

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 2.00PM

Present:

Councillor E P Foley – Chairperson

D K Edwards
C A Green

M Jones
G Phillips

H J Townsend
C Westwood
R E Young

Registered Representatives & Co-opted Members:

Mr W Bond (Special School Parent Governor)
Mr R Thomas (Primary School Parent Governor)
Mr I Davies (ATL)

Officers:

R Keepins - Scrutiny Officer
J Monks - Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Councillor H J David - Cabinet Member - Children and Young People
D McMillan - Corporate Director – Children
C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
N Echanis - Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Partnerships
N Sutton - Principal Officer Business & Management Support
T Haddon - Flying Start Manager

140 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor P A Davies - Unwell
Councillor P N John - Unwell
Councillor R L Thomas - Work Commitments
Councillor D B F White - Work Commitments
Mr T Cahalane - Work Commitments
Reverend Cannon E J Evans - Work Commitments
Mr K Pascoe - Work Commitments

141 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

142 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of meetings of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 2nd September and 13th October 2014 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The Scrutiny Officer drew Members' attention to the first bullet point of the recommendations in the 13th October 2014 minutes, in relation to lobbying the Welsh Government regarding salary scales and conditions for Social Workers. She informed the Committee that the report had not

yet been presented to Cabinet due to legal issues, as more evidence was required in order to clarify the information currently being received which had indicated that it was not a pay issue.

144 CHILDREN'S DIRECTORATE CHANGE PROGRAMME

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report to update the Committee on the Directorate's Change Programme and the fundamental changes being made to the structure this year, to ensure that the service could fully support a whole system approach for the delivery of the Children's Services, working alongside integrated partners across the public, voluntary and private sectors, including health and education.

He informed Members that 18 months ago there were around eight or nine programmes across the Children's Directorate, bringing together professionals to deliver those services within the community with a more holistic approach by exploring different ways to work more effectively with families that have the most chronic and complex difficulties, and who draw on a wide range of services. The vast majority of those services are now being relocated through the establishment of multi-agency community hubs, located in school cluster areas, in order to provide early intervention for those families at risk or in need of help. Clients will then only need to access one point of contact to obtain help instead of several, and would each be allocated a lead professional who would stay with them throughout the whole process. Connecting Families were

He pointed out that there were significant corporate changes impacting on how the services are delivered, moving dramatically to agile working by using technology, enabling Social Workers and health visitors to minimise the amount of paperwork, thus allowing them more time with families and children. He described how the change champions played an important role within the Change Programme through mingling and eliciting innovative ideas to become more efficient, and the Children's Change Project Board met once a month to monitor progress, as well as those areas which were not working so well.

The Chairperson asked whether the public were aware of these changes and if they had started to use the hubs.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that there would be a total of three hubs; the first to the west of the Borough is situated at Pyle Life Centre and another is based at Coleg y Dderwen to the north of the Borough. The whole of the Safeguarding and Family Support Team have been moved from Civic Offices and co-located to the hubs as well as library support, health and midwives, and reviews are now taking place at those hubs. He explained that the first communication was to let residents know of these hubs, and clients already receiving services would have been notified in writing, and visited by their Social Workers. He reported that Social Workers and Family Support Officers had moved from the offices at Sunnyside to the Civic Offices and it was anticipated that other agencies, such as health and midwifery, as well as aspects of the Youth Service, would also be co-locating there. He informed the Committee that he was not aware of any negative feedback as a result of these moves.

In response to a question from Members, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported that every Social Worker within the whole of the Directorate had been issued with a laptop with Wi-Fi connection, which allowed them to work from any Council building. Also, Digi pens were due to be piloted. He advised that the Digi pens were something he was excited about and once they had been tested, he would demonstrate them to the Committee. The Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Partnerships explained that Digi pens would allow information to be recorded and downloaded from any docking station saving the Social Workers a substantial number of hours.

Members asked for some examples of the Directorate working with other organisations to achieve outcomes.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support explained that predominantly the Directorate was working with health and social care to improve synergy. They had recently discussed a better way of tackling child sexual exploitation in light of the recent case in Rotherham, which was motivating debates on better information and intelligence sharing. He advised that children's safeguarding planning or review meetings were supported by inter-agencies including GPs, health, Police, education and teachers. Plans are formulated at an operational level and from a strategic level, with the Directors influencing such change. He reported that there were some concerns regarding interfacing with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) and the ABMU Planning Group would be re-commissioning CAHMS over the next 18 months. He confirmed that he was not aware of any issues from members of the public or staff as a result of the move from Sunnyside to Civic Offices and invited Members to visit the new venues.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People reported that he had visited the Pyle Life Centre after the relocation and had taken the opportunity to speak with staff. He advised that the general opinion amongst them was that they were delighted with their new location. Also, feedback from staff relocated to Coleg y Dderwen and Civic Offices was also positive. The Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Partnerships added that although some staff were not yet used to agile working, they understood the need for this move. The Flying Start Manager advised that her team had also been relocated and one of the reasons she had nominated herself as a Change Champion was to bring positivity to working within the community.

The Chairperson asked whether there was reasonable confidence that these programmes would be funded in the future. The Flying Start Manager advised that funding was secure up to the general election, with capital expenditure being allocated for 2015/16.

The Committee asked whether they were actively promoting and training volunteers.

The Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships explained that this was most relevant to the Youth Service, as over the last few years the Council had taken on a number of tasks which previously would have been carried out by the third sector. She advised that it was essential to develop support from voluntary organisations in the future and a number of restructures were being undertaken as part of the Change Programme to strengthen the role of volunteers. She could not confirm however whether or not the Council would be training volunteers, as such organisations usually preferred to carry out their own training.

One Member referred to a recent local review he had attended on domestic homicide, where a child protection issue was raised, and asked whether the Council was engaged in addressing such issues. He further asked whether annual or bi-annual performance management had been put in place in each of the hubs.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported that he had chaired one of two reviews on domestic abuse and was fully engaged in the process of both. With regard to performance management, he advised that the hubs were monitored by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) who would be reviewing the fostering service in the next few weeks. Also an internal quality assurance process was in place, and completed assessments by Social Workers were not signed off until they were verified by a Manager. Furthermore, at the conclusion of every piece of work involving a child, feedback is obtained from the families; although some of them did not want social services involved, many were grateful for the support they had received.

The Flying Start Manager reported that she had attended a partnership event involving domestic abuse issues and advised that relationships with partners were strong and growing. The Flying Start team had taken on board the subject of domestic homicide, resulting in enhanced training

across a wide range of professionals who worked alongside all victims of domestic abuse. She explained that the team were not domestic abuse workers, but did have some understanding and would signpost victims to the right support.

Conclusions:

Following their discussions with Officers, members agreed the following conclusions:

- That following the pilot of Digipens for social workers undertaking home visits, the use of Digipens be expanded for application in other areas such as minutes for LAC Reviews in order to ensure that the minutes are produced in a timely manner.
- Members expressed concerns that whilst everything was reported to be fine and all staff within the children's directorate happy with the restructure and relocation, there was obviously further reorganisation and restructure ahead. The Committee therefore requested that they revisit this next year under the subject of Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers to review the situation and examine any issues impacting upon social workers.
- Members commented on the large number of Change Projects that formed the Change Programme and questioned whether having 49 projects was realistic in terms of their deliverability.

145 WESTERN BAY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report to provide the Committee with information regarding the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Annual Report and Business Plan, published on the 31st July 2014. The report also provided information on the governance arrangements which had been put in place to ensure the effectiveness of the Board's activity.

He advised that there was so much change happening in local government at the moment and reported that he had recently observed a debate on local authority mergers. Three years ago there had been debates regarding the move towards collaboration with Western Bay by the Deputy Minister who had expressed that she wanted services co-located within the health board. This resulted in some early projects and programmes being identified in Wales, and there were two fundamental directions which would lead to change. The first was a directive by the Welsh Government to establish a regional adoption service, due to become operational in 2015, as children waited too long to be adopted. Also the Welsh Government had directed that the current 22 Regional Boards would need to be reduced to eight or nine Regional Safeguarding Children's Boards, and the Corporate Director – Children at the time had recommended that Bridgend should steer this directive to comply with legislation, rather than being told what to do. To that effect a development group was set up with Directors, which included Social Services and Education; from that group a Regional Safeguarding Board was established which was now in its second year.

The Chairperson asked whether access to Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) was still available on the website, which had been mentioned in the report.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support explained that people would be redirected to a new site via the BCBC website. However, there was a question over how long SCRs should remain available due to their personal and sensitive nature, and although identifiable information was redacted, the people concerned knew which report related to them, which he advised could be disabling. He stated that it was important to disseminate and develop learning in order to influence change.

A Member referred to the strategic priority on child sexual exploitation (CSE), listed on page 52 of the report, and asked whether there was any strategic information to tackle the issue along with partner agencies.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support explained that when local authorities combine, statistics on similar issues are inevitably compared, and it was found that CSEs were no more a problem in Bridgend than anywhere else, as investigation on cases in Rotherham showed that offenders were transient and used interactive technology. He was very concerned at the low number of offenders who were actually prosecuted, with only one successful prosecution in Bridgend over the last five years. This was being addressed with Police colleagues and had led to a Strategic Group being formed to further consider these issues. He informed Members that Western Bay had written to the Police Crime Commissioner, who had taken a personal interest and provided resources. The Commissioner had indicated his commitment to the Joint Strategic Groups that were being set up, and had been challenging his own Police Officers on the low number of prosecutions. The Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Partnerships advised that the Chair of Western Bay had encouraged partner organisations to feed in any information on CSEs and their approach to it. Also schools were considering whether the programme could be rolled out, as it was particularly effective in raising awareness.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People reported that he had requested a pre-Council briefing on CSE for all elected Members. He explained that although 36 Joint Strategic Groups had been set up, that did not mean there were 36 children being exploited; however it did demonstrate that all allegations were taken seriously and investigated, which would be explained in detail at the briefing.

The Committee questioned the lack of scrutiny in the Western Bay Health and Social Care Programme and asked whether any progress was being made in developing strategic issues, whilst at the time ensuring local services were being maintained.

The Head of Strategy, Commissioning and Partnerships explained that scrutiny was a big agenda item in Western Bay and there was a critical issue in how to resolve it as they did not want to lose the local scrutiny. Also, they did not want to increase the staff's workload. She advised that the Youth Offending Service and the Integrated Family Support Service duplicated reports and she was uncertain whether that could be improved on.

One Member pointed out that the original plan for Bridgend to have a joint scrutiny arrangement with Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff, with two elected Members from each of those local authorities and suggested this format could be used in Western Bay.

The Corporate Director – Children advised that there was no mandate for inspecting the consortium. However, the Wales Audit Office was currently carrying out a thematic review to look at value for money and would report back to the Welsh Government (WG) and Estyn. Western Bay was lobbying WG for a joint scrutiny, as the current arrangement requires the Managing Director of Western Bay to attend five different Scrutiny Committees which was not considered value for money.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People advised that the Cabinet Member for Education in the Vale of Glamorgan Council had expressed that he would be happy to visit other Scrutiny Committees along with the Managing Director; which Cardiff Council had already agreed to. He suggested that if the Committee were in agreement, they could also take him up on his offer.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Members that a number of members from the consortium would be attending the January meeting of the Committee and suggested extending an invitation to the Cabinet Member for Education.

Conclusions:

1. Members requested that feedback be taken to the Board to ask that a RAG (Traffic light – Red Amber Green) status be attached to the WBSCB Business Action Plan to indicate whether actions had been completed, were on track or at risk.
2. Members commented on the 36 cases in the past six months of interagency strategy discussions over a child at risk of Sexual Exploitation. Members agreed that this demonstrated vigilance by the Local Authority but were concerned over the lack of prosecutions and what the police were doing to protect children from sexual exploitation. The Committee asked that Cllr Martyn Jones undertake further work to determine the possible reasons for the lack of prosecutions and report back to the Committee for further consideration.
3. Members expressed concerns over the lack of a formal Scrutiny process for the Regional Safeguarding Children's Board. Whilst at a strategic level each local authority could receive the annual report, Members expressed concern over the lack of local level information. Given the fact that the work of the SCB involves children of Bridgend, and significant investment from BCBC, Members believe that some process needs to be determined to ensure that there is suitable accountability with the involvement of Scrutiny.
4. Similarly, Members also expressed concern over the WBSCB's inconsistency of reporting to each Local Authority's Service Board, as referred to in the WBSCB Annual Report. The Committee further commented on the invisibility of Bridgend's own Local Service Board. Members therefore agreed that their concerns needed to be forwarded to our own LSB Scrutiny Panel and that the Panel be asked to explore the reporting inconsistencies further with Bridgend's LSB to ensure that there was suitable governance being carried out of the WBSCB.

146 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report outlining the items due to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee on the 17th December 2014 and further sought confirmation of the invitees to attend the subsequent scheduled meeting to be held on the 6th January 2015.

Conclusions:

The Committee noted the topics due to be considered at the meeting of the Committee scheduled for the 17th December 2014. The Committee also acknowledged the invitees to attend the subsequent meeting on the 6th January 2015 and requested that the Attendance Strategy be included on the agenda for that meeting.

Members proposed the following subjects for scoping and possible addition to the Committee's Annual Forward Work Programme:

- Equalities in Schools
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Teenage Pregnancies

The meeting closed at 4:00pm.