



Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 5 March 2024.

PRESENT

Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC (in the Chair)

Mr. M. Frisby CC

Mr. R. Hills CC

Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC

Mr. M. Hunt CC

Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC

Mrs. S. Jordan CC

56. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

57. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that one question had been received under Standing Order 35.

Question asked by Mrs Sue Whiting:

“Could the Chair please state:

- a) Have all 224 children, currently in Year 6, with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), who had not been allocated a placement for Year 7 on the 18 January 2024 (as stated in the minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 23 January 2024) now been allocated a placement for Year 7, as the deadline of 15 February has now passed?
- b) How many children, currently in Year 6, with an EHCP, who've not been allocated a placement for September, may need to be home schooled in September. Also, what provision is already in place for children who are home schooled?”

Response by the Chairman:

- a) There are currently 44 pupils who are in Year 6 for whom the Service has identified that specialist provision is required, who do not have a special school or resource base secondary placement named for September 2024. These pupils have all been allocated a mainstream school in the interim.
- b) The Service is continuing to actively work with special schools, the sufficiency team and mainstream schools in order to ensure that pupils have an appropriate school placement for September. The Service currently has no plans for any of these pupils to be accessing home tuition in September.

Pupils with EHCP's who currently are accessing tuition through Section 19 provision are carefully monitored by the SENA team and ongoing work is done to arrange suitable ongoing provision.

Mrs Whiting asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you. Is it possible to clarify that the statement in answer b means that the Department is confident that all 44 pupils who still need specialist provision will have a specialist placement in September?"

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Children and Family Services reported that work was taking place to identify placements for the 44 children. The children's plans did not state that the children required home education so the Department would not plan for that. The plans did state that they needed specialist provision, so work was taking place across the Department to identify the correct provision for those children.

58. 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).

59. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

60. 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.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

62. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

63. Violence Reduction Network Strategy and Updates.

The Committee considered a presentation of the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) which provided an overview of a refreshed strategy and updates on the work of the Network. A copy of the presentation marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed Bethany Grewcock and Millicent Gant from the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), for this item.

In introducing the presentation, the Director reported that the Department continued to work closely with colleagues within the VRN, on community safety.

Arsing from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. There had been a decrease in the number of intervention workers carrying out detached work and youth justice work in the community. However, through the VRN, there had been an investment in staff which would lead to an increase in practitioners carrying out this work. The Department had secured funding for youth work provision and would allocate youth workers both within schools and in the community.
- ii. The VRN had conducted regular data analysis, in partnership with colleagues in health, education and social care, in order to identify the root causes for crime. This would enable the Network to strategise a long-term public health approach to focus on root causes. The data had also been used to recognise risk factors and to identify those individuals likely to be at risk. The result of this work had contributed to the refreshed strategy and would inform intervention work such as that which would be carried out through the Reach programme; a programme which aimed to prevent young people at risk of school suspension from future offending.
- iii. It was acknowledged that it was often challenging to directly measure the impact of intervention work. However, the VRN had created an outcome framework which would be used, alongside evaluation work and case studies, in order to track progress and identify positive outcomes.

The Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Families highlighted that data sharing agreements with partner agencies would be beneficial in understanding the impact of crime and for risk management. The data would also be used to form a long-term strategy for intervention. Violence Reduction Network's had made a positive impact other areas of the country in terms of a reduction in crime and were regularly audited and scrutinised by the Home Office in order to obtain repeat funding.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the presentation on the Violence Reduction Network, be noted.

64. Children and Family Services Department.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of the work of the Children and Family Services Department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

It was acknowledged that the Schools Music Service had not been included within the report, but was included on the Departmental Structure in Appendix B. The Service continued to work with schools in Leicestershire and Leicester City to provide music services to children.

The Lead Member for Children and Families highlighted that the Department delivered a wide range of Statutory services to children and families in Leicestershire and suggested that a copy of the report be circulated to all Elected Members.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Director of Children and Family Services be requested to provide all Elected Members with a copy of the report on the Children and Family Services Department.
- b) That the overview of the work of the Children and Family Services Department, be noted.

65. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of Leicestershire County Council's duties and responsibilities to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and the context in which it delivered services to these children and young people. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the Director reported that since the report had been published, the number of UASC in care had decreased. However, the number of care leavers had increased. Members noted that this was not unusual, as UASC were often older children, which meant that they would quickly progress into care leaver status. The number of UASC care leavers within the Council's care continued to present a financial challenge to the Department as less funding was available for this group.

Members noted that there was an error in paragraph 14 of the report. The report had stated that the Council had 88 UASC Children in Care and 88 UASC Care Leavers, in its care, in December 2023. However, this should have read 2022.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director stated that UASC had a range of different aspirations and needs. Some had preferred to return to their country of origin, but the majority often aspired to settle into the community. The Department had held celebration events whereby the achievements of UASC were celebrated, alongside other children in care and care leavers.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of Leicestershire County Council's duties and responsibilities to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), and the context in which it delivered services to these children and young people, be noted.

66. Children's Innovation Partnership.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an update on the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP), with a particular focus on the residential redesign. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director explained that the Service would work with Barnardo's to design and deliver residential care services. The Council would own the residential homes, and work as a strategic partner with Barnardo's, which would be the registered manager of the homes for operational purposes.

The Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Families acknowledged that delays in the opening of homes had been disappointing. However, she hoped that more homes would be opened by the end of 2024, and that the partnership with Barnardo's would be a positive change in the delivery of residential care services.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP), with a particular focus on the residential redesign, be noted.

67. Quarter 3 2023/24 Performance Report.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an update on the Children and Family Services Department's performance for the period to December 2023 (quarter 3). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The percentage of young people in Leicestershire not in education, employment, or training (NEET) related to young people of statutory school age only and represented all registered NEET young people in Leicestershire. Members noted that the figure did not include hidden NEETs, as it was challenging to obtain this data.
- ii. Performance for the period was comparable to that in the same period in 2022/23. It was suggested that a data analysis would be useful in order to understand the reasons for the similarities. The Director agreed to present information on underperforming areas, as well as an overview of targeted work aimed to improve performance, within the Performance Report at the meeting on 4 June 2024.
- iii. A Member raised a question as to whether the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme had had an impact on performance relating to Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). It was agreed that the Director would provide a written response to this question following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Director be requested to present information on underperforming areas, as well as an overview of targeted work aimed to improve performance, within the Performance Report at the meeting on 4 June 2024.
- b) That the Director be requested to provide a written response to a question as to whether the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme had had an impact on performance relating to Education and Health Care Plan's (EHCP).
- c) That the update on the Children and Family Services Department's performance for the period to December 2023 (quarter 3), be noted.

68. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 4 June 2024 at 14:00.

14:00 – 15:33
05 March 2024

CHAIRMAN