

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 February 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Higgins (Chair); Councillor Storey (Vice Chair); Councillors: Coupe, Hellaoui, McGee, Uddin and Walters.

OFFICERS: A Brown and J Dixon.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: M Braithwaite – Independent Chair, Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children's Board (MSCB).
G Watson – MSCB Business Manager

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: J Cain – Local Democracy Reporter; D Johnson – Labour Group Political Assistant; M Nugent; and K Whitmore – MICA Group Political Assistant.

An APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE was submitted on behalf of Councillor McGloin.

**** DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

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

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel held on 15 January 2019 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION SERVICES – FURTHER INFORMATION – FIRST CONTACT

A Brown, Director of Children's Care, was in attendance at the meeting to provide the Panel with information in relation to the Council's First Contact service.

First Contact was the 'front door' of the Council's Children's Services, providing a single point of contact for referrals, advice, consultation and support into Children's Services. First Contact brings together a range of professionals and agencies.

The Panel was provided with an update in relation to a joint arrangement which Middlesbrough Council was entering into.

The South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub (STMACH) would involve Middlesbrough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Council, and relevant partners, becoming the first point of contact for children's referrals including Safeguarding and Early Help. The STMACH would replace both Councils' First Contact Children's Services.

The partners in the STMACH would include both Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Councils, Police, South Tees CCG (as responsible health authority), South Tees NHS Hospitals Foundation Trust, Public Health South Tees, Education, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT), Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV).

Redcar and Cleveland Council would host the STMACH which would be based at Daisy Lane, Ormesby. This was also the location of the single point of access for the South Tees Single Point of Access for Adults. Consultation with the staff involved was ongoing, however, it was highlighted that staff had been very enthusiastic and could see the value in the new arrangement.

The vision for the STMACH was to provide an integrated single point of access for Children's Services across the South Tees that would include access to early help and a multi-disciplinary triage at the point of access. The STMACH would provide improved information sharing and decision making at the earliest possible opportunity and would enable the correct decisions to be made at the earliest opportunity to ensure the correct interventions were employed.

The drivers for the arrangement were to ensure that the right decisions for children and their families were made at the right time and having all information available to the multi-agency team would be hugely important in achieving this. The new arrangement would also increase enablement in terms of engagement of all partners which would be crucial to its success.

The approach to joint arrangements for children's hubs varied across the country and Middlesbrough had examined best practice from other areas to ensure the STMACH was established to best suit the needs of the South Tees locality. A similar joint arrangement already existed in the North Tees area, between Hartlepool and Stockton. This model varied from the STMACH model, in that it did not include early help as part of the hub and Hartlepool owned and managed the Hub on behalf of Stockton, whereas the STMACH was jointly co-ordinated by Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland.

A business case for the STMACH was being developed and needed to progress through the required approval processes. The STMACH aimed to 'go live' on 1 June 2019.

The implementation of the STMACH would be overseen by the Multi Agency Children's Safeguarding Strategic Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of Middlesbrough Council. A South Tees MACH Project Board had been established with key stakeholders and had developed the following significant workstreams:-

- HR Workstream
- ICT Workstream
- Design Workstream
- Information Governance Workstream.

There was an expectation that decisions in relation to referrals received would be made within 24 hours (as was currently the case).

With regard to information sharing, it was highlighted that whilst the STMACH would not be in a position to use one single data recording system, the appropriate information sharing agreements were in place to allow all staff working in the Hub to have all aspects of information available to them.

In terms of holding the STMACH to account, it was confirmed that this would be done at several levels by the Strategic Leaders Safeguarding Group, through OFSTED inspections and through Elected Member involvement. Further clarity was required in relation to the legal responsibilities for the task of decision making but Middlesbrough was keen to retain a level of oversight, audit and scrutiny to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families in Middlesbrough.

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

- A Panel Member expressed concern in relation to whether schools achieved the most appropriate response in order to support challenging children as the message being conveyed from some schools was that the thresholds for support eligibility were too high. It was queried whether the new arrangement would alleviate this. The Director responded that schools were one of the biggest deliverers of early help but some tensions existed between schools and the local authority as to who should deliver the support in some cases. One advantage of the STMACH was that because it would be a single point of access, the decision around whether the referral was a safeguarding or early help issue was taken away from the referrer who would not necessarily know where to direct their referral. In addition, over the past 18 months, an Education Support Worker, had worked with safeguarding leads around understanding thresholds and what was available in terms of support. As a result, the number of referrals received into First Contact by schools had reduced. Further work in this area was required and would be progressed in conjunction with the Director of Education.
- It was queried how individual families would access the STMACH. The Panel was advised that whilst First Contact received some self-referrals, the majority of referrals were received from professionals. The process for the initial decision making would remain as it was now but First Contact would be moving to a more robust triage system.

- When asked to provide an example of how the triage system would work, it was explained that when a referral was received, for example, from the Police in relation to a domestic abuse incident where they had concerns for a child, the Hub would be able to cross-reference the family address for any social work or health information. This would then be viewed in the round by the multi-agency team and a decision made as to the best way forward. In cases where the family was already known to social services or another of the Hub's partners, this would escalate the referral in terms of how it was dealt with and by whom.
- Reference was made to referrals from schools and it was queried how this worked across county boundaries. It was explained that each school had its own safeguarding and reporting arrangements. It was often the case that children went to school in one local authority area but lived in another, however, it was the responsibility of the local authority where the child lived to deal with the referral. In the instance that a school directed a referral to the wrong local authority, it would be passed to the first contact of the correct local authority and the school would be informed. A great deal of cross-boundary working took place as many families moved in and out of areas. The Panel was assured that appropriate procedures and guidance was in place to deal with such issues.
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that the LADOs (Local Authority Designated Officer) from Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland would sit within the STMACH. By placing both LADOs together it would improve information gathering and make the process more robust.

The Chair thanked the Director of Children's Care for attending and for the information provided.

AGREED as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted and considered in the context of the Panel's current scrutiny topic of Early Help and Prevention Services.
2. That the Director of Children's Care be invited to a future meeting of the Panel to provide an update on progress in relation to the South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub.

MIDDLESBROUGH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD (MSCB)

M Braithwaite, Independent Chair of the Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children's Board (MSCB), and G Watson, MSCB Business Manager, were in attendance at the meeting to provide the Panel with an overview of the work of the Board and information in relation to the Board's Annual Report 2017/18. A copy of the MSCB's Annual Report 2017/18 had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

By way of background, the Independent Chair informed the Panel that he was appointed as Independent Chair in 2010 and was an ex-senior police officer of 32 years standing. Following a public inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, Lord Laming made more than 100 recommendations, one of which was that each local authority should establish a board of key partners working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and be responsible for implementing Government guidance. There were currently around 155 Local Safeguarding Children's Boards across the country.

The MSCB was made up of a range of partners including Middlesbrough Council, Executive Member, Police, CCG, NHS, local NHS foundation trusts, schools, Public Health and three lay members. The Board met every two months and had several established task groups linked to the core functions of the Board.

The task groups were made up of members of the MSCB and practitioners with relevant knowledge and skills. The Annual Report provided details of the work undertaken by each of the groups during the 12 month period:-

- MSCB Performance and Quality Assurance Sub Group (long term group)
- South Tees Training Group
- MSCB Learning and Improving Practice Sub Group (LIPSIG)

- MSCB Safeguarding Implementation Group (long term group incorporating the communication strategy, the e-Safety strategy, and policies and procedures)
- MSCB Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) Group
- MSCB Safeguarding Liaison group

MSCB was also represented on the following Tees-wide groups:

- Tees Strategic VEMT Group
- Child Death Overview Panel (comprising Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Stockton LSCBs)
- Tees-wide policies and procedures group (comprising Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Stockton LSCBs)

The Annual Report of the MSCB was a single document containing all related activity of the Board for the period April 2017 to April 2018. Government Guidance, "Working Together to Safeguard Children" stated that the Chair must produce an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding and welfare provision for children in Middlesbrough. It should identify:-

- Any services requiring improvement
- The underlying reasons for the required improvement
- Actions being taken
- Lessons learnt from any reviews undertaken within the reporting period.

The MSCB Annual Report provided details on each of the Board's strategic priorities, outlining what had been done and what the impact had been:-

- Priority 1 – MSCB will promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people with particular focus on those suspected of being at risk.
- Priority 2 – MSCB will work with partner agencies to promote early help and recognise and respond to the neglect of children and young people.
- Priority 3 – MSCB will develop and implement effective communication strategies with a focus on the participation of children and young people.
- Priority 4 – MSCB will work with partner agencies to improve the link with adult services in particular those services working with domestic abuse, parental mental health and substance misuse.

The Panel was informed that safeguarding multi-agency training was delivered on a South Tees basis (covering Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland). The Annual Report provided details of the 22 training courses delivered during 2017-18, many of which were repeated two or three times depending on need and demand. A total of 62 teaching courses and four bite-size sessions were held.

A total of 1,354 staff had attended training sessions across the South Tees area, with approximately 507 attended by professionals working in Middlesbrough. E-learning continued to be an important part of the training programme and around 2,000 applications for e-learning were made across South Tees. To date, more than 15,000 staff and volunteers had completed Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect and refresher training.

The Panel was advised that the MSCB was currently engaged in raising the profile of safeguarding with faith groups in Middlesbrough and had carried out safeguarding audits with many of the 33 different faith groups in and around Middlesbrough to ensure that they had appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place.

In fact, the audit process was applied to all statutory agencies and the information was collated and examined by the MSCB. Where gaps were identified, the agency was required to develop an action plan to address any weaknesses and would be supported by the MSCB to strengthen specific areas.

The Panel was provided with information in relation to the Tees Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) which was responsible for reviewing the deaths of children from the Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) areas. The CDOP was a sub group of the four Tees LSCBs.

The role of the CDOP was to ensure that whenever a child death occurred, scrutiny of the cases resulted in recognised improvements that could be made to practice to improve quality of care and the safety of children.

The necessity of co-ordination and scrutiny by a CDOP was understood nationally and was a core component of the latest version of 'Working Together'.

It was highlighted that due to the nature and complexity of Serious Case Reviews and the judicial process involved, it could often take up to two years for the report and recommendations to be published. However, during that period the LIPSIG would consider the report and recommendations to ensure that the recommendations were put into an Action Plan to inform the agencies involved of changes required to working practices and identified training need, etc. so that changes could be made whilst the review was ongoing. The MSCB was required to commission two Serious Case Reviews during the 2017/18 year.

The Panel was informed that the MSCB was inspected by Ofsted in 2015, and was judged as requiring improvement to be good. The Wood Review of the role and functions of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards, published in 2016, outlined a number of recommendations for the implementation of new arrangements. Amended legislation would place a statutory duty on the local authority, police and local CCG to provide revised multi agency safeguarding arrangements. In Middlesbrough, that would take place on a South Tees basis, seeing the introduction of the South Tees MACH and new arrangements for the MSCB, yet to be finalised. The new arrangements for the MSCB must be determined by the end of June 2019 when all LSCBs would be abolished.

Work was ongoing with statutory leads to develop what the new arrangements would look like and how they would operate in practice across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The key considerations would be to ensure all agencies were working together and to keep children in mind at all times.

The Chair thanked the Independent Chair and Business Manager for attending the meeting and the information provided.

AGREED that the information provided in relation to the work of the MSCB and the contents of the Annual Report be noted.

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 15 January and 5 February 2019, namely:-

15 January 2019

- Call in – Middlesbrough place brand. Decision not to refer back to the Executive.
- Call in – Southlands future redevelopment. Decision not to refer back to the Executive.

OSB 5 February 2019

- Final Report – Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel – School Holiday Provision
- Executive Update
- Executive Forward Work Programme

- Scrutiny Panel Progress Reports

AGREED that the information provided be noted.

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 12 March 2019 at 1.30pm.