

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 20 January 2016

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cyril Randles
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Daniel Warren
Rosalie Watkins
Cllr Richard Whitehouse
Emmerson Morrison
Katie Blakemore

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith
Kathy Roper

Scrutiny Officer
Head of Young Adults Commissioning

Witness

Alan Coe

Chair of Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Arun Photay

2 **Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made relative to the under consideration at the meeting.

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (25.11.15)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25.11.15, subject to the agreed changes, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 6 – Children's Service Re-Design

The panel discussed if there were any further details about the future ownership of the proposed site for an outreach based at Valley Park Campus. The panel were advised that the plan is to remove all services from the site as it will change ownership. The site will be managed by an Academy from August 2016.

5 **Safeguarding Children's Board Annual: Report and Executive Summary 2014 - 2015**

Alan Coe, Independent Chair of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board, presented the main findings of the 2014-15 annual report. Independent Chair explained that the report was a final version and not a draft version as shown on the papers.

Independent Chair gave a short introduction to the essential responsibilities of the Council and other partners to protect the interests of children and young people in Wolverhampton. Independent Chair gave a brief outline of his work history and role in supporting the work of the Board to meet its responsibilities.

Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board is required under statute to produce an annual report detailing the work done and the progress against key priorities. Independent Chair commented on the relationship with schools where the Council has influence but not control due to changes in their governance and management arrangements.

Independent Chair commented that the Council has power through the licensing of premises and buildings to safeguard children and the work is much broader than being the responsibility of social care.

Independent Chair briefed the panel on the sections of the report which make reference to future risks and priorities. Independent Chair highlighted the relationship with GPs and schools, who are relatively independent, with their own governance presents a challenge in how best to engage them in the work of safeguarding.

Independent Chair commented on success in achieving 100 per cent return from schools in Wolverhampton. This figure compares to 20 per cent in the previous year. WSCB is offering safeguarding training and support to schools. However, the Independent Chair commented on the challenge in engaging with more GPs and this work was not easy.

Independent Chair commented on the challenge also presented by the growth of different faith groups across the city. Independent Chair explained that there are 80 different denominations and that WSCB cannot make demands that they meet

safeguarding standards. Work is being done to build relationships with different faith groups.

The panel queried evidence presented to the on-going review of child sexual exploitation and the issues of female genital mutilation and the concerns that some GPs were fully engaged in reporting cases to the necessary bodies.

The panel queried the progress in getting known faith groups to complete a safeguarding return. The members of the Child Sexual Exploitation Review who are also members of the panel were advised that the response had been poor. Independent Chair explained that the situation is improving but it will need on-going work to build relationships with representatives of different faith groups. Independent Chair explained the work being done with GPs to raise awareness of the issue of female genital mutilation.

Wolverhampton CCG has been asked by the Board to present a report on the work done to raise awareness of their responsibilities under legislation to report concerns to the Board. The report will include details of the number of cases and reassurance that GPs are taking the necessary action.

Independent Chair explained that he is contracted to work 30 days a year on behalf of Board.

Independent Chair commented on the work done to build relationships with the teachers in the independent sector and also academies. Independent Chair explained that it has taken time to improve and also that the Board are keen to more work with schools.

The panel queried the effectiveness and quality of safeguarding training given to frontline professionals working with families and the opportunities to identify possible signs of abuse. Independent Safeguarding Chair explained that responsibility for managing health visitors will be transferred to the local authority later in the year. Independent Chair explained that the Board will be checking that everyone working with families will get the minimum safeguarding training and also ask questions. Independent Chair commented on the good work done with staff from Wolverhampton Homes and the support provided by Mark Henderson to raise the issue of safeguarding.

The panel commented that the annual report was very positive about the work done to protect children and also a very helpful document.

The panel queried the statement in the cover report that there were no direct equalities implications arising from the report. The panel commented that the groups of vulnerable children covered by the report would have protected characteristics; further some children are deliberately targeted because of their ethnic origin or religious beliefs.

Independent Chair accepted the point about the statement and agreed to discuss the matter further with Strategic Director: People .

The panel queried evidence presented to the child poverty scrutiny review which highlighted a number of concerns and the impact of high levels of poverty on

children. Independent Chair explained that the equalities issues are considered during the work done by Child Death Overview Panel. The work is led by Walsall.

The panel commented on the reference in the report to internet safety and queried the work done with school. The panel were concerned about issues of reported bullying in schools. Independent Chair explained that the Board had arranged a conference to discuss the issue of bullying and the level of underreporting.

The panel requested more details about the strategic work of the Board and information about review and intermediate and targets. Independent Chair agreed that more details would be provided.

The panel also queried that the advice and support given to children and young people to help protect them and concerns that incidents were not being reported.

The panel discussed the number of allegations against professionals detailed in the report and specifically those related in children homes. Independent Chair explained that extra arrangements to monitor children who are placed in homes outside Wolverhampton.

The panel discussed how the mental health needs of young were being met by the mental health trust and issues about safeguarding. The panel discussed the need to challenge services to check the quality of services being provided.

The panel discussed whether the safeguarding situation was getting better in Wolverhampton and the effectiveness of partnership working arrangements.

The panel commented if the number of children where there are safeguarding concerns was expected to increase following the MASH. The panel discussed that awareness about safeguarding may increase but this could lead to earlier interventions by professionals who will have access to better intelligence. This will also include better analysis of the data. Independent Chair shared findings from the experience of Birmingham and the issues of trafficked children and the benefits improved reporting.

The panel queried that given the high numbers of looked after children in Wolverhampton if there was evidence to suggest that social workers were under pressure not to add to this figure.

The Chair thanked Independent Chair for the evidence.

Resolved:

Independent Chair to meet with Strategic Director: People to talk about the improving the equalities statement.

6

Draft Joint Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy

Kathy Roper, Head of Commissioning - All Age Disability, gave a short overview of the aims of the strategy and invited panel comments on the proposals as part of the consultation process. Head of Commissioning explained the strategy aims to build on current good practice in supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The panel thanked Head of Commissioning for presenting the report. The panel commented that the document does not give a lot of details about transport for schools and the support available. Head of Commissioning explained the option for people to use personal budgets to meet their transport needs as an alternative to the direct provision of special services. Head of Commissioning explained that strategy aims to be less paternalistic and give people more choice about how they use their money.

The panel discussed the support available to people across the autistic spectrum and reports of the difficulty they experienced to get the help needed. Head of Commissioning commented on the recently drafted Autism Strategy which includes guidelines on diagnosis and assessment and the responsibilities of different agencies. The panel commented on the level of provision available when diagnosis has been completed. Head of Commissioning explained that the review has 23 recommendations and accepted the need to improve the current offer to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Head of Commissioning commented on the practical inclusion agenda to support children to receive education in mainstream settings.

The panel thanked Head of Commissioning for the report.

Resolved:

The panel comments on the Joint Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy to be included as an appendix to the report presented to Cabinet when the consultation ends.

The meeting closed at 19:23