

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 7 November 2016.

PRESENT

Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC (in the Chair)

Mr. J. Kaufman CC
Mrs. C. Lewis
Mr. L. J. P. O'Shea CC
Mr. A. E. Pearson CC

Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC
Mrs. C. M. Radford CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC
Mr. G. Welsh CC

28. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2016 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

29. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

30. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

31. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

32. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Mr D Snartt CC declared a personal interest in all items on the agenda as two members of his family were teachers.

Mr A E Pearson CC declared a personal interest in all items on the agenda as he managed a company which provided physical activity services to schools in Leicestershire. He was also a Governor of Leicester College.

33. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

34. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

35. Leicestershire's Response to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on Leicestershire County Council's response to tackling Child Sexual Exploitation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed the report and the progress made in relation to the development of a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland multi-agency CSE team.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:

- (i). The Committee raised concerns around the delay of the planned move of the multi-agency CSE team to Wigston from Tigers Road. It was reported that the team was now scheduled to move on 7th December. Delays had been due to ensuring that the building was fit for purpose with significant redevelopment of the existing office space;
- (ii). In terms of information sharing and joint work with neighbouring counties, it was noted that the Police had in place nine CSE regional coordinators across the East Midlands, and that a single framework across the East Midlands had been agreed to create a unified and consistent approach in responding to CSE. Leicestershire continued to develop strong relationships with the regional CSE coordinators;
- (iii). It was reported that the department was looking to develop a faith and community champion service which would create a network of CSE champions and increase referrals from BME communities. This was to be commissioned from the third sector. Further to this the team had met with faith and community leaders in March 2016 to discuss issues around CSE and the response and contributions to tackling CSE from faith communities;
- (iv). Some young people suffered severely from the effects of abuse, particularly in relation to trauma and in many cases, young people required therapeutic support. The department would always seek to offer treatment to a young person within the County, though there were some instances where treatment could not be secured close to home due to demand or because of the complexity of a young person's needs. The department worked closely with colleagues in health and education services to ensure that therapeutic provision was funded by health partners and not the County Council;
- (v). The Committee queried whether referrals from within the City affected the workload of Leicestershire social care staff based at the multi-agency hub. It was reported that currently, the Leicestershire staff managed Leicestershire cases and therefore there was no impact on the rate of referrals from Leicester City;
- (vi). The Council and the Safeguarding Board worked together to ensure that authorities placing children within the Leicestershire boundary notified Leicestershire appropriately. This would assist in ensuring that systems were in place to effectively monitor and safeguard those children at risk of CSE and going

missing. The Safeguarding board Chair had written to over 30 local authorities stressing the need to notify authorities when a child was placed, and the Lead Member had similarly raised the issue with Ministers. It was recognised that this was an ongoing issue within social care, though steps had been taken to address the concern in Leicestershire;

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Committee note the progress and performance of the Council's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) team during quarter one and quarter two of 2016-17, and the progress in relation to the development of a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland multi-agency CSE team;
- b) That the Committee receive a further report in 6 months time outlining the progress around the development of the single children and vulnerable adults safeguarding hub, and its remit and work.

36. Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2015-16.

The Committee considered the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2015-16. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i). The Committee welcomed the report and was pleased to note that there was a reduced number of complaints escalating from Stage 1, however it was recognised that there was an increase of 0.4% of complaints overall on the previous year. It was thought that the increase in complaints overall was as a result of better general awareness of the complaints process within children's social care, and the fact that social care staff were encouraged to speak with children and young people about the complaints process to ensure they were not discouraged from entering the process if necessary;
- (ii). The Complaints team also captured and recorded compliments which had provided a helpful balance in assessing the work of the children's social care teams. It was reported that the Complaints Manager had already received an increased number of compliments for this year than had been reported in the 2015/16 annual report;
- (iii). The reduction in complaints escalating beyond the first stage evidenced improved assessment of complaints, decision making and resolution. It was noted that 77% of complaints were not upheld with demonstrated significant improvement than in previous years, and the Local Government Ombudsman had validated that children's social care teams were largely making appropriate decisions. Response timeliness had also improved and the team made efforts to manage complainants expectations and provide them with realistic timescales for resolution;
- (iv). The Departmental Management Team regularly received information around the timeliness of conference papers being available to parents and carers, an issue that was identified within the report. Whilst there was further work required to

ensure sustained improvement, the actions taken were driving improvement and as a result of the Signs of Safety model, parents and carers were able to leave the conference with a detailed copy of the child's plan;

- (v). It was reported that complaints were accepted in a range of formats to ensure that the process was accessible and reflected the needs of individuals wishing to make a complaint. The most common method of receiving a complaint was via telephone contact, either directly to the complaints team or through another channel such as customer services, or children's social care. Once a complaint was received it would be discussed with desired outcomes being identified to effectively manage the expectations of the complainant.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2015/16, and notes the specific actions being taken to improve performance arising from key learning points.

37. Leicestershire Fostering Service Quality Assurance and Performance Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on Leicestershire Fostering Service's quality assurance and performance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2016. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:

- (i). The Committee was advised that there were a number of children and young people that had returned to the care of their parents, though were still subject to a full care order and were therefore included within the Council's children in care figures. There were no placement costs associated with this cohort;
- (ii). The Committee queried whether the service had specified targets with regards to the number of foster carers recruited, the number of children placed, and the timeliness of proceedings. It was noted that service had recently reviewed its targets to span a five year period and analysis had been undertaken of the resource implications in meeting the targets. A primary focus was around recruitment of mainstream foster carers to meet the increased number of children coming into the care of the Council;
- (iii). A recruitment campaign for mainstream foster carers had been delayed due to a targeted campaign for foster carers for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) and Level 6 carers. A facebook campaign was launched in relation to attracting carers for UASCs, which had generated 100 enquiries, with 10 of these resulting in a positive outcome. Whilst there wasn't a high conversion rate for enquiries, it had presented an opportunity for the team to explore the type of care that enquirers could offer children and young people if they were not able to accommodate UASCs;
- (iv). The Committee recognised the difficulties in recruiting foster carers and that a factor in this was the increased pay offered to carers from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) than the Council was able to provide. The service had

commissioned a piece of work in the previous year to understand why carers would prefer to foster for Leicestershire County Council as opposed to an IFA in order to inform the support offered to carers by the service, and the nature of recruitment drives. The findings demonstrated that Leicestershire County Council foster carers were often invested in working with the local authority to ensure that services were good and believed that the local authority was in the best position to provide the best care for children and young people;

- (v). The service target for the recruitment of Level 6 carers was two, and there were currently 2 carers going through the assessment process. In the event that no suitable Level 6 carers were identified, the contingency plan was that the service specification would go out to IFAs to see if independent Foster Carers were able to meet the needs of the child. It was noted that IFA costs were often less than the costs of residential care for children and young people, and in many cases better met the needs of the child.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the activity of the Fostering Services during the period 1 April to September 2016.

38. Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency Quality Assurance and Performance Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on Leicestershire and Rutland's Adoption Agency quality assurance and performance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2016. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:

- (i). The Committee was advised that recruitment activity for adoption had been halted in the previous quarter. This was to ensure that when adopters were secured, they could expect to be matched with a child within a reasonable timeframe. Recruitment would commence as the need was required;
- (ii). With regards to a Regional Adoption Agency, it was reported that there were concerns around initial proposals in that there were gaps within the financial analysis and business case. Leicestershire and Rutland's Adoption Agency provided a good service and adopters were offered good support. Leicestershire would need to be assured that any regional arrangements would provide a similarly good level of service and that safeguarding matters were appropriately considered before it considered involvement;
- (iii). It was agreed that the Agency Decision Maker be invited to a future meeting of the Children's Social Care Panel to discuss her remit and work;
- (iv). The report outlined that there had been two disruptions within the last quarter, and it was noted that the plan for these cases was re-unification home, rather than permanency in care;

- (v). Leicestershire performed above the national target in terms of the average number of weeks between the start and end of proceedings for adoption. The service engaged in a pre-proceeding protocol which involved a range of assessments with families completed before court proceedings, which ensured a significant amount of work was completed to reduce the length of time waiting within proceedings.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Committee note the activity of the Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency during the period 1 April to 30 September 2016;
- b) That the Agency Decision Maker, Helen Gronnhaug, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Children's Social Care Panel to discuss her remit and work.

39. School Performance and Overview of Outcomes in Key Stage Tests and Examinations.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on school performance and the overview of outcomes in key stage test and examinations. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:

- (i). The changes to the years national performance measures were significant meaning that comparative analysis was difficult. Floor standards had changed for key stages 2 and 4 and were now linked to how the cohorts nationally performed. The results for Leicestershire were still largely unvalidated;
- (ii). Leicestershire attainment was generally in line with the national average though there were concerns around the progress of some pupils, primarily those with special educational needs and disabilities, eligible for Pupil Premium, and those more able pupils. However, a small cohort of children in care had demonstrated improved performance;
- (iii). The percentage of good and outstanding schools as rated by Ofsted was above national average;
- (iv). The Committee queried what actions the Council could take to influence the performance figures. The Council had a position of influence, rather than responsibility, and consideration was being given to engaging Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to champion the education of children in Leicestershire. The department was beginning to develop a strategy as to engagement, and further consideration would be given to inviting representatives of MATs to join the Leicestershire Educational Excellence Partnership (LEEP).

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Committee notes the performance of schools, including inspection outcomes in statutory tests and examinations, during 2016 and note the considerable changes that have taken place in the curriculum affecting statutory assessment and performance measures across all key stages.

40. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 16 January 2017 at 1.30pm.

1.30pm – 4 .30pm
07 November 2016

CHAIRMAN