



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2014

10.00 am - 12.40 pm in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

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Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Peggy Mullock (Vice Chairman), Hannah Fraser, Vince Hunt, Robert Macey, Kevin Pardy, Robert Tindall, Kevin Turley, David Turner and Roger Evans (Substitute) (substitute for Andy Boddington)

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

Austin Atkinson and Dominic Wilson

Co-Opted Members (Non- Voting)

Mark Hignett

24 **Apologies and Substitutions**

24.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Boddington.

24.2 Councillor Evans substituted for Councillor Boddington.

25 **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

25.1 None were disclosed.

26 **Minutes**

26.1 RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Young People's Scrutiny Committee held on the 16 July 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 **Public Question Time**

27.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

28 **Members' Question Time**

28.1 There were no questions from Members.

29 Quarterly Performance Report

- 29.1 The meeting received the report of the Director of Children's Services which summarised the latest performance indicators in relation to Social Care and Education for Children and Young People as at the end of the financial year 2013/14.
- 29.2 A Member commented on the seemingly low performance at key stage 2 for higher level students and asked for the reasons for this. The Head of Education Improvement and Efficiency advised that work on the identification of the issues around the higher level performance was being undertaken. She went on to say that there had been some improvement but this would be hard to quantify until the next tranche of data was received, but that there was clear improvement in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- 29.3 A Member asked whether there were any statistics for children educated at home. The Head of Education Improvement and Efficiency advised him that these would be included in a future report to the Committee.
- 29.4 A Member commented that there had been a 57% increase in referrals to Children's Social Care and asked for the reason for this. The Head of Safeguarding commented that the increase was in line with increases in other councils, and that referrals resulted in a number of outcomes. She went on to say that part of the early help work was aimed at reducing the number of referrals.
- 29.5 A Member asked why the percentage of referrals within 12 months of a previous referral had doubled in the 12 month period. The Head of Safeguarding explained that this rise was partially due to changes in the way that data was recorded. The Director of Children's Services commented that when compared with the Council's statistical neighbours the figures were in line with the national picture.
- 29.6 A Member commented that the majority of assessments seemed to be completed at the end of the 45 day target period. The Director of Children's Services commented that the length of time taken to do assessments depended on the complexity of the case especially where several agencies were involved.
- 29.7 A Member remarked that the number of looked after children (LAC) per 10,000 was still rising. The Head of Safeguarding stated that, although there was still a rise in the numbers, the county was still well below the figures for both the statistical neighbours and the national figures. She informed Members that the largest increase was in the 15 years and over age group and that there was also a rise in the 0 to 2 years age group which reflected our earlier recognition of cases of neglect. The Director of Children's Services commented that the decision to take a child into care was a difficult one and was always taken to ensure the best long term outcome for the child.
- 29.8 A Member asked whether the data covered the Telford and Wrekin area as well as Shropshire. The Director of Children's Services advised that it covered the Shropshire Council area and that Telford and Wrekin compiled their own data.

- 29.9 The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services reminded Members that when looking at the trends in the data it was important to take into account the work being undertaken around service redesign.
- 29.10 A Member asked whether the increase in the number of children with child protection plans (CPP) was due to an increase in the number of children with plans in place being more than the number of children having their plans removed. The Head of Safeguarding commented that this may be the case. She informed the meeting that work was ongoing on the issue of repeat CPPs and commented that it was important that the second plan did not just repeat what was contained in the first plan.
- 29.11 A Member asked whether the stability of placements depended on the quality of the placement. The Head of Safeguarding commented that the change in the figures had resulted from the decision to move out of county placements back to Shropshire. The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that this decision had been made as it was better for the long term outcomes for the children and it was also more cost effective to accommodate children in Shropshire rather than out of the county.
- 29.12 The Chair thanked Officers for the report and for answering questions.

30 Child Sexual Exploitation

- 30.1 The meeting received a presentation from the Service Specialist – Safeguarding and Review (copy attached to signed minutes) which provided an update on work being done in Shropshire to raise awareness of and to prevent child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- 30.2 A Member expressed concern that 7 out of the 20 cases considered were or became looked after children (LAC). The Service Specialist explained that the majority of the young people concerned became LAC as a result of concerns raised and that only one had been a LAC prior to the concerns being raised.
- 30.3 A Member commended the fact that the number of referrals by schools had increased and asked what training was provided for teachers and governors. The Head of Education Improvement and Efficiency informed the meeting that all schools had to have a child protection lead and that they received full training on CSE. It was noted that schools could also buy in training for other teachers and governors. A Member commented that she had received training as a governor and that it had been very worthwhile. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services commented that elected members had received safeguarding training as part of their induction training and that it may be an opportune time to repeat this training. Members agreed and requested that the co-opted members of the committee also be invited to this training.
- 30.4 A Member commented that the opportunities for people to become involved in the recognition of CSE were encouraging but was concerned that some of the information was not available. The Service Specialist commented that the Council

should not be complacent regarding the need to continually raise awareness. The Director of Children's Services commented on the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to raise awareness. She drew attention to the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) website that contained a lot of useful information on this subject. It was noted that a media campaign was planned.

- 30.5 A Member suggested that Parish and Town Councils could be used to raise awareness and that training could be offered through the SALC training programme. The Portfolio Holder commented that she felt that this would be a good way of raising awareness and that she would take this forward. It was also agreed to undertake Member briefings
- 30.6 A Member asked what work was being done to raise awareness within other youth and sporting groups. The Director of Children's Services stated that groups affiliated to the Shropshire Youth Association received training and guidance, and that sporting clubs were usually affiliated to county or national associations with clear safeguarding policies.
- 30.7 A Member commented that there were a number of out of county looked after children resident within the county and asked what provision was made for them. The Director of Children's Services responded that, whilst responsibility for these children remained with the home authority, Shropshire Council had a duty of care towards them and was working closely with the private care providers to agree processes and procedures around recognising the risks.
- 30.8 A Member asked whether the Council was advised when the police were called due to LAC absconding. The Service Specialist advised that there was a protocol that all authorities had signed up to and that in Shropshire this information was passed on by the police co-ordinator.
- 30.9 A Member asked whether the risk assessments carried out were robust. The Service Specialist advised that they had been recently reviewed and were up to date.
- 30.10 The Chair thanked the Service Specialist for his presentation.

31 Corporate Parenting

- 31.1 It was agreed that due to time constraints the presentation on Corporate Parenting would be deferred to a future meeting.

32 NEETS

- 32.1 The meeting received a presentation from the Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) & Transition Manager on work being done to reduce the number of young people in Shropshire not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

- 32.2 A Member asked what the current trends were with regards to the number of NEETS in the County. The IAG & Transition Manager agreed to circulate current data after the meeting.
- 32.3 Members congratulated the Officers on the good work they were doing and the Chairman thanks Officers for their presentation.

33 Work Programme

- 33.1 The meeting received copies of the current Scrutiny Work Programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.
- 33.2 The Chairman asked Members to let her know of any other topics they would like added to the Committee's Work Programme.

34 Date of Next Meeting

- 34.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at 10.00am on 22 October 2014 at The Shirehall

Signed (Chairman)

Date: