

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 13 December 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor Davison (Chair); Councillors: Hellaoui, Higgins, Uddin, J Walker and Wilson.

OFFICERS: C Breheny, S Butcher, J Dixon, K Jackson, L Kelly, R Farnham, A Parkinson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: S Carlisle – Deputy Head Teacher, Newport Primary School
Sergeant S Pattison – Newport Neighbourhood Police

An **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mawston.

**** DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

| Name of Member | Type of Interest | Item/Nature of Interest |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Councillor A Hellaoui | Non-pecuniary | Ag. item 4 – Locality Working – Ward Cllr for Newport – area in which Locality Working Pilot is taking place, and also Co-Chair of Governors Newport Primary School |
| Councillor J Walker | Non-pecuniary | Ag. Item 4 – Locality Working – Cllr chair of Lynx Youth project – guest invited to meeting |

MINUTES – 22 NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel held on 22 November 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

The Chair wished to congratulate Children's Services on the news that the Minister for Children and Families had endorsed the recommendations of the Department for Education's Children's Commissioner, Peter Dwyer, that the Service no longer required oversight by the Commissioner.

LOCALITY WORKING FROM A CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERSPECTIVE – FURTHER INFORMATION

The Chair welcomed those present and provided background in relation to the Panel's current scrutiny topic of Locality Working from a children's services perspective.

It was explained that the Panel had heard information in relation to various partners working within the locality pilot areas of Newport and North Ormesby and subsequently wished to invite some of those partners to discuss, with the Panel, their involvement in locality working in order to provide a better understanding of how a multi-agency approach was working to improve outcomes for children and families.

The following representatives were in attendance at the meeting:-

- A Parkinson – Newport Neighbourhood Manager
- L Kelly – Public Protection
- K Jackson – Public Health
- S Carlisle – Newport Primary School

Newport Neighbourhood Manager

A Parkinson, Newport Neighbourhood Manager, advised that in terms of the Children's Services aspect of the locality model, specific resources had been allocated to both locality pilot projects in Newport and North Ormesby, including named Officers within the model who had been co-located, both virtually and in office settings when permitted (due to the Covid pandemic). Throughout the pilot, several areas had been developed in relation to the Children's Services aspect of the model, including specific meetings and working groups in relation to children and families so that a team of support could be put in place around the family or individual in order to best support them.

Public Protection/Selective Landlord Licensing

L Kelly, Selective Landlord Licensing Manager, Public Protection Service, advised that selective landlord licensing operated in both the Newport and North Ormesby areas and that the wider Public Protection Service had always engaged with Children's Services to work in an integrated way. It was acknowledged that locality working afforded the opportunity and framework for such work to be carried out collaboratively.

The Selective Licensing Team worked closely with Early Help services, for example, Early Help may be working with a family living in a property in state of poor disrepair. This would be brought to the attention of selective licensing and a joint visit would be undertaken, often including Environmental Health, to inspect the property and assess whether it met an acceptable living standard. When inspection or post-tenancy visits were undertaken, a checklist was used to ascertain whether the family had other services working with them or whether they felt they required help/support from any other services.

The team attended child protection meetings which fed into support plans for children and families and liaised regularly with Social Workers to discuss whether families met thresholds for Early Help support or safeguarding concerns in order to make referrals where appropriate. Whilst carrying out housing inspections, any concerns would be raised with Early Help or Social Care teams where appropriate.

In relation to anti-social behaviour, the Neighbourhood Safety Team put together anti-social behaviour contracts and involved Social Workers, where applicable. In instances where it was considered any child/young person committing anti-social behaviour required a referral this would be done. It was highlighted that in North Ormesby, the Neighbourhood Safety Officer was aware of anti-social behaviour problems and had established a fortnightly meeting with the Social Workers allocated to the young people involved to discuss ways forward and solutions.

Across the wider Public Protection Service, Trading Standards dealt with age-restricted products including alcohol and cigarette sales which could impact on young people.

When asked how well locality working was operating, the Selective Licensing Manager stated it was working well and that she could see the value in locality working, however, it had been impacted by Covid and being unable to meet in person. There was a benefit in being located alongside partners to resolve issues more quickly.

Public Health

K Jackson, South Tees Public Health, advised that Public Health had been involved in the locality working projects since inception. There were two dedicated members of staff attached to the pilot projects – one in Newport and one in North Ormesby.

Public Health operated within the teams in its widest sense – to develop community engagement links; to ensure all services involved in the locality teams were aware that they could approach public health with any concerns regarding health and wellbeing within the localities; signposting - directing people to services such as drug and alcohol services; helping with mental health and wellbeing. In relation to wider aspects of the project, staff joined in with community walkabouts and

litter picks and made themselves known to local street wardens as well as residents to raise awareness about how they could help to improve things for the families involved.

The staff member allocated to Newport had provided information stating that in terms of involvement regarding the children's social care agenda, work had been undertaken in relation to improving the school environment, working with Middlesbrough Environment City, signposting regarding poverty and provision of quarterly data on child development and breast feeding rates in the area. Public Health wanted to promote pro-active working with all other services and agencies to improve outcomes for people living in the area.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- When asked if locality working appeared to be successful in terms of Public Health, the Panel was informed that in some ways Covid had helped to raise the profile of Public Health and the wide range of services it offered. Public Health was always keen to join any new approaches where there was real co-ordination and partnership working as this was essential to supporting families. The Officer considered that there was further work to be done as some partners within the localities were not always fully aware of the wide breadth of services that Public Health could offer. This was something Public Health was keen to promote further. The pandemic had hampered achieving some of the aims set out by locality working – particularly where cross-office conversations would be beneficial in order to build relationships - and it was hoped this would be regained further down the line when it was safe to do so. Public Health would always be supportive of a multi-agency approach on a wider scale in the future as this was the best way to address all of the issues that affected a person's health and wellbeing.
- A Member of the Panel considered that the multi-agency approach appeared to be working well as issues and problems experienced by families were multi-faceted and often required the involvement of more than one agency to provide help and support. It was queried if the project was to be rolled out to more areas in the future how this might impact on public health. In response, an example was provided regarding the Live Well Centre which was created on the principle that a person with multiple needs could walk into the centre and speak to one of the 'Motivators' who would address all of those needs either directly or by engaging them with the appropriate services, such as drug and alcohol services, welfare rights, sexual health, mental health resources, etc. The vision was that the locality working hubs would offer a similar opportunity and that not necessarily more staff were needed but that better links to those already delivering the services was required – knowing who to speak to within already funded services, whether that be a Council service, a Voluntary or Community Service or a national organisation. The key was to work better with the services that were already there and building on the 'making every contact count' approach to make it the strength behind locality working. If anything, Covid had shown that services could work differently to address people's needs and this had been done more effectively than considered possible.
- In terms of not necessarily needing additional staffing in locality areas, a Panel Member suggested that it would be sensible for each area to have a locality manager or co-ordinator who would be able to signpost people to the right services and that each locality project should learn from each other.
- The Executive Director of Children's Services highlighted that further information was needed in relation to the impact of the two pilot projects – for example, reference had been made to breast feeding rates in Newport. Had locality working made a difference to the outcome? Had rates increased? The Public Health Officer advised that quarterly data was available and that there were performance measures in place relating to each of the themes within the locality action plans, including three or four measures in relation to breast feeding rates and teen pregnancy. In terms of public health, improvements in outcomes had been recognised.
- The Newport Neighbourhood Manager added that there was a full performance management framework for both localities, with around 70 measures used to plot improvements and areas of concern. Nine or ten central measures were used to look at the over-arching aims of the

project as well as additional data which informed monthly updates to the strategic guidance group. This data would also be used in the compilation of the evaluation report on the pilot projects.

- A Member of the Panel queried whether Public Health covered all ages and not just children within the pilot projects. It was confirmed that all public health support was available from 'cradle to grave' with particular focus on vulnerable people.

Newport Primary School

S Carlisle, Deputy Head, Newport Primary School, was in attendance and advised that whilst the school was not a driver of the locality working project it worked with services that supported their children and families and their delivery model had changed through the locality working project.

The Deputy Head stated that the most positive changes for the School through locality working included Early Help and Neighbourhood Safety.

In terms of Early Help, a Senior Practitioner had been allocated to Newport and this had been very positive. The school had built a positive relationship with the Practitioner who was well-known within the school to staff and families. The Panel heard that the Practitioner was very 'hands on' and came into school regularly to meet children and families and worked with a range of agencies. This meant that when families were experiencing problems, for example with housing or difficulties with neighbours, the Practitioner knew which agencies to contact and work with to provide support to the family. It had been very positive for the school to have such strong practitioners. Due to the large numbers of families requiring support from the Early Help Practitioner, it was not possible for her to carry all of the caseloads alone. Whilst she supported the majority of families with children from the school, some cases had to be allocated to other practitioners. The Deputy Head highlighted that all of the practitioners were very professional and that the school was impressed with Early Help.

The Panel was informed that the Neighbourhood Safety Team had also made a big difference as a lot of the time families had issues which impacted on the children but did not link directly to education. For example, they may raise concerns regarding poor housing conditions, noisy neighbours, children not sleeping, etc. The school was now able to quickly contact the Neighbourhood Manager or one of the team to report the issues and would be signposted to the right services for support. This saved time for school staff and ensured that families were being helped in the best way possible by the right services. This was also the case for selective landlord licensing where families were experiencing problems. They could be linked directly with the family to offer support.

The Chair stated that she was pleased locality working was helping the school as problems experienced by parents and families impacted on children and it was reassuring to know that the multi-agency approach was working well.

A Panel Member commented that listening to the various agencies highlighted how Middlesbrough's communities needed a holistic approach to all the concerns. There were many problems outside of the education framework which impacted on children and families did not know where to turn for help. Many families were affected by poverty which impacted on their daily lives in many ways and the locality model helped to support individuals and families through a holistic model focussing on all of the issues. The Newport Ward Councillor commented that, on a personal level, her experience of locality working was very positive and that improvements in the community could already be seen by residents, schools, etc. The Councillor hoped that the locality model would continue and be extended.

Cleveland Police

Sergeant Pattison, Newport Neighbourhood Police, advised he had worked alongside the locality hub with various services across a range of issues, including housing, and had carried out days of

action and weeks of action jointly. Sergeant Pattison noted that services were working more closely together than in the past and that this was continuing to strengthen.

It was highlighted that there were a lot of issues in Newport and that a programme of work with young people in the area was underway. A dedicated PCSO specifically engaged with young people at Newport Hub in a range of activities including the Middlesbrough Foundation kick about. Relationships were being built upon between young people in the area and the neighbourhood policing team to build bridges.

Sergeant Pattison considered that the multi-agency approach was beginning to work and that being able to link to a range of services through the Neighbourhood Manger assisted greatly with tackling crime in the area and that professional relationships were being strengthened.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- It was queried whether more trust had been gained within the community and whether intelligence was more likely to be forthcoming to the neighbourhood police through the multi-agency approach. Sergeant Pattison felt that residents often just wanted to be able to speak to a police officer and often provided useful low-level intelligence that could be followed up, for example, in relation to anti-social behaviour. Equally, where Police were made aware of non-Police matters, they were now able to contact the Neighbourhood Manager who was able to signpost to the right services. It was highlighted that the most recent crime figures for Newport showed a decline, this could be partly attributable to problem tenants and houses being closed down during joint operations between the Police and the Council. Once more serious crime was reduced, this provided an opportunity for lower level issues to be dealt with.
- A Member queried how well the Police felt they were engaging with young people in the Newport ward. In response, it was stated that the dedicated PCSO has almost 20 years' experience of working within the area and had known the parents of many of the young people. Some of the barriers included language and cultural barriers, however, these were being broken down. The neighbourhood police attended the primary school to chat with parents and children at drop off and pick up times and felt that working with children from a young age helped to build relationships.
- Reference was made to the dedicated PCSO and in response to a question, it was explained that she had a strong presence in the community and regularly attended the Newport Hub. She was involved in collecting clothing for charity and attending the homeless café and was recently recognised for her work by being awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's birthday honours.
- A Panel Member commented that having such excellent provision would also highlight ongoing problems as well as resolving problems, for example, in looking at problems, more and more problems emerged, therefore, there would be a continuous challenge of having enough staff – eg Early Help practitioners working with Newport school. A major issue was poverty which impacted on many aspects of people's lives.

The Executive Director of Children's Services commented that it had been very helpful and thought-provoking to hear from other agencies. Unfortunately there was not a limitless amount of resources available for the pilot project and the model relied to some extent on how more could be achieved with the same amount of resources. The project needed to be evaluated to determine what impact it was having and could potentially look very different if it rolled to other parts of Middlesbrough in the future. The shift towards early help and preventative work was a step in the right direction.

The Chair felt that the two pilots were working well but acknowledged that every area would be different and it was crucial to work within the resources available.

COVID RECOVERY IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Executive Director of Children's Services highlighted that, following the Government's announcement on 12 December, staff were again being asked to work from home and that the return to office working on a 60:40 split had been delayed. In terms of Social Workers, they would carry on working with children and families as carefully and safely as possible.

The Director of Education and Partnerships had met with Head Teachers to discuss concerns around schools, particularly nativity events. This issue had caused some confusion as some schools were going ahead with nativities and others had cancelled. There were various reasons for the difference in approach including numbers of staff available. The general message from the Director was to look at the position in January in terms of infection rates and hopefully things would be more stable with less events taking place.

Several Panel Members raised concerns around the difference in approaches between schools and that it was dividing communities in some areas. It was queried whether advice from the local authority could be issued to schools in terms of providing a uniform approach.

The Executive Director of Children's Services acknowledged the comments and responded that whilst the local authority would prefer a consistent approach from schools, the authority's role was to advise and influence. Consideration would be given, in conjunction with the Director of Education and Partnerships, as to whether any strengthening advice could be provided.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

A verbal update was provided in relation to the business conducted at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 7 December 2021, namely:-

- Executive forward work programme
- Update from the Deputy Mayor & Executive Member for Culture & Communities (Councillor Smiles)
- Chief Executive's Update
- Scrutiny Panels' Chair's Updates.
- Revenue and Capital Budget – Projected outturn position, Quarter two 2021/22.
- Next OSB meeting – Tues, 18 January 2022 at 10.00am

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 Tuesday, 25 January 2022 4.00pm.