

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton, on Friday, 10 March 2017 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chairman), Cllr D Huxtable (Vice-Chairman), Cllr M Adkins, Cllr A Dimmick, Cllr J Dyke, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr J Lock, Cllr D Yeomans, Eileen Tipper and Ruth Hobbs.

Other Members present: Cllr Gorskop and Cllr Nicholson.

Apologies for absence: Cllr D Hill and Richard Berry

12 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Cllr Adkins, Cllr Dyke, Cllr Hunt, Cllr J Lock, Cllr Redman, and Cllr Yeomans, all declared a personal interest as a District and/or City/Town, Parish Councillor.

Eileen Tipper declared a personal interest as a lay member of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and as a trustee of CHYPPS.

Ruth Hobbs declared a personal interest as Director of Somerset Parent Carer Forum.

13 Minutes from the previous meeting - Agenda Item 3

The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting were accurate, and the Chairman signed them.

14 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no members of the public present.

15 Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed. The Chairman requested an update on the status of Members Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and this was provided by the Scrutiny Manager who noted that this process would begin afresh after the elections.

The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months including Cabinet meetings up to 12 April 2017.

The Committee also accepted the updated outcome tracker and the Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that once an outcome had been agreed as complete (Green) and reported to the Committee, it would be retained on the master copy but not reported again.

16 Addressing drug and alcohol safeguarding concerns in families - Agenda Item 6

The Committee considered this report designed to give Members an understanding of what services were available and how drug and alcohol use and the safeguarding concerns associated with families were addressed.

The strategic approach in Somerset to addressing drug and alcohol concerns recognises that there are different levels of need within the population which require different levels of response in terms of promotion, prevention, early intervention and specialist treatment.

Members heard that a programme of training for non-drug and alcohol specific services is provided to ensure that anyone working in Somerset (whether in paid employment or as a volunteer) would be confident and competent to respond to drugs and alcohol issues at a level that was right for them and the setting they are working in. In addition Members welcomed that the training emphasised the need to think family in working with any individual to ensure best outcomes from early interventions.

The Committee then heard (by way of an anonymous case study) and an example of a young person that had become involved with the service and the various measures put in place. This was then followed by a brief discussion during which questions were asked and answers provided.

The update was accepted and it was suggested that an update report be provided at a future meeting.

17 Youth Offending Team update - Agenda Item 7

The Committee agreed to note the Youth Offending update report, which was an information report.

18 Data Handling update - Agenda Item 8

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Data Handling Update until its next meeting.

19 School Performance 2016 - Agenda Item 9

The Committee considered this report that provided details of performance by Somerset schools in 2016 and included a summary of summary of the Somerset Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Assessments, KS1 and KS2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), GCSE and A Level results for 2016. It was stated that the data had now been validated and this had not changed the figures much.

It was reported that Schools either as academies or as maintained schools have increasing autonomy and the Council worked in partnership with all schools to maximise this autonomy and to increase school effectiveness. Following the development of the strategic vision 'Achieving Excellence for All'

the Council has put in place a number of key activities to support areas for improvement.

Overall it was stated that between 94-95% of Somerset Schools were good or outstanding however when compared to the national average (NA) figures or statistical neighbours (SN) Somerset's performance was average and this was a recurring theme. Vulnerable groups were still not performing as well as their peers although students with English as an additional language and Black and Minority ethnic groups had performed better than in previous years. The achievement gap for those in receipt of Free School Meals and their peers had increased. There was a question about male/female performance and it was noted that Somerset was still better than NA and SN in terms of the difference in performance between boys and girls.

Members considered and discussed the performance at the various key stages with consideration to also given to higher education and A level results and how children in care at the virtual school had performed. The Chairman sought and received reassurance the gaps between the most vulnerable groups and their peers remained an urgent priority. It was explained that Schools were very aware of this and the focus was to support School improvement through the Somerset Education Partner programme to enable more focus and support for those schools struggling to close the gaps. The report was accepted.

20 **Team Around the School** - Agenda Item 10

The Committee a report on the development of the Team Around the School (TAS) model that is an early help approach that supports the targets set out in the County Plan relating to Childrens Services in particular those improving the Ofsted rating and improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. TAS is also a key delivery vehicle for the Children and Young People's Plan.

Members noted that a key judgement made by Ofsted was that the Council needed to progress the early help strategy more swiftly, ensuring that it was well embedded across the partnership and that thresholds for services were better understood and implemented to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals to children's services.

It was reported that following discussions with various stakeholders in the Spring term 2015, that schools were best placed to be the drivers for improving early identification of need and the coordination of early support as they were a universal service with regular and consistent access to the vast majority of the children and young people across Somerset.

The issues that needed to be addressed were: Our vulnerable children are not doing well in Somerset; Strengthen local/partner relationships; Better deployment of multi-agency resources; Better support network for frontline staff; Need to address the 'refer on' culture and all partners hold appropriate level of risk; Consistent application of thresholds; Pockets of good practice across County; Align Early Help with school improvement.

The Committee heard that two schools, King Alfred's in Burnham on Sea and The Blue School in Wells were already operating a way of working that involved

regular multi-agency meetings, coordinated by senior staff of the school and involving feeder school staff that discussed pupils causing concern, and Wadham Community School agreed to join a pilot and coordinate the work in their area.

In response to a question it was explained that working with these schools has led to the development of the TAS model with the following aims:

- To provide a mechanism for schools to meet with family support services and other key partners on a regular basis in order to have shared conversations about children and young people where concerns have been identified and plan the delivery of and monitor the impact of support (aimed at Level 2 'Additional' need);
- To build trust and improve communication across agencies;
- To ensure early help resources from all agencies involved are utilised in the most effective way;
- To reduce exclusions, improve attendance, educational outcomes and overall wellbeing.

It was reported that a recent analysis of calls to Somerset Direct now showed that the schools sector is one of the lowest referring agencies with one of the highest conversion rates which is a significant change from a year ago. Whilst this cannot be solely attributed to the delivery of the TAS model it is reasonable to assume that it is a significant contributory factor.

Members noted that the Early Help Steering Group had been replaced by the TAS Strategy Group which has responsibility for overseeing the development and delivery of the model across the County and considering how it could develop in to the future. The report was accepted.

21 **Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019 - improvement programme 6 update** - Agenda Item 11

The Committee considered this report that provided an update on achieving effective multi-agency support for more vulnerable children and young people and developing an excellent children's social work service.

Members noted that since programme 6 update was considered at a meeting the following achievements had been reported:

- Family group conferencing service was now fully staffed with conferences to be rolled out across the county in February 2017;
- Strategic Manager Prevention appointed – due to start in February 2017 (to develop services specifically for adolescents on the edge of care);
- Ofsted Monitoring visits for Assessment (November 2016) and Safeguarding (January 2017) stated that adequate progress was being made in Children's Social Care;
- A Care leaver was now engaged in work experience at Viridor and conversations with Skanska and local Chamber of Commerce were underway to extend the model;
- There had been significant improvement in permanent staffing in South Somerset Assessment and Children Looked After teams;
- The partnership CSE strategy group was making good progress with involvement and leadership of the Police;

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children's (UASC) team was now in place, the team had been trained and data for all UASC children in the service was held in this team.

There was a brief discussion of various aspects of the programme and it was noted the following areas reported some slippage:

- There continued to be a poor response to advertisements for psychologists to join the emotional health and well-being team which meant the team was not yet able to function at capacity;
- There remain challenges in recruiting permanent staff to South Somerset safeguarding teams;
- Edge of care work was progressing more slowly than anticipated due to staffing issues however it was noted a Strategic Manager for Prevention would be in post from February 2017 to progress this work;

Placement stability remained a concern for children who had been looked after for more than 2 and half years. Examination of the data indicated that some foster carers struggle to manage children as they approach adolescence. It was reported that a revised training programme for those with 17/18 year olds would focus on building carer and child resilience was one of a range of measures in place to address this.

The update was accepted.

22 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 12

The Chairman, after ascertaining there were no other matters arising, thanked all those present for attending and reminded Members that the Committee's next meeting would be the last of this quadrennium.

The meeting closed at 12:48.

(The meeting ended at 12.48 pm)

CHAIRMAN