

Lancashire County Council

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 11th March, 2021 at 10.30 am in Teams Virtual Meeting - Teams

Present:

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

County Councillors

M Dad	J Mein
Mrs S Charles	E Nash
A Cheetham	J Potter
S Clarke	J Purcell
J Eaton BEM	M Salter
A Gardiner	D T Smith
N Hennessy	P Steen
S Malik	

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Janet Hamid, (Co-Optee Voting) Representing Parent Governors (Secondary).

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the special meeting held on 2 February 2021 and the ordinary meeting held on 9 February 2021

Resolved: The minutes from the special meeting held on 2 February 2021 and the ordinary meeting held on 9 February were confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Update on Family Safeguarding model

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Sharon Hubber, Director of Children's Social Care and Mandy Williams, Head of Service Family Safeguarding.

The report provided was a follow up report arising from the former Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 15th January 2020 when it considered a report on the Neglect Strategy. Lancashire County Council launched the new Family Safeguarding Model on the 11th February 2021. A

presentation was also provided to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee. A copy of which is set out in the minutes.

To support the implementation of the Model it was necessary to remodel the whole Children's Social Care Department. This took place on the 4th January 2021 allowing for the staff and management to be in place ready for the full launch on the 11th February. This was the date the evaluation of the Family Safeguarding Model began. The evaluation was being undertaken by 'The What Works Centre' who were commissioned by the Department of Education and would conclude in 2023.

The official launch took place on the 1st March. This was a virtual event that was opened by the leader of the county council with several speakers who were both external and internal. The purpose of the launch was to ensure all partners were aware of the implementation and provided staff with an opportunity to say how they felt to be in the new structure and what they were hoping to achieve.

During the presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The reason for implementing the new Family Safeguarding Model was that there was a rising number of children in care and care proceedings. Resources were largely spent on assessment and monitoring and change was not being achieved.
- It was important to have open and honest relationships with families.
- One of the key components of Family Safeguarding was keeping more children safe within their families.
- Multi-disciplinary teams were in place working together to support children and parents.
- There was a new computer system in place to reduce bureaucracy. This would allow social workers to spend more time with families and less time doing paperwork.
- Family Safeguarding Teams would have a team leader, a consultant social worker, 5 social workers, a child and family practitioner, a domestic abuse practitioner, either a mental health or substance misuse specialist and a team co-ordinator.
- For families the new Family Safeguarding Model would mean a reduction in repeat police call outs to domestic abuse incidents, a reduction in emergency hospital admissions for adults, a reduction in child protection plans, a reduction in care proceedings and an improvement in school attendance.
- Regarding the next steps, services would be delivered together to meet the needs of all family members.
- There would be a commitment from the partnership to keep families together safely and understanding the impacts of removal of children.
- There would be data sharing, and strong shared leadership and ownership across the partnership.

In response to questions and comments from members, the following information was clarified:

- There was concern over Lancashire County Council receiving notification of children who were in private care through other court orders from other local authorities. It was a legal mandate to inform the Executive Director in Lancashire if a child was placed in another authority. Last year Lancashire County Council wrote to every single local authority that had informed it they had children in the Lancashire area to offer help. The county council also informed local authorities about children it had placed with them.
- Members requested details of who the team leaders were for their areas so as they could contact them when issues arose. After the elections there would be awareness training on family safeguarding.
- The committee stated it was important to free up practitioners in order to spend more time with families. During the pandemic Lancashire County Council social workers had been very innovative in the way they had contacted families. Equipment had been provided to families so they could be contacted virtually. Garden visits had also taken place. Where there was concern staff were entering family homes with the proper protection. All county council social workers had been vaccinated early on.
- The Children's Social Care Team were able to support families that wanted to work with them in order for the family to remain together in a safe way.
- The committee was informed that there were 21 Family Safeguarding Teams across four areas of Lancashire looking at the needs in those areas. How need was managed in these geographical areas was being looked into. Family Safeguarding needed to be more community based and more accessible to families.
- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) made assessments of family situations before deciding if the Family Safeguarding Team needed to get involved.
- 15 staff in a team was financially achievable. Finance had been provided by the DfE and Lancashire County Council so that the number of social workers in the teams could be increased. There was a large recruitment campaign going on.
- Financially there would be differences to where money was spent. Cabinet had agreed to the change in how residential care would operate. The money would be used to create a different residential estate for the children of Lancashire.
- Regarding criteria for success, The Children's Social Care Team would like to see more children in Early Help and more children in Children in Need. This would show that the team was working with families in a more conversational, partnership way.
- The committee enquired about what was driving the increase in the demand for support. Poverty had a major impact on the work of social care and this had increased during the pandemic. Alcohol misuse, domestic abuse and mental health also contributed to demand.

- The question of how easy it was to predict where early intervention was needed. The Children's Social Team was now engaged with the private, voluntary and independent providers around the county's nurseries and Early Years sector to make sure children were school ready.
- In terms of domestic abuse, the team had undertaken motivational interview training and around 500 staff had completed this training at different levels. It was compulsory for staff to undertake this training. The Children's Social Team worked on the premise of how can it help keep the family together.
- Some of the domestic abuse workers were probation officers who already undertake domestic abuse perpetrator programmes.
- The Children's Social Team was engaging with Mental Health Services to try and persuade some of their staff to come out of clinician working and work in the community.

Resolved: That;

1. The progress of the Family Safeguarding Model and how the service would move forward following implementation be noted.
2. An update report be presented to the committee in six months.

5. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021

As this was the last scheduled meeting of the committee during this municipal year and current administrative term, the Chair proposed that the items currently listed on the work programme be considered for inclusion on the 2021/22 work programme by the new committee with responsibility for scrutinising education and children's services following the elections in May 2021.

Resolved: That the items currently listed on the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee's work programme be considered for inclusion on the 2021/2022 work programme by the new committee with responsibility for scrutinising education and children's services following the elections in May 2021.

6. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee would take place on Tuesday 8 June at 10.30am.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston