

## **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

### **Monday, 13 March 2017, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm**

#### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

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

#### **Also attended:**

Jane Stanley, Worcestershire Healthwatch

Catherine Driscoll (Director of Children, Families and Communities), Hannah Needham (Assistant Director for Families, Communities and Partnerships), Debbie Herbert (Lead Commissioner), Tina Russell (Assistant Director Safeguarding Services (Childrens Social Care)) 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 27 January 2017 (previously circulated).

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

#### **267 Apologies and Welcome**

Apologies were received from Derek Benson, Independent Chairman, Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board.

#### **268 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip**

Councillor Banks – Independent Chair of Orchard and Spring Vale Children's Centre, Evesham

Councillor Duffy – Independent Chair of WANDS Children's Centre, Droitwich

Councillor Oborski – Chair of Wyre Forest Local Children's Trust, Education Trustee for Comberton Primary School, Vice-Chairman of the King Charles 1 School (Academy) Governing Body, Member of the Safeguarding Improvement Board

Councillor Thomas - School Governor at Stourport on Severn Primary School

269	<b>Public Participation</b>	None.
270	<b>Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
271	<b>Progress Update on Optimising the Use of Children's Centre Buildings</b>	<p>The Director of Children, Families and Communities, Assistant Director for Families, Communities and Partnerships and Lead Commissioner were in attendance at the meeting to discuss the progress on Optimising the Use of Children's Centre Buildings.</p> <p>During 2016, this issue had been discussed on a number of occasions by the Panel and two call-ins had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB).</p> <p>Although the Cabinet Member decision of 13 September 2016 was subject to one of the Call-ins, it was agreed by the OSPB that the decision should be accepted but with the qualification that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel be requested to work with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility throughout the implementation of the decision to ensure continued Scrutiny and Quality Assurance and to report any concerns to OSPB.</p> <p>Following this, work has been undertaken to ensure the smooth transfer of Children's Centre buildings and to ensure the necessary support for this process and the sustainability of universal stay and play provision across the county. In addition, progress had been made in developing and embedding new early help services and pathways across the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service and Parenting and Targeted Family Support Services. This was integral to the Safeguarding Improvement Plan and also included supporting and challenging the whole workforce in playing their full part in identifying risk and managing need at the earliest stage.</p> <p>32 Children's Centres buildings were within the scope of the project, 18 were part of the consultation on future use of buildings, 2 were not part of the consultation but lease arrangements needed to be updated and a further 12 were not part of the consultation but required existing leases to be reviewed and updated.</p> <p>Current providers were contracted to the end of March</p>

2019 and renewal of leases of the 12 centres which were continuing as Parenting and Family Support providers (previously Early Help providers) were currently being aligned where appropriate to this date. This work was nearly complete for South Worcestershire (Action for Children) and in Bromsgrove (Redditch Borough Council). It was expected that all other areas would be completed by the end of March 2017.

In terms of the transfer of centres to schools/other providers, as the lease negotiation process was lengthy, officers had worked with the Place Partnership Ltd to put in place Tenancy at Will arrangements to ensure legal occupation of buildings by the agreed new occupiers. In a small number of cases, this has not yet taken place due to the future use of the building still needing to be agreed. However, in all cases continued delivery had been possible by effective partnership working between teams within the County Council, Place Partnership, providers and schools.

To support new occupiers, a one off sum of £30k had been made available on a need-by-need basis to support the sustainability of the universal stay and play sessions. Some of the £30k had been allocated following requests from providers and schools. To date a request for £8,127 from Redditch Borough Council (for provision in Redditch and Bromsgrove districts) and for £5,000 from the Provider 10:32 for provision in the Wyre Forest area had been approved. These requests include using funding to update equipment, ensure suitable access arrangements and for the training and guidance of staff and/or volunteers to run sessions. It was anticipated that the full £30k would be allocated across the county by the end of this term. A wide range of sessions continued to be delivered across the county, in a variety of settings, and were publicised via the council's website (<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/childrenscentres>)

After only a month of their new contract, one of the Parenting and Family Support providers reported a significant uptake of volunteering opportunities.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were noted:

- Discussions were continuing about the alterations required to enable the shared use of the Brookside at Comberton, Kidderminster Centre by the school and a request for alterations had been sent to the Place Partnership.

- It was confirmed that all providers were eligible to apply for financial assistance from the £30k one-off sum to support the sustainability of the universal stay and play sessions.
- In response to the concern about the impact on the families currently receiving early years support who would not be able to access this support following the reconfiguration of the provision, the Panel were reassured that every child would get support through the Health Visiting Service or School Nurse and those identified as needing more support would receive it.
- However, a Member of the Panel pointed out that reductions were also being made to the Health Visiting Service and the knock-on effect of those reductions was a concern also. The Panel were advised that the Health Visiting Service was undergoing a service reconfiguration redesign and would be delivered using a different model and would be able to support referrals for additional support. Also, at every Children's Centre an information and advice offer and a virtual early help offer for practitioners and families was also being developed.
- It was confirmed that the new leases would include monitoring and improvements and at least an annual meeting would take place between schools and a County Council Improvement Adviser and more frequent if necessary.

It was agreed that the Panel would receive a further update at the end of the year, but in the meantime any problems/issues would be highlighted to the Panel if necessary.

**272 Update on Children's Services Improvement Plan**

The Director of Children, Families and Communities (DCS) and the Assistant Director (Safeguarding Services) attended the meeting to update the Panel on the Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan.

At its last meeting, the Panel discussed the findings of the Ofsted Report - Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board' published on 24 January.

The overall judgement for Worcestershire was 'inadequate'. This was a very disappointing judgement for Worcestershire's children and young people, as well as for the committed and hardworking staff within the

service. The Panel were advised at their previous meeting that plans were already in place to deliver service improvement prior to the Inspection and this work had continued and been further strengthened to form an Improvement Plan to cover all recommendations from Ofsted.

Following the last meeting, the Panel were invited to a briefing on the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) on 14 February 2017, which was well attended and covered an overview of the 8 work-streams within the SIP.

In addition, there had been a number of notable meetings/events which had taken place relating directly to the SIP.

- On 17 February 2017, a small delegation from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) including the Chief Executive and DCS visited Nottinghamshire County Council to discuss their development from an inadequate judgement in 2009 to Ofsted judging them to be good in 2015. This proved to be a helpful sharing of learning, and was very informative in developing Worcestershire's plan to be as comprehensive as it needed to be to improve its practice. A key message from the visit was that it takes time to generate long term sustainable improvement, but holding your nerve and sticking with the programme was really important.
- Other headline messages included ensuring that children remained central to the improvement. Useful information, advice and guidance was also provided around practice improvements, use of ICT, legal support, communications approaches and making effective use of data. Peer learning would continue to be a feature of the Improvement Plan, developing networks with other Local Authorities and recognising and mirroring best practice where appropriate. Peer learning visits to both Leeds City Council and Devon County Council were planned for March 2017.
- On 27 February, Ofsted hosted an 'Action Planning Day' at County Hall, led by Jenny Turnross, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and Chris Sands, Senior HMI from Ofsted and attended by senior officers across WCC and a number of partners including some headteachers. The agenda for the day covered themes from the Inspection and some guidance on key issues to consider in future work – these included neglect,

assessment, care leavers, thresholds and leadership. During the day, Ofsted reinforced key messages from the Inspection about thresholds not being understood by everyone, the workforce challenge of recruiting and retaining staff and the impact of policies and procedures on practice. It was a very informative day and a number of key learning points would be incorporated into the SIP. The importance of engaging with partners early in order to deliver successful improvement was a consistent message from both the Nottinghamshire County Council visit and the Ofsted Action Planning day.

Although WCC have had a Safeguarding Improvement Board running for the last 18 months, it has now refreshed its remit and membership to oversee the SIP.

The Children's Social Care Service Improvement Board (SIB) met for the first time in its new form on 28 February 2017. Following the invitation from the CMR at the last Panel meeting, the SIB now had cross-political party representation from Pattie Hill (Labour), Fran Oborski (2013 Group) and John Thomas (Independent) and Senior HMI Ofsted Inspector Chris Sands was a member also.

The SIP outlined the 8 improvement outcomes with the eight work-streams and associated projects to deliver them and address the 14 Ofsted Recommendations. It also illustrated the link the SIP had with other key strategic documents, e.g. WCC's Corporate Plan, the Strategic Economic Plan and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) Business Plan. It showed the linkages between the objectives of each of the individual strategies and how they contributed towards the SIP, emphasising that the SIP had not been developed in isolation and would be updated shortly to reflect the outputs from WSCB's Development Day, held on 2 March 2017, to shape its Business Plan for 2017/18.

During this event, the DCS talked to partners about the Inspection and the SIP and asked for support across the whole system to make sure services to protect children from harm were as good as they possibly could be. Partners from the WSCB were invited to act as a 'critical friend' in one of the eight work-streams and immediately four colleagues volunteered. It was envisaged that a further four would volunteer by the formal WSCB meeting on 15 March 2017.

The Department for Education (DfE) had recently advised that Trevor Doughty, Director of People Services at Cornwall Council had been appointed as the person to assess the Local Authority's capacity and capability to deliver the improvements required to Children's Services.

In terms of delivery of the SIP; programme and project management support had now been identified and mobilised. The Senior and Wider Leadership Teams had also held workshops to establish cross-Council support, deploying dedicated specialist resources from across the organisation to support development and delivery of various aspects of the SIP.

Key lines of accountability and ownership had been established across the entire SIP, and coupled with the additional capacity and capability now deployed there were a number of successes and achievements that had already been delivered at this relatively early stage:

#### Work-stream 1 - Support and Develop Our Workforce

- Social Work Workforce Strategy had been developed, finalised and approved
- Market engagement activity had been completed and evaluated for Social Work Academy project

#### Work-stream 2 – Improve Our Practice

- Children in Need (CIN) Framework guidance completed and uploaded to Back to Basics website
- Revised Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) policies and procedures completed and signed off, along with updates to Framework-i workflow

#### Work-stream 3 – Commitment to Continuous Improvement

- Quality Assurance Framework developed, approved and now live
- Auditing programme underway which would now inform Ofsted monthly case-tracking requirement
- A number of performance management information dashboards had been deployed i.e. Family Front Door/Children In Need

#### Work-stream 4 – Listen to the Voice of the Child

- Four service user feedback forms developed to improve understanding of performance

#### Work-stream 5 – Make the Right Decisions at the Right Time

- Detailed plan scoped out for CSE and multi-agency meetings were now taking place on a weekly basis to progress
- Referral outcome letter and outcome of assessment letters implemented at Family Front Door
- Partnership locality events scheduled in all six districts April to June

#### Work-stream 6 – Deliver Good Outcomes for Children

- ePEP (Electronic Personal Education Plan) training for all stakeholders had now been completed ahead of system launch on 17 March 2017
- All adoption policies and procedures were now complete (21 in total)
- A working group had been established to revise the Corporate Parenting Board strategy and pledge

#### Work-stream 7 – Focus on Permanency for our Children

- Completed review and development of the processes for managing legal pre-proceedings and proceedings to ensure consistency of understanding
- Case Tracker system was now operational and access rolled out to Group Managers and Team Managers in Locality Social Work teams

#### Work-stream 8 – Provide Earlier Access to Support for Children and Families

- The Community Social Worker role had been revised and approved to provide greater clarity to all stakeholders
- A positive role model pilot had commenced in Bromsgrove with the Fire Service

In addition to the SIP Summary Sheet, it was crucial that the Directorate were able to demonstrate that the SIP was having a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and young people in Worcestershire.

The SIP was supported by a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboard that would monitor the performance of services delivered to children and young people in Worcestershire. The KPI dashboard was currently being developed and it was intended that the dashboard, accompanied with an analysis of the data (provided by the CFC Leadership Team), would streamline reporting and provide consistency to key stakeholder groups and



partners, including the Panel.

Appendix 4 in the Agenda Report outlined the eight SIP outcomes and cross-referenced them with the Ofsted recommendation that they would address and the proposed KPIs that would be used to measure performance. The intention was to keep the number of KPIs to a manageable and meaningful number, and provide the Panel with an opportunity to engage at this early stage of development.

At the last Panel meeting, reference was made to Paragraph 105 of the Ofsted report. This referred to a wide-scale review of Children In Need (CIN) cases that had taken place in June 2016 and now appeared to be fundamentally flawed. Work was underway to re-review these CIN cases with over 100 being completed during February. The DCS and Assistant Director: Safeguarding Services had stipulated that this review would continue throughout March 2017.

The Local Authority had 70 days from the date that Ofsted published its report (24 January 2017) to submit its Improvement Plan which gave a deadline of 3 May 2017.

Once the Improvement Plan was submitted, the 3 monthly Ofsted monitoring visits could be agreed. Each visit would have a key theme, which would be agreed in advance and take place over two days, with the first day focused on case tracking (6 cases as identified by WCC) and the second day having a wider focus with dip sampling of cases being undertaken in the chosen focus area(s). Each visit would be followed by a letter, which outlined the outcome of the visit (there were no judgements made but instead a statement summarising direction of travel). The first letter was not published.

Typically, four monitoring visits were scheduled over 12 months, during which Ofsted would discuss the best time to re-inspect. The only caveat to this was if Ofsted thought that children and young people were at risk of significant harm due to evidence of a lack of progress and/or poor practice. The re-inspection would be a full Single Inspection Framework (SIF).

Jenny Turnross, HMI from Ofsted, who led the inspection in October/November 2016 would lead on the monitoring visits too. The DCS was pleased with this appointment as it ensured continuity from Ofsted, and should make it easier to track improvement, whilst also building on the

relationships developed during the inspection last year.

During the opportunity for discussion, the following main points were made:

- Reference was made to the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Listen to the Voice of the Child number 4.5 – it was suggested that the Children in Care Council wasn't representative of all looked after children (LAC) and that there should be an opportunity for all LAC to be heard – it was confirmed that the scope of this was an area being addressed
- One member expressed concern about the depth of her understanding of the Service, given its complexity. It was suggested that moving forward, the Panel could undertake more visits and speak to more front line staff, which would help to bring the 'information to life' and in turn help the Panel have more clarity and understanding of the information it requested and received and be more robust and challenging. It was acknowledged that the Panel had a role in being clear about how much detail it required to be able to properly understand an issue
- Although it was expected to take between 3 and 5 years to turn the service around from an inadequate judgement, the Panel were reassured that it would be a continuous journey of improvement
- Workstream 1 – Support and Develop Our Workforce was focussed upon training and support for staff, case studies and quality standards
- The Panel requested to look at some anonymised service user feedback forms mentioned in Workstream 3 – Listen to the Voice of the Child
- It was clarified that the positive role model pilot in Bromsgrove with the Fire Service was a pilot where agencies came together to focus on early intervention and prevention
- It was confirmed that the SIP would be updated fortnightly with key comments
- As discussed earlier in the meeting, the CMR had invited cross-political party representation to the SIB. However, the Chairman suggested that in order to ensure that the links were made to the Panel, it would be helpful for the new Chairman of the Panel to also be included in this membership – the Director agreed to look into this.

As this was her last meeting before the County Council Elections, the Chairman thanked the members and officers for their support during her appointment as Panel Chairman and wished everyone ongoing success.

On behalf of the Panel the Vice-Chairman thanked the Chairman for her excellent chairing and wished her success in her future ventures.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

Chairman .....