

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 JULY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 23 July 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Carol Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: Andy Dunbobbin, David Healey, Dave Mackie, Mike Reece, Ian Smith, Carolyn Thomas and David Wisinger

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Adele Davies-Cooke, Veronica Gay, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe and Hilary McGuill.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Social Services, Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance and Resources Service Manager
Contract Team Manager for agenda item 6

IN ATTENDANCE:

Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin declared a personal interest in the following agenda items because he was a Kinship Carer:-

Agenda item 4 – CSSIW Safeguarding and Care Planning Looked After Children Progress Report to include update on the demands of Children’s Services

and

Agenda item 5 – Fostering Services Inspection Report

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint meeting of Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 4th June 2015 and the meeting of this Committee held on 18th June 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. **CSSIW SAFEGUARDING AND CARE PLANNING LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROGRESS REPORT TO INCLUDE UPDATE ON THE DEMANDS ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance introduced a report to provide Members with a progress update on the implementation of the key findings after the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children. The report also provided an update on the demands on Children's Services and how these were being managed.

The Senior Manager advised that he was presenting the report on behalf of the Senior Manager Children's Lead as she was unable to attend this meeting. He detailed the background to the report and explained that CSSIW had undertaken a national thematic inspection that focussed on Safeguarding and Care Planning of looked after children and care leavers, who exhibited vulnerable or risky behaviours. All 22 Welsh local authorities had been inspected with the findings of each of these inspections captured in a national overview report. The final conclusions of the inspection were set out in the report in the form of a number of questions asked about practice and processes within the local authority. The report provided an overview of the key developments the service had taken in response to those key questions.

Question 1 – Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

The Senior Manager explained that a number of key activities had been undertaken by the authority, which were detailed in the report and included Bi-monthly Children's Services Forum, annual Climbie visits, regular scrutiny reports and the Annual Pride of Flintshire event. On the role of a dedicated Participation Officer, he said that the service was proud to have been able to retain the role and recruit Gwenan Roberts to the post. The Senior Manager spoke of the work that had been undertaken and the relationship that the Participation Officer had built up with the looked after children (LAC) and care leavers. He also spoke of the comments made by the Children's Commissioner following her visit to the Pride of Flintshire awards about how impressed she was that the children and young people had led the day.

The performance in relation to promoting outcomes for looked after children and care leavers had been positive throughout 2014/15 with a notable improvement in respect of educational outcomes. The Senior Manager felt that some areas could still be improved and added that a dedicated LAC nurse had now been appointed which would assist in improving the timeliness of health assessments. He commented on the issue of placement instability which had increased slightly in 2014/15 and explained that this was an area where further work was needed. The Resources Service Manager advised that a number of key learning outcomes had been identified and processes had been put in place which included working more closely with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) colleagues and also officers being more proactive.

The Senior Manager spoke of the need to strengthen the links with the early intervention service and advised the Committee that the 'Team Around the Family' were moving to be co-located within Children's Services. A restructure of the service was also to take place which would directly impact on the LAC population and placements including a stronger integration of early intervention services. The Resources Service Manager advised that the restructure would mirror the development of the Wellbeing Act which would be in place from April 2016.

The report also highlighted the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). A CSE multi-agency panel had been formed and Victim Contact Team arrangements in conjunction with the Police were in place. At a regional level the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board had been established which had identified CSE as a key priority. The Cabinet Member spoke of a recent presentation to the Children's Services Forum by Detective Superintendent Ramessur-Williams on the pilot project to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Question 2 – Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

The Senior Manager referred to the robustness of care plans and said that the quality assurance framework had been reconsidered. One of the national performance indicators was that every care leaver should have a named personal adviser and in 2014/15 the target of 100% had been achieved in Flintshire. A designated CAMHS officer for looked after children had been appointed and this would enable an improvement in the timeliness of CAMHS provision to looked after children but he added that there was still work to be done.

Question 3 – Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive coordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

Sickness levels within Children's Services had reduced significantly in 2014/15 and this was helping to reduce the potential for children experiencing changes in Social Workers. It was also recognised that there was further work to be undertaken to minimise the number of changes of Social Workers for children and young people which would be addressed through the forthcoming service restructure.

A survey had been undertaken in April 2015 to better understand employee's experience of supervision and over 97% had reported that they felt that supervision was timely, effective and of good quality, which was positive. It was reported that work was underway with the business systems team to streamline and improve assessment and care planning documentation. An additional piece of work was being undertaken with children and young people to revise and improve the consultation documentation that they completed themselves. The Resources Service Manager advised that having one model form would ensure consistency.

Question 4 – Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?/ Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

It was reported that the Quality Assurance Framework was being developed with a stronger focus on the voice of the child being central to decision making and service delivery. The Senior Manager advised that the Placement Strategy needed to be reviewed and this was being undertaken as part of a wider piece of work to develop a new LAC strategy that would be focussed on a number of areas that were detailed in the report.

Demands on Social Services

The Senior Manager advised that the referrals and contacts to the service had grown significantly and work being considered as part of the restructure would look at how to effectively respond to it. Other areas that the restructure would focus on were detailed in the report.

Councillor David Healey thanked the Senior Manager for the presentation and he commended the officer that had produced the report. He sought clarification on the reasons for the increase in referrals. In response, the Senior Manager advised that there was no single reason for the increase but it could be as a result of increased awareness. He also spoke of multiple referrals such as from the Police, schools and GP surgeries which could account for some of the higher figures referred to. Councillor Healey also asked about the practical difficulties in streamlining the process and whether assessments were undertaken at the first visit. The Resources Service Manager indicated that the initial visit would be for evidence gathering and would be followed up by an assessment being undertaken after the visit. He also gave examples of the type of calls that the service received which could range from problems that were unrelated to children or young people to children being left unattended.

The Senior Manager spoke of CID16 referrals from the Police and of the need to streamline assessments. He commented on areas of good practice used by other authorities which were being considered by the Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Smith, the Senior Manager advised that CYAST stood for Children & Younger Adults Support Team. He then provided details of the Council's successful young apprentice scheme and advised that a three year apprentice scheme was to commence in September 2015 to undertake modelling work to identify trends and where support was needed. He commented on work which had been undertaken in the past with Cordis Bright to identify vulnerable families in Flintshire and advised that a refresh of the data was to be undertaken.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin referred to his role as Armed Forces Champion and spoke of support options that could be achieved through the Covenant. The Senior Manager welcomed the suggestion to discuss options and advised that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act would place a duty on local authorities to enhance wellbeing. He commented on work to be undertaken with the voluntary sector to provide support for those who needed it.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Reece about whether referrals were received from youth clubs, the Resources Service Manager indicated that this could be a source of referrals but that he did not have details available at this meeting. He added that he could review the data and provide a sample of where referrals were received from.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the details of the report and the developments that had taken place and were underway in relation to the discharge of the Local Authority's duties in respect of safeguarding and promoting positive outcomes for looked after children be acknowledged; and
- (b) That an update report be provided to a future meeting of the Committee on improvements to the service that were being considered.

23. FOSTERING SERVICES INSPECTION REPORT

The Senior Manager Commissioning introduced a report to consider the Care and Social Services Inspection (2015) of the Flintshire Fostering Services and subsequent action plan (updated as of July 2015).

The Resources Service Manager explained that the purpose of the inspection was to ensure that the service was fit for purpose and that the Council was meeting the statutory regulations. The inspection team had identified a number of positive areas which were detailed in the report but there was also one area of non-compliance in which independent members of the Fostering Panel were employees of the Council. This had now been addressed with the appointment of two new members not employed by the Local Authority.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services indicated that the Fostering Team had won two accolades and there had been an increase in the uptake of foster carers. Events had been held to promote foster caring and the service was performing well.

In response to a question, the Resources Service Manager advised that Flintshire currently had 113 foster carers.

RESOLVED:

That the continuation of effective progress made by the Fostering Service in supporting foster carers and looked after children effectively be endorsed.

24. ROTA VISITS

In response to a question from the Chair, Members indicated that no rota visits had taken place.

The Contract Team Manager advised that during the previous six months, only 7 out of 20 rota visits had been undertaken and indicated that she had details with her of the outstanding visits. For the newer Members on the Committee, she explained the purpose of rota visits and the type of facilities that Members would be required to visit and stated that rota visits were to be extended to independent sector homes. She added that training could also be undertaken for Members who had not previously been on rota visits. The Contract Team Manager sought clarification from the Committee of whether they would prefer to undertake rota visits within their ward.

The Chair suggested that a list of outstanding rota visits could be provided for Members at each Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting to allow the outstanding visits to be allocated to Members.

Councillor Dave Mackie asked if an email could be sent to him as a reminder if he had not responded to an allocation of a rota visit within two weeks.

The Contract Team Manager spoke of a one page profile for each Member that would be undertaking rota visits which could be sent to the facility in advance of the visit so that the operators would know who to expect. She suggested that preparation of the profile could be undertaken in smaller groups which she was happy to arrange following this meeting. The Cabinet Member spoke of the importance of having the profile in place and suggested that the Members who had already prepared their profile should promote its importance to other Committee Members. The Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator suggested that copies of the form be made available to the Committee following this meeting to allow them to complete it and return it to the Contract Team Manager.

On the issue of the Forward Work Programme, the Facilitator advised that a planning session had been held the previous day. She had met with the Chief Officer (Social Services) and had populated the Forward Work Programme which she had shared with the Chair. A copy would be circulated to the Committee Members and the Facilitator asked Members to advise her if they had any suggestions for additional items. She detailed the reports that were to be considered in the meeting scheduled for 22nd September 2015 which would include a report on the 'Review of Adoption Services following implementation'. In response to a query from Councillor Mackie about whether the report would contain the new organisational structure, the Resources Service Manager provided details of what the report and appendices would consist of.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be received.

25. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the public or press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.05 am)

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Chair