

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 4 September 2019 at 4.30 pm in Committee Room 3 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.35 pm
Concluded 7.15 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Arshad Hussain S Khan Mullaney Wood	Gibbons Pollard	Ward

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Fauzia Raza Parent Governor Representative

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Kerr Kennedy Voluntary Sector Representative
Tom Bright Teacher Secondary School Representative

Observers: Councillor Farley and Councillor Thirkill

Councillor Gibbons in the Chair

10. CHAIRS OPENING REMARKS

As the Overview and Scrutiny Lead Officer would now be servicing another Committee the Chair and Members thanked her for the work she had undertaken for the Committee.

11. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillor Gibbons, Councillor Thirkill and Kerr Kennedy disclosed an interest as they were Members of the Joseph Nutter's Foundation.

Action: City Solicitor

12. MINUTES

Resolved-

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2019 be signed as a correct record.

Action: City Solicitor

13. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

14. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referral received by the Committee.

15. JOSEPH NUTTER'S FOUNDATION

A verbal report was presented to Members of the Committee on the Joseph Nutter's Foundation. The Joseph Nutter's Foundation was a local charity which provided financial assistance for children in need who lived in the Bradford Metropolitan District and had at least one parent who had died.

It was reported that the aim of the Foundation was to offer modest support in the form of annual and one-off grants for essential items that would improve the welfare of the child or young person. Grants were awarded for clothing and footwear, bedding, beds, other essential household items, such as cookers, washing machines, fridges etc that would improve the welfare of the child or young person. The Foundation occasionally considered other needs on an individual basis. The grants that were made by the Foundation did not affect any State benefits which the family might be receiving.

Members were informed that in the past 12 months 42 families had been visited and supported, involving a total of 89 children and, had provided financial assistance to those families totalling almost £38,000. The families assisted represented all sections of the local community although it was an on going concern that a significant proportion of the children who were being assisted were aged 16 and over and would soon no longer be eligible for assistance; last year 36% of the children assisted were aged 16 and over whilst only 29% were aged 10 and younger and, 35% were aged 11 to 15.

It was reported that it was crucial that families were made aware of the support available by the Foundation and its activities. The Foundation had in recent years intensified its efforts to identify new families by making direct and regular contact with local schools, Children's Centres and Social Services.

The representatives from the Foundation asked the Committee for any further

help it could provide in making the public aware of the support available by the Foundation, particularly in relation to families with children of primary school age.

Resolved-

That the information on the Joseph Nutter's Foundation be circulated to all Councillors and that Members of the Committee cascade the information through their networks.

Action: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

16. PROGRESS UPDATE FOLLOWING THE OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS) - OFSTED MONITORING VISIT PREPARATION, PROGRESS AND CONTINUED CHALLENGE

The Strategic Director Children's Services presented a report (**Document "D"**) that provided the Committee with a progress update in respect of improvements identified within the Improvement Plan following the Ofsted inspection of September 2018 and the subsequent Department for Education (DfE) notice to improve issued in December 2018.

More specifically the report focused on the improvement activity around the next Ofsted monitoring visit, preparation, progress and continuing challenge. The next Ofsted Inspection was due to take place in middle of October 2019.

A document titled Vital Signs was tabled at the meeting. Members were informed that the Vital Signs report had been created to help all members of the Improvement Board understand and interpret the key trends in children's social care performance. It was hoped that this would help support a culture of challenge and assist Bradford through the improvement journey following Ofsted.

Members of the Committee made the following comments:

- What progress had been made with the recruitment of Social Workers?
 - Did the service monitor staff moral?
 - Members questioned officers as to why the Vital Signs report was not circulated with the agenda.
 - What was the number of staff that had undertaken the back to basics training as it was not detailed in the report?
 - Would have been useful for Members if the report had included the figures for June 2018 and July 2019.
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- The Committee had on a number of occasions asked for the information

relating to Social Workers Health check; had that been undertaken and where was that information? the Committee wanted to know how Social Workers were doing? Relevant information should be provided to the Committee as well as the Improvement Board.

- What happened when agencies the service worked with, who were not undertaking certain tasks on time?
- Would be useful to have more details on the workforce, issues relating to recruitment and retention and evidence of how the Service was dealing with it and plans to improve the future workforce.

In response it was reported that:

- The recruitment of Social Workers was a national challenge too and Bradford was not unique; additional social workers had been recruited which included some agency workers becoming permanent employees; there was a planned recruitment fair taking place for September and October 2019; information in relation to workforce could be provided to the Committee.
- Some staff had left to work in other parts of the organisation.
- Newly qualified staff were applying but the service was lacking in experienced social workers and the focus now was on recruiting to such posts.
- Staff morale was monitored and was improving, the feedback received was that staff were positive.
- Manageable case loads, suitable training and development and good supervision were key components to retaining and recruiting social workers.
- The Vital Signs report was circulated to Members electronically on the 27 August; future reports to the Committee would include the Vital Signs report circulated with the agenda.
- All Managers should have completed the back to basics training by the end of August 2019; training Social Workers was the next stage.
- Social Worker Health Checks could be provided to the Committee; reports to the Improvement Board should be publicly available; Membership of the Board was currently being looked at.
- Officers would work with Senior Officers of the relevant agencies where there were any problems and if matters could not be resolved the issue would be escalated to the Safeguarding Board.

- Information in relation to workforce could be provided to the Committee.

Resolved-

That the Committee looks forward to receiving further updates detailing improvements/progress made and workforce breakdown at each Committee meeting throughout the Municipal Year.

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

17. UPDATE ON THE EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION SERVICE

The Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted **Document "E"** which provided an update on the implementation and effectiveness of the Early Help and Prevention Service with a particular focus on impact and quality. The report highlighted key milestones met and current challenges.

Members made the following comments:

- The report did not contain sufficient information in relation to audit work being undertaken by the Service.
- How did the service approach hard to reach communities?
- It was difficult to monitor how the service provided now was better than what was provided under the old structure; would be useful to have a representative from the Hub to advise the Committee on how it was different to the old structure and how the service was coping with reduced resources.
- Would be useful for the Committee to have data from parents before the changes to the Service were made and feedback after it had changed to ascertain whether the Service had improved.

In response to Members questions it was reported that:

- The Service made every effort to contact hard to reach communities via the various agencies it worked with.
- Feedback from parents would show whether the Service was providing the appropriate support.

In response to a Member's question it was reported that ascertain the effectiveness of the service would result in the reduction of referrals and agencies being able to support families as soon as possible when contact was made.

Resolved-

That the Committee receives an update report in December 2019 and requests the attendance of officers from the Hubs to explain how the Hub Model was working and operating.

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

18. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) REFORMS

The Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted **Document "F"** which provided an overview of the developments and progress in respect of the delivery of the SEND reforms.

Members made the following comments:

- When would the CAPITA 1 system use and transfer of pupil information into a single data source be completed?
- Members expressed concern that the waiting times for access to CAMHS (Child Adolescent Mental Health Services) was still an issue as well as the Single Point of Contact for Health; requesting information via an email was not sufficient; there should be someone available to speak to.
- When would the accommodation of the SEND team be resolved?
- What was the percentage of Education Health Care Plans that were of a good quality?
- When was the SEND Inspection likely to happen?
- Was the voice of the child being taken on board in the work that was taking place to make improvements?

In response to Members comments it was reported that:

- The co-location of SEND teams had made progress; the Accommodation Steering Group met on 18 July and where teams would be moving to had been agreed and a date had been established for the move which would be approximately two weeks.
- The transfer of pupil information into a single data source would be completed by 2020.
- A single point of contact for requesting and receiving health information was required from the CCG in order that there was a single contact for Education Health Care Assessments to so that requests could be looked at and assessments discussed if needed; that contact should be a clinical professional; similar to what other authorities had in place.
- There was more confidence in terms of quality in the new Education Health

Care Plans; there were over 3000 old Education Health Care Plans that had not been reviewed on time and the outcomes for those plans had not been changed; the Quality Assurance Post had been in place since June; reviewing of EHCPs would take place from now until February, officers would be able to report to the Committee around that time.

- The Local Area SEND inspection was imminent for Bradford but the date would not be known until a call from inspectors had been received, which would be on a Monday morning.
- Work was being undertaken to reduce the CAHMS waiting times.
- Voice of the child was important in changing services and would continue to be; needed to work on actively engaging young people on a wider basis; EHCP champions had been established and was a good way of capturing the voice of the child in schools; review plans needed to ensure the voice of the child was heard.

A representative of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) attending the meeting and spoke about the progress being made in relation to Local Authority requests for health checks for Looked After Children; the current system would be to receive health checks via email which will be monitored by the CCG, the timing of responses would also be monitored and reviewed by a number of health providers to ensure the assessments were being undertaken in a timely manner. The CCG was in the process of recruiting an individual to assist with the single point of contact with the aim of recruiting by October 2019.

Members felt that the response provided by the CCG was not sufficient and the issues in relation to single point of contact was not being resolved quickly enough.

The Chair emphasised that a verbal update be provided to the Committee on the establishment of the Single Point of Contact for Health assessments.

Resolved-

- (1) That the Committee expresses concern that the Single Point of Contact for Health has yet to be established and urges officers to expedite the recruitment process.**
- (2) That a verbal update on the progress being made be provided to the Committee by December 2019.**

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

The report of the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "G"**) presented the Committee's Work programme 2019-20.

Resolved-

That the Work Programme 2019-20 continues to be regularly reviewed during the year.

Action: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair