

SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board - Children and Young People held on Thursday, 30 May 2019 at 10.30 am at Conference Room A/B, Cumbria House, Carlisle

PRESENT:

Mrs V Tarbitt (Chair)

Mrs C Johnston
Mrs C Bowditch
Mr M Mill
Mr CP Turner
Mr L Fisher

Mr P Dew
Mr W Clark
Mr GD Cook
Mr HGG Graham

Also in Attendance:-

Mr D Hamilton	-	Democratic Services Officer
Mr J Macilwraith	-	Executive Director - People (Deputy Chief Executive)
Mr D Barton	-	Assistant Director - Education and Skills
Mr J Rasbash	-	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs E Mallinson, Mr B Shirley, Mr A Wonnacott, Mrs S Evans, Dr K Lockney and Mr McEwan.

2 MEMBERSHIP

The new membership was noted.

3 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest made on this occasion.

4 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, the minutes of the meeting held on the 12 February 2019 be confirmed as an accurate and complete record.

6 SEND LOCAL INSPECTION

Consideration was given to the report from Executive Director – People which presented the outcomes of the Ofsted SEND local area inspection.

SEND local area inspections were carried out jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to inspect local areas to see how well they fulfilled their responsibilities for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The Assistant Director – Education and Skills talked members through the outcomes of Cumbria's joint inspection in April 2019 and explained that unlike Children's Services inspections, the inspectors do not give a rating, but produce a report with recommendations for improvement.

The Assistant Director explained to members the headline findings of the inspection which were as follows:-

- The impact of the SEND reforms on children, young people and families in Cumbria was found to be variable and there has not been enough pace in implementing the reforms
- There was found to be a lack of joint working between health, care and education and inequitable access to service
- Some parents and carers were found to have lost faith and trust in the local area and co-production is weak
- Leaders were found to be developing a clearer understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses
- There were strengths identified within the report which the service must now build upon.

Members were then talked through the criteria of the inspection and were showed the areas that the service had been found to be delivering effectively and the areas where development was needed. As a result of the inspection the local area had been issued with a Written Statement of Action (WSoA) of which both the Local Authority (LA) and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) are jointly responsible. There were 9 key areas highlighted for improvement which would be monitored at quarterly visits culminating in a re-inspection in approximately 18 – 24 months.

Cumbria's WSoA will be submitted by 21 August 2019, it is suggested that in that time the Local Authority's governance structures – Health and Wellbeing Board, SEND Improvement Board – Working Groups convene and begin to explore detailed action plans.

Members share their observations regarding some of the more contradictory findings in the report and ask about how Cumbria compares with other local areas. The Assistant Director – Education and Skills responds that most local area inspections have resulted in the issuing of a written statement and explains that 5 years on from the reforms more local areas are receiving written WSoAs.

Members ask for clarification on the work around alternative provision and the local authority's work with health, education and social care partners. It is explained that the proposed resource provision hubs would allow children and young people with special educational needs to access support while attending their local schools. It is hoped that this would allow for earlier identification and intervention and for resources to be distributed more effectively.

Officers were asked to comment on Cumbria's success historically with regards to inclusion of SEND students in mainstream schools and whether this was still possible in a time when resources and funding had become more difficult to attain. It was agreed that this was an understandable concern and that limited funding had resulted in difficulties but the service as a whole had been exploring new ideas for delivering better outcomes.

The Assistant Director – Learning and Skills clarified to members that 28 schools in Cumbria were designated as offering strategic resource provision, and each equipped to meet specific individual special educational needs. The proposal involved removing the specificity of the designation allowing more flexibility so that the needs of children and young people in that catchment area would be better met. The strategy would also ensure mainstream schools would be adequately resourced to meet the needs of students.

Concerns were raised about the strategic integration of the system and members sought assurance that the Local Authority would do more to ensure that the work of the Council and the work of partners in health and social care is consistent and that solutions are found together so that the local area can regain the trust of parents and carers. The Executive Director – People explained to members that the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Children's Trust Board will be primarily

Officers agreed that this was a priority and assured members that the inspection report had now given them the leverage to work more dynamically with partners across services.

Discussion then took place about the increase in permanent exclusions and officers were asked whether there was any trend identified. The Assistant Director – Learning and Skills explained that while there had been an increase, the rate of SEND pupils was in line with non-SEND pupils, and Cumbria was still better than the national average for rates of SEND pupil exclusions.

Members ask if more could be done to equip schools to provide earlier interventions for those with mental health needs. Officers agree that certain needs are preventable if services intervene earlier and assures members that training is ongoing to provide teachers with 'mental health first aid' skills which together with other means of support will mean improvement in their ability to of intervene early.

A detailed discussion took place regarding concerns over the capacity for teachers to take on more responsibility and sought assurance concerning how schools could be better incentivised to meet ever growing need.

The Assistant Director – Learning and Skills explained to members that consultation with parents will take place and information had been provided to the media. It was **AGREED** that in conversations with partners a response be produced to reassure parents of children and young people with special educational needs.

The Executive Director – People asked members to consider the role of the Scrutiny Advisory Board – Children and Young People in driving improvement in the area. It was **AGREED** that regular updates be provided to the Board and a decision be taken on whether to create a working group.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and acknowledged their hard work and the hard work of frontline staff.

It was **RESOLVED** that,

- 1) A local area response be produced to reassure parents of children with special educational needs
- 2) That the Board further consider the role they will play in improving the service to meet Ofsted and CQC requirements

7 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning discussed with members some of the many ways that children and young people with special educational needs or difficulties can add to a school. She reflected on her experiences as a teacher and highlighted how important it is for the service and for teachers to do their best for all children. She also provided an update on a various Department for Education consultations that the Council had been responding to.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services delivered an update to members on the recent meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board. She fed back the findings of the latest Foster Carer report which assured members that the service was on track to meet recruitment needs by October. Members then heard the latest news regarding the newly launched Care Leaver Offer.

8 CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

The Executive Director – People (Deputy Chief Executive) gave an update on a number of relevant schemes including Cumbria’s delegation as the location of the Regional Adoption Agency. He explained to members that the ‘go live’ date had now been delayed until 2020, and so it was **AGREED** that a comprehensive update be given to the Board.

Members heard that the Strengthening Families application would soon be submitted to the Department of Education (DfE) following the Chancellor’s budget speech announcement regarding £20 million allocation to Children’s Services to find innovative ways to manage demand. This programme was only made available to local authorities with Children’s Services that have a rating of Requires Improvement and have higher rates of children looked after than statistical neighbours. Cumbria was invited to take part, and members are told that the Council will be informed if it has been successful in September as securing political and partnership agreement is an important component of the bid. It was **AGREED** that Cumbria submit a bid and that the approach be supported.

Members were informed of a meeting between officers and the Ofsted - North West Regional would take place to discuss the focus of the next Ofsted Children’s Services visit.

The Executive Director – People (Deputy Chief Executive) asked that the Board familiarise themselves with the new arrangements for the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board, and so it was **AGREED** that a presentation be brought to the next meeting for the purpose of briefing members on the statutory safeguarding requirements.

It was **RESOLVED** that,

- 1) Cumbria submits an expression of interest in taking part in the Strengthening Families Programme.
- 2) A presentation be brought on the statutory arrangements of the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board.

9 BOARD BRIEFING

The Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor provided an update to members whereby he informed them of a member briefing which was due to held on 10 July 2019 on the topic of County Lines. The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Superintendent will give a presentation that will last from 11:00am until 12:30pm in the Council Chambers of County Hall, Kendall.

Members were also informed that arrangements were being made for the delivery of a presentation on the work of the Youth Justice Team.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 10:30 am on 23 September 2019 in Committee Room 1, County Offices, Kendal.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm