

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Monday 11 February 2019 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Bainbridge, P Brookes, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, C Hampson, K Hopper, I Jewell, A Patterson, M Simmons, A Willis and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Ms R Evans and Mrs P Parkins

Also Present:

Councillors A Bainbridge, L Maddison, J Turnbull and Mr D Balls.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Potts, D Bell, J Blakey, N Grayson, L Kennedy and A Reed.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor L Maddison substituted for Councillor N Grayson.

3 Declarations of Interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no declarations of interest from co-opted members or interested parties.

5 Update on Joint Targeted Area Inspection Action Plan

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented Members with progress on the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Action Plan, and a presentation from the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board with regards to progress against the improvement actions contained within the plan (for copies see file of minutes).

The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) advised that the action plan was a live document. It was driven by three partnership working groups that had an ability to challenge and monitor day to day progress.

Members were reminded of the number of actions that had already been achieved and that the timescale was self-imposed.

In relation to strategy meetings the Independent Chair of the LSCB advised that there were tele conference facilities that was of particular benefit to partners who found it difficult to attend meetings that could be called at short notice.

Members were advised of the progress to date in the five themes identified within the JTAI Action Plan including the use of assessment tools to identify risks of abuse; that the LSCB had revised its training programme to include cumulative risk assessment in relation to coercive control.

The Independent Chair advised that there had been an audit of the improvement actions in December 2018 and a further six audits were planned. It was important that all actions were effective and could be evidenced.

In relation to the Voice of the Child section of the action plan members were informed that it was a fundamental theme included within all of the actions and of the renewed focus to ensure this was the case in all single and multi-agency training programmes. Members were advised that in relation to the use of the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) for children with a child protection plan County Durham was leading the way regionally.

Members were advised of the key themes from Ofsted focussed visit in January 2019.

Councillor Brookes referred to Voice of the Child as being most important, but also being the least successful with 8 out of 10 actions had not been completed in the agreed timescales. The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board confirmed that 6 out of the 8 actions related to pre-birth procedures, but a task and finish group would commence at the end of February to ensure all agencies were aware of procedures however he admitted that the timescales set may have been slightly ambitious.

Councillor Brookes then referred to strategy meetings, of which some were required to meet within a 24 hour timescale, putting services under a lot of pressure. He queried the number of meetings and how they were managed. He also asked for comments on the issue of staff to attending meetings who did not have the relevant authority to make decisions.

The Strategic Manager, Families First North, confirmed that 600 strategy meetings with partners had been held across 14 teams during quarter two, which was a significant amount of work. Some referrals were held within four hours, it depended on the level of concern regarding the child. Meetings may be delayed based on the availability of staff, but only if their contribution was crucial. Some of the logistical problems had been alleviated; conference calling had been introduced which meant that staff did not have to physically meet in person anymore, and formerly where GPs were unavailable due to clinics, they were now able to contribute written information due to a new pilot which had been introduced.

Finally, in response to Councillor Brookes, the Strategic Manager, Families First North confirmed that there was a mechanism through the LSCB to challenge partners should any consistently not engage, however there was an excellent working relationship with partners and reassured the Councillor that there had been a significant piece of work that had involved all agencies.

Councillor Jewell acknowledged the challenges from multi-agency working and queried whether the improvements which had been made were proving positive. The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board reminded Members that the inspection was in July and although there had been improvements, some of them would take time to filter through. He advised that audits would continue and there would be self-examination and third-party assurance from Health partners. The Independent Chair acknowledged that it was early days but there were good working relationships at all levels and if the process was not working, a task a sub group would review and imbed learning.

Mrs Evans commented on liaising with the Health Service, saying that to her knowledge it could be a difficult challenge. She suggested that the Voice of the Child was not included within all themes as had been previously alluded to and she commented on there being a reliance on NYAS, when there were other services such as Youth Offending, which had done some good work with young people. Finally, she confirmed that she was still unsure after been presented with all of the information, what constituted a good outcome.

The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board confirmed that there was no difficulty with regards to interface with the Health Service, there was an executive group which met regularly with contribution from the Director of Nursing for North Durham CCG. The Senior Safeguarding Nurse confirmed that there were sub-groups of the executive group which were also attended by colleagues in the other Foundation Trusts, Harrogate and Tees, Esk and Wear Valley. The Health Service was a complex organisation, there were 70 independent GP's in County Durham, however practices had changed in order to scrutinise and improve the service. There had been changes in the way in which partners were engaged.

With regards to the Voice of the Child, the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board confirmed that the voice of the child was included throughout all of the themes included in the action plan and Investing in Children had been consulted as a first response and there were plans to create a new apprentice post for a Young Peoples Commissioner. He acknowledged that this had been omitted from the papers.

The LSCB Business Manager advised that a shadow board made up of young people would meet with practitioners and families and would look at what the partnership is doing. If this information was appropriate to include in the action plan it would be done.

Councillor Patterson confirmed that it was important to remember that the views of IIC were perceived and children did not always agree with them. In response to a question from Councillor Patterson with regards to Liquid Logic, the Strategic Manager, Children's Services Reform, confirmed that it had been fully implemented during the previous week and had transitioned smoothly, aside from a few small glitches. The system would not change working practice, but it had intuitive steps built in which would not allow a case to

be progressed until the completion of essential tasks. This would alleviate management oversight, which was a concern of one of the JTAI Inspectors.

Strategic Manager, Families First North, confirmed that it also simplified the extraction of data, which would ultimately assist with performance and best work practice.

Mr Balls sought reassurance for those areas which did not require improvement were still being monitored and whether the LSCB were continuing to meet through the transitional period to the new partnership and whether planned work would still continue. The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board confirmed that the final meeting would be attended by Chairs to ensure nothing was omitted from the work plan.

The Detective Superintendent advised that some children could not speak out as they were experiencing abuse and there was a need to change the culture and develop a language to ensure all children were listened to.

The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board agreed to return in 6-12 months for a further progress update.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 The Child Protection Offer

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Manager, Families First North, which provided Members with an overview of the work Child Social Care staff undertook when managing safeguarding concerns in Child Protection (for copies see file of minutes).

Councillor Charlton queried the capacity for staff over 14 teams with the referral rate. The Strategic Manager, Families First North, confirmed that following a restructure in 2017, the teams were established according to locality teams which varied in size and were aligned to local networks such as police and health. Areas where there was high demand would have more in the team than in areas where there was lower demand. Teams range between six to seven social workers where demand is low to medium and nine to ten social workers where demand is high. The skill mix of teams was also considered to ensure combinations are right. The teams had also been allocated on the skills of staff, ensuring that all had experienced members of the team as well as NQSW.

In response to a question from Councillor Brookes regarding staff pressures and the potential link to sickness absence, the Strategic Manager, Families First North, confirmed that there was a reliance on Managers to have the skills to allocate work and monitor and review through one to one supervision. In addition there was an opportunity for reflective practice sessions, where cases were presented and discussed for development. A task and finish group had been set up to configure additional needs for the service but the emotive nature of the work and pressures with regards to workflow, did have an impact on practitioners.

Councillor Hopper advised that she had visited the MASH at Newton Aycliffe and it was interesting to see how partners based there worked together. The Strategic Manger, Families First North, confirmed that the invitation for Members to visit was open.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.