

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 31 January 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor Bowie, in the Chair.

Councillor Sam Leaves, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Jordan, Rennie, Singh, Stark, Kate Taylor and Tuohy.

Co-opted Representatives: Harry Samuels, Claudia Marshall and Alderman Purnell.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Browne and Sam Davey and Edith Bayley.

Also in attendance: Also in attendance: Stuart Palmer – Assistant Director for Homes and Communities, John Miller – Head of Integrated Youth Services, John Searson – Principal Adviser, Jo Hall – Senior Adviser Early Years, Dave Simpkins – Acting Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care, Caroline Kirsopp – Service Manager, Cindy Willcocks – Interim CAMHs Service Improvement Manager, Michelle Thomas – Director of Operations, Plymouth Community Healthcare, Maggie Carter - Lead Officer and Amelia Boulter – Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 10.05 am and finished at 12.55 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee 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.

41. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the following declarations were made, as follows –

Name	Minute	Reason	Interest
Councillor Mrs Beer	Minute 50 – Early Years Safeguarding.	Chair of Plum Tree Children’s Centre and safeguarding governor.	Personal.
Councillor Jordan	Minute 50 – Early Years Safeguarding.	Member of the Plymouth Early Years Strategic Partnership and Chairman of one Charitable Nursery and Acting Chairman of another Charitable Nursery.	Personal.

42. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The Chair welcomed Harry Samuels and Claudia Marshall to the panel as the Young Person Representatives for this meeting. It was reported that Jenny Collins, Parent Governor Representative had resigned as a parent governor and co-opted representative.

Members commented that correct procedures need to be in place when recruiting co-opted members to ensure the right processes were followed.

Agreed that following the resignation of the parent governor representative on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the Democratic Support Officer to explore –

- other options for co-opting representatives onto the panel;
- investigate whether other local authorities experience similar issues when recruiting parent governor and faith co-opted representatives;
- the statutory requirements for co-opted representatives;
- the recruitment process for co-opted representatives.

43. **MINUTES**

Agreed that –

1. Councillor Sam Leaves and Alderman Purnell's attendance at the 1 November 2012 meeting is recorded;
2. subject to the changes above, the minutes of the 1 November 2012 are confirmed as a correct record.

The panel were also informed that Maggie Carter would be undertaking the Lead Officer role on behalf of Jayne Gorton.

44. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no chair's urgent business.

45. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Tracking resolutions were either progressing, completed or covered in the agenda today.

46. **YOUTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURE UPDATE**

John Miller – Head of Integrated Youth Services and Stuart Palmer - Assistant Director for Homes and Communities provided the panel with an update on the Youth Service Restructure.

The panel were informed that –

- (a) a review of youth services was initiated as part of the recent restructure in Home and Communities Department. An opportunity was created in the management structure to bring together the youth service, youth justice and care leavers with the aim of improving the youth offer within the city;
- (b) they took into consideration the services already in place and how the service would encompass the principles of a co-operative council by working more closely with the voluntary and community sector;
- (c) there was a need to work with major stakeholders and schools to review the youth offer alongside the offer delivered by the council and how to identify vulnerable young people earlier;
- (d) it was identified that people did not understand what was being offered and were now working with Corporate Communications to improve how to communicate the offer to young people in the city;
- (e) the latest performance figures revealed that Plymouth were doing very well compared to other youth services across the country. It showed that we were engaging very well with young people and they were able to access services.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that -

- (f) there were currently 155 different projects happening across the city and were led by other organisations. It was important to maximise those relationships as the youth offer goes beyond what PCC can provide;
- (g) they were unaware of the bureaucratic process that young carers had to undertake to become part of the young carers group and would investigate. They were looking to split the group into two age groups because they were currently oversubscribed. It was also raised that funding for young carers sat with social care and the offer was provided by the youth service;
- (h) it was helpful to receive feedback from councillors on information received from young people on their requirements e.g. somewhere quiet to do homework. It was reported that libraries were keen to work with the youth service and were piloting work clubs supported by Jobcentre Plus;
- (i) Young Inspectors were a group of young people supported and trained to ensure quality services are provided for young people such as the Life Centre Project and Summer Mix Programme;

- (j) they employed apprentices to look at how young people preferred to be communicated with. This led to a new Facebook page and Twitter feed and any comments posted would receive a response;
- (k) the Youth Service was part of the strategic partnership looking at aspirations, worklessness and raising participation for young people. They offer a Summer Mix Programme to help young people develop their work related skills, giving them access to different working environments, experiences and to help improve self-confidence;
- (l) the Summer Mix programme was inclusive and this had greatly improved over the last 4 years and can evidence the improvement. They continued to ensure that the programme was inclusive but there was always room for improvement;
- (m) the reports were not currently public apart from the youth survey which was public. They were looking at ways to make documents more accessible as well as ensuring that the information was relevant and timely. They were happy to share the information with the panel members;
- (n) panel members commented that Seymour House was recently used for the first time for young people to vote in the Youth Parliament Elections and whether alternative venues were sourced for young people to vote. It was also reported that Marine Academy Plymouth did not get involved because of current building work at the school which meant there was no space for a ballot box. They would investigate why Pembroke Street was not used as a polling station and ask the area based team to look into this;
- (o) panel members were invited to contact John Miller as their support was valued. John extended the invitation for Members to be involved in the focus groups to sit side by side young people and look at how services can be improved.

Agreed that John Miller to report back to the panel in March and give response on the issues raised –

1. investigate the bureaucratic process young carers undergo prior to joining the young carers group;
2. that relevant share information with the panel and to review how information is made more accessible;
3. explore the reasons why Marine Academy Plymouth were not involved in the recent Youth Parliament Elections and why Pembroke Street was not used as a polling station.

47. **DYSLEXIA**

The panel were provided with a report on dyslexia. Panel members commented that 1 in 4 children in school could be dyslexic and more work needed to be undertaken to identify those children. The panel requested to look at this issue in greater detail.

Agreed that a task and finish group is set up to investigate and understand how many young people across the city are dyslexic and to ascertain from schools on how they identify and support children with dyslexia.

48. **UTC**

The panel were provided with a report on the University Technical College (UTC) and noted the report.

49. **SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE**

John Searson – Principal Leadership Adviser provided the panel with an update on schools performance. The panel were informed that report provides the validated results up to KS4 with significant improvement in KS5. In general the performance in the city from early years to KS4 was lagging behind the national averages but was improving.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that -

- (a) by focussing on the Average Point Score (APS) can narrow the range of subjects available to a pupil. It was important that the schools listen to the aspirations of the young people and provide a number of accreditations;
- (b) historically the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) looks at attainment and expectations over a period of time and estimates a pupil's future exam performance based on socio-economic factors. Now teacher assessment was an integral part of helping to estimate future academic performance;
- (c) a volunteer scheme 'Right to Read' was introduced to PCC employees. It is a scheme for volunteers to sit with children and help with their reading. This scheme has been rolled out to a number of other organisations and was part of the wider offer to improve reading within the city;
- (d) grade boundaries did impact on the city with regard to the English results and should shortly hear the outcome of the judicial review. A large number of students were negatively impacted as a result of the grade boundary being removed.

50. **EARLY YEARS SAFEGUARDING**

Jo Hall – Senior Adviser Early Years provided the committee with an update on early years safeguarding. The report was a position statement on the audit undertaken. The concerns raised were dealt with and they were ensuring providers had the necessary resources to safeguard children.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that –

- (a) the early years safeguarding audit was completed almost a year ago and training and guidance was put in place to address the issues raised. It was reported that the sharing good practice was becoming embedded;
- (b) 99 per cent of providers completed and returned the forms as part of the safeguarding audit. The one provider (1 per cent) that did not complete and return the form was followed up. It was found that this provider had already completed the necessary forms and they were satisfied that further forms were not required to be completed;
- (c) Councillor Jordan stated that private and charitable nurseries had gone above and beyond to ensure the safety of children. Councillor Jordan also recommended to other panel member to undertake the safer recruitment training, the training emphasises the problems staff face;
- (d) Alderman Purnell raised concerned with the report provided to the panel as it appeared not to have procedures in place for the safeguarding of children. The report only mentioned once the use of mobile phones and this was a key safeguarding issue. Alderman Purnell proposed that a working group should be set up to review the safeguarding practices currently in place and to be reassured that the level of safety had increased and review the training offered.

Agreed that Alderman Purnell reviews the training offered and to be reassured that safeguarding practices in place provide safety for children in early years settings.

51. **MONITORING OF SICKNESS AND RECRUITMENT IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

Dave Simpkins – Acting Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Caroline Kirsopp – Service Manager provided the panel with an update on the monitoring of sickness and recruitment in children's social care. The panel were informed that –

Recruitment

- (a) there was a robust recruitment process in place and from the 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2012, seventeen new starters were recruited with a further 5 social workers recruited in January 2013. Of the 22 recruited, all were students from Plymouth University, 2 trained

outside of Plymouth and 3 were PCC social work trainees who participated in the Open University programme;

- (b) Plymouth were able to attract and recruit people because of the excellent Ofsted results which recognises the level and quality of support and professional development offered to newly qualified social workers;
- (c) Plymouth runs a programme for newly qualified social workers during the first 12 months in their role as a newly qualified social worker. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment which is supported by the Social Work Reform Board and Professor Munro in her review of social work. Social workers were required to produce a portfolio of evidence, identify areas of development, obtain 360 feedback along with observations of practice undertaken by team managers. It was also reported that this programme was very successful.

Sickness

- (d) progress to reduce sickness levels was slightly hampered by genuine long term sickness which were not due to work related stress. Managing sickness and how to deal with sickness was a high priority for the management team;
- (e) the Acting Assistant Director reviewed long term sickness on a monthly basis at a Sickness Panel. The Sickness Panel has been positive and very proactive in managing staff when they went off sick;
- (f) the manager make calls and home visits and where appropriate uses occupational health. The Capability Policy was also used and followed and looked at alternative working arrangements for staff to ensure they were no longer in a stressful situation.

52. **CAMHS UPDATE**

Cindy Willcocks – Interim CAMHS Service Improvement Manager and Michelle Thomas – Director of Operations, Plymouth Community Healthcare provided the panel with an update on CAMHS.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that -

- (a) they attended school assemblies to raise the profile of positive mental health and to reduce the stigma of mental health. It was also an opportunity for children to look after their own mental health;
- (b) there was an overall expectation that children and young people should not wait longer than 18 weeks. It was felt that 18 week referral time to treatment was a long time for young people. It was reported that in reality a majority of children were seen for treatment much sooner;

- (c) Plymouth along with Torbay and Devon had a been successful in obtaining funding for Children and Young People Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (CYP IAPT) and had attracted £2m over a 2 year period. Plymouth attracted between £500k - £600k and would help to achieve the 4 main principles of CYP IAPT (see report);
- (d) Children's Social Care had to make a difficult decision and withdrew a social worker from the CAMHs Outreach Team because of pressures. The panel were assured that Children's Social Care work very closely with the CAMHs Outreach Team on issues as they arise;
- (e) they were unsure on the current numbers of children waiting more than 15 weeks;
- (f) it was reported that Plymouth Community Healthcare were undertaking a piece of work with commissioners on safeguarding and would report back to the panel at a future meeting;
- (g) panel members raised whether the Police had a good understanding of children and young people with mental health issues and learning disabilities. It was felt that this was a matter for the Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Community Development to raise this with the Police;
- (h) panel members were also concerned that children and young people were still waiting a long time for an appointment and highlighted that this should not be happening. The panel also raised concerns on the support given to children and young people in fulltime education and their families.

Agreed that –

- 1. Plymouth Community Healthcare report back to the panel at the next meeting on the numbers of children and young people waiting more than 15 weeks before receiving treatment;
- 2. Plymouth Community Healthcare to provide the panel with a report on the results of safeguarding work at a future meeting;
- 3. the Chair to ask the Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Communities to speak to the Police on the concerns raised by the panel on how the Police deal with children and young people with mental health issues and learning disabilities;
- 4. Plymouth Community Healthcare to provide the panel with a report detailing the support provided to children and young people and their families.

53. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted the work programme and agreed to include the following items –

- Children Services Budget;
- Schools Forum (summary report);
- Dyslexia Task and Finish Group;
- Early Years Safeguarding (to review training practices).

54. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.