

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 2 December 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Beer, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Corvid, Goslin, James, McDonald, Morris and Nicholson (substitute for Councillor Loveridge).

Apologies for absence: Councillor Loveridge.

Also in attendance: Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Jane Anstis (Head of Service for CSW, Participation and Fostering), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Ming Zhang (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Stuart Hogg (Practice Manager – Participation), Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 12.00 pm and finished at 2.00 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.

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct.

11. Minutes

Members agreed the minutes of 19 October 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

12. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business however under this item the Chair wished Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) best wishes for her retirement and welcomed Ming Zhang, her replacement, to the post.

13. Policy Brief

The Chair directed Members attention towards the Policy Brief contained within the agenda pack and invited Members to ask questions.

Questions related to the following key areas:

- the press release from 26 October 2020 regarding action to help prevent vulnerable young people from becoming homeless – it was asked if a protocol between housing and children's services had been created in order to address the guidelines.

Members noted the Policy Brief.

14. **Update on Progress since JTAI - verbal**

Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Jane Anstis (Head of Service for Permanency, Children and Young & Families Service) spoke to a Powerpoint presentation on the Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

Key points highlighted to Members included the following:

- the JTAI took place in November 2019 and was a targeted multi-agency inspection into children's mental health; the Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership was responsible for overseeing the improvement and action plan;
- strengths identified during the inspection included stable senior leadership, joint commissioning arrangements which were reflective of well-developed partnership arrangements, a wide variety of services available from the community and voluntary sector which worked together well to deliver targeted emotional health support for children, with a focus on early intervention and that children and young people were meaningfully involved in consultation about the development of services and co-production of initiatives;
- key recommendations from the inspection linked to the governance arrangements of the Youth Offending Team, the required improvement of the quality of referrals and information sharing between professionals and Quality Assurance Framework improvements;
- Next steps included partnership and single agency monitoring to review progress against the action plan, quarterly multi-agency meetings to check progress made and inspectorate visits to review key recommendations.

Key areas of questioning from Members included:

- the impact of domestic abuse on young people and if this had been discussed as part of the JTAI;
- if improvements had been made as to how young people access mental health services, specifically CAMHS;
- concerns regarding pressures on family courts which was impacting on the council's ability to issue care proceedings to protect children, how the

backlog of public law cases made it harder for children to return home or remove them out of care, and children's social personal and emotional development and becoming less confident and anxious;

- if specific data key performance indicators had been set in order to measure if the changes made as a result of the action plan had been successful;
- if information sharing and comparison with some of the local authorities that had undergone the same process had happened;
- if mental health reporting focused specifically on service children, and if a representative from the armed forces was appointed to any multi agency meeting where the issue of mental health was being discussed; an invitation was extended to Jean Kelly and Councillor Laing to attend an armed forces covenant meeting;
- what the current backlog was for legal proceedings and the prioritisation of the listing of cases, and what pressure this put on the local authority.

It was agreed that:

1. the JTAI Action Plan would remain on the panel's work programme and Members would scrutinise progress against the action plan in the future;
2. The regular update provided to Members upon Children in Care would include an update upon legal proceedings.

(Councillor Allen declared a personal interest under this item)

15. In House Fostering/ Impact of Service Re-design (to follow)

Councillor Jemima Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Jane Anstis (Head of Service for CSW, Permanency and Fostering) and Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) presented the In House Fostering/ Impact of Service Re-design to the Committee.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- the Foster for Plymouth campaign had gathered momentum and was hitting targets to provide more Plymouth placements for Plymouth children that needed them;
- Plymouth City Council used a range of placements to provide care and support for children and young people. Some provision was provided in-house, with other placements commissioned from a range of externally commissioned providers. The preference was to place children in local authority foster care where possible, prioritising the use of a non-profit making fostering service and enabling more children to remain in their communities;

- an In-House Fostering service review was undertaken in October 2019 and the service was re-designed. Actions had been taken since to recruit more foster carers for local children and to create a future where fewer children were required to leave their communities to outside of Plymouth.

Key areas of questioning from Members included the following:

- guardianship and if legislation surrounding this subject had changed;
- how many foster carers were at retirement age and how many new foster carers were required in order to fill that loss;
- why there had been a decline in young people going to in-house foster care;
- an update on the Children in Care Awards and the Foster Care Awards.

Officers and Members highlighted their thanks to the city's Foster Carers.

Members noted the update.

16. **Covid Impact - verbal**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Ming Zhang (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) presented the Covid Impact item to the Committee, with a particular focus upon the impact on schools.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- that schools and settings had continued to work effectively with communities and the local authority to support and encourage as many children to attend school as possible; attendance remained high, this also included the attendance of pupils with SEND in maintained schools;
- risk assessments for maintained schools had been reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Team and where necessary had received support from Public Health colleagues;
- a recovery plan had been created to assist schools in tackling lost time and to catch up – funding had been provided by the DFE on this basis; other areas of support included a dedicated youth hub programme called Skills4Plymouth, and support from the SEND support team and the Virtual School to identify a pupil's EHCP or PEP.

A question was raised regarding the issue of school transport and it was highlighted that this was associated with public transport as a result of the impact of Covid.

The Chair thanked school staff and Council officers for their work in supporting the high attendance rates in the city.

Members noted the update.

17. **Participation - Work of Young Safeguarders and the Listen and Care Council (to follow)**

Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) and Stuart Hogg (Practice Manager – Participation) provided Members with an update on Participation (work of young Safeguarders and the Listen and Care Council).

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- the Participation Team sat within the Children Young People and Families Service; it was highlighted that the team didn't speak for young people but tried to get their voices to where they needed to be heard;
- the Young Safeguarders were a group of young people aged 14-19 who lived in Plymouth and were interested in improving services that delivered support to young people across the city. They produced a sound clip that had been distributed throughout the PSCP organisations highlighting the importance of language and how professionals could sound to young people;
- the Listen and Care Council was made up of three groups of young people who were either in care or were care experienced. These groups were the Junior Listen and Care Council (ages 8 to 13), the Senior Listen and Care Council (ages 13 to 17), and the Care Experienced Council (CEC) for young people aged 18 and over; they had provided information on life in lockdown to Corporate Parenting Group meetings;
- members of both the Young Safeguarders and the Listen and Care Council had been involved in a number of recent recruitment and interview processes to support appointing managers with recruitment decisions.

Key areas of questions from Members included:

- how membership of the Listen and Care Council Voice Groups were selected, and how those that might be marginalised were encouraged to join or have their views represented;
- how young people were coping with the change in contact from face to face to digital contact.

Members noted the update.

It was agreed that Members would be provided with a link to videos from the You Can Do It Awards.

18. **Work Programme**

The Committee noted their work programme for 20/21.