

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 12 March 2018

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Welcome Koussoukama
Cllr Lynne Moran
Rosalie Watkins
Cyril Randles
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal

Employees

Amanda Newbold
Andrew Wolverson
Meredith Teasdale

Senior School Improvement Advisor
Head of Service, People
Director of Education

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following people:

Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Jonathan Yardley
John Dovey
Emma Bennett
Representatives of Wolverhampton Youth Council
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded.
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (7 February 2018 and 1 November 2017)**
That the minutes of the meetings held on 7 February 2018 and 1 November 2017 were approved as a correct record and was signed by the Chair.
- 4 **Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 5 **Early Intervention Model Implementation**
Andrew Wolverson, Head of Service – People, introduced the report. The report details the impact of the early intervention programme which is aimed at keeping

children safely at home. The Head of Service advised the panel that the restructure of the early intervention programme started in April 2016.

The Head of Service commented on the overall progress made by the programme and the positive impact made against the stated objectives. The Head of Service accepted that there was more work to be done to build on the progress made.

The Head of Service reported that the numbers of looked after children had remained relatively stable during the last 12 months, but was confident that the right children had been placed in care. The Council had the highest intake of children under five years and older children. The Head of Service commented on the issue of cases involving youth violence and the use of knives and the work being done with Youth Offending Team to provide the right level of support in these circumstances.

The Head of Service commented on the positive impact on the parent champions programme in supporting and encouraging people to get involved with initiatives supported by the early intervention programme. The parent champions have been able to engage with parents that the service has not been able to work with previously. The Head of Service advised the panel that the contact by parent champions is done with the consent of the family.

The Head of Service briefed the panel on the results of an analysis of the assessment of the three key issues facing each of the localities. The Head of Service advised the panel that action plans had been prepared and delivered by members of the multi-agency strengthening families partnership groups in the locality.

The Head of Service commented on results showing the areas highest levels of referrals to the MASH team are Children's Village and Whitmore Reans and the work being done to respond to increase.

The Head of Service commented on the important role of the Council in helping families but also highlighted the contribution of partner organisations in offering a flexible response to help meet the needs of local families. The Head of Service added that the Council wants to get more partner organisations working at the early intervention and making referrals to the early assessment team.

The Head of Service commented on the work being done to restructure working practices with a focus on prevention and to offer families support at the right level. The aim of the providing support is to build the family resilience so they will need less help from the service or have the confidence to access the support or information themselves to deal with the situation.

The panel discussed the work of the youth offending team in dealing with issue of violence and the relationship with early intervention teams. The Head of Service commented that the service had two dedicated police officers working within the strengthening family hub to support families dealing with issues of domestic violence. The number of police officers has since increased since the report was published to four.

The involvement of the police has been very positive and has help to provide intelligence about families that may benefit from the support offered by members of the early intervention team.

The panel queried the support offered to other family members where a child is involved in violence. The Head of Service reassured that panel that the early intervention team would work with the whole family and offer support to other children to build positive self-esteem; this work would be done jointly with the school.

The panel discussed the high number of referrals in areas and the contribution of factors such as a deprivation and unemployment and queried the reasons for the service wanting to collect further evidence, when there was general agreement about the impact of these issues. The panel commented that the issue of lack of resources was a known major factor in families and there was concern about the impact of a delay while gathering more information which will lead to the same conclusion at the end of this process.

The Head of Service accepted the historical nature of the issues in certain localities but added that further evidence is needed to better understand why families who have been referred straight to MASH were not previously known and what could be done to either have prevented this or to better supported the family at an earlier stage.

The Head of Service added that the issue for the service was to decide if the right mix of resources is available, in terms of staff with the skills needed to identify families that would benefit from an intervention at a much earlier stage.

The panel discussed the source of referrals from partner organisations and the work being done to promote the use of the referrals system. The aim being to encourage the sharing of information and good practice about families between the different agencies.

The Head of Service commented on the work done to get greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of partner agencies in ensuring a whole system approach is taken to support the transformation of the family support service. The Head of Service added that work is being done to detail the expectations of health visiting service to support the future vision of the offer of families needing help and the targets to be achieved when commissioning services.

The panel discussed work being done with early intervention service and Wolverhampton Homes and private sector landlords to better support families facing eviction.

The Head of Service commented that the Council is working to agree minimum standards about the length of the eviction notice given to families that the service is working with. The aim being to allow the early intervention service to get involved and provide the necessary support when an eviction notice has been issued to a family.

The panel discussed the translation resources available to support families with second language who are in contact with the early intervention service. The Head of Service commented that employees have access to reliable online translation services when meeting parents in these circumstances at the first meeting with a family. In addition, the services of a translation agency and telephone service is also available if needed.

The panel queried the reasons for the difference in the numbers of people who are reported in para 3.4 as 'unwilling to engage' between the different localities – for example, Children's Village (24.03%) compares to Dove (6.81%) and the implications for the work of the early intervention team. The Head of Service commented that the service is offered based on consent, unlike other agencies such as the police who have the powers to enter a property when there are safeguarding concerns. The figures were also affected by either a change in family circumstances from the date of the original referral to date when the family has been visited or the family resolving the issue themselves in the meantime and no longer needing the support of the early intervention team.

The Head of Service commented on the work done to agree consistency in the applying the threshold for intervention and referral. The Head of Service explained that he wants to have a discussion with partner organisations about the process used to decide if a family meets their threshold for action. The aim being to get achieve a greater level of consistency when dealing with cases.

The Head of Service commented about the need to engage better with all schools about the circumstances where a family case would be need escalated to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub(MASH). The Head of Service commented discussed the range of promotional and information events to raise awareness about the work of the early intervention team and the criteria for making referrals to the service.

The Head of Service explained that Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board has issued an escalation policy and the service is working with partners to ensure it is applied consistently when dealing with families.

The panel discussed the support available to families experiencing the issue of domestic violence and the circumstances where a case would be escalated.

The panel welcomed the report and noted the success of the early intervention team.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to support the next steps detailed in section six of the report to better understand how the service can achieve the aim of keeping children safe.
2. The panel agreed to note the findings of the report and endorse progress made by the early intervention service.
3. The panel welcome the progress made to recruit parent champions and would like to add its congratulations about the impact of their work in supporting local families.

6

Key Stage 4 and 5 Results for Wolverhampton

Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education, introduced the report and invited Amanda Newbold, Senior School Improvement Advisor, to present the main findings of the report. The Senior School Improvement Advisor explained the progress made in Wolverhampton at Key Stages 4 and 5 against national performance measures for 2017.

The Senior School Improvement Advisor explained the changes to how school education results are measured and the performance of Wolverhampton against 2017 headline accountability measures. The Senior School Improvement Advisor advised the panel of the improvement in Progress 8 outcomes when compared to 2016 and its good performance when compared to other areas nationally.

The Senior School Improvement Advisor commented on the performance of the Wolverhampton schools who had reached the English Baccalaureate standard. The Senior School Improvement Advisor advised the panel that 15.8% of pupils reached the standard.

The panel queried the impact on some schools in Wolverhampton as a of changes to subjects which were no longer included in the assessment, such as ICT. The Director of Education explained the changes to the assessment process and added that work is being done to improve the score in the future, but added it will take time for schools to get the structures in place. In addition, the response to schools to the introduction of the English Baccalaureate varied with some schools giving pupils more choice about the subjects at post 16 stage, while other schools encouraged pupils to study subjects that would count in the national assessment.

The panel discussed the poor performance of Wolverhampton schools in the table listing the percentage of pupils attaining the English Baccalaureate when compared with neighbouring authorities. The Senior School Improvement Advisor commented on the reasons for this and added that Wolverhampton is performing better than our neighbours in most subjects.

The panel discussed the issue of pupils being prevented in some schools from been given an option of considering apprenticeships as an option at post 16 stage. The Director of Education responded that there is still work to be done to raise awareness about the option of apprenticeship with schools and to explain to parents and pupils what is on offer. The Head of Skills is drafting a report on skills strategy which will set out plans to respond to the issues highlighted during the discussion.

The Senior School Improvement Advisor commented on the results of the post 16 accountability measures for schools and the progress made.

Resolved:

The panel welcomed the progress made and agreed to note the progress made to support schools to improve educational performance.