

Lancashire County Council

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th January, 2020 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Nikki Hennessy (Chair)

County Councillors

I Brown	J Mein
A Cheetham	E Nash
B Dawson	J Purcell
J Eaton	P Steen
A Gardiner	M Tomlinson

Co-opted members

Oliver Moores, Youth Council Representative
Councillor Louise Edge, Children's Partnership Board -
Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Rossendale
Councillor Christine Melia, Children's Partnership
Board - Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancs

County Councillor Nikki Hennessy chaired the meeting in the absence of County Councillor Andrea Kay.

County Councillors Bernard Dawson, Edward Nash PSC and Jenny Purcell replaced County Councillors Lorraine Beavers, David Smith and Andrea Kay 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 9 October 2019

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on the 9 October 2019 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Permanence – Ofsted Focused Visit

The Chair welcomed Sharon Hubber, Director of Children's Social Care, to the meeting.

The report presented informed the committee that on the 4 November 2019, Ofsted had undertaken a two day focused visit to determine if Lancashire had improved their permanence offer to children and young people. This was not a graded visit but they had provided an overview of the direction of travel on the four recommendations made in 2018.

The outcome of the inspection was that Lancashire had enhanced both the provision and the systems to ensure permanence was seen as a priority for Looked after Children. There was further work to be undertaken but they could see that across the workforce, improvements had taken place.

After the inspection eleven recommendations were made to support Lancashire achieve a Good rating at future inspections. Of those, four recommendations that identified areas which required improvement were directly related to the permanence of children in the care of the local authority. The four areas for improvement were:

Assessments that were of a consistently good standard

Plans that provided detailed actions and timescales to measure progress

Timely and purposeful direct work with children to help them understand their plan

Management oversight that provided a clear rationale for permanence decisions and reduced drift and delay

It was noted that the inspectors had highlighted that there continued to be drift and delay in both revocation and in proceedings that lead to children waiting too long to know where they would be living in the future.

Members enquired what the period of time was between each review because there were concerns that there had to be a permanence plans available after the second review. They were informed that the first review was within fourteen days, the second review was twenty-eight days and the third review was three months.

The committee passed on its thanks to all the officers involved.

Resolved: That:

- i. The improvements detailed in the report be noted.
- ii. Review and support of the service be continued to ensure that all children and young people cared for by the county council are provided with the highest level of care and support.
- iii. The four areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted letter be noted and assurances sought on improvements.

- iv. The evidence of improvements included in the 'Getting to Good Plan' be presented to the committee in six months' time.

5. Neglect Strategy

The report presented provided an update to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on the implementation of the Neglect Strategy and the partnership working.

A refreshed Multi Agency Neglect Strategy was launched by the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board in April 2019. Consultation was undertaken in preparation for this review with key partner agencies and children and young people. The strategy set out what neglect was and the current picture in Lancashire. There were workshops taking place regarding the strategy and more work needed to be done. The strategy was ongoing constantly.

Four key priorities evolved through a partnership working group. These were:

1. Strategic commitment across all partner agencies
2. Improved awareness, understanding and recognition
3. Prevent neglect through early help
4. Improved effectiveness of interventions and reduced impact of neglect

Members felt positive that children were being educated in what neglect was and that children's views were being taken into account.

The committee was informed all front line health professionals that met with children and young people and families on a daily basis were fully trained in the Neglect Strategy Toolkit. However, there was a need to measure how many of these toolkits were being undertaken by these front line health professionals.

It was felt by members that the toolkit should be shared with school teachers as they met children and young people on a daily basis. They were informed that all education teachers had been involved in creating the toolkit and that education had been a part of the whole process. Schools were reported to be really receptive of the toolkit.

The committee enquired how Lancashire County Council worked across the borders with other CCGs. It was noted that there was a lot of joint working with other CCGs and the Children's Services Team was adept and confident about working across borders. Members were informed that county lines (complex safeguarding) remains a priority.

In terms of the Family Safeguarding Model, the Children's Services Team was working to make sure that an infrastructure was in place and awaiting for the Department for Education to confirm. The team was hoping to launch the model in October 2020.

A question was raised in relation to home schooling (Elective Home Education) numbers and how the Neglect Strategy feeds in. It was reported that the Education Scrutiny Committee has this on their work programme and will include Neglect Strategy.

It was highlighted that the voice of the child was really important in Lancashire and social workers were working very hard to make sure children and young people were getting the right services at the right time. There were many forums held in Lancashire where children and young people's voice could be heard.

A question was raised in relation to the reduction of members of the Youth Parliament in Youth Council and how this impacts on 'the voice of the child'. Further information was requested to clarify.

Resolved: That:

- i. The progress so far be reviewed.
- ii. Further work to be undertaken across all partners to ensure the Neglect Strategy is well embedded and making a difference be noted.
- iii. A request be made to Education Scrutiny Committee to include the Neglect Strategy as part of any discussions around Elective Home Education.

6. Child Poverty

The report presented provided the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee with a comprehensive presentation on the subject of child poverty.

The committee was informed of the disparity in levels of poverty in Lancashire. Preston was the most deprived and it bordered Ribble Valley which was in twenty percent of the most affluent areas in the country.

The committee received a presentation from Sharon Hubber, Director of Children's Services, on poverty and its impact on the child.

It was reported that there was often a lot of mental health issues with parents of children who were born into poverty. Children could and did overcome the financial and social environment into which they were born but often there were obstacles in their way including exposure to drug and alcohol problems, domestic violence, unemployment and mental health issues. All of this led to stressful environments and behaviours that could have a negative impact on their own mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Some children were born into large families where there were levels of disability. Some were also born into communities that were deprived areas and where there were gangs. It was highlighted that deprived areas had fewer shops and no green areas which led to health issues and an increased mortality rate. There were also fewer social organisations.

Regarding education, some children were not ready for school. Members felt it was vital to educate parents on how important it was for children to receive a good education.

The committee was informed that the Children's Services Team was working with families where three generations were unemployed and therefore those opportunities to see what work did for you were lost. Lancashire County Council had to be ambitious for every child in the county, not just those who did well at school.

It was important to influence change and Lancashire County Council had to be aspirational for all children in Lancashire. It had to encourage the increase of jobs and ensure that higher education was seen to be achievable. In addition, some members expressed concerns that funding was not being provided to those agencies which advise and support vulnerable people on money management.

It was stated that there should be a mix of learning to budget and people having enough money to budget with. People could not be expected to budget without enough money.

The committee enquired how Lancashire County Council could work with local authorities to create jobs in areas of poverty for young people. Also how could Lancashire County Council support parents to be aspirational to their children. Early Years and Early Help was vital for this. It was stated that the Family Safeguarding Model would be a good place to start for growing aspirations.

Resolved: That:

- i. The report presented be noted.
- ii. Specific topic areas for further scrutiny be identified.

7. Work Programme 2019/20

The work programme for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year was presented.

The topics included were identified at the work planning workshop held on 22 July 2019.

Regarding child poverty, it was agreed that the committee would look further into money management and the support from agencies along with the Family Safeguarding Model.

A Suicide Prevention update briefing note would be circulated to the committee members to include links to child poverty.

Regarding child poverty, the committee requested a briefing note on Holiday Hunger and Food Banks. A mapping exercise was suggested on Holiday Hunger

evidence finding. Pupil Premium Funding was also an area that could be considered.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report presented be noted.
- ii. A briefing note on Suicide Prevention be circulated to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.
- iii. A briefing note on Holiday Hunger and Food Banks be circulated to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee will take place on Wednesday 26 February 2020 at 10:30am in Cabinet Room 'C' (The Duke of Lancaster Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston