

**Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday,
23 January 2019 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall,
Bradford**

Commenced 4.35 pm
Concluded 7.00 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Engel Arshad Hussain S Khan Mullaney Peart	Gibbons M Pollard	Ward

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Sidiq Ali	Parent Governor Representative
Claire Parr	Church Representative (RC)
Joyce Simpson	Church Representative (CE)

Apologies: Shain Wells (Parent Governor Representative)

Councillor Mike Gibbons in the Chair

42. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

- (1) In the interest of transparency Claire Parr disclosed an interest in Minute 46 as her daughter was a Social Worker.
- (2) Councillor Engel disclosed an interest in Minute 46 as she was a Member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- (3) Councillor Engel, Councillor Sobiya Khan and Councillor Peart also disclosed an interest as they were taking part in the Labour Group work on SEND and Children's Services Improvements.

Action: City Solicitor

43. MINUTES

Resolved-

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2018 be signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

44. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

45. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No referrals had been received.

46. OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS)

The report of the Interim Strategic Director (**Document "U"**) provided updated information about the Council's response to the published OFSTED ILACS judgement following inspection of Bradford's Children's Services.

The interim Strategic Director Children's Services reported that progress had been made in addressing the key areas for improvement identified by OFSTED which included:

- An interim Improvement Board had been in place since the end of the inspection chaired by the Chief Executive; an Improvement Advisor would be appointed by the DfE and would start to chair the Improvement Board in February 2019.
- Development of the Improvement Plan included the voice of the child at its heart, involving staff at all levels in Children's Services. A Planning workshop with Ofsted took place on the 10 December 2018 to help inform the improvement plan.
- A peer review of the Front Door and MASH arrangements had been undertaken. The peer review identified that there was further work to be undertaken to ensure that the application of consent and decision making in the MASH were robust. Actions arising from this review would be included within the Improvement Plan.

She reported that there had been a number of actions taken in advance of the publication of the Improvement Plan which included:

- Auditing 1700 cases for children who were Child Protection and Child in Need and undertaking corrective actions where required
- Putting in place an additional Head of Service for the Front Door and

MASH to strengthen leadership capacity

- Strengthening Quality Assurance and employing three temporary experienced auditors to review specific areas and cases
- Undertaking on-going recruitment to vacancies resulting in a very small number of unfilled posts
- Working closely with the Teaching Partnership to put in place additional training for social workers and managers starting in January 2019
- Putting in place additional social work oversight in the homelessness team and in the contact centre.
- Putting in place a plan to move the early help gateway into the MASH in early January, facilitating the move to having one integrated front door
- Undertaking a review of social work salaries and retention.
- Starting to review the use of the information management system Liquid Logic to ensure the most efficient and effective use of system capability
- Reviewing the performance information requirement and putting in place an enhanced suite of reports to drive and facilitate the required improvements.
- Confirmation of arrangements for the Children's Services Improvement Board once membership and Terms of Reference were approved by both DfE/OFSTED and Executive.
- Submission of a full Improvement Action Plan (Deadline for submission: 4 February 2019).
- Undertaking the actions set out in the improvement plan and putting in place performance indicators to monitor progress.
- Supporting on going monitoring visits every three months, the first of which is expected to take place in March 2019.
- Quarterly monitoring would continue until the Authority had an inspection and moved into a different pathway (to be good or above)
- Councillors and senior officers collectively were committed to making sure that the authority worked rapidly and effectively to improve services to meet the ambitions for Bradford's children.
- Progress made would be reported to the Improvement Board who would exercise their strategic responsibility for Children's Services; Children's Service's Overview and Scrutiny Committee would offer challenge and scrutiny.
- There was a lot to do but a good start had been made and the Service was

going beyond what Ofsted were asking and wanted the service to be good or outstanding.

- There was an agreement at Council for additional resources to be made available to support the work required in the Improvement Plan.
- The service was committed to listening and responding to staff and taking on board suggestions; there was a suggestion box for staff to put any issues/ideas in; continuing with email communication and staff were freely emailing about suggestions/ideas for improvement.
- Re-issued social work standards to make sure they were visible.
- Appointed interim posts as well as appointing permanent managerial posts.
- There was a much more strengthened approach to performance management and how data was used.
- An independent voluntary provider had been appointed to work with young people to obtain their views.
- A tracker was set up to look at progress being made in 12 week cycles.
- Looking at high performing children's services elsewhere and adopting best practice.

Members commented on the following:

- How was the service prepared in terms of looking at the future and business as usual?
- There was a lot of changes in a short space of time, how were the workforce feeling about this? Needed to be careful that there was no slippage in other areas.
- Was there a feeling that staff were bearing with the Service?
- What were the issues in relation to Front Door and MASH arrangements?
- What proportion of the 1700 cases reviewed had short comings?
- It was important that the service had appropriate measures in place for recruitment and retention and career progression of its staff and focussing on a diverse workforce and management structures at all levels which would in turn helped deliver improvements.
- Commended officers for the work undertaken so far; children's voice was paramount; working with families where young girls kept running away, had the service talked to young people about what improvements needed to be made?
- Children being excluded from school was not helping as children ended

up in a Pupil Referral Unit and were then exposed to other risks as they had to travel a distance to get to a PRU.

- In terms of failure of the scrutiny committee in not receiving the accurate information in relation to the workload of Children's Services there was no mention in the report for the Committee being provided with the right information; there was an omission in the improvement plan as to whether the Committee needed training to ask appropriate questions and the effectiveness to do a proper scrutiny.
- Officers had attended the Committee previously and told the Committee good news stories chosen by Managers of the Service.
- there was a high level of movement in the service and there was complex demands on junior social workers.
- Could bring a report back to the Committee on recruitment and retention and demand on Social Workers and that as a service you were succeeding in that area, needed to get retention right.
- There should be clear information for young people relating to homelessness; partners should be referring young people to the homeless service.
- Was the service receiving all the help and support it needed to achieve the results required?
- Was there more the Scrutiny Committee could do to make sure the department was sticking to its Improvement Plan?
- The Committee had heard from Children's Services staff in the past, but felt that these were handpicked and were often speaking about their experiences while sat next to their manager; it would be much better if the Committee had more choice on who they heard from at meetings as it would give a much better chance to ask probing questions.

In response to the questions raised by Members it was reported that:

- The service was mindful to get to a steady state that was good and building on success where there was good work taking place.
- Prevention and Early Help would be strengthened which would help in managing the high level of demand; it was better for children and families and cost effective to receive help early.
- Alongside what Ofsted had recommended the service was expanding on audits and inspections.
- The workforce had mixed feelings, nervous, apprehensive, slightly

suspicious of what comes next; they were nervous about how the changes needed would be implemented; some staff were saying that they had started to feel the change in culture, which was more positive.

- Staff had raised a lot of questions about the environment they worked in such as parking, some staff were feeling the change in culture which they felt was positive; it was early days and the Service was running staff surveys more regularly; pay and conditions were important; looking to increase pay levels in line with the regional area but also looking at caseloads; Keighley Social Services Manager stated that none of the Social Workers in Keighley had unmanaged workloads which was a sign that things were beginning to turn.
- Officers were constantly communicating and reassuring staff but could not make changes overnight; resilience of some staff was remarkable and they should be recognised for that.
- Had to oversee all of children's services, there was a team of dedicated officers stretching themselves as wide as possible; a lot of work was being undertaken on SEND readiness.
- There was inconsistency in relation to the Front Door and MASH and the application of thresholds and how a referral was responded to; Doncaster Peer Review found examples where people had not applied the consent policy appropriately such as telling families that their information might be shared; the service had re-issued the consent policy; written out to all partners about different levels of consent; needed all partners and staff to understand the consent policy; a new interim head of service and interim service manager were in post; a number of changes had already been made, the service was continuing to make more changes; re-modelled what front door should look like.
- 25% of the 1700 cases reviewed were unclear; 400 cases related to one team, there was a considerable pressure in that service; the main issues found were that records of the outcomes for children were not clear.
- The service was looking at recruitment, retention and a representative workforce; Bradford's workforce was very representative but was less representative in management roles; workers should be able to see progression and diverse workforce represented at all levels of management.

- The service undertook return interviews with young people who kept running away, if the young person refused to have a return interview then the service would talk to someone the young person had contact with to find out why that young person was not happy and why it was happening; feedback of young person could be undertaken through Youth Service, Schools, leave/participation engagement officer; the service was trying to change culture to make all staff feel responsible for a young persons voice.
- The Service was working hard with schools and children in alternative provision like a PRU; more work was being undertaken as part of early help and prevention.
- Officers would work with scrutiny beyond the Improvement Plan; the Committee would be receiving a specifically themed report at each of its meetings.
- There had been an imbalance in the support provided to schools; there was a lot of pressure on schools, voluntary sector and faith communities; quality suffered as a result of that; there was a huge piece of work being undertaken on demand ie did the service have the right people in the right place which will inform a business case and shift resources from one area to another; needed to be realistic in dealing with demand.
- Could invite the independent Chair of the Improvement Board to come and talk to the Committee about how they should be scrutinising and challenging.
- There was nothing to stop the Scrutiny Committee from receiving training from someone who could advise the Committee on how they should scrutinise.
- The Early Help and Prevention Service was closely being monitored and work was being undertaken across the partnership on implementation of the new model.
- Ofsted's criticism was about responding to the needs of children but not that the young person understood what rights they had on statutory services such as homelessness and needed to have a social worker overseeing the service which had been addressed.
- The service was receiving the support it needed to address the requirements needed; there was a strong partnership in place; getting it right was apparent to all.
- In terms of staff bearing with the service, some staff were now saying they were changing their mind about leaving and deciding to stay in Bradford.
- The priority was to address the areas of improvement that had been

highlighted by OFSTED and determined to getting the basics right for children; the aim was to move quickly to a position where the service was good or better for Bradford's children.

- The Committee would be provided with regular updates on the progress of the plan and would be given presentations on specific parts of the plan in future meetings.

Resolved-

- (1) That the Committee notes the draft Improvement Plan and looks forward to receiving a specifically themed report at each of the next six committee meetings.**
- (2) That the Interim Strategic Director, Children's Services includes reference in the Improvement Plan, to the role that the scrutiny committee will have in working with the Improvement Board.**

Action: Interim Strategic Director, Children's Services

47. SCHOOLS FORUM UPDATE

The report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "V"**) provided an update on the work of the Schools Forum.

The last update was provided (as an additional report for information) to the Committee on 12 December 2018. The Schools Forum had met once since on 9 January 2019. The decisions list from this meeting was attached at Appendix 1 to Document "V".

The Schools Forum had now made its recommendations on the allocation of the 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). These recommendations would be presented to the Executive and then to full Council for final decisions on 21 February 2019.

In response to a Members question the Deputy Director, Education and Learning reported that the DfE had confirmed that they did not want to appoint a sponsor for the free SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) School, this did not mean that the Free School would not be happening but the plan to build it would be delayed, the hope was to have it up and running by 2020/21 which was now hugely disappointing; free schools required sponsorship; there was an issue around sufficient capacity and provision; the authority was looking at using potential physical capacity in current provision at present to create more specialist places as this approach did not require the opening of a new school or sponsorship; there were plans to put in place additional capacity; 354 new places would be made available and the authority would continue to review the situation so that it could be prepared for 2020.

Members requested that the Committee should lobby the Government on the late announcement of the funding allocations and the position that the late

announcements put schools in.

Resolved-

That the Committee notes the information provided in the report and requests that the outstanding funding award from the Government be reported to the Committee in a timely manner.

Action: Interim Strategic Director, Children's Services

48. UPDATE ON SCHOOL TRAVEL

The report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "W"**) set out the progress made by the Travel Assistance Service and Passenger Transport Services post the structure changes of April 2017.

Members made the following comments:

- Why were these changes not made before; who did the 10 full time trainees detailed in paragraph 2.8 train?
- What was the definition of eligibility?
- How much did the service of Edge Public Solutions cost? Could transformation and change of the service not happen without them?
- There was an online application process but were hard copies available?
- Was there a process to re-assess applications where there was a mobility component?
- How was the original saving of Children and Adult Services Transport Budget of £5.9 million arrived at?
- Some children that were receiving assistance were passing closer schools to get to the school they were attending.

In response to Members questions it was reported that:

- Definition of eligibility was a legal definition; the government set out the eligibility that Local Authorities had to work with; the eligibility on Post 16 was decided by each Authority on whether they provided it or not.
- Bradford Council had a statutory duty to provide home to school transport to children assessed as being eligible; the categories of eligibility were set down in legislation and statutory criteria and guidance issued by Central Government enabled the Council to determine which children were eligible.
- The transformation was made by the Travel Assistance Programme Board.

- The full time trainees were needed to cover the training of adults who travelled at the same time as school; KEYFORT would also provide walking escorts to eligible children who lived within a short walking distance and where their additional needs did not prevent them from walking to school.
- Applications could be made online as well as hard copy of the application being made available.
- Applications could be re-assessed if parents inform the service of any changes.
- The potential saving of the Children's and Adult Services transport budget of £3.568 million was now a more realistic figure.
- The eligibility criteria for SEN schools was different; needed to look at what the school offer was for children such as children in Keighley attending schools in Bradford which meant that a child was spending a long time travelling to school.

Resolved-

That the Committee welcomes the changes highlighted in the report and the savings achieved to date.

49. PROGRESS REPORT ON B POSITIVE PATHWAYS

In January 2017 Bradford was awarded £3.2 million over 2 years from the DfE Innovation Fund. There were 3 elements to the award:

- 1) Reducing the need for children to come into care through stronger edge of care work.
- 2) Improving our ability to provide high levels of care within our residential homes through embedding a therapeutic "PACE" approach.
- 3) Setting up two "mockingbird" hubs to improve support to foster carers working with children with more complex needs.

After consultation with the Children in Care Council, the programme was named B Positive Pathways (BPP). The Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services presented a progress report on BPP (**Document "X"**).

Updated appendices were tabled at the meeting.

It was reported that In November 2018, DfE gave permission to re-profile funds from the initial 2 year timeframe into a third year in line with delays encountered through recruiting specialist practitioners.

Members were informed that B Positive Pathways Programme (BPP) was an

innovation funded project that scaled the successful North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) 'No Wrong Door' innovation project to Bradford. No Wrong Door was a different approach to working with adolescents to prevent them entering the care system and to improve their long term outcomes. The model centred on a hub home with wrap around multi agency professionals working together. No Wrong Door had won several awards and had made a significant saving to the public purse in the approach that had been taken. A number of Local Authorities were looking to replicate this approach.

It was reported that BPP was fully funded for two years. There had been a staggered completion date for the two years in regard to partners. The Police partnership would be reviewed in March 2019 and the Health partnership would be reviewed in March 2020. By the third year for each partnership, the aim was to show the significant savings that had been made to ensure that the programme was supported financially for years three and four. There would be a full academic review of the programme (including a cost benefit analysis) to show impact with the research partners led by the University of Oxford Rees Centre.

Members were informed that the Hub Home and Children's Specialist Centres had been inspected by OFSTED and two were judged as good and one required improvement.

It was reported that in January 2019 the evaluation team would be producing some cost benefit analysis findings ahead of the discussions with police to identify the future vision of the partnership; the in house BPP data analyst had also been able to draw some data. The findings were inclusive of a £292,825 saving across LAC for missing, of which £144,425 was directly related to BPP. In addition to this, BPP had made a direct saving to police of £71,253 in its reduction of calls for the service.

Members were informed that there were currently 26 young people in the Mockingbird model and since February 2018 the service had not encountered any breakdowns of stability within this cohort.

Members made the following comments:

- It was pleasing to see that the project was working as episodes of missing from LAC (BPP homes) was improving.
- Would be interesting to see information in relation to complaints and compliments from young people.
- What do the authority do about children that were being neglected by foster carers?
- Needed to look at the sustainability of the mockingbird model.

In response to Members comments it was reported that:

- Children that went missing from care were offered return interviews; if a child declined a return interview then other means would be used to ascertain why they went missing.
- Information on complaints and compliments from young people was tracked; outreach services did receive feedback from young people.
- Fostering and how to improve the service was being looked at; the authority would want to know about any child that was being neglected; the authority did make regular visits to foster carers; not all fostering families were fell under the service.
- The service was supporting Greater Manchester in rolling out this model, to prevent children going into care.

Resolved-

- (1) **That the Committee welcomes the contents of the report and asks that officers provide information in a briefing note on the steps that are being taken to address the issues with the site that “Requires Improvement”.**
- (2) **That the full academic review of the programme be presented to the Committee, as soon as the information is available.**

Action: Interim Strategic Director, Children’s Services

50. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19

The report of the Chair of the Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Document “Y”) presented the Committee’s Work Programme 2018-19.

Resolved-

That the Work Programme 2018-19 continues to be regularly reviewed during the year.

Action: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

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.