progress of the Children's Services Leadership Academy and the retention figures for 2018/19 be provided.

6. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2018/19

The work plan for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the 2018/19 municipal year was presented. The topics included were identified at the work planning workshop held on 10 July 2018.

Members were informed that the item on Teenage Suicide would be included on the agenda for the meeting on 27 February.

Regarding the proposed Bite Size Briefing on Child and Adult Mental Health Services, a request was made to include the progress of services as part of the briefing and for a date to be confirmed.

Members also highlighted the need to view the breakdown of Lancashire children looked (CLA) after placed outside of the county.

Resolved:

- i. That the report presented and comments be noted.
- ii. A date for the CAMHS briefing be set.
- iii. The briefing note on Lancashire CLA be circulated to members.

7. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee will take place on Wednesday 27 February 2019 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