

## Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 29 June 2022 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 16:36  
Concluded 19:10

### Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Alipoor Berry Shafiq	Winnard Pollard	J Sunderland

### VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Joyce Simpson  
Fauzia Raza

Church Representative (CE)  
Parent

### NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Tom Bright  
Dr Samina Karim

Apologies: Councillor Julie Humphreys, Councillor Talat Sajawal and Councillor Carol Thirkill

### Councillor Winnard in the Chair

#### 1. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

Councillor N Elahi

#### 2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

#### 3. MINUTES

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 and 23 March 2022 be**

signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

**ACTION: City Solicitor**

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

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

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

There were no referrals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

**7. NATIONAL REVIEW INTO THE MURDERS OF ARTHUR LABINJO-HUGHES AND STAR HOBSON**

The Board Manager from Safeguarding Children's Board advised Committee Members that the Review Panel conducted an investigation into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, the report was balanced and fair. The Officer advised that challenges had been identified amongst various issues. Focussed work was underway to revise protocols and train staff in relation to assessing risk, sharing information and provide quality supervision of social workers. Review and action was being taken on all statutory multi-agency processes used to keep children safe including child protection medicals, strategy discussions and Section 47 enquiries

The Review had set out eight national recommendations and six recommendations for the partnership in Bradford. There is a need for sharper communication between partners/organisations. It was reported that specific training had been delivered to the CSC and Health care staff on coercive and controlling behaviours in relationships and the impact on children learning, hidden partners and diversity.

The Safeguarding Partnership, the Children's Commissioner and Chair of the improvement board are reviewing arrangements including governance and performance to ensure actions are taken and that agencies are held to account.

The Chair of the Committee asked if partners were confident that changes had been made that would make something like this less likely to happen.

The Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that something like this could never be eliminated but now there would be a much more open culture with agencies and more readiness to work together. New efforts had been made with training staff and encouraging them to report any concerns.

The Officer from West Yorkshire Police advised that they had introduced a Neglect toolkit which could be drawn upon by practitioners from all agencies to identify and effectively respond to cases of neglect and that they would work to recommendations but it was a difficult environment and the main challenge from

the report is to have key partners to work together and share information so that swift action could be taken. It was reported that more officers and practitioners were now in post with expert knowledge.

The Officer said that one of the key things that stood out from the report was partnership, all the organisations have already made some changes and the protection of children was of high priority for all partners and agencies in Bradford. The Officer suggested on better ways of working collectively with Partners, have better communication and to also identify ways of following up on action plans to monitor progress.

The Chair of the Committee pointed out that the calls of family members for Star Hobson reporting concerns were dismissed and requested to know what measures had been put in place to ensure that social workers and other key staff do not dismiss vital information.

The Officer from West Yorkshire Police reported that the department had undertaken further training, in Star's case the initial assessment had set the case as malicious from the beginning. Officers had been trained to challenge everything and to not be frightened of sensitivity. West Yorkshire Police Safeguarding specialist functions had increased the implementation of Digital Media Investigators. Digital media had been a significant source of information during the investigation of Star's murder.

The Strategic Director for Children's Services reported that the department frequently received false allegations, these would now be followed with a full investigation and would not be assumed false. The department would ensure they get the balance right and to not be afraid to challenge or question a decision.

The Board Manager from Safeguarding Children's Board pointed out that it was important to be in a stronger position with trained staff and agreed with other partners/agencies to not be afraid to challenge decisions and working tightly with partners with open communication would certainly improve things.

A Member of the Committee was keen to understand what measures were in place to support recommendation 5 of the report specifically focussing on out of hours' service.

In response the Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that there was an out of hours' emergency duty team for any social care related issues in Bradford. If there was a dangerous situation the Team would gather information from different agencies within a few hours and take appropriate action.

The Officer from West Yorkshire Police reported that there was an Emergency Duty Manager who carried out professional discussions and made assessments to ensure there were right people with the right information making the right decision.

All Partners/Agencies were in agreement that there was some work that still needed to be done and this was being worked on by all involved. However, the only way to measure the effectiveness of the process currently in place was to wait and see if it worked.

The Officer from Safeguarding Children's Board pointed out that there were systems and cultures in place throughout Bradford and it would be beneficial for all to have a better understanding of all these multi agency roles.

A Member of the Committee pointed out that the NHS have introduced a new process, guidance and training for Pre-birth, maternity and antenatal safeguarding. The Committee Member was keen to understand how this would work.

In response the Strategic Director of Quality and Nursing Bradford District advised that she would look into this and report back at a later date.

A Member of the Committee referred to section 2.17 of the report where it stated that Bradford would work alongside the Government appointed Children's Commissioner to make significant changes in how social workers work in the district. Bradford was in the process of setting up a Children's Trust which would deliver further changes needed to make at pace to make sure children in our district are safe. The Committee Member expressed concerns on the length of time it would take to implement this.

In response the Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that the department had been working hard to ensure the process was in place soon.

A Committee Member asked what the partnership was doing to build confidence in people to report issues.

The Strategic Director for Children's Services informed Members that there had not been a drop off in reporting. People were encouraged to call 999 or report to the department.

The Officer from West Yorkshire Police advised that it was an information led service, confidence in Partnership was important and in order to build trust and confidence within communities the PCSOs have been regularly patrolling areas.

Committee Members were keen to understand what steps had been taken to maintain the wellbeing of social workers and officers dealing with sensitive information.

In response the Officer from West Yorkshire Police reported that the department had started carrying out safeguarding reviews to ensure officers were not overwhelmed with caseloads and any issues and concerns could be addressed in a timely manner.

The Officer added that progress was being made on recruiting new staff and maintain current staff by providing them with the correct support. A new recruiting strategy was in place to encourage people to come to work in Bradford.

Members were keen to understand the specifics on improvements.

The Deputy Director for Social Care informed Members of the Committee that the key pieces of focus were on how the front door workers deal with the information they gain, where they share this information and identifying next steps as capturing the response would help the worker to be clear of further actions, this would in turn improve services.

Members of the Committee wanted to know what would be different going forward for social workers/safeguarding officers/front line staff.

In response the Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that they did not have a clear model in October 2021, there was a disjointed model. A new practice model has been worked on which has also been communicated with social workers.

A Member of the Committee wanted to know how people could manage handling risk, departments see quite a few new personnel so how would services ensure the skills would not be lost and knowledge and expertise was retained. In response the Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that there were much talks around the concept of consistencies. A child may not have the same social worker throughout therefore the service has been working on ensuring that the child experiences minimal amount of disruption. Sometimes the social worker would move up in their career or move on from the service in which case it cannot be helped. There would more support and open communication with social workers going forward.

The Strategic Director of Quality and Nursing Bradford District suggested having a practitioner's forum for better connection with front line workers and multi-agencies.

The Officer from West Yorkshire Police reported that the service had been struggling with Police retention. People were more focused on work/life balance therefore the service was looking at enhanced pay, better shifts and allowing space and time to deal with each case. The Officer informed Members of the Committee that there had been uplifts of resources making it a better place to work but it was a struggle to get detectives on to Safeguarding but the service was working on it.

A Member of the Committee stated that more needs to be done with regards to identifying the dynamics of a community and suggested getting to know the communities better. The Committee Member asked if this was something that would be focussed on.

In response the Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that this was something the team were moving towards to get a better understanding on localities and communities.

A voting co-opted member was keen to understand how the pressure was managed with social workers given the impact of stress of case load and depleted resources. The Member stressed that taking care of staff wellbeing was paramount.

The Strategic Director for Children's Services in response informed the Member that the service was ensuring that staff had visible leadership and a drop in was available for staff which was frequently used. Virtual support was also available where questions could be raised in chats, staff could ask questions, raise any concerns and suggest new ideas. This has worked well as staff feel connected and heard which in turn improves the workforce. Additionally, a recruitment

retention payment has been offered to agency staff who had chosen to move to a permanent position, which has been a positive achievement for the service.

The Officer from West Yorkshire Police reported that there were around 50/60 people off work at any one time as there were higher number of staff off with stress from safeguarding. There was a Police Assistance Programme to officers to support them and address and monitor issues and concerns.

A Member of the Committee stated that social work was a challenge throughout the country and advised that the services need to boost the morale of social workers. The Member added that manager's needed to evaluate needs and build confidence which would enable staff to do their jobs effectively.

In response the Strategic Director of Quality and Nursing Bradford District advised that this could be achieved by a renewed focus on key performances and maintaining connection with front line staff.

The Deputy Director of Social Care advised that training had been provided for front line managers' which were quality assured and audited. All issues and concerns raised were addressed especially during the drop in sessions where a lot could be read and understood from body language. The Officer added that it would be beneficial when all partners/multi-agencies used the same data/information and there were more openness and willingness to work together and had an open communication, a multi-agency united front.

#### **Resolved –**

**This Committee requests that a further report relating to progress with the implementation of its review recommendations, giving examples of some positive outcomes, be brought to this Committee in November 2022.**

#### **ACTION – Bradford District Safeguarding Children's Partnership**

#### **8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

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.**