

Lancashire County Council

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Briefing Session

Notes of the Briefing held on Tuesday 9th February 2016 at 11am in Cabinet Room C, County Hall, Preston

Present:

Committee Members:

County Councillor Gina Dowding
County Councillor Susie Charles
County Councillor Sue Prynn
County Councillor Graham Gooch
County Councillor David Smith
County Councillor Cynthia Dereli
County Councillor Mike Otter

Terri Hacking, Action for Children
Debra Wilson, Lancashire Care Foundation Trust
Sarah Barraclough, Ashton Primary School
Alice Marquis-Carr, Fylde & Wyre CCG

Officers

Wendy Broadley, Principle Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Bob Stott, Director Children's Services
Louise Taylor, Corporate Director Operations and Delivery
County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools
Richard Cooke, Health Equity, Welfare and Partnerships Manager
Chris Coyle, Senior Practitioner – Child Protection
Sakthi Karunanithi, Director Public Health and Wellbeing
Steven Knight, Newton Consultants
Emily Roche, Newton Consultants

Apologies:

Apologies were received from County Councillors Munsif Dad and Julie Gibson and Elaine Shinks

Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed committee members to this briefing for an opportunity to meet and gain an understanding of children's services prior to the first formal meeting of the Committee.

As part of the briefing, there was a number of presentations and electronic copies of these were circulated to the committee members.

Overview of Children's Services

Bob Stott presented to the Committee an overview of the current Children's Services structure with details of each service:

- Traded Services includes a number of services such as School Catering Service, Educational/Off Site Visits and Governor Services. This is very much a school focussed service with a wide remit. Traded Services operates on a full cost recovery basis.
- School Improvement covers a wide variety of services which includes Elective Home Education (EHE) and Alternative Education Provision. Much of these services are traded with a number of statutory elements. Bob reported that currently 90% of primary schools and 83% of secondary schools have Ofsted judgements of good/outstanding.
- Safeguarding, Inspection and Audit Responsibilities Service sits at the heart of all children's services. This service links in with Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and has several functions that provide a link to all services including Independent Reviewing Officers, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Advice and Support Service.
- Adoption, Fostering, Residential and Youth Offending Team includes Supporting Carers and Young People Together (SCAYT +). The Residential Team deals with some of the most challenging children and Ofsted have particular interest in this part of the service.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Service includes the monitoring and transition of all children and young people with SEND. In addition, Education Psychology forms part of this service. There has been a national shortage of education psychologists but Lancashire County Council are now getting back up to full staffing numbers.
- Children's Social Care sits at the core of the safeguarding offer and includes some of the most difficult services to deliver. This service includes children subject to children in need plans (CiN) and those subject to child protection plans (CPP).

At this point, Bob introduced Chris Coyle to the Committee to detail the work within children's social care.

There is a level of complexity when working within children's social care particularly the challenges faced with dealing not only with complex family needs but also with the judicial system.

Much of the work is linked to neglect issues which can result from a number of behaviours relating to the toxic trio (substance misuse, domestic violence, mental health and in addition, disguised compliance). These behaviours may also link to mental health issues.

Child protection plans (CPP) can include Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Female Genitalia Mutilation (FGM), radicalisation and childhood obesity.

Chris outlined the process when a referral is received through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or the Contact and Referral Team (CART). CART are responsible for identifying whether a Section 17 or Section 47 assessment is required.

Children Looked After (CLA) follow a different pathway. They are subject to Independent Reviewing Officer reviews after placement but a child can be removed from a placement as we have overall responsibility as a corporate parent.

Home education – Bob reported to the Committee that to take a child out of school to educate at home, parents need to contact the school and the local authority but if a child has never been in education, this is not required. This can create a safeguarding issue as the local authority would not be made aware of the child although other services may pick up where a child is not entering education system and notify the local authority.

It was agreed that the following information would be circulated to the Committee:

- A glossary of acronyms
- Information on Section 17 and 47 processes
- Flowchart of pathway from the initial referral into children's social care

Summary of the Ofsted inspection/remit of the Post Inspection Improvement Board

Richard presented information to the group on the Ofsted inspection and the Post Inspection Improvement Board.

The findings indicated a unique outcome where Children's Services were judged as inadequate with the LSCB judged as good.

The Ofsted report is based around 17 recommendations but there are also other areas which require consideration.

A number of immediate actions were completed which included workforce capacity. This has now been addressed through recruitment of a number of agency staff and newly qualified social workers (NQSWS).

Linda Clegg has been seconded from Blackburn with Darwen Council as Director of Children's Services to help support the significant transformation work

required. Linda will report to Louise Taylor, Corporate Director of Operations and Delivery.

All Child in Need cases have been reviewed to assess the level of risk. There are currently a number of systems in place for performance reviewing which are being worked on to identify the correct reporting requirements. Liquid Logic is the case management system used which is linked to performance reporting.

Ofsted have agreed to support Lancashire County Council with an improvement offer which includes monthly visits with feedback on findings and a quarterly report to the Improvement Board.

The timeline for re inspection is two years and the judgement can only be changed after full inspection has taken place.

The Post Inspection Improvement Board has been established with a varied membership of elected members and partners including health, police, LSCB, voluntary organisations and the Children and Young People's Trust chair (although membership is not static and will change to be reflective of issues).

The Improvement Board will monitor the delivery of improvement through a plan which will be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE).

Tony Crane will be completing the diagnostic for submission to the DfE by the beginning of March. From this diagnostic, the DfE will then inform the approach which either will be via an improvement plan or direct intervention.

Richard confirmed that a piece of work is being completed to define the functions of the Improvement Board and its relation to the other scrutiny committees already in place.

In addition, an Operational Improvement Board has been established with membership from multi agency front line staff with the first meeting in March.

The following actions were agreed by the Committee:

- Summary of the key issues to inform a future work plan
- Confirmation of the remit of the Improvement Board in relation to this committee to avoid duplication of work - Wendy to arrange a meeting between Tony Crane, CC Gina Dowding and CC Susie Charles
- Link provided to the Ofsted report (see below)

[Children's services: Ofsted inspection 2015](#)

Newton Consultants

Louise introduced Steven Knight and Emily Roche to the Committee to discuss work undertaken around the Children's Pathways Review.

Newton Consultants were commissioned to complete an eight week assessment to look at the breadth and width of children's services through an assessment to identify areas where improvements could be made.

The assessment approach took information from various sources which included:

- 14 days of live study with practitioners
- Over 2000 days of tick sheet studies – feedback suggested that practitioners were very engaged in the assessment
- 375 cases reviewed
- Historical complete case data over the last 2-3 years
- Interviews with local teams

The scope of the review was to assess the end to end process looking at the pathway and resources.

Steven and Emily presented the findings from the assessment including example cases.

From the 350 cases reviewed, almost half could have an improved pathway through reduction in drift and delay, improved effectiveness of work and improved threshold decisions.

The Committee raised concerns around the current Liquid Logic system issues. It was identified that 75% is the way we work with it and only 25% is the actual IT system. In order to improve this there is a need for more of a cultural change and not just training.

A report is due to go to Cabinet with the proposed next steps in three weeks' time.

Children's Health Issues

Sakthi presented information to the Committee detailed in the Child Health Profile from June 2015 which included the following information:

- 63% children are school ready
- Infant and child mortality is significantly worse than the England average
- Children with dental problems is significantly worse than the England average
- One quarter of children are overweight or obese
- Diabetes is now a significant contributor to economy issues

The level of health and wellbeing of children is generally worse than the national average but the level of child poverty (17.1% of children under the age of 16) is better than the national average.

See below link to the Child Health Profile June 2015.

[Child Health Profile June 2015](#)

Lancashire is a part of the national troubled families' project to identify and work with vulnerable families. The criteria has been widened in second phase to include parents who are either part of the criminal justice system or NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

There are a number of inherited contracts which have been reviewed and currently in the process of re procuring these services. In addition, a healthy weight management service for adults, children and young people across Lancashire is in the process of procuring a range of providers.

Information on balanced diets form part of the infant feeding and healthy child programme. Poverty does have big impact on healthy eating and malnutrition is now a problem as well as Vitamin D deficiency.

Safeguarding does impact on universal services and may demand time from practitioners which then impacts on services. The safeguarding agenda is consistently growing. E safety is big on the agenda as well as mental health and CSE.

There are some issues around IT information management systems as there are different systems across partners. Sakthi reported they are currently looking at a platform to act as an interface to assist with this.

They are also looking at the implementation of an electronic version of the red book (monitors child development to age 5).

The staff consultation on children's centres, YPS (Young People's Service) and Early Help is now open with the proposed changes to the services provided.

It was suggested that this may be an area to look at given that children's centres were judged good throughout the Ofsted inspection.

It was agreed that:

- Terri Hacking will provide information around children's centre worker roles
- Sakthi will provide information round the remit of health visitors and school nurses

Next Steps

It was discussed and agreed that it would be very useful for each of the representatives from the Children's Partnership Boards to give an overview of children's services from their different backgrounds.

Future actions identified include:

- Progress on the transformation
- Further presentation from Newton Consultants

Glossary:

CART – Contact & Referral Team

CiN – Children in Need

CLA – Children Looked After

CoN – Continuum of Need

CPP – Child Protection Plan

CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation

DfE – Department for Education

ELE – Elective Home Education

FGM – Female Genital Mutilation

IRO – Independent Reviewing Officer

LSCB – Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board

MASH – Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub

NEET – Not in Education Employment or Training

NQSW – Newly Qualified Social Worker

PDRO – Performance Development Reviewing Officer

SCAYT+ - Supporting Carers and Young People Together

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

WPEH – Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help

YOT – Youth Offending Team

YPS – Young People's Service