

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 7 April 2017 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chairman), Cllr M Adkins, Cllr A Dimmick, Cllr J Dyke, Cllr D Hill, Cllr James Hunt, Eileen Tipper, Cllr D Ruddle and Cllr S Coles

Other Members present:

Apologies for absence: Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr J Lock and Richard Berry

175 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Cllr Coles, Cllr Hunt, 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.

176 Minutes from the previous meeting held on - Agenda Item 3

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

177 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no members of the public present.

178 Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed.

The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months including Cabinet meetings up to 19 June 2017.

It was suggested that the Family Based Care (fostering) Peninsula Framework be reviewed by the new Committee after the elections in May.

The Committee also accepted the updated outcome tracker.

179 Child Sexual Exploitation prevention update - Agenda Item 6

The Committee considered this presentation that provided details of the Council's on-going work to prevent child sexual exploitation. It was explained that there was a great deal that was unknown about the perpetrators, this was because relevant agencies did not seem to record data on those responsible and frequently victims did not know their abusers.

It had been estimated by the Children's Commissioner that 16,500 children in the UK were at risk of exploitation. However given that it largely remained a hidden form of abuse and due to inconsistent record keeping it was thought that the true figure of those at risk or victims was probably higher.

It was noted that the Council was working closely with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary and other agencies including Barnardo's and the NHS, in order to help create an environment where vulnerable children can report abuse and feel safe. This would then hopefully result in a more joined up and less fragmented approach so all victims were known to all services in Somerset rather than none or some and there would be adequate services in place to be able to respond.

There was a discussion about issues involving confidentiality and data protection between various agencies and the work being undertaken to ensure protocols were observed whilst also ensuring important information was shared appropriately. It was also noted that the increase in the number of victims may be as a result of a higher profile the issue of sexual exploitation had in recent times and this had raised overall awareness of the subject.

The report was accepted.

180 **Pathways to Independence (P*"*i) update - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee considered a report that explained the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to homeless 16 to 17 year olds and Care Leavers up to the age of 25 and how some of the duties were met through an integrated commissioned service called Pathways to Independence Service (P2i).

It was reported that the Pathways to Independence Service (P2i) allowed young people with housing related support needs to access person-centred support, until they were able to sustain independent living without the need for support. A newly commissioned P2i service delivery model had started on 1 January 2017 and an update was provided on progress since that time.

Members heard that the transition of all young people from the two former providers of the service was managed by a comprehensive transition plan being in place for all young people so that they were moved on to suitable accommodation or independent living as appropriate to their needs. From 1 January 42 young people within South Somerset and 46 young people within Taunton Deane had successfully transitioned.

There was a brief discussion about the unsuccessful attempt to recruit a permanent P2i co-ordinator and it was noted the current co-ordinator, a secondee from Sedgemoor District Housing, was an expert in young people's housing rights and the duties of respective organisations. A further 6 months secondment had been successfully negotiated to allow her to remain in post and this had been an invaluable source of expertise and appropriate challenge when needed and it had the benefit of further improving relationships with District Council colleagues.

It was also stated that P2i Hubs were now operational in four areas in Somerset; Bridgwater, Taunton, Shepton Mallet and Yeovil with each Hub hosting a full time worker provided from the Council as well as a full time P2i Homelessness Prevention Officer provided by District Councils. The Hubs were the first point of contact for young people when faced with housing issues and they provide advice guidance and support. Hub workers also carry out assessments of need (using the Early Help Assessment) to understand in more depth the support required and also complete a risk assessment for any service provision.

There was a brief discussion about the challenges of providing suitable accommodation for a small number of very high needs young people including those with undiagnosed and diagnosed mental health issues as well as offending/re-offending behaviour. It was explained that the P2i Commissioner is working with the Police, Leaving Care, Adult Social Care, and Public Health amongst others to try to address some of these issues and find alternative solutions.

Members also welcomed the news that training for all P2i Hub staff would be developed to make sure that all staff shared the same knowledge and skills in areas such as Emotion Coaching, Housing Advice, Signposting and Assessments. The report was accepted.

181 Data Handling update - Agenda Item 8

The Committee received a presentation designed to give Members an understanding of what services were available and how the new Professional Choices website functioned.

There was a brief discussion about the new tool and how well it appeared to be operating and used by those for whom it had been designed for. There was a question about if the software had been licensed and if so could the Council look to selling it to other Council's, and in response it was stated that this was being considered.

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

182 Young Carers Task and Finish Group Final Report - Agenda Item 9

The Committee considered this final report that provided an overview of the Task and Finish Group's review in to the services for Young Carers. The Group had met with a variety of service users, including young carers and young adults who had been young carers as well as professionals involved in delivering the service.

The Chairman introduced the report and he thanked all those who had contributed to the review and he stressed the importance of recognising the hidden savings those young carers contribute to the authority and colleagues in health services.

The Group had identified that the number of Young Carers the Council is aware of is only a fraction of the total; however the amount of money the known Young Carers save the Council and other services is huge. The support offered by Young Carer in Somerset helps the Council to keep care costs down and in return the Council can support and enhance the Young Carers service by building on the work already started.

It was suggested that the Council should work with all stakeholders (including but not exclusively - GP's, Schools, Colleges) to try and find a way to improve identification and subsequent support of Young Carers as early as possible and ensure details are passed to relevant Officers for initial contact and evaluation with a timetable for follow up if appropriate. Currently too often a lack of awareness and understanding is leading to poor or no support packages for young carers (and those they care for) and this impacts negatively on their educational outcomes

The Committee agreed the suggested recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families/Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.

183 Committee's End of Quadrennium report - Agenda Item 10

The Committee considered and agreed its report before it would be presented to the 26 April 2017 Full Council meeting.

184 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 11

The Chairman, after ascertaining there were no other matters arising, thanked all those present for attending this meeting and the other meetings since the Committee's inception in May 2015 and he also thanked Officers for their support during that time.

(The meeting ended at 12.08 pm)

CHAIRMAN