

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 5th December, 2014 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Bill Winlow (Chair)

County Councillors

A Barnes	A Schofield
C Crompton	J Shedwick
S Holgate	V Taylor
R Newman- Thompson	C Wakeford
Mrs L Oades	D Watts
C Pritchard	G Wilkins

County Councillors Steven Holgate and Alan Schofield replaced County Councillors Miles Parkinson and David O'Toole respectively.

The Scrutiny Committee invited County Councillors Margaret Brindle, Susie Charles, Fabian Craig-Wilson, Cynthia Dereli and Yousuf Motala to the meeting.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 November 2014

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board - Early Help Thematic Inspection Findings, LSCB Annual Report, Information-Sharing Pilot and Child Sexual Exploitation

The Chair welcomed Jane Booth, Independent Chair of the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB); Kathryn Grindrod, LSCB Business

Manager; Tony Morrissey, Head of Safeguarding Inspection and Audit; Bob Stott, Director for Universal and Early Support Services; County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools; and Detective Chief Inspector Tony Baxter to the meeting.

At the March 2014 meeting of the Scrutiny Committee members asked the Lancashire Safeguarding Board (LSCB) representatives to return to present a number of items when they became available. These items were:

1. LSCB Annual Report
2. Findings from a thematic practice inspection of Early Help Services
3. Update about the information-sharing pilot between the NHS and CYP Directorate.

In addition, the Scrutiny Committee had requested some information about work in Lancashire around the issue of child exploitation, and a report about this had also been provided.

The LSCB had a statutory responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of work undertaken by agencies to safeguard children in Lancashire. The LSCB Annual Report set out the work undertaken in this regard in Lancashire for the previous financial year up to end of March 2014. The report reflected the sheer volume of work across the county and the pressure member agencies were under.

The report set out key successes and also areas for development for all LSCB member agencies during the coming twelve months. The LSCB remained particularly concerned about services for children experiencing emotional and mental health issues. This issue had recently been presented to the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board and ongoing development work had been agreed. The LSCB would continue to work with partner agencies to address all areas for development identified in the Annual Report and Lancashire County Council was a key organisation in all this work.

One of the key areas for development and further analysis was continued awareness raising and analysis of the risks presented through use of the internet and social media. DCI Tony Baxter informed Members that an open day for schools had been held in November on how to manage internet risks. He explained that work was also being done through the E-Safety Group. Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board had produced an E-Safety Strategy which set out how effective E-Safety services would be provided in Lancashire.

Another key issue was engagement with private sector children's homes and the Committee was informed that the LSCB had held an event regarding this.

The LSCB also stated it was vital services targeted resources to areas where the needs were the greatest.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the LSCB Annual Report 2013/14, a summary of which is provided below:

- Members enquired about the level of engagement with further and higher education institutions. They were informed that the LSCB recognised that there was more work to be done in this area, though through sub-groups it did have contacts with further education establishments. Bob Stott, Director for Universal and Early Support Services, informed Members that he was meeting with all further education principals on 7 January and he would bring this awareness of safeguarding to them at this forum.
- Regarding the statement in the report "Abuse and neglect were clearly the most common reasons for children being looked after. As would be expected the more economically deprived districts had the highest rates", Members raised concerns about this statement, feeling it may reflect a stereotyped generalisation about certain areas, and could even prove to be counter-productive in terms of the attitudes towards such areas. The LSCB representatives advised the Committee that the reality was that vulnerabilities cluster and there were more children on a child protection plan as a result of concerns about neglect in these areas of the highest deprivation, but recognised that the language used should have been clearer and more specific, based on the specific evidence rather than appear to make such judgements.
- Members queried arrangements for dealing with children missing from home. The first port of call for missing children was the police, and it was confirmed that significant efforts had gone into developing and improving the response in this area. When a missing person was reported it was graded as high, medium or low risk and got an appropriate response from the police. When a missing child was found he or she got a safe and well check, and a return home interview. Return home interviews were done by the Children's Society. There was a commitment for the safe and well check, and the return home interview to be carried out within 72 hours.
- The Committee enquired what the recruitment policy was for people to become Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) ambassadors. DCI Baxter would take this query away and find out what the policy was. Essentially ambassadors were people who could reach young people and this was usually through education facilities.
- OIN relation to re-referrals, it was reported that there had been an impact in the recent migration of social services record from a previous ICT system to a new system (known as "Liquid Logic") and the migration of information had caused difficulties because some referral documents had to be opened and were now classed as re-referrals. The Team had also been working with the definition of referrals and as a result of this there had been a reduction of re-referrals coming through.
- The committee requested that the annual report be e-mailed to all County Councillors along with the additional CSE campaign report.

- The committee discussed the delivery of child abuse awareness raising sessions by the NSPCC in 498 primary schools. It was explained that the sessions were aimed at children around 9 years of age and were age specific – it was advised that the sessions dealt with the issues, such as "grooming" in a way that children of that age would understand. not mentioned grooming was part of the sessions in some way. The Committee were also informed that these sessions were a rolling programme.
- The Committee enquired what help was possible where abuse or neglect was a problem for families living in poverty. It was made clear that it was understood that, whilst poverty was a problem for many families, and there was support available, it could not be assumed that children in poverty were also victims of neglect, and that the response from any agency therefore had to be appropriate to the actual situation.
- There was concern over the inconsistency in support services for children with emotional distress in Lancashire and Members wanted assurances that these issues would be addressed. The LSCB recognised and shared these concerns and had requested assurances from the agencies about availability and consistency of support for children with emotional health and wellbeing. The Health and Wellbeing Board had set up a task and finish group that was reviewing the services delivered through LCC funding and Children's Social Care.
- Regarding prosecution in Lancashire, it was confirmed that the police robustly pursued offenders, and actively sought a range of actions against offenders. There was a high success rate of cases that reached court with very high conviction rates, and support for young victims of abuse was recognised as crucial and something the police worked hard on.

The Chair introduced Tony Morrissey, Head of Safeguarding Inspection and Audit, to introduce the findings of the Thematic Inspection of Early Help.

The LSCB had the responsibility for monitoring the quality and effectiveness Of the early help offer in Lancashire. The LSCB completed a multi-agency thematic practice inspection of Early Help in Lancashire in May 2014. The inspection team comprised a number of professionals from LSCB partner agencies, but also a team of young inspectors who had been funded by the LSCB to undertake inspections and assess how well agencies are safeguarding children and young people.

The inspection found a number of strengths in respect to early help, some of which would benefit from replication across Lancashire, as well as a number of issues which required discussion to clarify matters going forward. Potential improvements were identified, which if adopted could provide further

improvement in the early help children and young people and their families received, further enabling families to work with agencies to build their resilience and address any issues at an early stage.

In the thematic inspection report the strengths around the work of children's homes was noted. Other strengths from the inspection were the investment by agencies in Early Help activity and the level of consultation involved in specific commissions.

There were 18 areas identified for development and these had been shared with the CYP Trust and also the newly formed Children's Partnership Boards. There remained issues with instigation of the Common Assessment Framework and the application of thresholds. The SEND reforms and the future resourcing of all agencies would present challenges in the coordinated delivery of Early Help support.

The LSCB would monitor progress of actions resulting from the thematic inspection and hold agencies to account for delivering improvements.

The Health and Wellbeing Board had endorsed the Children and Young People's Plan as the 'starting well' plan and therefore had strong strategic links with the early help agenda. This would provide clarity about the strategic lead for the Early Help agenda which was felt to be lacking by the inspection team.

The newly formed Children's Partnership Boards (CPBs) had agreed that Early Help, and the findings from the thematic inspection, would form part of their local action plans. The LSCB would have representation at every one of those CPB meetings to ensure progress continued to be made.

Councillors were invited to ask questions and raise any comments in relation to the Thematic Inspection of Early Help, a summary of which is provided below:

- Members asked how serious the lack of consistency was throughout Lancashire referred to in the report. It was explained that Lancashire was a large county and had 600 schools, and there were a number of different agencies involved, and ensuring consistency was a complex matter. It was explained that, whilst it was accepted that there needed to be a higher degree of consistency, this was being addressed. All organisations at a strategic level were signed up to the training. People had to be taken on in a professional role at the operational level and were utilising the Common Assessment Framework.
- It was noted that the financial challenges facing all public sector organisations was an issue facing the LSCB, but it was felt that organisations were using the opportunity to look at how to work better together and remove duplication. There were Prevention and Early Help Panels in each district which were agencies coming together and looking at a coordinated approach.

- The Committee enquired how Early Help addressed the issues of mental health problems within families. Where there were issues of emotional and mental health problems they would be addressed accordingly. CAMHS was working with schools on mental health issues.
- Members were informed that there was confidence that all organisations involved had appropriate measures in place in relation a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks. A Section 11 audit also took place to ensure these checks had taken place.
- Regarding internet access, there was screening and blocking which took place within the local authority. Basic filters existed within the local authority's e-mails.
- On the subject of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Members enquired what the role of GPs was in this organisation. It was recognised that GPs were an important source of information regarding families, and children and young people. MASH looked at a range of information and screened this information. Whilst GPs were not directly part of the MASH, health representatives in MASH were able to ensure there were strong links.

Regarding Child Protection Information Sharing the Committee were informed that Lancashire County Council was the first local authority in the country to go live with this information sharing system which meant that when children presented at various health settings the professionals at these settings would be able to access information about whether or not children were subject to child protection plans.

Resolved: That,

1. The annual report be noted,
2. The committee note that the LSCB and partner organisations in Lancashire continue to have a positive and effective approach to Child protection and Child Sexual Exploitation
3. The LSCB annual report and CSE campaign report be circulated to all councillors
4. Further reports to Scrutiny are made as appropriate.

5. Work Plan and Task Group Update

A report was presented summarising the work to be undertaken by the Committee in the coming months, including an update on task group work.

Resolved: That the report be noted

6. Urgent Business

None.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be on Friday 16 January, at 10.30 at the County Hall, Preston.

I Young
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston