

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

**A meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was held on 2 July 2018.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Higgins (Chair); Councillors Coupe, Lewis, McGee, McGloin, Storey, J Walker (substitute for Councillor Hellaoui) and Uddin.

**OFFICERS:** A Brown, J Dixon and H Watson.

**PRESENT AS OBSERVERS:** Councillor D Rooney  
L Henman, D Johnson (Political Assistants)  
C Cooke (member of the public)  
J Cain (Press)

**AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor Hellaoui.

### **\*\* DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members at this point in the meeting.

### **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Storey was nominated and seconded and, therefore, appointed as Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Panel until amended by the Panel.

**AGREED** that Councillor Storey be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People's Social Care Scrutiny Panel until amended by the Scrutiny Panel.

### **SETTING THE SCENE – OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Chair welcomed those present to the first meeting of the newly-established Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel.

H Watson, Executive Director of Children's Services, and A Brown, Director of Children's Care, had been invited to provide the Panel with an overview of the main services, falling within the Panel's remit, provided by Children's Services, and to highlight any priorities and/or challenges for the year ahead.

A map of Children's Services' current staffing structure had been circulated to the Panel prior to the meeting. The Executive Director explained that there were three senior leadership teams that reported to her directly – Children's Care; Education; and Prevention and Partnerships.

The Director of Children's Care provided an overview of the services for which she was responsible and highlighted that this was the current structure, however, consultation on a revised service structure was ongoing. There were four Heads of Service under her directorship and each Head of Service was responsible for a variety of teams, as follows:-

- Head of Quality, Standards and Initial Response (Principal Social Worker)
  - Multi Agency Safeguarding Team – including partners from the Police and Health Services. This was the entry point or 'front door' where concern referrals were made to the Council and also the entry point for Early Help.
  - Independent Review Team – responsible for case management of social work for children to ensure that the needs of the children were being met, to form an independent view and to challenge.

- Workforce Development – recruitment and retention continued to be a significant challenge not only in Middlesbrough, but in the North East and nationally.
- Head of Assessment and Care Planning
  - Eight Assessment and Care Planning Teams responsible for front line Social Workers undertaking assessments and drawing up intervention and care plans.
- Head of Placements and Looked After Children
  - Children with Disabilities Team – specialist team.
  - Pathways – Leaving Care Team – specialist team - the offer to children leaving care was very different to children in care.
  - Children Looked After Team – a new Regional Adoption Agency, “Tees Valley Adoption”, based in Stockton, had been established and was now responsible for the recruitment of adopters.
  - Fostering Team – current responsibility for fostering recruitment.
- Head of Children’s Homes and Resources
  - Children’s Homes – there were currently three children’s homes in Middlesbrough and one specialist short break facility for children with disabilities.
  - Resources – consisted of three teams: Supervised Contact Service; 0-18 Parenting Support; Home Support for Children with Disabilities.

The Executive Director highlighted that, whilst there may be some cross-over, the Director of Education’s service area would fall largely within the remit of the Children and Young People’s Learning Scrutiny Panel. There would be cross over between both the Children’s Scrutiny Panels in terms of the services provided by the Director of Prevention and Partnerships and these were outlined as follows:-

- Head of Strategic Services
  - Believe in Families Children’s Services Transformation
  - Voice of the Child/Participation Co-ordination – a Participation Officer was now in post and this area would be instrumental in providing a range of focus groups for young people with different needs.
- Head of Prevention
  - School Readiness Team
  - Work Readiness Team
  - Family Case Work Team
  - Early Help Hub
  - Business Change
- Head of Partnerships
  - South Tees Youth Offending Service
  - Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children’s Board
  - Troubled Families Team
  - Risk and Resilience Team

In terms of identifying pressures and priorities for Children’s Services, the following areas were highlighted:-

- Social care funding and demand would continue to be a pressure should current levels of demand continue. This was a national issue and the Panel was informed that local government funding had been cut by 50% in real terms since 2010 and that, overall, by 2020 Councils would face a funding gap of around £2 billion for children's services.
- Corporate parenting was identified as a key priority that required strengthening.
- 'Believe in Families' was a significant transformation programme consisting of many strands including, in particular, training and development of staff in techniques to create good partnerships with families and communities.
- A renowned international programme, 'Signs of Safety' would be introduced. Evaluation of the programme had been positive and it was anticipated that the programme would have a positive impact in the long term in Middlesbrough once it was embedded into practices and outcomes.
- Ensuring that a full range of placements were available for looked after children, including trying to increase the numbers and types of foster carers in Middlesbrough. This would help to reduce the number of children placed with independent foster carers, some of which were out of area placements. Residential placements would also be examined.
- Strengthening 'edge of care' services to provide wrap around support to help stop children coming into the care system.

During the course of discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- In response to a query, the Panel was informed that there were three residential homes in Middlesbrough. There had been significant investment to bring the homes up to the required standard and two had been rated as 'good' by Ofsted. The other was rated as 'requires improvement' however this was not in relation to the standard of care afforded but in relation to the matching of the children into the placements. Work was being undertaken to identify how the residential offer could be improved to meet the needs of children and provide more flexibility for children and carers.
- In response to a further query regarding the Gleneagles Resource Centre, it was confirmed that the facility was available for short break and respite care for children with disabilities. In terms of accessing the facility, the Panel was advised that each fostering package was assessed on the needs of the child and the family as the levels of support required would vary.
- Reference was made to the use of independent foster carers and it was acknowledged that efforts were ongoing to increase the number of foster carers in Middlesbrough. There needed to be particular emphasis on recruiting specialist carers to provide placements for sibling groups, teenagers, children with disabilities and mother and baby placements.

### **SETTING THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19**

The Democratic Services Officer submitted a report inviting the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel to consider its work programme for 2018/19.

A list of potential topics, which were anticipated to be of particular interest to the Scrutiny Panel, and the suggestions received in respect of the Scrutiny Panel's remit were contained in the report.

Members were advised that the topical issues and suggestions outlined in the report were merely proposals and the content of the work programme was entirely a decision for the Panel to make.

The Panel was encouraged to select two topics where scrutiny could make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development.

The Panel was reminded that it could also identify shorter 'one-off' topics and receive any relevant updates throughout the year as it considered necessary.

The Panel held a discussion in relation to the suggested topics within the report and the following issues were raised:-

- It was noted that the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel had chosen the topics of school holiday provision and emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people for inclusion in its work programme.
- A Panel Member commented that it would be interesting to look at how Early Help Services had developed following the reduction in Sure Start and associated resources and also to look at how Prevention Services could be built upon to ensure the needs of children and families were being met as early as possible. It was suggested that the topic of Early Help and Prevention Services could be considered alongside the 'Revolving Door Report'.
- Corporate parenting was highlighted as an issue of importance as everyone had a responsibility as a corporate parent and that awareness should be raised across the authority and with partners. The Executive Director advised that the Corporate Parenting Board had been established and would receive regular updates on various issues including the education of looked after children.
- The issue of young carers was touched upon and it was acknowledged that many young carers did not see themselves as being carers but many young people supported parents and siblings for a variety of reasons. The Panel indicated that it would be interested to receive further information on this topic later in the year and that it could potentially link in to the topic of corporate parenting.
- The Panel identified that it would be interested to receive an update in relation to the review of the role and functions of the safeguarding children board. The Executive Director explained that, from next year, there would no longer be a requirement to have a Safeguarding Children Board in its current format. The department was working closely with other Local Authorities to establish the best way forward and an update could be provided to the Panel at an appropriate juncture.
- Reference was made to the new measures announced by the Government to provide fast access to support and advice for children living with alcohol-dependent parents. The Panel acknowledged that alcohol was a problem in Middlesbrough and that many children's lives were impacted upon through alcohol or drug dependent parents and that an update on the issues would be useful.

**AGREED** that the following topics be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval and inclusion in the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel's work programme for 2018/2019:-

1. Early Help and Prevention Services / 'Revolving Door' Report.
2. Corporate Parenting.

The Panel also agreed that it wished to receive update information in relation to the following:-

1. Review of the role and functions of the Safeguarding Children's Board (Wood Review).
2. New support to help children living with alcohol-dependent parents.
3. Young Carers.

**PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MEETING DATES FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL FOR THE 2018/19 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

A provisional schedule of meeting dates, for the 2018/19 municipal year, was submitted for the Panel's consideration.

**AGREED** that the proposed meeting dates for 2018/19, as set out in the report, be approved.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update to the Panel in relation to the business conducted at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 5 June 2018, namely:-

- Final Report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Council Budget 2018/19 and Proposed Savings.
- Final Report of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel – Reducing Loneliness and/or Social Isolation in Later Life.
- Final Report of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel – Listening to the Voice of the Child.
- Final Report of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel – Selective Landlord Licensing.
- Executive Forward Work Programme.
- Scrutiny Panel Progress Updates.

**AGREED** that the information provided be noted.