

SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board - Children and Young People held on Tuesday, 9 February 2021 at 10.30 am via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT:

Mrs V Tarbitt (Chair)

Mrs C Bowditch
Mrs S Evans
Mrs EA Mallinson
Mr W McEwan
Mr CP Turner

Mr P Dew (Vice-Chair)
Mr W Clark
Mr GD Cook
Dr K Lockney
Mr GRPM Roberts

Also in Attendance:-

Mr J Readman	-	Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director - People
Mr D Barton	-	Assistant Director - Education and Skills
Ms L Berryman	-	Assistant Director - Children and Young People
Ms L McKie	-	Senior Manager - Children and Families
Mrs F Musgrave	-	Assistant Director - Integration and Partnerships
Mr J Rasbash	-	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor
Mr D Hamilton	-	Democratic Services Officer

PART 1 – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr P Healy, Mrs M Davis and Mrs V O’Dea.

54 MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes of membership on this occasion.

55 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Mr G Roberts made a declaration on a non-pecuniary interest in reference to Agenda Item 6 as he was a member of the CNTW Health Partnership.

56 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of any items of business on the agenda.

57 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, the minutes of the meeting held on the 4 December 2020 be confirmed as an accurate and complete record.

58 CHILD EXPLOITATION UPDATE

Members considered a report from the Assistant Director – Children & Young People (Deputy DCS). The Senior Manager - Children & Families introduced the report by clarifying the term 'Child Exploitation' and explaining that exploitation could take a variety of different forms including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

The Senior Manager - Children & Families explained the governance of the issue lay with the Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership's (CSCP), 'Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children Group' (MET) had multi-agency strategic oversight of child exploitation in Cumbria. Members heard that the group was jointly chaired by the Police and the Council's Children & Families lead for exploitation, it met on a bi-monthly basis and had representation from across a range of agencies.

Members heard that in Cumbria there were currently 63 children identified at risk of or being exploited. Members asked for clarification on the level of risk and it was explained that the risk levels used were: Category 1, 2 or 3 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), with level 1 being the lowest risk and 3 the highest. The Senior Manager - Children & Families then broke down the numbers of identified at risk or exploited children by district area.

Oversight of all children with a child exploitation category of risk lies with the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) group. MACE meets on a 6 weekly basis and provides the framework to allow regular information sharing and action planning to tackle child exploitation in Cumbria. This included information relating to the links between children at risk or subject to exploitation, perpetrators or individuals who may pose a risk and/or locations and community intelligence. This meeting continued to run throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure oversight of some of the county's most vulnerable children.

A discussion took place regarding whether an increase of children put at risk could be seen in the data over the course of the pandemic. The Senior Manager – Children and Families explained that the data does not yet show an increase in number of children identified as at risk of exploitation following Covid. However, the service was undertaking a county wide piece of work via the CSCP, to raise

awareness of child exploitation and help improve identification, which could result in an increase in referrals.

The Senior Manager – Children and Families detailed the campaign stating that it was a county-wide child exploitation awareness raising campaign launched by the CSCP in partnership with the NSPCC. It was explained that the 'IT'S NOT OK' campaign would help raise awareness of child exploitation among children and young people, parents, practitioners and the wider community. It would highlight how to spot the signs of exploitation and where to report concerns. The campaign would also use a preventative approach, encouraging children and young people to think about what a healthy relationship looks like and to encourage them to speak out if they ever had concerns. In the first three months of the campaign, 1000 professionals attended learning and development events, the campaign had also carried out engagement work with parents and carers as well as with children and young people.

Members were asked whether they wished to receive regular updates on child exploitation and the awareness campaign so as to support campaign engagement and it was **AGREED** that updates be brought regularly to the Scrutiny Advisory Board – Children and Young People.

59 ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Members considered a report which sought to provide the Board with an update on attendance and exclusion data in the context of COVID-19, and to inform members of the support provided by the Directorate to children and families during the pandemic. The report also set out some of the longer-term strategic work being undertaken by the Directorate to support improved access to education in the future.

Following from the previous report brought to the Scrutiny Advisory Board – Children and Young People in September 2020 the Assistant Director – Education and Skills began by providing an update from 5 January 2021 – the start of the current lockdown. Members heard that schools had been closed to all but vulnerable children and those of key workers. Unlike the first lockdown, no hubs had been established on this occasion, and the large majority of schools were open in one form or another with most providing remote learning, with limited face-to-face teaching via apps like 'Zoom' or 'Teams'.

During the autumn term 2020 school attendance was reported to DfE on a daily basis, and in Cumbria it remained above the national average. On the last day of term Cumbria's attendance stood at 83.6%, compared to a national average of 78.2%. Attendance was higher in county primary schools (89.8%) than secondary schools (75.1%).

The Assistant Director – Education and Skills then stated that even without the impact of COVID-19, there had been a recognition that the county had insufficient places in dedicated SEND settings – particularly in special schools – and Alternative Provision (AP) settings to appropriately meet the level of demand. However, some substantial investments had been made to both improve and increase the facilities available.

Further work would be required to develop facilities over the coming months and years. Prior to the impact of COVID, there had been an upward trend nationally and locally in, for example, the number of children with EHCPs and, correspondingly, the number of parents seeking places in special schools. The ongoing reorganisation of Resourced Provision would provide better access to SEND facilities and support in mainstream schools, but options would need to be carefully considered so as to attract substantial capital support into the county and make further strides forward.

A discussion then took place whereby members recommended that a particular focus be paid to maintaining access to education for all children, and to seeking out the appropriate resources to provide the support required.

60 SEND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

Members considered a report which provided an overview of Cumbria's SEND Improvement Programme and the progress made in implementing the local area Written Statement of Action (WSOA) in response to the findings of the Ofsted/ Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of special educational needs and disability (SEND) which took place in March 2019.

The SEND Partnership Strategic Lead provided some background by explaining that Cumbria was inspected by Ofsted and the CQC in March 2019 to judge how effectively the SEND reforms had been implemented by the local area, as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection included the local authority, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), public health, NHS England for specialist services, early years' settings, schools and further education providers.

The inspection raised concern about the effectiveness of the local area and determined that there were nine areas of significant weakness. The partners in Cumbria were required to produce a WSOA, setting out the immediate priorities for action; the progress on implementing these actions have been, and will continue to be, closely monitored by the DfE and NHSE.

The Cumbria SEND Partnership Improvement Board is responsible for ensuring the delivery of the WSOA and for reporting on progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board is led by an independent chair - an experienced DCS and Improvement Lead for the DfE.

The WSOA takes a thematic approach to respond to the findings set out in the letter issued by Ofsted/CQC following the inspection and is supported by six corresponding partnership working groups. These groups meet regularly to progress the work of the partnership and monitor progress; they report every six weeks to the SEND Partnership Improvement Board.

Members heard that as part of the formal monitoring arrangements a review of progress by the DfE/NHSE would take place every six months. Prior to the review a written progress report would be submitted by the local area. The most recent

review took place on 16 November 2020, with the formal post review letter received on 21 December 2020.

The post-review letter from the DfE/NHSE concluded that, as in all local areas, the pandemic had presented challenges for the pace of work or required a change of approach. It was explained that where this had occurred, the local area was encouraged to illustrate the operational or implementation changes made as a result.

In preparation for the revisit inspection the review undertaken of the nine areas of concern and the statements made in the inspection letter was well received and felt to be helpful in enabling the local area to more clearly link the action being taken with the points made by inspectors.

The local area was also advised to ensure that timescales for action, approval and implementation were clearly set out, so that 'sufficient' progress could continue to be demonstrated.

The next review meeting with the DfE/NHSE was scheduled for 25 March 2021, earlier than the usual six-month period at the request of the local area. At this meeting greater emphasis would be expected on the impact of the improvement work on children, young people and their families and the consistency of service/provision across the local area.

With regards to next steps the SEND Partnership Strategic Lead explained that Ofsted and the CQC would re-visit the Cumbria local area to assess the progress made in addressing the nine areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSoA. This was expected to take place within 18 months of the WSoA being approved; the approval was received on 18 October 2019 and therefore a revisit is expected to take place by 18 April 2021. Arrangements to prepare for the revisit inspection would be led by the SEND Partnership Strategic Lead on behalf of all partners.

A review of the local area's progress to implement the WSoA was undertaken by the SEND Partnership Strategic lead in November 2020. This included a summary of the key points in the Ofsted letter, aligned with the nine areas for improvement to illustrate how these judgements were made.

A series of questions posed to senior leaders was guiding priorities for action in 2021, with work now taking place in response. This was supported by the development of a draft self-evaluation for SEND which would be considered by the SEND Partnership Improvement Board at their meeting on 1 February 2021.

61 COVID UPDATE

A presentation was received on the topic of Children's Covid Response and Recovery Update and which highlighted the following areas:-

- Introduction/Response and Recovery Priorities
- Schools

- Professional Team Around Schools
- Social Workers in Schools
- SEND
- Social Care and Safeguarding
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Impact on Specialist Services
- Impact on MyTime
- EH and Think Family
- The next 3-6 months

62 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE

Members received an update from the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Learning as well as from the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

63 BOARD BRIEFING

Members considered a report which provided an overview of the Board's business and opportunities for further scrutiny which included a summary of the main activity relating to the Board since they last met:

- Referral to December cabinet on School Admissions Policy;
- Contribution to the draft Scrutiny Annual Report which is due to be published in April.

Members heard that in December the Chair of the Board wrote to the Leader requesting that the item on the School Admissions Policy be deferred to the next Cabinet cycle to allow members of the Board an opportunity to look at the policy and feed in any views.

Cabinet agreed to defer the specific recommendation about catchment areas to allow an opportunity for Board members to be invited to meet with officers responsible for the paper.

An informal meeting was held with 3 members of the Board, the Assistant Director and the manager responsible for drafting the policy. Based on the concerns raised by the Members, the Assistant Director agreed to advise Cabinet that a review of the catchments in the Copeland area should be carried out during the summer to inform the next iteration of the School Admissions Policy, which would go to consultation in the Autumn and to Cabinet in December 2021.

64 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board – Children and Young People is due to take place on 17 June 2021.

The meeting ended at 12:50pm