

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 11 May 2016, County Hall, Worcester - 10.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Ms L R Duffy (Chairman), Mrs F M Oborski (Vice Chairman), Mr R W Banks, Mr P Denham and Mr I Hopwood

Also attended:

Mr J P Campion, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
Mrs E B Tucker
Jane Stanley, Worcestershire Healthwatch

John Edwards (Strategic Commissioner - Education Services),
Debbie Herbert (Lead Commissioner),
Hannah Needham (Strategic Commissioner - Early Help and Partnerships),
Diane Partridge (Assistant Director, Safeguarding Services (Children's Social Care)),
Simon White (Director of Children Families and Communities),
Paul Wilson (Interim Lead Commissioner),
Jodie Townsend (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and
Samantha Morris (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2016 (previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

238 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from June Griffiths and John Thomas.

239 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

240 Public Participation

None.

241 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

242 Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Learning and Achievement Services Commissioned to Babcock Prime

The Strategic Commissioner – Education and Skills and the Interim Lead Commissioner attended the meeting to discuss the measures and resources in place within the Council's Education & Skills Intelligent Client Unit (E&S ICU) to monitor and manage the delivery of the education services commissioned to Babcock Prime. The E&S ICU has a Lead Commissioner, Commissioning Manager and Commissioning Officer.

The majority of the Council's Learning and Achievement Services were commissioned to Babcock Prime on 1 October 2015 on a 5 year contract. The services transferred to Babcock Prime from the Council were:

- School Admissions
- Children Missing in Education
- Elective Home Education
- Exclusions
- Post-16
- Specialist Inclusion Services
- The Virtual School (not the Headteacher role)
- School Improvement
- Governor Services
- Early Years & Childcare
- Education Investigation Service/Children in Entertainment & Employment
- Education Welfare Service
- Workforce Development

The Council retained some services which were previously within the Learning and Achievement Service:

- Place planning and provision
- The role of the Virtual Headteacher
- The strategic lead for services for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The County Council monitors the Contract under a strict and robust governance structure and had:

- Weekly commissioning meetings with the Babcock Regional Manager
- Monthly Review Meetings with Council and Babcock senior managers, which included Council commissioners and Babcock leads

- Quarterly Review Meetings with senior Council officers and Cabinet Member, and senior Babcock Prime; and also had
- A suite of programme processes which had been introduced to ensure robust contract monitoring:
 - Reporting and contract monitoring tools
 - Issues log and Early Warning Register
 - Data management protocols
 - Evidence of continued measurable improvements in standards e.g. Ofsted inspections

During the discussion the following main points were made:

- The Commissioning Team co-ordinated and quality assured all data used to monitor the KPIs and each KPI was accompanied by a narrative giving detailed background on each indicator. It was difficult to measure the County Council's 2016 performance in comparison to 2015 as the KPIs were changing. The performance however, could be compared nationally.
- It was suggested that although the national indicators had changed, consideration should be given to running a parallel system for a period of time to compare like with like data and thus County Council year on year performance.
- Looking to the future, it was suggested that performance data could be broken down by district level, an approach which was welcomed by Members.
- In response to the concern that the turnover of School Improvement staff was having an impact on the poor performance of KPI 3 in relation to KS2 (The proportion of schools below the government's floor standards and those deemed to be 'coasting' is below national or statistical neighbours performance, whichever is lower) it was felt that although there had been some changes in staff since Babcock were appointed and the demise of the National Strategy, the gap was in fact narrowing.
- It was suggested that the deficit of primary school places for September 2016 in Worcestershire was due to a bulge year (a one-off situation) and managing parental choice v parental preference. It was

243 Update on Back to Basics Safeguarding Improvement Plan

confirmed that the County Council retained responsibility for school place planning.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for attending the Meeting and requested that:

- KPI's were regularly sent out to the Panel to enable them to keep a watching brief; and
- The Babcock Action Plan on KPI's also be sent to the Panel.

It was suggested that scrutiny should look at:

- Attainment by area
- The attainment journey to give each young person the opportunity to achieve their full potential
- Vulnerable groups.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding was invited to the meeting to update the Panel on progress of the Back to Basics Safeguarding Improvement Plan since the Local Government Association (LGA) Safeguarding Peer Review in April 2015.

In November 2014, the County Council - as part of its desire to be a learning organisation - invited the LGA to help facilitate a Peer Review on its approach to safeguarding children. The Peer Review took place in April 2015.

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the outcomes of the Peer Review at its meeting on 25 June 2015 and were informed that the LGA team had identified the following four priorities:

- A 'back to basics' Safeguarding Improvement Plan
- Resolving the future direction for the 'Front Door'
- Implementing a detailed financial recovery plan
- Review and defining the role of Early Help

The Panel agreed that they would undertake further scrutiny work to consider the Directorate's response to these priorities and met with the Assistant Director Safeguarding Services and Strategic Lead Quality and Improvement on 5 August 2015.

It was recognised that much of the ongoing improvement work and work initiated in response to the Peer Review was still at an early stage and that it would take time before improvements would be seen. Therefore, it was agreed that the Scrutiny Panel would receive an update in six months' time on the progress made.

The Safeguarding Improvement Plan implemented in May 2015 had been monitored monthly by the Safeguarding Improvement Board. The Plan was subsequently refreshed in January 2016 and was considered by the Safeguarding Improvement Board in February 2016. The refreshed Plan took into account the progress achieved to date and was aligned to the three strategic priorities for Children's Social Care:

- Getting the 'gateway' into Children's Social Care right;
- Securing safety and permanence for children at the earliest opportunity;
- Building a confident and capable workforce.

As a result, the performance indicators that accompanied the Safeguarding Improvement Plan were revised so that they were directly relevant to the Plan and were signed off in March 2016 by the Children, Families and Communities' Directorate Leadership Team and Safeguarding Improvement Board. Progress on performance was monitored through monthly corrective action reports which were compiled monthly by the Team and Group Managers for performance clinics that are held in each of the locality safeguarding areas. These were then reported to the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and on to Safeguarding Improvement Board.

Evidence from other local authorities who had embarked on improvement journeys similar to Worcestershire (e.g. Walsall and Herefordshire) suggested that improvement began with compliance. There had therefore been a focus on the compliance-based practice standards:

- Assessments in timescale
- Timeliness of visits
- Timeliness of Section 47 Enquiries
- Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC)
- Timeliness of response to complaints

Performance had improved evidenced by March 2016

data except for the percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences completed in timescale. Performance for this indicator fluctuated between May 2015 and March 2016 between c. 40% and 75% and the Directorate were trying to understand the reasons for this through the corrective action reporting process in order to ensure long term and sustained improvement. As a result of the fluctuating performance an instruction had been issued to all Team Managers that the decision as to whether an Initial Child Protection Conference was required must be made no later than day five of a Section 47 Enquiry and a revised Framework workflow had been put in place to support this and was being monitored closely by Team and Group Managers. Furthermore there had been some investment in information technology solutions to maximise participation and combat venue pressures.

From January 2016, the focus had been on quality of practice through case file auditing and a series of mock inspections. Further work to improve quality of practice would include ongoing robust auditing of cases, further mock inspections, safeguarding alerts and learning from complaints.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families explained how there had been a monumental shift in basic social work practice with significant improvements and a more confident workforce. Retaining high quality social workers was the next focus and would cement the improvements made to date.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- At the present time 83% of the workforce was permanent out of a target of 100%.
- It was disappointing that the KPI relating to the timeliness of initial Child Protection Conferences was only 40% and the Panel would wish to see this information broken down by district areas to allow for a deeper analysis to further understand the reasons.
- In response to the concern that there may be people who were asking for help from social care but didn't meet the threshold for help, the Panel were reassured that although social care intervention may not be appropriate, help would always be offered. Approximately 1/3 of all contacts made to social care didn't meet the threshold.
- Ideally, the Council were aiming to offer better

244 Stronger Families Programme Update

support to families in need of help which would result in less LAC and better outcomes for the children.

- The threshold's for Safeguarding were being re-drafted and were going to be approved by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board on 16 May 2016 but would be sent to the Panel for information.

The Chairman of the Panel thanked the Cabinet Member and Officer for coming to the meeting and was very pleased to see the improvements which had been outlined during the discussion. The Panel requested a further update in 6 months' time.

The Strategic Commissioner: Early Help & Partnerships was invited to the meeting to provide an update on the Stronger Families Programme which was Worcestershire's response to the national Troubled Families programme.

Delivery of phase 1 of the programme was completed by March 2015 and provided support to over 900 families who met the criteria of having children not attending school, youth crime/anti-social behaviour and/or adults not in employment. Of these families 833 achieved the required improvements (improved school attendance, reduction in crime/anti-social behaviour and/or an adult moving into employment) that allowed the County Council to claim further 'payment by results' government funding.

Delivery of phase 2 of the programme was underway and had so far delivered support to 760 families who had complex needs. A key requisite of the second phase of the programme was a system change - to challenge the barriers faced by families receiving services across the public sector. This was being led in Worcestershire through the Connecting Families Programme.

The pilot being carried in Redditch still needed further time before more formal plans could be put in place for a county-wide roll-out, however, it will be built on the following building blocks:

- Family Support Workers in a District area would at some point be expected to come together as one team and be co-located. Local Partnerships would need to be identified to provide Change

Champions to support the approach

- Communications to share learning from Redditch
- District specific learning events to build programme according to local need.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for attending the meeting and asked if members could be advised when wider roll-out across districts took place.

The meeting ended at 11.25 am

Chairman