

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 21 July 2016

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)
Councillor S Bains
Councillor D Gannon
Councillor D Kershaw
Councillor R Lancaster (substitute for Councillor Lucas)
Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor P Male

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson

Cabinet Members and
Deputy Cabinet Member: Councillor K Maton
Councillor E Ruane
Councillor P Seaman

Invited: Councillor Duggins – Leader Coventry City Council
Janet Mokades – Local Safeguarding Children's Board
(LSCB)
DCI – Ian Green – Police Representative

Employees (by
Directorate):

C Coulson-Haggins, Resources Directorate
J Gregg, People Directorate
G Holmes, Resources Directorate
J Moynihan, Chief Executive's Directorate
J Newman, Resources Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate
H Walker, People Directorate

Apologies: Councillors N Akhtar , Lucas and C Miks
K Jones and R Potter

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interests

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th June, 2016 were agreed as a true record.

Further to Minute 4/16 there were three Members interested in the Task and Finish Group to consider the Recruitment and Retention of Social Work Staff.

RESOLVED that if any other Scrutiny Member would like to join the Task and Finish Group they would contact the Chair

9. Serious Case Review

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Serious Case Review (SCR) Co-ordinator for Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards which updated the Board on the outcome of the SCR published by the Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) on 11th July, 2016.

The police commander referred the cases of five young people, who previously or at the time of the abuse had been in receipt of services from agencies in Coventry, to the Independent Chair of Coventry's LSCB. It was agreed that this case should be subject to a SCR in March 2015, as it met the criteria identified in the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' government guidance in that there was information that:

- (a) abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected; and*
- (b) either (i) the child has died; or (ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.*

The Police investigation was a result of information that several teenage girls were victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) perpetrated by a group of men in Coventry. Five men were subsequently convicted of a number of criminal offences, including physical assault, witness intimidation and the supply of drugs and were given custodial sentences. The men had also been charged with a number of sexual offences, but these charges did not result in any convictions.

The Serious Case Review Report was appended to the briefing note and detailed background, methodology, summary of experiences, links between the children and those abusing them, an appraisal of practice, current practice and implications for future work.

The review was not required to work to prescriptive Terms of Reference; instead 3 core questions were posed:

- i) What can we learn specifically about these cases, as well as more widely around responses to troubled young people?
- ii) Why did it happen and could it have been prevented?
- iii) Could it happen now? If yes, what do we need to change?

The Review was also specifically asked to consider:

- the voice of the children, their understanding of their own situations and the implications for what disclosures they make
- Professionals' relationships to the children

The recommendations of the SCR were:

1: The LSCB to ensure that assessing the impact of Coventry's CSE strategy on outcomes for children is identified as a priority including giving consideration to the option of commissioning a research led project to identify the outcomes.

2: That the LSCB and partners consider how to promote and develop a relationship based model of working with children who present as vulnerable and at risk.

3: The Board to co-ordinate a task and finish group to consider the longer term needs of those children and young people who have experienced abuse and how these can be met within Coventry.

4: The LSCB share this SCR with the Adult Safeguarding Board and review options for joint working or commissioning of services for the victims of CSE.

5: The Board to ensure that learning from this SCR regarding the vulnerabilities following adoption breakdown are shared with relevant professionals in order for the implications for post adoption support in Coventry to be considered.

6: This SCR to be shared with YMCA England in order for the lessons to be considered within the wider organisation, including access to safeguarding support for members of the Federation.

Janet Mokades, Independent Chair of the LSCB attended the meeting along with DCI Ian Green representing the Police.

Councillor M Mutton was clear that the role of elected members on the Scrutiny Board was not to hear the review again but to scrutinise and review the recommendations. Councillor M Mutton also requested that members be mindful of the young people referred to in the report and also that procedures had changed.

Janet Mokades noted the timescales in the report and the background, she noted changes in the management of CSE. DCI Ian Green reported on preventative CSE.

Having considered the report the Scrutiny Board questioned those present on the following:

- Reassurance regarding whether victims feel safer when providing information
- Partners working together (including licensing and housing as well as health, police, education and social care) and private companies sharing information (including) hotels and bed and breakfasts
- Targeted youth services
- Linking small pieces of information
- Improvements to information recorded in Children's Services
- Ways scrutiny could help improvements

The Cabinet Member requested that all Councillors view these young people as 'if they were their own' and DCI Green requested any information and intelligence as

a preventative measure advising Members not to 'assume' the Police had the information .

The Director for Children's Services noted that the improvement journey would take time but requested Members champion Childrens Services when possible in order to attract quality Social Workers to Coventry.

Janet Mokades noted that the action plan following the SCR with progress on recommendations would be available to Members on request.

The Scrutiny Board discussed government funding for long-term support to victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) into adulthood and also to support local targeted youth work to the most vulnerable to enable preventative work and the collection of soft intelligence on CSE.

The Scrutiny Board also thanked Janet Mokades for all her work with the Scrutiny Board over the last few years representing the LSCB, as this would be their last meeting with her as Chair of the LSCB.

The Scrutiny Board were very thankful to those congratulated within the report and wished to thank the individuals.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The Scrutiny Board note the recommendations and request that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People write to Government regarding Funding for long-term support to victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) into adulthood and also to support local targeted youth work to the most vulnerable to enable preventative work and the collection of soft intelligence on CSE**
- 2. The Board requested that the individuals noted in the report as evidencing good, determined practice be congratulated**

10. Early Help Strategy Progress Report

Further to Minute 37/15 the Scrutiny Board noted a progress report of the Executive Director for People regarding Early Help. The Early Help Strategy and Action Plan were appended to the report.

The report outlined the significance of Early Help in supporting families and children at the earliest possible point/transitions in children's lives, and before problems escalate, needing acute, and costly services. The Early Help Strategy outlined key strategic objectives which supported and strengthened the collaborative working arrangements and partnership of agencies and organisations across Coventry – to focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with a range of specific measures aimed at evidencing progress.

The report highlighted early help measures that were indicators of the effectiveness of early help and progress against them:

- Maximise school readiness

- Maximise School attendance
- Minimise the numbers of referrals to social care
- Maximise the numbers of assessments completed to support the family when a need emerges
- Minimise the number of parents and children involved in crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Minimise the number of Looked After Children
- Minimise the number Child Protection Plans

The report provided an update on phase 2 of the Strengthening Families programme (formally Troubled Families) which agreed intervention methods (with a holistic approach) to ensure that the 'root cause' would be addressed and provide support to sustain change and to 'break the cycle' of entrenched family behaviour. The report outlined the new outcome tool 'Steps to Change'. The report noted challenges including high caseloads in Referral and Assessment (RAS) and future proposals under Connecting Communities to introduce 'family hubs'.

The Scrutiny Board questioned the officers and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People on aspects of the reports which included:

- Measuring effectiveness
- Challenges
- Definition of 'school readiness' and the impacts of changes
- Risk averseness
- Funding
- Family group conferencing

Officers reported that family group conferencing was now part of Early Help.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the Board noted the report and requested a briefing note in 6 months to update members on Early Help**
- 2. the Board requested that officers investigate whether there is a standard definition of 'school ready' so that the expectation can be shared with all providers**

11. Improvement Board Progress Review

Further to Minute 3/16 the Scrutiny Board noted a joint briefing note which detailed progress on the Children's Services Improvement Plan, Reported to the Children's Services Improvement Board on 22nd June, 2016, based on data from May, 2016.

The progress report included an update on the six themes aligned to the Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Notice including an update on the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

The Scrutiny Board questioned officers on the following:

- The new Chair of the Improvement Board
- The new Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board

- Recruitment
- Child Protection Plan numbers
- The improvement journey

RESOLVED that the Board requested

- a) The new Chair of the Improvement Board be invited to the Scrutiny Board**
- b) A letter of thanks be sent to Mark Rogers for his support to the Improvement Board**

12. Outstanding Issues

The Scrutiny Board noted a briefing note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator which detailed the new approach to be taken on progress, outcomes and responses to recommendations and substantial actions made by the Scrutiny Board. The new template and examples were attached to the briefing note.

When recommendations and actions were made at a Scrutiny Board, following the scrutiny meeting, they would be circulated to the relevant Cabinet Member and officer, and recorded on a recommendations tracker. The tracker would bring to the Boards attention the responses received from Cabinet Members and Officers in regards to recommendations and actions. Following a response or an action, it would be removed from the report and kept in the full recommendations tracker. The complete tracker could be viewed by contacting the Scrutiny Team.

13. Work Programme

The Scrutiny Board noted the work programme.

14. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 4.00 pm)