

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 18 July 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Chair)
Councillor B Kaur
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor G Lloyd

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson

Other Members: Councillors

Employees (by Directorate):

J Gregg, People Directorate
G Holmes, Place Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillor

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 21st March, 2019 and 20th June, 2019 were approved.

Further to minute 3/19 'Introduction to Children's Services and the Education and Skills Service' the Board noted that

- the work programme had been updated
- information had been circulated regarding the youth provision discussion in March and data for Looked After Children
- Exploitation had been referred to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

8. Children's Services Improvement

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided an update on the progress with Children's Services Improvement which had been reported to the Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 23rd May, 2019. The next Continuous Improvement Executive Group will be held on 12th August, 2019.

The report noted that Ofsted re-inspected Children's Services on 6th -30th March 2017, the outcome of the inspection was published on 13th June 2017, Children's Services were judged as "requires improvement to be good". Services for Children were no longer inadequate. The Department for Education (DfE) removed Children's Services from intervention on 13 June 2017, the service was no longer subject to an improvement notice. Supervision and support had been provided by the DfE up to June 2018.

A report on the future arrangements for continuing and sustaining improvements in Coventry was presented by the Independent Chair and the Director of Children's Services at Improvement Board on 3 October 2018. It was agreed that the Children's Services Improvement Board be replaced by a Continuous Improvement Executive Group to retain political and corporate oversight of Children's Services Continuous Improvement. The Group would ensure tighter focus on continuous improvement and Ofsted preparation. The impact of performance would be managed and monitored by the group. This was an interim measure before returning to business as usual in accordance with the revised arrangements for Children's Safeguarding, and subject to satisfactory inspection by September 2020. At this time the Executive Group would cease and oversight transferred to the revised Safeguarding Partnership and monitored as business as usual. Board members fully supported the revised arrangements and membership of the group.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive continued to give public commitment that Children's Services remained a key priority for the Council. This included prioritising funding for Children's Services to maintain its capacity to improve. The Council, alongside partner organisations continued a relentless focus on securing improvements in services for children, young people and families to ensure they were safeguarded and achieve positive outcomes.

Ofsted's revised framework included focused visits to local authorities who were judged to be 'requires improvement' the first visit was held on 30-31 January 2018. The visit focused on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 22 February 2018. The Ofsted Annual Conversation with regional representatives was undertaken each year, this took place on 14th February 2019. The meeting was part of a broader meeting covering education and early years. A further focused visit was held on 26-27 February 2019. The visit focused on permanency planning and achieving permanency. The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 21st March 2019. The next standard Inspection of Children's Services was likely to be between September 2019 and September 2020.

The report also contained information about

- Children's Services redesign
- Achieving for children – coaching and workshops
- Workforce
- Performance
- Sustaining continuous improvement

The Board questioned the Cabinet Member and officers on the following:

- information to scrutinise improvement progress
- governance of the new Continuous Improvement Executive Group

- the 83% retention of staff
- permanence
- preparation for Ofsted
- coaching of strategic operational leads
- quality of practice workshops
- current performance
- key performance indicators and a balance between setting aspirational targets and realistic achievable targets

The Scrutiny Board were pleased that the number of agency workers had significantly reduced.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People discussed the trajectory of improvements, the challenges to the service and how people were now attracted to work in Coventry and happy to remain at the Council which had been visible at recruitment events.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board noted the briefing note and requested that further consideration be given to:

1. **The information provided to Scrutiny in Improvement reports**
2. **Scrutiny Board 2 representation on the Continuous Improvement Board**

9. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board considered the Work Programme and noted that since publication it had been updated to include Improvement Board reports back and a Task and Finish group report back.

The Board discussed potential additional items to be considered for the work programme including:

- Children missing and performance of unregulated children's homes
- Children missing from education
- Secure provision for children who have been arrested and not bailed
- Voluntary sector and partnerships to be included in the discussion regarding CSE and Knife Crime
- Task and Finish Group on Partnership Working in Children's Services

RESOLVED that consideration be given to the work programme containing items discussed.

10. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business

(Meeting closed at 11.25 am)