

**Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Monday 2 October 2017 at 10.15 am**

**Present:** Councillor CA Gandy (Chairman)  
Councillor FM Norman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: JA Hyde, Mr James (Co-optee Member), JF Johnson, MD Lloyd-Hayes, MT McEvilly and D Summers.

**In attendance:** Sally Halls, Independent Chair Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board  
Hazel Braund, Director of Operations at Wye Valley Clinical Commissioning Group

**Officers:** Chris Baird, interim Director Children's Wellbeing  
Adam Scott, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help  
Lindsay MacHardy, Public Health Specialist

**9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Seldon.

**10. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor D Summers attended as a substitute for Councillor A Seldon.

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members of the committee declared non-pecuniary interests in: Item 5 - Commissioning intentions for universal and early help services for children, young people and families; Item 6 – Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board annual report 2016/17; Item 7 – Outcomes of casework peer review; and Item 8 – Children's wellbeing self-assessment:

Councillor Hyde as the support team member (looked after children), the chairman of the corporate parenting panel and a member of the fostering panel.

Councillor Norman as a member of the corporate parenting panel.

**12. MINUTES**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

**13. COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS FOR UNIVERSAL AND EARLY HELP SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES**

The committee considered a report from the cabinet member health and wellbeing and the cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing concerning procurement of universal and early help services for children, young people and families. The report was introduced by Lindsay MacHardy, public health specialist, who advised the committee that the proposal contained in the report placed the family and child at the heart of the commissioning exercise. The commissioning exercise would enable further integration of the approach for early help and public health nursing services.

Hazel Braund, Director of Operations at Wye Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) spoke on behalf of the CCG and raised concerns regarding the procurement exercise. It was not felt that the proposal took account of safeguarding issues and no discussion with the safeguarding board had taken place. The principles of the commissioning exercise were supported but there was disappointment that the CCG had only been made aware of the proposals at a late stage and without sufficient detail on which to base a proper assessment. It was a significant paper that the committee was being asked to consider, proposing a very different model of operation to existing arrangements. There was concern that without an understanding of existing models it would be a challenge to scrutinise effectively the new arrangements proposed in the report.

Chris Baird, interim director for children's wellbeing, said that the early help strategy had been to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Board (HSCB) and the board had considered the approach in Herefordshire. Commissioners and providers of children's services had to ensure that the service had appropriate safeguarding in place and followed the HSCB's procedures.

The committee made the comments below during the debate:

- Concern regarding a lack of consideration of safeguarding issues in the proposals and the reported lack of engagement with the safeguarding board.
- Concern regarding the reported lack of consultation with the CCG.
- The redesign survey report attached to the draft cabinet report demonstrated that there was a lack of awareness of WISH in the local community. Very few respondents accessed the site for guidance and advice. Further work was required to raise the profile of the service and ensure that it was accessed more readily by the community.
- There was not felt to be a sufficient level of evidence in the report to provide assurance that the contracts currently in place were providing value for money and effective service. However the committee was content to support the extension of the family befriending services, proposed in the draft cabinet report contracts up to March 2018 with Vennture and Homestart to ensure a consistency of service during the current year.
- The committee required further detail of the services that would be procured in order to undertake effective scrutiny of the proposal. The draft cabinet report was not clear about tangible outcomes and quantifiable results sought through the procurement. The committee was unable to assess the terms of the proposed

commissioning exercise to determine if it could realistically achieve its stated aims. The report in its current state did not contain enough detail to enable effective scrutiny. The outcomes sought through the commissioning exercise needed to be defined clearly and any targets which providers would be required to meet. The committee requested sight of the contract specification informing the commissioning exercise and to be circulated to potential bidders.

- There was concern regarding the provision of services within rural areas of the county. It was recognised that the report referred to the issue of rurality but more detail was required to show how services would be delivered across rural areas. The use of internet based services to deliver services across rural areas was noted but it was felt that in areas where broadband provision was limited this was not an effective solution. The notion that access to services would be facilitated through text messaging was also undermined by the paucity of mobile telephone signals in certain areas of the county.
- Access to services in market towns would be compromised by the limitation of public transportation from rural areas.
- The use of local facilities to support provision of services such as church halls was supported but there was doubt regarding the ability of local communities to sustain such services.
- It was felt that the commissioning intentions needed to include greater detail on proposals for the provision of services from rural areas and how the resilience of those services would be ensured.
- The committee supported the principles of early intervention contained in the proposal and the contribution this made to a general focus on prevention.
- The committee felt that the cabinet members responsible for presenting the decision to cabinet should be informed of the significant concerns raised.
- The committee queried what action would follow the submission of its concerns to the cabinet members; it was requested that the contract specification be circulated to members of the committee for assurance, ahead of the proposed decision by cabinet.

The motion outlined below was proposed by Councillor Lloyd-Hayes and seconded by Councillor Summers. The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolved - That the committee:

- 1) supports the extension of the family befriending services contracts with the existing providers to the end of March 2018;
- 2) has significant concerns about the commissioning exercise proposed. The cabinet members for health and wellbeing and young people and children's wellbeing are asked to have regard to the committee's concerns, particularly:
  - The reported lack of consultation concerning safeguarding arrangements and engagement with the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board;
  - The provision of services in rural areas;
  - The requirement for additional detail in the report, in particular the contract specification ; and
  - A reported lack of communication with the CCG.

- 3) requests that, before a decision is taken on the proposal, the cabinet members share additional information with the committee, including the contract specification.

There was a brief adjournment from 11.25 a.m. – 11.34 a.m.

#### 14. **HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD (HSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17 AND BUSINESS PLAN 2017/19**

The committee received a report concerning the annual report of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB) for 2016/17 and the business plan covering 2017/19. The report was introduced by Sally Halls, Independent Chair of the HSCB who explained to the committee the priorities that had informed the work of the Board during the previous year. The priorities consisted of child sexual exploitation, child protection, neglect and early help. In the current year the Board continued to focus on these areas and assess the rates of looked after children in Herefordshire.

The committee made the following points in the discussion that followed:

- If the committee would have the opportunity to see the neglect assessment tool or to have a demonstration of the facility. *The Board would be receiving a presentation from the NSPCC shortly on the use of the tool and if appropriate there would be consideration of how to make it available on the Board's website.*
- A summary of the work of the child death overview panel was requested. *The panel was a multi-professional body which examined the deaths of all children under 18 in Herefordshire, which include deaths due to medical conditions.*
- There was concern that very few referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) were forthcoming from certain agencies. *It was explained that the LADO dealt with very specific referrals regarding perceived conduct.*
- The location of the Emergency Duty Team at Worcester for emergency out of hours social work services was questioned and whether it would be desirable to locate the service in-county. *It was confirmed that the service was contracted jointly with Worcestershire County Council and was based in Worcester. The service was currently under review but was deemed to be effective. Providing a distinct service in Herefordshire would be much less cost effective given the volume of work.*
- Clarification was requested regarding the totals in the diagram showing totals for: children in need; with child protection plans; and in care. The high number of children in care was raised. *It was confirmed that each of the totals was a separate figure and that the high number of children in care was attributable to difficulties in removing children from care. There had been a reduction in the number of children being admitted to care. The chair of the HSCB agreed that the diagram would be changed.*
- It was suggested that the Board could publicise its activities to local parish councils and the details of the parish liaison officer at the Council would be shared with the Board.

A motion was proposed by Councillor JF Johnson and seconded by Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes to note the report and the strategic priorities of the Board. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

**Resolved – that:**

- a) The annual report and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Herefordshire as assessed by the Board are noted; and
- b) The strategic priorities identified by the Board are noted.

## 15. OUTCOMES OF CASEWORK PEER REVIEW

The committee received a report concerning the outcomes and recommendations of the casework peer review in June 2017. The report was introduced by Chris Baird, interim Director of Children's Wellbeing, who advised the committee that the review formed part of the improvement work being undertaken in Children's Wellbeing and further reviews were scheduled in September and spring 2018. Mr Baird provided a summary of the presentation from the LGA Peers outlining the outcomes and recommendations from the review.

The committee discussed the following points during the debate:

- A further review of some cases had taken place in September and an update on any outcomes currently known was requested. *The review in September had concerned a smaller sample of cases and the resulting themes had been broadly similar to the earlier review. Generally good outcomes were identified and the teams were effective however some work was required on making improvements to process and practice.*
- It was recognised that the outcomes of the review in June had been positive and the teams in the service should be congratulated.
- The need for improvement in some processes was also recognised including better record-keeping. This was felt to be a very important area for the service to improve to ensure complete records were in place.
- The committee queried the focus on reducing the level of looked after children and how this would operate in practice. *It was explained that a change in culture was required. The notion that children were safe in care and should therefore remain in such circumstances throughout their childhood was in some cases being reviewed to see how best to meet the child's need.*

Resolved – that the committee notes the report and offers congratulations to the teams involved in the review for the positive feedback received.

## 16. CHILDREN'S WELLBEING SELF-ASSESSMENT

The committee received a report concerning the development of the Children's and Wellbeing Directorate's draft self-assessment in readiness to participate in the peer challenge among authorities in the West Midlands. The report was introduced by Adam Scott, assistant director safeguarding and early help, who advised the committee that the process to produce a self-assessment was now a national requirement and heads of service within the Directorate would be adding to the draft document to be finalised later in the autumn. The outcomes of the recent reviews would be included in the self-assessment and when finalised, the document would be subject to the Ofsted inspection exercise.

The committee made the points below in the discussion that followed:

- The difficulties involved in the recruitment of staff with experience. *It was confirmed that a new HR representative was currently developing a recruitment*

*strategy to assist in the hiring of experienced staff. However recruitment to middle management positions had been a success.*

- It was queried whether the target completion dates in September 2017 in the improvement plan had been achieved. *It was confirmed that the tasks had been completed with the exception of the case load target which had been readjusted to a later date.*
- Training for teachers in respect of mental health issues. *It was confirmed that this was a topic that could be explored at the December meeting of the committee when mental health was an item on the agenda.*

A motion was proposed by Councillor McEvelly and seconded by Councillor Hyde to note the report. The motion was carried.

Resolved – that the notes the draft self-assessment document for the Children’s Wellbeing Directorate.

## **17. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

No questions were received from members of the public.

## **18. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

No questions were received from members of the council.

## **19. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The committee received and noted its work programme. The following updates were provided:

- At the meeting on 4 December 2017 there would be a presentation from Children and young people Mental Health Partnership;
- In Mid December there would be an LGA Children’s scrutiny training session; and
- At the meeting on 22 January 2018 the committee would consider the draft Autism Strategy.

## **20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the committee was scheduled for Monday 4 December at 10.15 a.m.

The meeting ended at 12.57 pm

**Chairman**