

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 10 September 2018.

PRESENT

Mrs B. Seaton CC (in the Chair)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC
Mrs. R. Page CC
Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC

Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC
Mr. G. Welsh CC
Mrs. M. Wright CC

In Attendance

Mr. I. D. Ould CC, Lead Member for Children and Families
Mrs. D. Taylor CC, Cabinet Support Member

24. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2018.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2018 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

25. Question Time.

The following question, received under Standing Order 35, was put to the Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Question from Miss Karen O'Reardon

'What percentage of children's social workers are SENCO and CAMHS trained?'

Reply from Mrs B Seaton CC

'There is no requirement for social workers to be CAMHS or SEN trained. We have one social worker who is currently seconded to SENA in order to support the integration of social care into Education, Health and Care Plans.

Miss O'Reardon asked a supplementary question around whether, given that there are now more children in care with complex needs, it would be an idea for social workers to undertake basic training in SEN and CAMHS and whether there were any plans to do this?

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Children and Family Services responded that CAMHS was a health service, and social workers were not equipped to make a judgement on the mental health needs of young people. This was not within the remit of a social worker as there were other members of staff who had been trained to undertake this role.

26. 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).

27. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

28. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

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

No declarations were made.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

30. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

31. Early Support and Inclusion for Children with SEND.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services advising of the latest position regarding early support to families where a child had special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability. This followed the ending of the previous contract with Menphys in December 2017 and the Cabinet decision to establish an in-house SEN Early Help Service from that same time. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed the county focus and the fact that the service had been brought in-house. Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:

- i) In response to a query around reviewing further progress of the new contract, it was stated that plans were in place for further monitoring. The service had worked closely with the Parent Carer Forum and was keen to involve parents in the quality assurance and monitoring of progress. Work would be taking place in the next few months to confirm the proposals for monitoring, but key was ensuring transparency around how the support offer was being delivered. However, parents had been heavily involved in shaping the offer, and it was the intention that set outcomes would be in place by the end of the year.
- ii) Some concern was raised that in the feedback to date, there appeared to be no complaints by parents. It was the intention to provide a more in depth analysis on the outcomes and this would include greater consultation with, and feedback from, parents. Two complaints had been received from parents since the service had moved in-house and these had related to being unable to secure a place on a summer scheme. In these cases, other signposting work had taken place with the two parents.

- iii) Early indications were showing that the service was already a success. However, further detail needed to be provided on parent's feedback and the views of young people.
- iv) It was reassuring that staff were able to TUPE over into their new roles. In response to a query around the proportion of staff who had transferred, it was noted that all those who had been offered the opportunity had done so, and were now employees of Leicestershire County Council. There had been some minor differences with the original terms and conditions for the staff, but these would be addressed as part of the Early Help Review, as the staff would be subject to the action plan around this. Whilst their role would not be changing, the minor differences in the terms and conditions would bring them in line with those of the County Council.
- v) It was noted that £33,000 remained within the Disabled Children's Services budgets and it was noted that, in order to ensure that this money was used in the best way, discussions would take place with the Parent Carer Forum along with other groups of parents and carers, for example within the Supporting Leicestershire Families service where there were groups of parents who had been brought together to discuss SEND issues. It was also the intention to involve the young people who were part of the SEND Youth Groups.
- vi) The Committee welcomed the positive feedback to date from parents, but agreed that further detail was needed. An update report would be presented to the Committee in six months.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That a further update be provided in six months.

32. Change to the Order of Business.

The Chairman sought and obtained the consent of the Committee to vary the order of business from that set out on the agenda.

33. Annual Complaints and Compliments Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services providing a summary of the Children's Social Care statutory complaints and compliments annual report for 2017/18. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:

- i) In terms of monitoring improvements, it was stated that where fault had been found, actions would be followed up to see whether anything could have been done differently. Where there were wider themes arising from the complaint, these were fed through to the department to consider. Improvements were still needed in following up the wider actions.

- ii) A number of improvements had been made as a result of the work arising from the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection, but there was concern that this report did not appear to fully reflect these. It was stated that one issue had been the high turnover of staff during the period and the high level of agency staff used. A large difference from previous years was the level of activity in the department, particularly around single assessments. It was felt that the report was a reflection of the current position of the department and it was anticipated that when the next update report on the Ofsted improvement process was presented, there would be further evidence of progress.
- iii) The department had a number of performance indicators to measure the performance around the recording of information. There had been a significant increase in the number of single assessments, which had led to a better recording of information. The MOSAIC computer system had also led to some improvements, and this had been designed to work in the First Response team so that it was easier to record information onto the system.
- iv) It was suggested that it would be helpful to look at the number of cases being considered by each service area and the percentage of these which actually resulted in a complaint, as this would provide a year on year example of whether the number of complaints was increasing. There was departmental sharing of the complaints system, and where fault had been found, this was shared with all service managers.
- v) In relation to a query around the ownership of complaints, monthly management meetings took place with child care managers to discuss a range of indicators relating to timeliness. As a result, managers were fully aware of the targets and these were monitored on a team by team basis. Managers were aware of the need to respond to things proportionately, and this included how to complete assessments and visits as well as complaints. A named manager was allocated to a complaint and took ownership of the issue until it had been resolved. A senior manager from the department was aware of the issue and a complaints handler was also assigned to the case to ensure any actions were followed up. It was stated that a previous issue had been that managers had dealt with Stage 1 complaints without formally recording them anywhere, but this had now been rectified.
- vi) The Committee had previously received reports on the recruitment and retention of staff within the department, and it was suggested that a further update be presented. Currently, there were 43 agency staff in children's social care and this had been relatively consistent since the Ofsted inspection. There had been difficulty in recruiting permanent staff, but this reflected the national picture. Over the next two months, 31.5 new social workers would be commencing, the majority of whom were newly qualified. As a result, these would require additional support, and it would therefore be necessary to retain a number of the agency staff for longer than anticipated. It was felt that the department's Recruitment and Retention Strategy was now starting to have an impact.
- vii) It was noted that better reporting was now having an impact on the increase in complaints around child protection.

The Lead Member for Children and Family Services expressed concern over the turnover of staff within the department, and the fact that all new staff had to be trained in Signs of Safety. However, he was happy with the current position within the department and felt that improvements were being made.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Committee receives an update on progress with the recording of complaints in six months' time;
- (c) That the Committee receives an update on Recruitment and Retention at its meeting on 22 January 2019.

34. Quarter 1 2018/19 Performance Report.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Children and Family Services presenting an update of the department's performance for the period April – June 2018 (quarter 1). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:

- i) In response to a query around ensuring that children were not leaving the care system too early, it was stated that the timing was key of when to become involved with a family and when to stop intervention. The department was due to undertake a series of audits on child protection cases, and consideration would be given to whether the service had disengaged with the family too early and whether support should have been provided for a longer period of time. It was suggested that further consideration should be given to this when the detailed work had been undertaken.
- ii) It was reported that the education data would be confirmed in January and the Committee would then receive information around Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 2 outcomes.
- iii) It had recently been reported in the national news that a number of nurseries were being forced to close due to the lack of funding they were receiving for the free places they had to offer. No nurseries in Leicestershire had yet reported that this had been the case, but the situation would continue to be monitored.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

35. Annual Report of the Independent Chair of the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The Committee considered a report of the Independent Chair of the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board (LRLSCB) which presented the Board's Annual Report for 2017/18. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with

these minutes. Any comments or proposed amendments would be addressed in the final report before it was presented to the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board at its meeting on 12 October 2018.

The Independent Chair of the LRLSCB was unable to attend the meeting to present the Annual Report. Given the independence of the LRLSCB, members of the Committee did not feel that it was appropriate to raise their questions with any of the officers present at the meeting. However, it was felt that the Committee's comments and questions were important and there should be the opportunity for these to be presented. It was therefore agreed that any questions that the Committee would have asked the Independent Chair would be recorded and submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 September. The following questions and comments were raised:

- Were there any barriers to learning because of the capacity of workers across the children's social care workforce?
- Concern was raised regarding the capacity of officers to attend training and the non-attendance at this by the Probation Service.
- It was queried how the change in process around Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit cases being allocated to social workers would be monitored?
- Were the computer systems across partner organisations synchronised so that they were compatible?
- The LRLSCB would continue to monitor the notable reductions in referrals and child protection plans in Rutland, and it was queried whether this would also be the case in Leicestershire?
- Was the LRLSCB satisfied with Leicestershire County Council's procedures and did it feel that the arrangements the County Council had in place were adequate?
- Further detail was requested regarding the 'Section 11' peer challenge process; was this successful and how would it be taken forward?
- There had been a reduction in the number of Elective Home Educated children who had received a statutory visit. Why was this the case and what was being done to improve this?
- Had funding for the new local arrangements for safeguarding been secured from the Police, CCGs and local authorities?

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were also raised:

- i) The Committee was reminded that this would be the last Annual Report of the LRLSCB as the arrangements to replace the Board were now being finalised. A report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee providing an update on the current position with this.
- ii) It was noted that one of the key messages in the Annual Report was that changes to the First Response service are improving assessment processes. In the light of current staffing issues facing that team, it was confirmed that the necessary arrangements would be put in place to ensure that the performance of the service was affected as little as possible.
- iii) A follow up inspection from Ofsted around the front door arrangements was expected and the outcome from this would provide a good indicator of the improvements that had been made. It was felt that there had been improvements, and the Annual Report of the LRLSCB also reflected this opinion.

RESOLVED:

That the questions now raised by the Committee be submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 September 2018.

36. Dates of Future Meetings.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 5 November 2018 at 10.30am.

Future meetings of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at 1.30pm on the following dates:-

22 January 2019
5 March 2019
4 June 2019
3 September 2019
5 November 2019.

1.30 – 3.23pm
10 September 2018

CHAIRMAN