

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 11 September 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Johnson, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Buchan, Goslin, James, Loveridge and McDonald.

Co-opted Representative: Mrs Nicky Williams (Parent Governor Representative).

Apologies for absence: Councillor Downie.

Also in attendance: Emma Crowther (Strategic Commissioning Manager), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Councillor Jemima Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Ollie Mackie (Strategic Service Manager – NSPCC), Shelley Shaw (Development and Impact Manager – NSPCC), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Transformation), Siobhan Wallace (Head of Service – Children, Young People and Families) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.42 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

22. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct:

Member	Subject	Reason	Interest
Mrs Nicky Williams	Plymouth Challenge Update	She is a Parent Governor at High View Primary and sits on the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance.	Personal
Councillor Mrs Johnson	Plymouth Challenge Update	She is a Governor at Compton Primary School.	Personal

23. **Minutes**

Members agreed the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 July 2019.

24. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

25. **Mapping of Corporate Plan to Scrutiny Committees**

Members noted the Mapping of Corporate Plan to Scrutiny Committees report.

26. **Number of Children in Care - verbal update**

Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) advised Members that the number of children in care was currently at 415 and was previously reported at 417 in March; there was a slight rise in August to 423 however the overall number remained reasonably stable.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- (a) the number of children in care included those placed outside of the city in independent fostering agency placements or in residential placements; costs attributed to children in care placed outside of the city would be provided to Members;
- (b) a large piece of work was currently being undertaken to review all children in care in higher cost placements, including those placed away from the city. It was highlighted that some children were placed further away because of the potential risks posed to them locally, however all placements were regularly monitored and reviewed.

It was agreed that:

1. costs attributed to children in care placed outside of the city would be provided to Members;
2. information upon the number of children in care, specifically regarding data on those with SEN, special guardianship orders and those subject to a care plan, would be provided to Members; this information would also form part of the 'Number of Children in Care' update at future scrutiny meetings.

27. **Pledges Update**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Transformation), Councillor Jemima Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) provided an update on pledges linked to the panel's terms of reference.

The following key points were highlighted:

- (a) Pledge 43 was due to be signed off imminently – the STEM Conference had taken place with great success and events had also gone ahead on the same date in Plymouth Lido encouraging young people to have greater exposure to

STEM activities;

- (b) Pledge 48 focused upon support provided to young people in care with their career aspirations. It was highlighted that every young person in care between the ages of 14 and 17 had been asked what their career aspirations were; 102 young people had clear aspirations and it was now for officers to facilitate work experience opportunities. Work was also ongoing with Barnardos in partnership with the Council regarding care journeys; aspiration audits were to be undertaken with children in care to identify what support was required to help them fulfil their aspirations.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- (c) data linked to the proportion of care leavers that were in Education, Employment or Training (EET) and Accommodation was provided in percentages in order to prevent the identification of any young person; it was acknowledged that this information could be provided in more detail at the Corporate Parenting Group;
- (d) 44.4% of young people leaving the care system were NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) however personal advisors were responsible for supporting young people up until the age of 25 to find education, training and employment opportunities. It was highlighted that there were a range of reasons as to why a proportion of care leavers were NEET however a work plan was being developed to improve outcomes for the care leaver group, including support and guidance on accommodation and other factors to enable them to be independent adults. Progress and improvement of outcomes contained in the work plan would be reported back to Members in approximately 6 months' time;
- (e) career aspiration work linked to the 17-25 age bracket was the subject of a report that went to Cabinet in July 2019; a small cohort of young people had been identified as needing their aspirations explored and identified. This work had been completed and this group of young people would join the 102 young people from the 14-17 age bracket in coming forward for work experience;
- (f) the Young Carers Champion was responsible for working with schools to identify numbers of young carers however specific names or the breakdown of young carers via year group was not recorded;
- (g) the increasing burden of young carers was deeply concerning and was one of the reasons it was identified as a Pledge; the Council was working with schools to identify young carers in order to provide the required support. Any safeguarding issues would be monitored and dealt with via a referral to the children's social care department;
- (h) where any agency was concerned about the welfare of a child it wouldn't have to reach a statutory framework threshold; agencies could undertake an early help assessment referral to mobilise support at an earlier stage - it was

agreed that work would be undertaken to assess what response adult social care colleagues had when dealing with a vulnerable adult known to receive support from a young carer to ensure the process was adequately joined up – an update would be provided to members;

- (i) school attainment standards would continue to be a priority for the local authority; it was recognised that support was provided from a variety of angles to those school leavers who had left without a good education including work around skills and adult education courses, however more work was to be done. It was highlighted that it was important for children to receive a good education whilst at school and schools were looking to recruit good teachers, good school leaders and improve teaching networks. Ofsted were working more closely with the local authority to go into schools in an informal way to provide support other than inspect, and a national expert was working with some Plymouth schools to help promote improvement;
- (j) it was acknowledged that some young carers didn't require intervention from social care however were still encouraged to come forward to authorities to ensure that adequate support was in place if required. The collection of data regarding the variation of young carers, and the support provided, was recognised as being inconsistent from to school and an update would be provided to Members detailing how the current system worked and what good practice could be shared.

The Chair thanked Officers and Cabinet Members for their attendance and highlighted to Members that the Council was currently consulting on adjustments to the school holidays – this information had already been provided to all Members and they were encouraged to participate in the consultation.

Members agreed:

1. to recommend to the Corporate Parenting Group that they consider in more detail data linked to the proportion of care leavers that were not in Education, Employment or Training (EET) and Accommodation;
2. that progress and improvement of outcomes contained in the work plan focused upon care leavers would be reported back to Members in approximately 6 months' time;
3. that work would be undertaken to assess what response adult social care colleagues had when dealing with a vulnerable adult known to receive support from a young carer to ensure the process was adequately joined up – an update would be provided to members;
4. an update would be provided to Members detailing how the current system in schools regarding the recording and support of young carers worked and what good practice could be shared.

28. **Early Help Offer**

Emma Crowther (Strategic Commissioning Manager), Siobhan Wallace (Head of Service – Children, Young People and Families) and Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) presented the Early Help Offer report.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) in July 2019 Cabinet approved an initial business case to carry out engagement regarding the proposed future design of Early Help and Targeted Support services in Plymouth (up to the age of 19); the programme of engagement would take place between August and October 2019 with Children's Centres, families and targeted support services; scrutiny was asked to engage in the process;
- (b) the aim of the project was to create a network of family hubs that were warm, welcoming, friendly and non-stigmatising to encourage children, young people and families to receive support, socialise, learn new skills and connect with community links to build resilience.

Members provided the following feedback:

- (c) it may be beneficial to set up a pilot scheme in a deprived part of the city to test success;
- (d) youth centres should be engaged with as part of the consultation and overall programme; it was queried if youth centres were currently being utilised effectively;
- (e) this project was a good idea and should fill a gap in provision left by Surestart;
- (f) it was questioned if other services such as pop-up libraries could be brought into the programme, how the programme could be used to help support young people with ASB behaviours, and if the programme would connect with the CAMHS pathway?;
- (g) the distribution of centres didn't appear to be even across the city;
- (h) access for dental services was important as well as input from the police;
- (i) concerned that the budget may be restricted and affect the project's success;
- (j) emphasise the need for a joined up approach with health colleagues;
- (k) the voice of the child was important – where were officers interacting with young people?

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (l) the programme findings were to be presented to Cabinet in November 2019 with an expectation that procurement (if any) would take place in the Spring of 2020 with implementation in Spring 2021; it was anticipated that the programme would have time to run pilots;
- (m) youth centres were being consulted as part of the engagement process; officers were conscious that they tended to operate at different hours across the city and it was vital that the needs of all users, from parents with young children to teenagers, were met;
- (n) officers were assessing how buildings, which would form part of the programme, were being used in order to fill potential gaps and make the best use of them;
- (o) officers were approaching a multitude of providers, including the DWP, health visitors, school nurses, education providers and early years providers, to see how they could better work together;
- (p) there was a desire to create a couple of dedicated spaces for the targeted support practitioners, specifically in areas where it was identified that were existing issues or an emerging need of support;
- (q) officers were working up a model for an adolescent support team to provide early intervention for young people who were in the early stages of ASB;
- (r) the network of health and wellbeing hubs were not included on the map in the report;
- (s) this programme would take time to embed however officers were trying to future proof it as much as possible;
- (t) officers were aware of the need to drive change and be transformative with the practicalities of working within a budget; this new way of working would enable a greater ability to bid for funding grants in a more joined up way;
- (u) young people were being engaged with as part of the consultation process;
- (v) members were encouraged to advertise the via social media channels to ensure a wide range of responses were received.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

29. **Together for Childhood - To follow**

Siobhan Wallace (Head of Service – Children, Young People and Families), Ollie Mackie (Strategic Service Manager – NSPCC), Shelley Shaw (Development and Impact Manager – NSPCC) presented the Together for Childhood Update.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- (a) Together for Childhood was a 10 year multi-agency project run in Ernesettle which was co-led between Plymouth City Council and the NSPCC; the aim was to try and build resilience in the community to prevent child abuse happening, to create a place where children felt safe to disclose abuse and where perpetrators didn't feel safe to act;
- (b) the five building blocks of the project included:
 - Relationships and sex education
 - Community engagement
 - Trauma informed system
 - Public health messaging
 - Preventing offending and harmful sexual behaviour
- (c) for the past two years the project had been in an active delivery mode and 1900 individuals had been engaged with since April 2019; a wide range of work had been undertaken including workshops with young children to identify what was important to them, a collection of women in the community knitting pairs of pants to go on Build a Bear's, inter-generational work involving young people from the youth group and Tea and Toast group and the integration of the team into the community;
- (d) the Pants campaign was due to be launched on 28 September 2019 at the Life Centre;
- (e) the project was successful in being awarded a three year funding grant from the Samworth Foundation of just under £280,000. This money would go towards focusing on peer to peer abuse and restorative approaches;
- (f) work would be undertaken with the Safeguarding Board and Safer Plymouth to undertake a system wide harmful sexual behaviour audit. This would identify strengths and weaknesses and what could be done to address them;
- (g) a schools service called the Speak Out Stay Safe programme was run by the NSPCC and had reached 93% of schools in Plymouth.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (h) the Together for Childhood project was using a child sexual abuse matrix which consisted of a public health approach and primary, secondary and tertiary prevention to target interventions in the right area;
- (i) the project had a 10 year lifespan however it was hoped that work would continue after this timeframe, led by the community, to continue to generate

ideas and work to prevent child abuse;

- (j) the youth parliament were due to join with young people from the Together for Childhood project to think about safe spaces; scoping for this piece of work was yet to be completed however it was hoped that with time, ideas would be discussed, tested and developed;
- (k) the NSPCC selected four sites nationally for the Together for Childhood project; Plymouth and Stoke-on-Trent were to focus on the prevention of child sexual abuse and Grimsby and Govan (Glasgow) were to focus on families facing multi adversity; learning was shared across the four sites however it was highlighted that Plymouth had significantly more reach numbers. This was attributed to the Ernesettle community that had actively participated and helped with the success of the project to date;
- (l) one element of the Pants Campaign, Speak Out Stay Safe, was to encourage children to disclose abuse; it was recognised that in some cases there were barriers of disclosure, including a fear of not being believed, however by working with adults in the community and the professional network it was hoped that this would help.

Members thanked officers for their attendance and praised the work of the Together for Childhood Project.

30. **Child Exploitation - To follow**

Siobhan Wallace (Head of Service – Children, Young People and Families) and Ollie Mackie (Strategic Service Manager – NSPCC), presented the Child Exploitation update.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) in 2016, a full scrutiny review was conducted into child exploitation in Plymouth; this review came up with a range of recommendations all of which had been completed;
- (b) it was highlighted that young people could be exploited in a number of ways, including County Lines (drug running), sexual exploitation, human trafficking and criminal exploitation;
- (c) the oversight for the work surrounding child exploitation in Plymouth was with the Local Safeguarding Board (PSCB) however this was to transfer to Local Safeguarding Arrangements soon; Safer Plymouth also had an oversight of a number of strands of the work, particularly regarding their role to address cyber-crime and fraud. In Plymouth, child exploitation work was overseen by the strategic Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) subgroup of the PSCB and was chaired by the NSPCC;
- (d) examples of work linked to child exploitation in Plymouth included: Operation Greywild (which targeted and disrupted large groups of young people who were becoming involved in criminal activity or ASB); Operation

Dalitron (focused upon engaging fairground owners and operatives to prevent child exploitation); Barnardos have delivered 'in plain site' (targeting awareness raising in the night time economy);

- (e) MACE had developed a new screening tool for all professionals concerned about potential child exploitation; this would support better intelligence gathering about prevalence and types of child exploitation in Plymouth.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (f) officers had been working with young people to discuss what cyber bullying and peer to peer bullying looked like to them; it was now for messages/ a campaign to be developed with young people to clearly explain what cyber bullying consisted of in order to encourage others to recognise the signs and receive help and support if required;
- (g) as part of the child exploitation scrutiny review in 2016 there was a call for evidence sent out to a variety of partners and organisations requesting for more information on this subject; the call for evidence had a poor response rate and members of the review were concerned what that implied to the importance of child exploitation at the time. Since 2016, the local authority, partners and other organisations had worked well together on safeguarding courses, annual conferences, seminars and training sessions;
- (h) one of the focuses of the Together for Childhood project was to develop key messages and training, in conjunction with Barnardos, for Early Years Practitioners; work was also ongoing as to how this could link in with the early years curriculum. It was also highlighted that the council's early years team had an action plan consisting of safeguarding, training programmes and audits for childminders/ nurseries etc;
- (i) the Safeguarding Board was the lead for child exploitation in the city; whilst there was a lot of information on their website regarding this subject, it was acknowledged that the Council needed to have a clear link on their website which would direct them to this information.

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and congratulated them on progress made in this area.

It was agreed that Child Exploitation would remain on the panel's work programme and that a progress report would be submitted to scrutiny in the future.

31. **Ofsted Improvement Plan**

Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) and Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) presented the Ofsted Improvement Plan.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- (a) the Ofsted Improvement plan set out the key priorities following Ofsted's visit in November 2018; the improvement plan had been in place since February 2019 following receipt of the letter and detailed report from Ofsted. Six areas of improvement were identified; some linked to specific parts of the council's processes including strategic meetings and how children's plans were completed. It was considered that there was still work to be done however progress was being made;
- (b) the quality of written plans were being audited and month on month improvements had been made;
- (c) work around care leavers was considered to need more accelerated work; the service had been asked to developed a task and finish group with a clear work plan around all of the areas relevant to care experienced young people including education, training and employment, suitable accommodation, quality of preparation for independent living, quality of visiting and the quality of plans in place. This piece of work was about to commence;
- (d) the other three areas of improvement identified in the report (sufficiency of local placements/ supervision and management/ auditing of casework) were considered to be making progress and were on track. Ofsted were keen that the council had an effective system of self-evaluation – that had been accelerated significantly since November – there was now considered to be a good approach to audit good practice and where there was need for improvement;
- (e) there was an aim for the plan itself to be transformed into a plan on a page to aid good scrutiny.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (f) there were no additional resources or budgets linked to the work of the Ofsted Improvement Plan;
- (g) it was recognised that the Ofsted Improvement Plan was a detailed document which served a better purpose as an internal document; it was hoped that the plan on a page would highlight would allow easier scrutiny and would detail lowlight and highlights of progress made;
- (h) Officers accepted and understood that Ofsted inspections and external scrutiny was important and part of the business as usual.

The Chair thanked the Service Director for Children, Young People and Families and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People for their attendance and offered her thanks to the team for the hard work done in making improvements.

Members noted the update.

(Mrs Nicky Williams: Parent Governor Representative was not present for this item)

32. **Plymouth Challenge Update**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) presented the Plymouth Challenge Update.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- (a) work surrounding raising standards, leadership and the peer mentoring programme were ongoing;
- (b) a well-regarded National Leader in Education from the Teaching Schools Council had visited several schools in Plymouth providing advice whilst helping to write bids for funding support;
- (c) subject hubs arranged via the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance for secondary schools had been adjusted as new alliances had been formed; they were sharing good practice and focusing upon different areas of improvement;
- (d) the Education Series events organised by the Department for Education had taken place and were designed for schools to hear from system leaders, Ofsted and national experts; they were well attended;
- (e) the local authority continued to develop the Aspiration strand of the Plymouth Challenge and a lot of work had been done regarding STEM activities over the summer;
- (f) GCSE results for the city were not yet known however it was acknowledged that results may not rise significantly this year with many school leaders new in role and several schools struggling to rise from a low baseline;
- (g) the coordination of the challenge was something that was being discussed between the Regional Schools Commissioner and the local authority; it was highlighted that the LA was unable to understand the impact of measures put in place as they weren't provided with clear information on the long term picture.

In response to a question raised it was reported that Plymouth was a good case study for the system not working as it should, specifically regarding the difficulty in attracting good MATS to the city. There seemed to be a reluctance to take on challenging schools.

The Chair thanked Officers and the Cabinet Member for their attendance and update.

It was agreed that the update is noted.

(Mrs Nicky Williams: Parent Governor Representative was not present for this item)

33. **Work Programme**

The Chair advised Members that the work programme now had a scoring system included in order for items to be effectively prioritised.

It was highlighted that Children's Mental Health was an important issue for scrutiny to oversee; Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) advised Members that the Joint Targeted Area Inspection Framework was currently on the panel's work programme however the current theme was children's mental health issues. It was suggested that this item could be brought forward with a report detailing what the framework included and whether the local authority was ready for such an inspection.

Members noted the work programme and agreed to bring forward the scrutiny of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection Framework.

(Mrs Nicky Williams: Parent Governor Representative was not present for this item)

34. **Tracking Decisions**

Members were advised that the majority of items listed on the panel's tracking resolutions had been completed.

It was queried why items were still categorised as 'ongoing', specifically with regards to bullying and attendance however it was highlighted to Members that these issues would be picked up as part of scrutiny select reviews which were still in the planning stage.

(Mrs Nicky Williams: Parent Governor Representative was not present for this item)