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**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 12 March 2019.

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

**PRESENT AS OBSERVERS:** M Nugent

**OFFICERS:** R Brown, J Dixon and G Earl.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor J McGee, Councillor Z Uddin.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

18/39 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2019**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel held on 12 February 2019 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

18/40 **DRAFT FINAL REPORT - EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION SERVICES IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

The Panel was asked to consider its Draft Final Report on Early Help and Prevention Services in Middlesbrough. The report had been drafted based on the information gathered over the course of Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 31 July, 11 September, 16 October, 13 November and 11 December 2018, 15 January and 12 February 2019.

During the course of the review, information was provided by Officers from the Council's Prevention and Partnerships service, Children's Services, Public Health South Tees, Headstart, 0-19 Service, CGL and MVDA. Panel Members also attended various site visits including: Children's Centre sites; accompanied Family Casework Practitioners on home visits to clients; and the Work Readiness Team. A copy of the Draft Final Report had been forwarded to all who had contributed to the review for comment.

The importance of obtaining the Panel's approval in respect of the report was highlighted as all Final Reports presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board were owned by the Panel.

The Panel was asked to consider the possible conclusions and recommendations for inclusion within the Final Report, based on the evidence presented. A list of possible conclusions, prepared in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel, was circulated for consideration.

The Panel confirmed that it was happy with the proposed conclusions and wished to add an additional conclusion in relation to the School Readiness Team and Health Visiting Service identifying a 93.5% improvement in 0-5 year olds progressing from requiring targeted support to universal support.

The proposed conclusions were as follows:-

**TERM OF REFERENCE A** - 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.

1. The Panel was provided with extensive information in relation to current early help and prevention services in Middlesbrough. This included how universal and targeted support is delivered by the Council's Stronger Families Service and its key partners; how referrals are received; and how vulnerable children, young people and families are identified and monitored.
2. The Panel is aware of the national picture of an increase in demand for children's social care, coupled with a reduction in funding and that Councils could face a £3 billion funding gap by 2025 in the delivery of children's services and heard that there has been a change in the funding climate with a shift towards crisis intervention, leading to the provision of some early help services, particularly at a lower level, being lost.
3. With this in mind, the Panel is satisfied that all of workstreams within Stronger Families, together with key partners, are providing the best service possible to address the early help agenda, within the limits of the resources available to them.
4. The Panel acknowledges that the delivery of early help can be challenging and, having spent time with staff within Stronger Families, considers that staff within each of the teams to be professional, dedicated and hard-working, ensuring that the best possible service is delivered to children, young people and families within Middlesbrough.
5. Extensive work has been undertaken by MVDA and Stronger Families, and the wider children's workforce, to ensure that everyone works together to deliver a 'whole family approach' to early help. The Panel recognises that further work is required but feels that good progress is being made. A vast range of VCS organisations have been introduced to early help delivery partners to provide support, where appropriate.
6. The Panel was encouraged to hear that a theory of change model is under development and that MVDA is in the process of working with key VCOs to examine how they can support statutory services.
7. The Panel considers there to be a robust audit trail in place across Stronger Families, and the wider children's service, to ensure that caseloads and work is effectively monitored, with case work audits undertaken by the Director, Head of Service and Team Managers with staff on a monthly basis.
8. The Panel commends the achievements of the Work Readiness Team in reducing the number of young people who are NEET, however, it also notes that whilst the numbers of 16-17 year olds that are NEET has reduced, post-18 unemployment has begun to rise.

**TERM OF REFERENCE B** - To examine how information is recorded, analysed and shared between partners.

1. The Panel heard that the recently introduced 'My Family Plan' had replaced the previous early help assessment and focussed on working with the whole family unit. The use of the document had been rolled out across Stronger Families and key partners when working with families to provide early help. The Plan encourages meaningful conversation between families and early help providers to ensure that the whole family's needs can be considered so that the right support is provided.
2. The Panel acknowledges that sharing information appropriately between partners is key to ensuring that the correct support is provided to children, young people and families, at the right time. The Panel heard that appropriate information sharing agreements are in place between partners.
3. The Panel was informed that in ways of improving the sharing and analysing of data between HDFT and early help services was being explored through information governance.
4. The Panel was advised that a South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub (STMACH) is in the process of being established. The Panel considers that the creation of the STMACH will greatly assist with the identification of children, young people and families in need of support and provision of the correct support in a timely fashion.

**TERM OF REFERENCE C** - To determine whether the most vulnerable children, young people and families are receiving the help and support they require in a timely way.

1. The Panel commends the work undertaken by MVDA and Stronger Families to

employ different ways of working together to ensure that children, young people and families are provided with the most appropriate support in a timely way. The work undertaken identified issues around 'silo' thinking and practices and the Panel considers that statutory professionals now have a much better understanding of the importance of working together and finding different approaches to best suit the needs of the whole family unit.

2. The work also resulted in MVDA introducing a diverse range of more than 200 organisations to Stronger Families that can potentially provide support to families.
3. Again, the Panel feels that the STMACH will assist in improving the response to children, young people and families in need of early help support.

**TERM OF REFERENCE D** - To develop and understanding of the issues and problems faced by children, young people and families and to identify gaps in early help service provision.

1. The Panel heard that the work undertaken by MVDA and Stronger Families has provided professionals with a better understanding of the issues and problems experienced by young people and families and how to respond better to their needs. The work also provided statutory partners with a better understanding of how the VCS can contribute to the delivery of early help in Middlesbrough.
2. The work also identified gaps in provision, particularly in relation to befriending support and youth provision. MVDA is currently working with Middlesbrough's youth offer with a view to potentially opening up low level support to respond to a range of needs within families.
3. The Panel was advised that an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) programme is currently being piloted in two primary schools and that this will greatly assist in understanding the issues and problems faced by children and their families.
4. The Panel heard that four School Practitioners had commenced work across schools in Middlesbrough and considers that this will also assist in understanding the issues faced by children and their families and will also assist schools in responding to the needs of children.

**TERM OF REFERENCE E** - 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.

1. The Panel was provided with a range of impact data from each of the Stronger Families workstreams and from key partners and is satisfied that statutory requirements are being met.
2. As the Teams within Stronger Families had been established between 2016 and 2018 the Panel recognises that it is difficult to assess the longer term impact of early help provision at the present moment, however, this should become more apparent as time progresses. For example, the School Readiness Team is currently unable to assess the long term impact of the universal and targeted provision provided to children in the current cohort as they have not yet started school.
3. However, the Panel notes that as part of the School Readiness Team, the Health Visiting Service, delivered by HDFT as part of Healthier Together Middlesbrough, identified that 93.5% of 0-5 year olds with a previously identified targeted support requirement had improved sufficiently to the point that they now only require universal support.

The Panel was provided with a verbal outline of the possible recommendations which would be circulated to the Panel, for final comment and approval, prior to inclusion within the Final Report.

**AGREED** as follows:-

1. That the proposed conclusions, as outlined above, be approved for inclusion in the Panel's Final Report.
2. That the Democratic Service Officer, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel, be authorised to formulate the recommendations and circulate to the Panel Members for comment and final approval for inclusion in the Final Report.
3. That the Final Report be circulated to the Panel for approval and submission to the

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next available Overview and Scrutiny Board, for consideration.

18/41 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Vice Chair provided a verbal update to the Panel in relation to the business conducted at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 5 March 2019, namely:-

- Budget and Balanced Scorecards Position at Quarter Three 2018/19.
- Final Report - Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel - Air Pollution
- Executive Update
- Executive Forward Work Programme
- Scrutiny Panel Progress Reports

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

18/42 **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 9 April 2019 at 1.30pm.