

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 29 June 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)
Councillor S Bains
Councillor D Kershaw
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor A Lucas
Councillor P Male
Councillor C Miks
Councillor K Mulhall
Councillor P Seaman

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Mrs K Jones

Cabinet Members: Councillor B Kaur
Councillor K Maton
Councillor E Ruane

Other Members: Councillor J Clifford

Employees (by Directorate):

J Gregg, People Directorate
G Holmes, Resources Directorate
K Nelson, People Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th April, 2017 were approved.

3. Ofsted Report

Further to minute 84/16 the Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) regarding the Ofsted re-inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Children's Services were re-inspected by Ofsted from 6th to 30th March 2017. The Ofsted re-inspection of services report was published on 13th June 2017 and judged overall Children's Services in Coventry as "requires improvement to be good." Services for Children were no longer judged to be inadequate, this marked

a key point in the improvement journey and demonstrated the improvements made.

The Ofsted judgements received were as follows:

- Children who need help and protection Requires improvement
- Children looked after and achieving permanence
 - Adoption performance Requires improvement
 - Experience and progress of care leavers Good
- Leadership, management and governance Requires improvement

The Department for Education (DfE) removed Children's Services from intervention on the 13 June 2017, this meant the service was no longer subject to an improvement notice. Supervision and support would be provided by the DfE for the next 12 months, which would include two six month reviews.

The inspection report was attached as an Appendix and identified nine recommendations for improvement:

1. Continue to monitor and develop services through the work of the improvement board so that all children in Coventry receive the help and support that they need and their outcomes improve.
2. Ensure that the Local Safeguarding Children Board supports partners to understand and consistently apply appropriate thresholds to levels of need at every stage of the child's journey, including the early help pathway.
3. Ensure that the introduction of risk management methodology across the authority includes partners and the authority at all stages.
4. Improve the quality of chronologies to ensure that they provide relevant detail relating to children's histories and the impact of previous interventions.
5. Improve the quality of children's assessments and the focus of plans, so that all children at every stage of their journeys have their needs fully recognised and met.
6. Ensure that managers, independent chairs of child protection conferences and IROs improve their practice, by robustly chairing children's meetings and challenging any delays in their plans being progressed.
7. Review the authority's arrangements for privately fostered children and ensure that those arrangements and associated practice comply with statutory guidance.
8. Strengthen arrangements to ensure that the management of allegations of professional abuse is robust and effectively safeguards children.
9. Ensure that the progress of prospective adopters is tracked effectively so that the potential for children to be placed without delay is minimised.

A Children's Services Improvement Plan had been developed in response to the Ofsted recommendations and areas for development.

The report identified a number of issues for partners including the application of thresholds and the appetite for risk across the strategic safeguarding partnership.

The Improvement Board would work to strengthen and provide assurance and governance role of partners and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). The LSCB would report on progress made in respect of the required areas of improvement that relate to partners.

The final Improvement Plan would be presented to a future Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) and submitted to Ofsted and the DfE by 20 September 2017.

The Scrutiny Board recognised the achievement and positive move from "inadequate" to "requires improvement to be good" and thanked the political leadership and officers involved in the improvement journey. The Board were keen to support the continuation of progress.

The Scrutiny Board acknowledged that the Ofsted Report had been published and available for discussion prior to the meeting. Scrutiny Board members were keen to include issues identified in the Ofsted recommendations on the work programme including:

- Managing risk effectively
- Private fostering
- Quality of practice
- Improvement Board updates
- Transformation of Children's Services

The Board were reassured that the 'Voice of the Child' was heard by Social Workers and that the improvement plan would include advocacy.

The Board were keen to investigate the challenge of retention of Social Workers as a Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **The report be noted and a report back at the end of the municipal year be requested.**
- 2) **A Task and Finish group be established on Retention of Social Workers with the following membership:**
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor Mrs Lucas
Councillor Seaman
Councillor Miks
- 3) **The work programme be updated to include issues identified by the Board following the Ofsted recommendations**

4. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 2.30 pm)

