



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2014

10.00 am - 12.05 pm in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 252739

Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Peggy Mullock (Vice Chairman), Hannah Fraser, Robert Macey, Kevin Pardy, Kevin Turley, David Turner, Paul Wynn and Roger Evans (Substitute for Heather Kidd)

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

Austin Atkinson and Dominic Wilson

35 Apologies and Substitutions

35.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Heather Kidd (Councillor Roger Evans substituted), Mr J Carline and Mr M Hignett.

35.2 The Chairman reported receipt of Mr Carline's resignation as he was emigrating to Melbourne for work purposes.

36 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

36.1 None were disclosed.

37 Minutes

37.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 had been circulated.

37.2 Councillor Evans considered that Minute 31.6 was incomplete, and requested a more complete record detailing the reasons why second Child Protection Plans [CPPs] were put in place.

37.3 It was agreed that the following revised wording should replace Minute 31.6:-

Councillor Fraser asked why a child received a second CPP and whether it was for the same or different reasons. She questioned whether, if it was for similar reasons as a previous CPP, the initial CPP was removed too early. The Head of Children's Safeguarding advised that there were a number of reasons for repeat CPPs and that this may be either a repeat of the original safeguarding concerns or different ones. Members noted that in some cases the re-referral reflected the awareness of agencies to the concerns in a family and, if having improved and been referred into

early help there was a relapse, then an early re-referral would be made back to social work services based on patterns of history. The repeat CPP was not necessarily a negative issue as long as there was no lengthy period of CP registration in repeat scenarios as this would indicate delay.

37.4 RESOLVED

That, subject to the above rewording of Minute 31.6 detailed above, the minutes of the Young People's Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29 January 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

38 Public Question Time

38.1 There were no questions from members of the public

39 Members' Question Time

39.1 There were no questions from Members

40 Care Leavers' Pathway and Educational Achievement, Attendance and Health Outcomes of Shropshire's Looked After Children [LAC]

40.1 Members considered the report from the Head of Children's Safeguarding outlining national regulations and expectations for children looked after by the Local Authority as they moved into adult and independent life, and provided details of Shropshire's developments.

40.2 The 16 Plus Team Manager explained that the updated Regulations set out requirements for local authorities to introduce "staying put" policies to provide foster carers and young people with information and guidance on all aspects of extending placements beyond the young person's 18th birthday; there was an expectation that 25% of care leavers would "stay put". He added that local authorities had a duty to provide care and pathway planning for young people leaving care, and that the "My Independence Plan" booklet provided information on the need assessment and pathway plans for care leavers.

40.3 The 16 Plus Team Manager explained that an Officer Task & Finish Group had been established to develop options for young people moving out of LA residential and foster care into supported and independent living accommodation. Members noted the progress made to date to develop accommodation for care leavers in order to provide a step down from residential care, increase the range of options and enable successful transition to independent housing.

40.4 A Care Leaver provided details of her experiences and explained that she had derived great benefit from being able to stay living long term with her foster carers.

40.5 A Member queried the cost of different types of accommodation. The 16 Plus Team Manager stated that costs ranged from £45,624 per annum for externally commissioned provision which was the most expensive, down to £12,567 for the Supported Housing Independence Project which was the cheapest.

40.6 A Member queried the delay in producing the Independence Plan given that it was based on guidance provided in 2010. The 16 Plus team Manager advised that the Plan replaced an earlier document which had been produced following receipt of the guidance, which was still current

40.7 The Head of the Education and Health Team for LAC introduced the Education Achievement, Attendance and Health Outcomes Annual Report and drew Members' attention to notable highlights which included: -

- 21.4% of children achieving KS4 GCSE passes at A* - C including english and maths compared with the national average for LAC of 11%
- 16 out of 17 LAC at KS2 making expected or better than expected progress
- Improved attendance figures with only 4.7% of the cohort missing more than 25 days education in the year
- Improved 16 year destinations with only one young person from a cohort of 18 being classified as NEET at the time of the report and subsequent to the report that young person was now engaged with County Training.

40.8 Members congratulated Officers on the excellent results contained in the report and a Member noted her particular admiration for the team of Officers involved with adoption.

40.9 **RESOLVED**

- i) That the progress being made to develop semi-independent and supported lodging care arrangements for 16/17 year olds, be noted;
- ii) That further updates on the impact of the new arrangements in meeting the Government's vision, be received; and
- iii) That the Educational and Health achievements of Looked After Children, be noted.

41 **Closing the Gap in Educational Outcomes - 2013**

41.1 Members received the report from the Head of Education Improvement and Efficiency which outlined the actions taken and improvements in the outcomes for children entitled to free school meals (FSM).

41.2 The Head of Education Improvement and Efficiency advised Members that in 2013 the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) at Key Stage 2 gaining level 4+ in reading, writing and mathematics dropped from 62% to 59% but that the gap in performance between those pupils entitled to FSM and their peers dropped

from 23% to 19%. She added that the picture at Key Stage 4, where the gap had been the greatest, had improved with almost 32% of pupils on FSM in Shropshire gaining five or more A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, compared to 24% in 2012. The gap in performance between pupils entitled to FSM and their peers had reduced from 37% in 2012 to 31% in 2013.

41.3 Members queried how pupils eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium would be identified with the onset of universal free school meals for Reception and Years 1 and 2. The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that previously parents had to apply for FSM which automatically triggered the pupil premium. She added that she was not aware how it would work under the new system, and was awaiting further information from the Department for Education.

41.4 A Member commented that a great deal of emphasis was put on underperforming pupils but the most gifted pupils were often forgotten. The Head of Education Improvement and Efficiency commented that a proportion of most gifted pupils received FSM and that it was important that the pupil premium was used to their benefit rather than being directed to the underperforming pupils

41.5 The Chair thanked Officers for the steps they had taken to improve performance.

41.6 **RESOLVED**

That the information detailed in the report be accepted.

42 **Transformation Activities - Early Help / COMPASS / Mental Health/Targeted Mental Health Support (TaMHS)**

42.1 Members considered the report from the Head of Children's Safeguarding which provided information on the ongoing service redesign to review and develop the process, systems and services to deliver Early Help for Shropshire's children and young people.

42.2 Members were advised that the aim of the service redesign was to review and develop services which deliver Early Help, reduce bureaucracy and develop systems to ensure the provision of timely services.

42.3 Lisa Wells from the Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) informed the meeting that "Compass" a new single point of referral for parents and professionals had been set up. It was noted that between 12 February and 5 March 2014 it had received 66 calls and the triage team had been able to make appropriate responses. She added that emergency referrals continued to be dealt with by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services [CAMHS] duty officer.

42.4 Jo Robin explained that Officers from the local authority and the CCG had developed a comprehensive approach to CAMHS across a pathway covering the varying needs from tier 1 (lowest needs) to tier 3 (specialist intervention required). She added that service redesign had taken place with new service specifications for tier 1 and tier 3 services.

42.5 Lisa Wells commented that there had been an increase in the incidence of self harm in young people and in response to this a "self harm pathway" had been developed in order to provide a consistent approach to early identification and support. She added that the information, advice and guidance leaflets had proved to be a particularly useful resource for young people when supporting their friends who self harm.

42.6 A Member asked how it was ensured that all young people with needs were identified, and commented that social media could be used to convey the message. Ms Robins commented that schools were ideally placed to identify and support pupils and that work was ongoing with GPs and Children's Services to ensure that no one "fell through the net". It was noted that the provision of school nurses was being looked at as part of the overall review of School Health Services. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services commented that the future role of school nurses would be very different from their traditional role and it was hoped that services could be expanded.

42.7 A Member welcomed the development of the Self Harm Strategy. In answer to a Member's query, Ms Robins advised that it was too early to comment on its efficacy.

42.8 A Member questioned the number of child social workers and whether there was a high staff turnover. It was noted that retention of social workers and support staff was good.

42.9 **RESOLVED**

- i) That the re-design and future plans for development of Early Help support services to children and families, be noted; and
- ii) That developments in mental health provision, be noted; and
- iii) That future reports be made to the Young People's Scrutiny Committee to further Members' understanding of the impact of the developments.

43 **Feedback from RAG on Looked After Children**

43.1 The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that at the last meeting it had been agreed that a Rapid Action Group be established to look at aspects of Looked After Children and that following a scoping meeting Members had agreed to look at fostering and foster carers. She stated that three meetings had been held, as follows: -

- Meeting 1: Members looked at the scope of the RAG and how this would be achieved
- Meeting 2 : Members met with families who were involved in fostering to discuss their experiences and the challenges involved in fostering

- Meeting 3 : Members met with social workers involved in fostering to discuss the decision making process

She advised Members that a fourth meeting would be held to consider the lessons learned so far and to identify any further work.

43.2 A member of the RAG commented that the work provided a useful insight into the processes involved and highlighted the need to bridge the gap between foster carers and other agencies.

43.3 The Chair advised that a further report would be presented to the Committee once the RAG had completed its work.

44 **Quarterly Performance Report**

44.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of Children's Services which summarised the latest Quarter 3 Performance Indicators in relation to social care for children and young people.

44.2 A Member asked why the number of referrals to children's social care had risen and why the percentages of children with a second or subsequent child protection plan (CPP) had gone up. With regard to the number of referrals to children's social care, the Director of Children's Services advised that the rise followed the national trend and that almost half of the referrals resulted in no further action. Several Members commented that it was positive that people felt able to make referrals even if they resulted in no further action. With regard to the percentage of children with 2 or more CPPs, the Director of Children's Services agreed to bring a report to a future meeting of the Committee.

44.3 A Member asked why the target for the number of children placed more than 20 miles from home had been exceeded in the second half of 2013. The Director of Children's Services commented that quite often children with specific requirements had to be placed out of county as there was no suitable provision for them within Shropshire. She added that work was ongoing to improve the mix of places available within Shropshire.

45 **Scrutiny Work Programme**

45.1 The current Work Programme had been circulated. The Chair reminded Members to advise her if they wished to suggest any topics for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

46 **Date of Next Meeting**

46.1 It was noted that the next meeting would be held at 11.30am on Wednesday 30 April 2014.

Signed (Chairman)

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