

## Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 26 July 2017 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm  
Concluded 6.15 pm

### Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT	INDEPENDENT
M Pollard D Smith	Engel Mullaney Peart Shaheen Tait	Ward	Sajawal

### VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Joyce Simpson, Church Representative (CE)

Observer: Councillor Val Slater

Apologies: Sidiq Ali, Claire Parr, Tom Bright, Irene Docherty and Gull Hussain

### Councillor D Smith in the Chair

#### 1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillor Shaheen disclosed an interest in Minute 7 as she was training to be a Social Worker.

Action: City Solicitor

#### 2. MINUTES

Resolved-

That the minutes of the meetings held on 14 March and 11 April 2017 be signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

**3. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

**4. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

No referrals had been received.

**5. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

**Resolved-**

**That the appointment of the following non-voting co-opted representatives for the 2017/2018 municipal year be recommended to Council:**

**NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:**

**Teachers Secondary School Representative: Tom Bright  
Teachers Special School Representative: Irene Docherty  
Voluntary Sector Representative: Kerr Kennedy**

**Action: City Solicitor**

**6. BLOCK CONTRACT CALL-OFF FROM THE WHITE ROSE 16-25 YEARS LEAVING CARE AND VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT FRAMEWORK, PROVIDED IN ACCOMMODATION SITUATED WITHIN THE BRADFORD AND DISTRICT BOUNDARY**

The Director of Children's Services presented a report (**Document "A"**) regarding two block contracts called off from the White Rose 16+ Framework Agreement in order to give Bradford Council more control over the provision of accommodation and support to young people 16+ and those leaving the care system. It was intended that the contracts would be commissioned at a lower weekly cost than the current weekly average framework spot price.

It was reported that the Council currently had in place block contracts for leaving care accommodation that would end on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017. The Council was seeking to put in place new contracts that would ensure it had continuity of provision for this type of placement via this Call-Off Contract. The current contracts had strengthened the relationship with existing White Rose Framework Providers who had appropriate accommodation within the Bradford District Boundary, the new contracts would ensure continuity of this approach in the purchase of leaving care placements.



In response to Members questions it was reported that a detailed report was submitted to Corporate Parenting explaining the full range of the offer, the report before the Committee was submitted for information.

Members felt they needed clarification on the role of Scrutiny Committee's in considering such contracts.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That it be noted that new block call off contracts from the White Rose 16-25 years Leaving Care and Vulnerable Young People Accommodation and Support Framework, will be set up which will ensure Bradford Council can:-**
  - (a) Block purchase beds at a reduced rate.**
  - (b) Guarantee 24 beds in the Bradford District to help to ensure that Bradford's young people can be accommodated and remain living locally.**
  - (c) Bradford Council to make the required financial commitment during the lifetime of the contract.**
  
- (2) That the Committee requests that the City Solicitor clarifies Contract Standing Orders to determine at what stage contracts over £2 million be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee's and the role of Members in considering such contracts.**

**Action: Strategic Director Children's Services (1)/City Solicitor (2)**

**7. UPDATED INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ON THE WORKLOADS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

The report of the Deputy Director, Social Care (**Document "B"**) presented the most recent information on the workload of Children's Social Work Teams and updated Members on key pressures on the service. The workload analysis was based on activity up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

There had been a slight rise to the overall workloads of social workers, and pressures upon the service since the last report was presented.



It was reported that there were 187 Social Workers (175 full time equivalents) in Children's Social Care directly employed by the Council. This was a reduction since March 2016 when there were 211. In December 2016 the Service changed the way it calculated the number of social workers to exclude any with a zero caseload – this would include workers on maternity leave and long term sick leave. The decision was made because including workers who actually weren't holding any cases was making the caseload average look lower than the true picture. There were 42 Community Resource Workers.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that older children were allocated a Community Resource Worker as opposed to a Social Worker; this was not an issue for Ofsted; all looked after children had a Social Worker allocated to them; Community Resource workers were extremely experienced and their salaries were above a new Social Worker.

It was reported that an issue arising from the survey undertaken of social workers was the lack of IT equipment; 10 social workers had been issued with Samsung Tablets to pilot; this had been extremely positive and now agreement had been given to roll out a further 50 devices; Social workers were very enthusiastic about this as they believed it supported increased engagement with children and young people and also enabled social workers to work more flexibly and saved time for other tasks; Social Workers were also able to access emails while out on a job.

In response to a Member's question it was reported that 32% of cases were handled by experienced Social Workers; the caseload balance was not quite right between experienced and newly qualified; there were a number of plans in place to maintaining experienced Social Workers; when the service was requesting a less experienced Social Worker to take on a child protection case there was a lot of support put in place for them.

A Social Worker who attended the meeting explained that new Social Workers were teamed with experienced colleagues and received a lot of support; if a Social Worker was not ready they did not have to hold child protection cases; working culture supported you when you needed it.

It was reported that social work recruitment took place every month. The Principal Social Worker (PSW) was leading on this and had established a more streamlined process. The Service recently recruited 24 social workers with only 2 vacancies remaining. The next recruitment was targeted at experienced social workers to take place in August. There was still lots of interest to working in Bradford with the last recruitment having 59 applications. The PSW and Head of Social Work were working closely with workforce development colleagues on retention for experienced social worker initiatives, manageable caseloads, regular good supervision and team support. A leadership programme was being developed for team managers to support their professional development.



In response to a Member's question it was reported that the number of children subject to child protection plans within Bradford was broadly similar to regional comparators and slightly lower than the national average. The number of children becoming subject to a care plan for a second time was within an acceptable range but did not have national comparative figures for that; some children that became subject to a care plan a second time included children moving from other areas and was not always due to the work undertaken in Bradford.

It was reported that handling 18 cases was classed as a safe workload, Bradford was under that figure; a range of outcomes was looked at on a monthly basis and the Services was benchmarked against neighbours and national targets; the Service was performing well.

A Social Worker reiterated that she was satisfied with her caseload and always felt supported by Management and colleagues. She reiterated that her and her colleagues felt supported.

A Member suggested that due to the increasing demand across much of Social Care over the past 12 months it would be interesting to see the results of a staff survey.

The Strategic Director Children's Services suggested that the Committee could set up a task and finish group to have a look at the issues raised by Members such as staffing.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that demand was increasing; it was a similar picture in other areas; poverty was driving demand; child population of Bradford continued to rise; there was an increase in referrals, assessments and an increase in the number of care proceedings. Applications to Court for an order in care proceedings increased in 2016/17 to 261 children in Bradford, compared to 205 children for the previous year 2015/2016. An analysis of children becoming Looked After in 2016 indicated that 1 in 6 were from Central and Eastern European (CEE) backgrounds. A snapshot of children becoming Looked After in February 2017 demonstrated that half were not born in Bradford (either newly arrived communities of families that had relocated to Bradford for a variety of reasons).

In response to a Member's question it was reported that Early Help was a working progress; targeted early help had been working for a year and was starting to make a difference especially in terms of referrals; assessments undertaken by Early Help eased the pressure on Social workers undertaking assessments; Early Help was working well but needed to improve.

The Chair requested that Early Help be placed on the Work Programme for September.



**Resolved-**

- (1) That the Committee welcomes the information provided and requests further reports be received during 2017/18 to ensure the continuation of safe workloads and practice into the future given the current financial climate.**
- (2) That future reports shall include more information on national and statistical neighbour comparison figures.**

**Action: Deputy Director (Social Care)**

**8. OUTCOMES OF THE JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION (JTAI) OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT**

Between 27 February and 3 March 2017, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMI Constabulary (HMIC) and HMI Probation (HMI Prob) undertook a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Bradford. This inspection included a specific (“Deep Dive”) focus on the Council’s response to children living with domestic abuse.

The report of the Strategic Director of Children’s Services (**Document “C”**) summarised the outcome of the inspection and its implications for the district. The report outlined the strengths which the inspectors noted across the partnership and in relation to social care, and described the partnerships plans to address the areas for development which were identified.

A Member asked whether lessons had been learned from the recent serious case reviews and how did the Inspectors arrive at the positive inspection?

In response it was reported that 50% of the inspectors time was spent at the “Front Door” to services for children across all agencies, this element of the inspection looked at how children were dealt with at the first point of contact with all agencies across the system; deep dive into files, provided about 100 cases which were looked into in detail; they looked at Council’s own audits and were confident with what they saw.

It was reported that a full time Police Officer streamed every case of domestic violence, examined police history, school history and considered which cases needed to be referred to Early Help, there was robust decision making around domestic violence.

A Member asked how many of the areas for improvement the service was aware



of before being inspected.

In response to the Members question it was reported that JTAI's used a self assessment framework; a group meeting with the Safeguarding Children's Board was held and it was recognised that Early Help needed improving and the inspection outcome was it was strong; joined up work on how we commission services was on the radar; there was no health representative on MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub). The inspection helped to put a concrete action plan in place in areas the service was looking at.

**Resolved-**

**That the outcome of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Bradford Metropolitan District be welcomed and the Committee urges close working relationships with the various partners.**

**Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services**

**9. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2017-18**

The report of the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "D"**) presented the Committee's draft Work Programme 2017-18.

**Resolved-**

**That the Work Programme for 2017/18 continues to be regularly reviewed during the year.**

**Action: Scrutiny and Overview Lead Officer**

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

