
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 11 September 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors T Higgins (Chair), M Storey (Vice Chair), D P Coupe, A Hellaoui, L Lewis, J McGee, L McGloin and M Walters.

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: T Brittain - MVDA
D Johnson - Labour Group Political Assistant
J Cain - Press
Councillor J Brunton Dobson

OFFICERS: R Brown, J Dixon, G Earl and S Marley.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor Z Uddin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

18/10 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 31 JULY 2018**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel held on 31 July 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

18/11 **EARLY HELP & PREVENTION SERVICES - FURTHER INFORMATION - SCHOOL READINESS TEAM**

G Earl, Head of Prevention and S Marley, School Readiness Manager, were in attendance at the meeting to provide the Panel with further information in relation to the School Readiness model and the work of the School Readiness Team in Middlesbrough.

By way of background, it was explained to the Panel that in 2015, Middlesbrough Council was successful in bidding for a "Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods Project" resulting in the current Incremental School Readiness Model, created with Health colleagues. This was developed using the Greater Manchester good practice model based on learning from other local authorities. Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods was more focussed than the previous Sure Start regime and concentrated on fewer target groups to achieve a greater impact with a reduced cost element to the Council.

The School Readiness Team was made up of a number of functions including management of the Children's Centre, the statutory duties of the Family Information Service (involving working with all private, voluntary and independent day care providers and childminders to ensure they provide good/outstanding care of Middlesbrough children), an element of managing the funded childcare (Achieving two-year-olds (A2YO) and 30 hour entitlement), along with undertaking safeguarding audits, staff training etc. The Team managed two Council nurseries – Bright Starts and Stainsby - and a small crèche team.

The main aims of the School Readiness Team were to work with families with children aged 0-5 years, by:-

- Helping children become ready for nursery and primary school.
- Accessing good quality childcare, including free early education for two, three and four year olds.
- Supporting childcare settings to maintain quality and standards, safeguarding, policies and procedures to help increase their Ofsted ratings.

It was explained that the Children's Centre model consisted of one central Middlesbrough

Children's Centre, with seven outreach sites at Park End, Berwick Hills, North Ormesby, Thorntree, Hemlington, Martonside and West Middlesbrough. A further Children's Centre was located at Abingdon Primary School which the school ran on behalf of the Council. A copy of the School Readiness Team staffing structure was attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report and it was highlighted that each children's centre site had a small team working in each of the centres and that the staff within the Team worked across all of the sites. The centres were also used by other social work teams to meet with families as they provided a more relaxed setting.

The Team included 3.5 FTE Family Practitioners that worked with all pregnant teens/teen parents in Middlesbrough. The Practitioners ensured all pregnant teens and teen parents had a 'My Family Plan' in place and worked closely with Health Visitor colleagues to deliver a number of universal and targeted interventions to ensure the health and wellbeing of parents and children.

The Panel was provided with information regarding the following targeted elements:-

- 6-8 week Health Visitor check - This check was undertaken by a Health Visitor who would assess whether parents needed any additional support. All new parents were referred for 'Magical Moments' which encouraged parents to engage in supporting their babies' development and was linked to the universal services that were available at the centres.
- Two year, three months Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) - The ASQ was a nationally recognised tool with a scoring system, used by Health Visitors to assess whether a child was meeting his/her developmental milestones.
- One year old ASQ -Health Visitors had now begun to undertake the ASQ at one year old in order to identify interventions at an even earlier age. It was hoped that this would eventually lead to a reduction in the number of children requiring interventions at age two.

After completing the ASQ assessment for a child, the Health Visitor would determine whether the child had an identified development need and carry out a follow up ASQ three months later. The Health Visitor would refer the family to the School Readiness Team to work with the family on the child's needs. For example, a mid-range score might mean that the child required targeted interventions to improve fine motor skills and the team would work with parents to show them how they could help their child at home. If the child's ASQ score was extreme, the appropriate referral would be made to more specialised services for support. Currently, 93.5% of children that were identified as requiring some form of targeted support had improved to the point where they now only required universal services.

The Panel was informed that the universal services on offer at the centres across Middlesbrough were free for all families in Middlesbrough with children under the age of five. There were currently 9,431 0-5 year olds in Middlesbrough and 8,301 of those children were registered with the Children's Centres. This equated to 88%. It was highlighted that, over the last year, there had been 57,331 individual visits/contacts where families had either visited one of the centres or where staff had worked with families in their own homes.

A Literacy Pathway was also delivered as part of the School Readiness model. This included Book Start Corner and Borrow a Book scheme operated jointly with libraries. Staff at the Children's Centre registered families with the Library during universal Children's Centre activities and families were able to exchange books during those sessions.

The universal services offered at all of the centres were as follows:-

- Baby Play
- Stay and Play
- Child Health Drop-in
- Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond programme
- Healthy exercise and nutrition in the really young (HENRY)
- 0-5 Family Links parenting programme

Also, the following services were provided by partner agencies at the centres:-

- Midwifery programmes, eg Early Bird clinics
- Physiotherapy drop-ins
- Speech and language interventions

In terms of target groups, the Panel was advised that the centres had four groups:-

- Achieving Two Year Olds (A2YO) - There were 1,098 eligible children and the centres had worked with 956 in the last 12 months (87.1%).
- Pregnant Teens - 40 potential pregnant teens, 35 of which were worked with in the last 12 months (95%).
- Teen Mums - 108 potential teen mums, 104 of which were worked with in the last 12 months (98.1%).
- Nursery Readiness cohort - 197 in the cohort, 191 of which were worked with in the last 12 months (97%).

With regard to pregnant teens and teen parents, families received support from a named Health Visitor until the child turned five and started school. They were then supported by a school nurse. During the five-year period there would be a point where Mum would only require access to universal services for support, however, at any point during this time if the family's needs became more complex they would be linked up with colleagues in the Family Casework Team. In addition, Family Practitioners were able to bring in specialised support when working with pregnant teens/teen parents where appropriate. The School Readiness Team also liaised with the Work Readiness Team once the child turned one to assist Mum to engage in education, employment or training.

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

- With regard to the numbers of children that were not registered with the children's centre, it was queried whether language may be a barrier and whether there was any specialised work with ethnic minority groups to encourage engagement. The Panel was advised that the School Readiness Team was currently working with the EMAT Team to provide an interpreter for families who did not speak English as their first language when the Team was making follow up visits with the families.
- In response to a query, the Panel was informed that the Health Visiting Service in Middlesbrough was delivered by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust. Health Visiting colleagues shared information regarding the progress of 0-5 year olds following completion of their ASQs which allowed the School Readiness Team to see how many children had made progress from requiring some form of targeted support (grey) to only requiring universal services (white).
- In relation to questions around the staffing numbers and roles at the children's centre sites, it was confirmed that as staff numbers had been reduced following the introduction of the new model, staff worked across all of the centre sites and provided support both in the centre sites and in families' homes. There was now a more pro-active approach to engaging with families by having an outreach work element rather than waiting for families to come into the centres.
- Reference was made to the take up of 15 hours per week free nursery entitlement for two-year-olds. Members were advised that the Achieving Two Year Olds was a Government initiative aimed at improving outcomes for children from low income families. In Middlesbrough AY20 was available for the 40% most disadvantaged children and was one of the Centre's target groups. The Team received information from the Department of Work and Pensions six times per year informing which children were eligible and Children's Centre staff would contact families to encourage take up and that only places in good or outstanding Ofsted rated settings would be funded. A mixture of places were available in schools, nurseries and with childminders so that parents had a choice. Families were required to meet certain criteria in order to be eligible and were sent a 'golden ticket' to encourage them to take up the 15 hours free provision.
- The Golden Ticket and accompanying letter was being translated into the seven most

common languages spoken after English, in Middlesbrough to help break down barriers to accessing the service.

- In terms of nursery provision in primary schools, the School Readiness Team had worked hard to encourage schools to provide two-year-old nursery places. Ayresome Primary was one of the schools to provide such places and several more primary schools were now coming on board.
- In response to a query it was confirmed that the 30 hours free childcare provision was more around helping working parents, or whose income was equivalent to, 16 hours per week.
- It was queried whether School Readiness was achieving its objectives in relation to AY20. The Head of Service highlighted that when the initiative was first launched, take up in Middlesbrough was relatively low, however, Middlesbrough had increased its take up rate which was higher than that of Tees Valley and statistical neighbours.
- In response to a further query, it was confirmed that AY20 did not have an element of parental involvement as the entitlement was specifically for the child, however, a parenting programme was available through the children's centre which was open to all parents.
- A Member of the Panel queried whether there was a progression pathway for employees within the School Readiness Team. The Head of Service advised that the wider Stronger Families Service employed around 10 apprentices, some of which were adult apprentices. The apprentices were able to apply for vacancies so employment progression was available.
- In terms of service outcomes, it was queried whether the service had specific checklists. The Panel was informed that the service worked to a tight performance framework including how many children were registered, how many target groups were reached, etc.
- In response to a query as to what proportion of children were deemed to be school ready, it was stated that it was too early to determine as the current cohort of children would not start school until next year.
- With regard to advertising of the services available, the Panel was informed that these were advertised via the Family Service Directory website, Council website and the Council's facebook and twitter accounts. In addition, there were regular radio advertising campaigns in relation to specific campaigns such as the funded childcare and mobile phone free zones. The mobile phone free zone campaign had also featured on the BBC One Show, encouraging parents to put down their phones and talk to their children.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and the information provided.

AGREED as follows:-

1. That the content of the submitted report, and information provided at the meeting, be noted and considered in the context of the Panel's current scrutiny review.
2. That the Managers of the Family Casework and Family Partnership Teams be invited to the Panel's next meeting to provide further information in relation to the work of their respective teams.

18/12

FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION - CHILDREN'S CENTRES SITE VISITS

Members of the Scrutiny Panel carried out visits to the Children's Centre sites between 4 and 7 September 2018 as follows:-

- West Middlesbrough Children's Centre
- Martonside Children's Centre
- Thorntree Children's Centre
- Abingdon Children's Centre
- Hemlington Children's Centre
- North Ormesby Children's Centre

The Panel held a discussion around their observations and findings at the centres. The

following key points were made:-

- Members were very impressed with the excellent work undertaken across all of the centre sites.
- Members felt that the service area did an excellent job under difficult circumstances and that staff were committed and knowledgeable.
- The School Readiness team had formed good links with Health colleagues and other Council Teams within Stronger Families in order to deliver appropriate services and offer support to those who needed it.
- With regard to specific sites it was noted that:-
- North Ormesby opened during term time only. Visited Stay and Play session.
- West Middlesbrough Children's Centre was the main site and provided a base for staff from the Family Casework Team, Family Partnership Team and Health. The teams worked across all of the sites in Middlesbrough.
- Members visited breast feeding group - 12 mums in attendance but this varied. Mums' views were that they had found it helpful and had benefitted from attending, made friends, supported each other.
- Martonside - visited Baby Play group and spoke to families using floor books etc.
- Thorntree - visited Stay and Play and spoke to staff in relation to work undertaken with pregnant teens and teen parents.
- Abingdon - highlighted that this centre was very well attended. English classes were available to parents who did not speak English as their first language.
- Hemlington - visited the Early Bird midwifery programme and also discussed the pregnancy birth and beyond programme.

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

- It was queried whether contraception advice was available as part of the midwifery programmes/services available at the centres. It was confirmed that midwives would discuss contraception with mothers at the six-week check and would signpost them to their GP where appropriate or to the Council's contraception 'C Card' scheme. This provided young people up to the age of 24 with access to free contraception across various sites in Middlesbrough.
- It was highlighted that work was currently ongoing with clinical leads and public health to identify gaps in sexual health and contraception services and to ensure the views of teen parents were obtained.
- Reference was made to specific support for fathers and it was noted that there had previously been a support worker available to engage with fathers, however, that post no longer existed. It was confirmed that this was the case, however, fathers were welcome to attend any of the services provided by the centres.
- A Member of the Panel highlighted that some centre staff had expressed some concerns regarding the delay in receiving information regarding teenage pregnancy statistics. The Panel was advised that this was a national problem. The data was provided by the Department of Health and there was a time lag in the supply of such data, however, this did not impact on service provision but around noting the outcomes of the impact of the work being done.
- Reference was made to training and employment opportunities for parents and progression routes and it was queried what the next steps might be in relation to this. The Panel was informed that the Council worked closely with Middlesbrough Community Learning and linked into a town-wide advisory board that looked at such issues.
- It was queried how the current 14% of people not registered with the centres were followed up to encourage registration/engagement. The Panel was informed that the Team was currently provided with non-reach data every 12 weeks. This provided a list of those people who had not been seen or contacted by the team/centre within the last 12 weeks. The team was looking into the possibility of requesting this information every six weeks.

The Chair asked that the Panel's thanks be conveyed to all of the staff working across the centres and for welcoming Members on the site visits and providing information in relation to

the services offered.

AGREED that the information provided and discussed be noted and considered in the context of the Panel's current scrutiny review.

18/13 **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 meetings held on 2 August and 4 September 2018, namely:-

2 August 2018

- Call In - A172 Dixon's Bank/Stainton Way Highway Improvement Scheme
- Decision: not to refer back to the Executive.

4 September 2018

- Councillor Calls for Action (CCFA) - Southlands Centre
- School Reserves - Service Update.
- Scrutiny Panel Progress Updates.

AGREED that the information provided be noted.

18/14 **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SCRUTINY TOPIC**

The Panel considered its draft terms of reference for its current scrutiny topic of Early Help and Prevention Services in Middlesbrough. Following discussion, the Terms of Reference were agreed with the addition of number 5.

AGREED that the Scrutiny Panel agreed its terms of reference for the current scrutiny topic of Early Help and Prevention Services in Middlesbrough as follows:-

1. To examine current provision of Early Help and Prevention services in Middlesbrough and explore current working arrangements between the Council and key partners, looking at how universal and targeted support interventions are delivered, including how children, young people and families are identified and monitored.
2. To examine how information is recorded, analysed and shared between partners.
3. To determine whether the most vulnerable children, young people and families are receiving the help and support they require in a timely way.
4. To develop an understanding of the issues and problems faced by children, young people and families and to identify gaps in early help service provision.
5. To investigate and assess the impact of the Council's Early Help and Prevention policies/services and how the impact of such policies/services are measured.

AGREED that the Terms of Reference, as set out above, be approved for the Panel's current investigation topic of Early Help and Prevention Services.

18/15 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for 16 October 2018 at 1.30pm.