

MINUTES of the meeting of Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Shire Hall, Hereford on Wednesday 1 October 2014 at 3.30 pm

Present: Councillor CNH Attwood (Chairman)
Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: JM Bartlett, KS Guthrie, Brig P Jones CBE, JLV Kenyon, AJW Powers, J Stone and GA Vaughan-Powell

In attendance: Councillor G Powell (Cabinet Member Adults Wellbeing)

Officers: J Davidson (Director for Children's Wellbeing), G Hughes (Director for Economy, Communities and Corporate) S Lloyd (Interim Public Health Consultant), P Meredith (Assistant Director Safeguarding & Early Help), J Roughton (Head of Children & Families Casework), J Whitehead (Chief Officer Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) D Barnett (Participation and Mentoring Officer), A Churcher (HSCB/HSAB Business Manager), H Jones (Senior LAC Education Officer), S Vickers (Head of Safeguarding and Transformation) K Saunders (Student Social Worker) and DJ Penrose (Governance Services)

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors PA Andrews, PL Bettington, NP Nenadich and CA North.

21. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Councillor AJW Powers for Councillor CA North.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

23. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 1 August 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record.

24. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

None.

25. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

26. OUTCOME OF CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING OFSTED INSPECTION AND ACTION PLAN

The Director of Children Safeguarding presented a report on the Outcome of the Children's Safeguarding Ofsted Inspection, undertaken between 29 April and 21 May 2014, together with the Action Plan, and following areas were highlighted during the discussion:

- That the Action Plan allowed monitoring of progress not only by Officers, Members and the HSCB, but also by the Department and the Minister, as the Council was still subject to an improvement notice.
- That there had been some good progress made since the first inspection, albeit some of it was very recent, and that Ofsted did not identify any child potentially at risk of harm.

The Head of Children & Families Casework said that the Action Plan was due to be submitted to the Department by the 6 October. There had been significant amount of consultation across the Council, including Cabinet, both the Adults and the Children's Safeguarding Boards in order to be as thorough as possible. The Plan would be updated on a monthly basis and subject to internal and partnership scrutiny. The HSCB element would also be considered by the forthcoming Local Government Association Peer Diagnostic.

In reply to a question, he went on to say that the intention was to ensure that every lead officer would be held to account on a monthly basis.

In reply to a question, the Assistant Director Safeguarding & Early Help said that obstacles to achieving the Action Plan targets included the increase in Looked After Children, the rising demand for services with a reducing budget. The CHIPP programme had been put in place in order to recycle resources and use them in a more efficient way. The issue would be included in the overall Council Risk Register.

A range of approaches were being used to deal with issues arising within hard to reach minority groups. This included the Roma and traveller team working to identify protection issues.

In reply to a query regarding children placed in County by another authority who went missing from care, the Head of Children & Families Casework said there was a cultural shift when dealing with non-Herefordshire looked after children. Independent care providers in the County were aware of the standards that the Council required of them. Of the two or three children that were reported missing every day, most were returned within a couple of hours. Improvement was required when aggregating data regarding children who went missing on a regular basis. Work was in hand with other Authorities in order to ensure that all issues were shared across County boundaries.

It was suggested that if the police were called out to a Care Home for any reason, that this should be recorded in the record of the home for later examination.

A Member suggested that in a rural county, it was possible that abuse of children as highlighted in the Jay Report into Child Sexual Abuse in Rotherham was even more likely to go undetected.

That there was a team within the police looking at cyber bullying and associated issues, and had a dedicated officer to deal with concerns. The issues were also considered by the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB).

In response to a question regarding Frameworki, the Head of Children & Families Casework said that the system worked well, the problem in Herefordshire had been in

the way that it had been . Changes to the Child Protection modules had reduced the operating time by two thirds, and the data was more accurate.

In reply to a question, the Assistant Director Safeguarding & Early Help said that the Peer Review had highlighted the large caseloads. These had improved significantly through a specific plan of action and would be managed by continuing to improve efficiencies within the department. As a result of improvements, it was now possible to know exactly what was happening, a situation that they had not been in 12 months ago. The backlog of cases had been cleared, and the performance of staff had improved. Framework system improvements meant that a case could now be closed within two hours rather than nine.

The process for Child Protection Conferences had been streamlined, and multi-agency colleagues were reporting back on the HSCB quality assurance framework.

In reply to a question, the Cabinet Member Young People and Children's Wellbeing said that progress was being made in ensuring Members understood their Corporate Parenting role. There had been a lack of understanding amongst Members about their role during the term of the present administration, and a new programme of training would be put in place following the elections in May 2015 which would require mandatory corporate parenting training. Members who failed to complete this section would not be eligible for their allowance until they had done so. Group Leaders would discuss the matter further, and a programme would be bought back to the Committee prior to the election.

It was noted that there was an active group of Members on the Corporate Parenting Panel, and that Members were also actively seeking ways of helping young people by offering apprenticeships and a range of other opportunities and support. It was suggested that a database of the skills and experience of Members should be developed in order to provide Young People with a tool to approach Councillors for guidance. This could be put together by the Groups.

Resolved

That:

- a) the outcome of the inspection attached at Appendix 1 be noted;**
- b) discussions be held with Group Leaders regarding a programme of training for Members following the election in May 2015; and;**
- c) A database of Members skills be made available to Children's Services in order to provide a resource for Looked After Children.**

27. HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (HSCB) ANNUAL REPORT AND BUSINESS PLAN

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) Annual Report and Business Plan was noted, and the Committee received a presentation of supplementary information.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- That decision making within the service was much clearer than it had been eighteen months previously, and there was a better audit trail than in the past.

- That the number of children currently on a child protection plan who had previously been on one had risen in 2014 as a result of the return to the system of children who had been subject to earlier inappropriate decisions to take them off plans.
- That there was good representation on the Strategic Board across all agencies involved in its work and there was a good governance structure within the Board itself.

The Director of Children's Wellbeing said that changes within a number of organisations were having an impact on their engagement with the Strategic Board. This was particularly the case with the police and probation services. The Independent Chairman was aware of these issues, and a West Mercia wide approach was being developed with the police.

Resolved:

That:

- (a) the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Herefordshire as assessed by the Safeguarding Boards be noted;**
- (b) the priorities of the Boards in relation to specific safeguarding issues in Herefordshire be acknowledged;**
- (c) the Council's contribution to service improvement through commissioning within Herefordshire with regard to safeguarding issues be acknowledged.**

28. CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE DATA

The Committee received a report on the Performance Data for Children's Safeguarding. The Assistant Director Safeguarding & Early Help highlighted the following areas:

- That whilst the number of Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) that were open was rising, a number of these were historical, and should have been closed down. Three hundred and thirty had already been closed, and a significant amount of work had been undertaken in those that were active.
- That there had been an increase of 28% in the number of contacts received a month, and there had been a 60% increase in the last two years. This represented a significant increase in activity for the service.

A Member said that there had been resistance to including strategic leads from the Committee to the monthly performance meetings to which Group Leaders were invited. The rationale behind this was that senior Members needed to evidence their knowledge and awareness of critical safeguarding issues but he did not believe that it should be incumbent on Group Leaders to be the only Members present. The matter would be addressed outside the meeting as the monthly performance meeting was different from the role of Scrutiny.

Resolved:

That:

- a) the performance of the Children's Safeguarding Service be reviewed; and**

b) Comments be made on any further performance indicators which the Committee would like to be included in future reports be noted.

29. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

The Committee received a presentation on the work of the Children in Care Council. The Participation and Mentoring Officer highlighted the following areas:

That whilst the Children in Care Council was small, it was proportionally large in terms of the number of Looked After Children (LAC) in the County. Plans were in hand to widen participation.

The young people involved in the Children in Care Council wanted to make a difference to other LACs as well as being in control of their sometimes rather chaotic lives. A flexible approach had been taken to meetings, which were held when needed.

A website was being put together by the young people, with the links to the Council's Quality Assurance Team in order to encourage comments or complaints.

That Pack a Tack was an initiative that had been started a few years ago by young people who, not feeling they had anything they could call their own when they first went into care, designed a box of things that were useful in the first week of a placement. The box that these items came in could then be used as a filing system for their documentation. A care leaver would usually be asked to take the box to someone entering care as a way of giving them hope and support.

Resolved: that the Committee note the Council's approach to developing the Children in Care Council.

30. HEALTHWATCH

The Committee received a report from the Independent Chairman of the Healthwatch, in which he highlighted the following points:

That the Communications Workshop held by the Committee on the 18 September had provided local partners with an opportunity to find out what partner agencies were doing in the communications field

That Taurus were now arranging an 8am to 8pm, seven day a week GP service across Ross and Hereford.

That there were arrangements in place to deal with the Stroke Pathway at the Hospital. This was a commissioning issue, and was being discussed between the Wye Valley Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Chairman thanked him for his report.

31. WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme was noted.

The meeting ended at 17.50

CHAIRMAN