

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

Commenced 4.35 pm
Concluded 8.00 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP
Engel Arshad Hussain S Khan Peart Thirkill	Gibbons M Pollard	Ward	Sajawal

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Joyce Simpson
Shain Wells

Church Representative (CE)
Parent Governor Representative

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Tom Bright

Teachers Secondary School Representative

Observers: Councillors I Khan and Farley

Apologies: Sidiq Ali and Claire Parr

Councillor Mike Gibbons in the Chair

51. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

52. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency the following disclosures of interest were made in the item relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability Reforms (Minute 57):

- (1) Councillor Peart as she worked with children with special educational needs.

- (2) Councillor Engel as she had a child on the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) waiting list.
- (3) Shain Wells as she had a child on the special needs register and was a member of a local autism committee.
- (4) Councillors Peart, Engel and Khan as they were taking part in the Labour group working party on SEND and Children's Services improvements.

Action: City Solicitor

53. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

54. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

55. YOUNG CARERS

The report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "Z"**) provided an annual update on plans to meet the needs of Young Carers within the Bradford district, including the recent re-tender of the service. The work of the Young Carers service was guided by a Memorandum of Understanding 2010, refreshed in February 2014 and 2017 and a Framework of Good Practice. Previous reports had been presented, the last one was in September 2017.

The following questions were asked by members and responses were given :

- The System 1/GPs – Developing flagging system for young carers was recorded as amber (getting started), was this up to date? In response it was confirmed that this was out of date as this was now in place.
- How many schools had signed up to ensuring that a Young Carer lead was in every secondary school and primary school by the end of 2019? All schools had been contacted to identify a Young Carers lead, to sign up to the policy and to ensure that the leads undertook training. Schools that had not signed up would be followed up to encourage them to do so.
- Where there any issues that had prompted the Council to re-tender the Young Carers Service? The service was re-tendered to ensure all contracts had gone through appropriate rigour.
- How were referrals being made? Referrals were being made through school nurses and work was taking place to promote the service through local radio stations.

A number of young carers attended the meeting and outlined the help they received from the current provider Barnardos for such things as bullying, family problems and personal problems.

- What was being done to include special schools, colleges and universities? When a young person moved to college the service would liaise with the college. Special Schools, colleges and Universities could be contacted. It was pointed out that the new provider Carers Resource worked with adults

- and had links with colleges and universities.
- Why were there a higher number of Young Carers in Bradford South? A lot of schools worked with the service in Bradford South which suggested that the approach was the right one.
 - What work was being undertaken regarding the transition to the new provider, Carers Resource? Letters had been sent to carers and staff had been transferred over to the new provider so service users would not see a difference and there would be a smooth hand over.
 - Who makes the assessment that caring is inappropriate? The worker would undertake an assessment with the young person and the family. When a referral was undertaken consideration was given to whether they could be referred to other agencies if they did not meet the criteria.
 - Was any work being undertaken with parents to assure them that being a young carer was OK and to address their fears that Social Services may become involved? All of the work undertaken with young carers stressed that it was OK to be a young carer and that they had more skills than other young people to deal with things in different ways. Work with parents involved empathy and putting anything that could in place to support their situation. The emphasis to parents was that they were not the only ones in this situation and that they were not alone.
 - What work was being undertaken to get a young person to recognise that they were a young carer? Proposals were being investigated into asking a question to identify young carers (a) when adults had a review for long term conditions (b) to link young carers in the household with others in the household (c) by including young carers on the adult carers registers held by GP practices (d) by adding a question about young carers to the routine questions on discharge from hospital. Helping young people to recognise that they were young carers was being undertaken using publicity in schools and youth clubs, by word of mouth, by teachers prompting questions in assembly and through Young Carers Leads in schools.

The following comments were made by members of the Committee:

- The statistical data in the report from Barnados did not show how it was used. A narrative would have been useful especially in the national context of changes and challenges being faced. It was suggested that this be borne in mind for future reports.
- A member was concerned that the requirement to enable young carers to become actively involved in decision making and planning around the person they care for was not being met. It was acknowledged that there was work to do with health professionals to involve young carers when care plans were being developed.
- It was pointed out that the report from Barnados in Appendix 2 only covered the period 1 April to 31 March 2018. In response it was noted that in the transition period between the current contract and new provider of the service, quarterly reports were being made to the local authority that contained demographic data. It was estimated that there were approximately 69 open cases at that time. A future report was requested including up to date statistics and a narrative on how they were being used.
- It was suggested that the one to one peer support provided by the Youth in

Mind “Buddy Scheme” could help young people to recognise that they were young carers and that consideration should be given to linking with schools that had a buddy system to identify young carers.

- It was suggested that links with charities and other organisations that provided support for the terminally ill would assist in identifying young carers.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the young carers be thanked for attending the meeting.**
- (2) **That a report be presented to the Committee in 6 months to monitor progress of the new contract, including details of what action is being taken to address any issues of concern.**
- (3) **That the Interim Strategic Director be requested to write to those schools that have yet to engage with the Young Carers Service, to encourage them to become involved with providing support for young carers.**
- (4) **That the Committee has concerns about how the early recognition of young carers is picked up and urges officers to increase promotional communications in all schools and health settings and work with the wider community to de-stigmatise being a young carer.**

ACTION: Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services

56. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved –

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability Reforms (Appendix 1 to Document “AB”) on the grounds that it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if they were present, exempt information within Paragraph 3 (financial or business affairs) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), would be disclosed and it is considered that, in all the circumstances, the public interest in excluding public access to the relevant part of the proceedings outweighs the interest in publication of the report.

57. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY REFORMS

The Interim Strategic Director Children’s Services submitted **Document “AB” which included a Not For Publication Appendix 1)** which provided an overview of the developments and progress in respect of the delivery of the SEND reforms.

SEND Inspections of all local authorities and local areas over the period May 2016 to May 2021 would be undertaken to assess how effectively these duties were being met. An inspection of the Bradford area was imminent.

The Local Authority (LA) and relevant partners had undertaken a process of Self Assessment in preparation for the pending inspection. The SEND Strategic

Partnership Board had been re-launched with clear terms of reference, multi agency membership and 4 clear project work streams; Integrated Assessment and Service Delivery, Joint Commissioning, Co production and Engagement and Preparing for Adulthood and were supported by the SEND Transformation and Compliance team.

As part of the self assessment process the RAG ratings in the LA Audit Tool contained a large number of Amber ratings (Partial Compliance and Work in Progress), many of which could revert to Red or non compliance if progress was not sustained or quick enough. This and the work of the SEND Transformation and Compliance team had identified a number of areas which required immediate action to be taken.

The following comments and questions were made by members of the Committee and responses given:

- Re-organisation had left professionals struggling, parents confused and children suffering. Care needed to be taken to ensure that children did not “fall through the cracks” The quality of SENCO’s (Special Educational needs Co-ordinators) in schools varied widely which had led to a post code lottery. In response it was noted that efforts were being made to raise awareness through the Local Offer. Bradford Link was accessible across all age ranges and parents were signposted to talk to schools, early years settings or GP’s. My support Plans involved families from the start on how all agencies could support children at an early stage.
- A member referred to the historic practice of keeping children in mainstream schools and the reluctance to issue statements. In response it was noted that the national average of assessments completed within the 20 week period was 64.9% and that Bradford was well below this. The national benchmark had been to keep the number of statements under 2% however this was a long time ago. There were a range of other factors on how government funded the High needs Block going forward. The issue facing Bradford was to identify what the level of SEND was and where it needed to be. Decisions were made historically on moving funds from other blocks to the High needs Block by the Schools Forum as a whole and this was not linked directly to the low number of statements.
- A member referred to the difficulty in navigating the EHCP process. In response it was noted that the Integrated Assessment & Service Delivery workstream of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board was working to have a more joined up and integrated process that recognised the experience of families.
- Where does the Overview & Scrutiny Committee fit into the governance structure of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board? A recommendation that Overview & Scrutiny be included could be taken to the Board.
- There was a need to hear from groups representing service users.
- The problem of information sharing between Education and Health was highlighted.
- What were the barriers to taking action on the issues detailed in paragraph 5.2 of Document “AB” and how was the problem going to be addressed? Was it lack of funding or expertise? The Committee needed to have assurance that there would be specific action and the timescale for that action. In response reference was made to the national rules on sharing

data and patient confidentiality. It was acknowledged that there was an issue regarding waiting lists for CAHMS however this may have been for a number of reasons and there would be no one easy solution. All schools had mental health champions and buddies which had been introduced at the instigation by young people and it was hoped that this would leave CAHMS to deal with only the more difficult cases.

- A member questioned that an EHCP could not be reviewed outside the annual process as the needs of the child could change in a short period of time. In response it was clarified that an annual review or interim annual review would have to be called to make any changes to an EHCP and that annual reviews did not just take place once a year. Changes could not be made to an EHCP as a desktop exercise.
- There had been an increase in requests from parents for EHCP's and it was felt that this was because parents did not have confidence in the local authority to provide support for their children without an EHCP. In response it was noted that there had been an increase nationally in requests for EHCP's however parents distrust of the system could not be ruled out. There was a need to ensure that My Support Plan process was robust and supported families.
- Reference was made to the necessity to consider the experience of service users and the needs of a diverse population. It was recognised that it was essential to ensure that services were joined up and that practitioners understood the needs of the child.
- How do the authority ensure that there is meaningful support for children with special educational need, especially those in mainstream schools? How is the authority identifying those children that are home schooled? My Support Plan should be used for children that did not have an EHCP, families and professionals were involved and this was reviewed termly. There was a statutory review of EHCP's once a year. Both systems should ensure that support remains appropriate.
- A member was pleased to note that the allocation of a Caseworker system for existing EHCP's and all EHC assessments were being developed and implemented, however it was pointed out that this had originally been identified in a report to the Committee in 2014. In response it was noted that the service was increasingly self aware and eager to understand where it was and where it needed to be. The task in hand was recognised and steps were being taken to drive forward significant improvements. The CCG was represented at the meeting and collective responsibility was recognised as was the need to ensure that all parts of the system supported the EHCP process.
- What was causing the delay in accessing CAMHS? There were a number of reasons such as the complexity of cases, budget reductions, teams had not grown to reflect the increase in demand and teachers referring young people to CAHMS with low levels of need. It was hoped that the Youth in Mind Buddy System would take away pressure from CAHMS to deal with the more complex cases.
- Members questioned whether families were being directed to the Local Offer. In response it was noted that schools were being reminded to put the Local Offer link on their web sites. Ways were being looked at of raising the profile of the Local Offer such as a Local Offer live event.
- A member related her first hand experience of the difficulty in accessing services and was concerned for the amount of teaching time lost during

that time. In response it was acknowledged that there were too many parents and children for whom the service had not worked. The priority was to understand the depth of the issues.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the draft SEND Action Plan be referred to the Executive.**
- (2) **That the Committee requests that the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be added to the governance structure of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board.**
- (3) **That representatives of the service users be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to share their views as soon as possible in the new municipal year.**

ACTION: Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services

58. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD FOR 2017/18

The report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services (**Document “AA”**) provided a summary of the Annual Report of the Safeguarding Children Board to accompany the full report which was provided as an appendix. The report provided a summary of priorities and achievements of the Board in 2017/18, as well as the annual summary of the Child Death Overview Panel.

The Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board introduced the report and was accompanied by representatives of the Police and Public Health. He referred to the challenge of recognising the voice of the child in all aspects of safeguarding in Bradford.

The following comments were made and questions asked by members of the Committee:

- Concern was expressed about the statement that schools were “opting out of local authority control and running themselves in the same way as independent schools”. It was pointed out that they were not independent schools but were publicly funded. The Strategic Director of Education confirmed that she had statutory responsibility for safeguarding over all organisations, including independent schools. They could not be required, but persuaded that it was in their interests to be seen to collaborate with the local authority. The importance of building relationships with schools was stressed.
- A question was asked about the definition of modifiable and non modifiable cases of consanguinity.
- What were the barriers to hearing the voice of the child? In response it was noted that every Board meeting received reports from children’s groups. There was a need to hear voices from more communities.

Resolved –

That Document “AA” be noted and a further report provided in 12 months

ACTION: Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services

59. OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN’S SERVICES (ILACS)

The report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services (**Document ”Y”**) provided updated information about the Council’s response to the published OFSTED ILACS judgement with a focus on the Theme Four: Improving the Front Door and MASH arrangements.

It was noted that the first monitoring visit would take place on 6 and 7 March. Members were advised that the Head of Service left their post just after Christmas and as a result an experienced manager had been put in post who whose work would be overseen by the Interim Assistant Director Children’s Social Care Improvement who had been seconded from Doncaster Children’s Services.

It was reported that capacity and demand for Front Door services had increased since the OFSTED inspection. The number of police officers in the Front Door had reduced that had unintended consequences such as the fragmentation of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation Team. Negotiations were taking place to increase the police presence.

It was noted that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had agreed to increase the number of Health Workers in the MASH from 1 part time to 1 full time. A secondee had been requested until the post could be filled.

The Youth offer was being looked at to add young people at risk of harm or offending. There had been a rising number of referrals of families and homeless. An additional officer had been added to work on youth housing.

The MASH Strategic Group was looking at refining the section 47 process of referrals. Meetings were taking place with colleagues in localities to improve the strategy. Processes would be simplified without losing the ability to gather information from partners that were co-located. Reviewing the sharing of documents was being looked into.

The following comments and questions were made by members and responses given:

- A member had been working with families that had moved into the area and been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation and were involved with the MASH Team but noted that she had not been informed of the outcome of the cases. It was accepted that the authority was not were it needed to be but that a start had been made in dealing with issues better. It was acknowledged that there was a need to strengthen links with the benefits system to protect children in need.
- Who were discussions taking place with regarding housing? In house and with the housing provider on how to help families with children.
- What about families moving into the area? Negotiations had to take place

with providers, however they were often on a list with other vulnerable people.

- With reference to a question regarding thresholds when reviewing children it was agreed that thresholds were too low and that partners needed to get together to have shared responsibility and understanding.
- An assurance was requested that risk management around domestic violence and neglect were being undertaken better than in September. In response it was noted that some improvement had been shown but that it was not consistent and not enough yet.
- A question was asked about developing closer links with the social worker co-located in the call centre to triage telephone calls before they were transferred to the MASH. In response it was noted that this would increase the number of referrals being made to the correct place. It was stressed that families should be referred to the lowest level of service rather than straight to a statutory service.

The Strategic Director noted that the receipt of accurate data was still at the development stage to provide the authority with joined up information which was presently on two separate systems. She added that changes had already been made in developing quality assurance audits that would give assurance that children at the front door were safe. Dip sampling was finding more “good” and less “needs improvement”. She concluded that work at the Front Door and MASH would continue and that self awareness would be demonstrated at the review.

Resolved –

- (1) The Committee notes the continuing risks, issues and challenge.**
- (2) That the 20 March meeting of the Committee continues the scrutiny of the Front Door with the findings of the Ofsted monitoring visit scheduled for 7 and 8 March 2019.**
- (3) A summary outcome of the key findings arising from the Peer Review of the Front Door is brought to the next Committee meeting.**
- (4) The Committee request that for their next meeting, data and audit information is available on theme four (front door and MASH) to enable a deep dive focus to take place.**

ACTION: Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services

60. CHILDREN’S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 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.

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