
Meeting	Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	6 October 2021
Present	Councillors Webb (Vice-Chair in Chair), Fenton, Fitzpatrick, Heaton and Daubeney
Apologies	Councillors Baker (Chair) and Barker

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

14. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

15. CITY OF YORK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

Members considered a report that highlighted the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership (CYSCP) Annual Report 2020-21.

The Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, Assessment and Safeguarding was in attendance to present the report along with the Independent Scrutineer of the CYSCP, who had joined the meeting remotely.

The Independent Scrutineer confirmed she was the scrutineer for the council's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and she made reference to Appendix A of the report. She assured the Committee that work on safeguarding children and young people throughout the pandemic had continued and that strong working partnerships with all agencies had continued. It was

noted that the relevant agencies, such as schools, were still accountable to the partnership and she made reference to the update within the report, including details on the three statutory partnerships.

Members were made aware of the work that had taken place, including the challenges and the Independent Scrutineer suggested that the Committee could begin to challenge the various partnerships/relevant agencies by scrutinising areas such as; the systemic practices, family poverty and the pressures within children services.

In answer to questions raised, the Independent Scrutineer and the Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, Assessment and Safeguarding confirmed:

- The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were moving towards becoming an Integrated Care System (ICS) and the partnership would continue to have senior representation.
- Systemic practices should help reduce some pressures within the system and ensure partners and families were 'speaking the same language'.
- The Trusted Relationships Service supported children and young people who were at risk of child sexual exploitation or abuse as well as criminal exploitation and peer on peer abuse.
- Midwives and health professionals were campaigning and reiterating messages about the prevention of sudden death infancy and keeping baby safe.
- Training across the partnership and throughout individual agencies was based on very strong research evidence and was fed directly down to the frontline.
- The recruitment process for the Director of People and the Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services had begun. An Interim Director of People was already in post, which would allow continuity to build on the progress already made.

Members welcomed the imminent Ofsted inspection and the Independent Scrutineer was thanked for her report and she and the partnership were also thanked for their continuing work and for the support given to families, children and young people.

Resolved: That the CYSCP Annual Report 2020/21 be noted.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated.

[An adjournment took place between 6:25pm and 6:30pm]

16. **SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report that updated them on the ongoing work in supporting schools in the city with their role in safeguarding children and young people.

In the absence of the School Safeguarding Adviser, who had sent apologies as she was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments, the report was presented by the Assistant Director of Education and Skills.

The Assistant Director highlighted the role of the School Safeguarding Adviser and she noted the advice, support, guidance and training provided to all schools in York including academies, independent schools and colleges.

Members were also informed that the School Safeguarding Adviser:

- Worked closely across the multi-agency partnership, with the City of York Safeguarding Partnership and acted as an education link for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Responded to any concerns raised to Ofsted from parents in relation to safeguarding.
- Worked closely with colleagues within the education and skills teams.

In answer to questions raised the Assistant Director and the Executive Member for Children and Young People confirmed:

- Schools and the Local Authority had a requirement and a statutory responsibility to ensure all children were kept safe in all education settings.
- Safeguarding responsibilities extended from pre-birth onwards.
- The NSPCC Look, Say, Sing, Play project and the Early Talk for York project would be commencing in York.
- Work was ongoing to create a replacement for the YorOk Board.

- Officers were working with Nesta, Early Years Innovation Partner and were focussing on various projects to increase engagement with parents to encourage the take up of the 2 year old health checks and the 2 year old funded entitlement.
- A community champion scheme was being developed to support the multi-agency partnership approach and could be used to reach new families moving into an area.
- The School Safeguarding Adviser worked within a broader team, all of whom worked around the school agenda. All those officers understood their statutory duties and the pressures within safeguarding in education.
- Some Head teachers had reported increased complexities in the communities they served. Many schools had invested heavily in building their pastoral teams in the last year and the School Inclusion Adviser would continue to support schools and consider models and the multi-disciplinary teams that had been embedded nationally.

The Committee thanked the Assistant Director for her update.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated.

17. PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE, PLACEMENT WITH PARENTS, DISCHARGE ACTIVITY AND UNREGULATED PLACEMENTS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report that highlighted the Profile of Children and Young People in Care.

The Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, Assessment and Safeguarding was in attendance to present the report. He highlighted how practices and decision making in social care had improved. He provided an update on placements with parents, discharge activity, adoption, special guardianship orders and Section 20 agreements, noting that the Local Authority were keen to use only Placement with Parent Regulations (PWPRS) for final orders when it was proportionate to do so.

Members were also informed that:

- Systemic practices were being used to engage with and build relationships with families.
- Cases with a potential plan of adoption were also overseen at the early permanence action meetings.
- The Special Guardianship Order allowed connected carers to take on the role without any kind of detriment.
- The majority of children placed outside of York were with connected carers. The permanence tracker was used to keep as many children as possible within York and the safeguarding arrangements around suitable placements was robust.
- Recruitment of foster carers would continue.

Members noted the areas for further improvement, which included the support offered to foster carers and a continued focus to ensure children were placed locally. In answer to questions raised, The Assistant Director confirmed that:

- When implemented, questions relating to the new Corporate Parenting Board arrangements could be raised at this Committee.
- Due to the complexity of some cases, the financial pressures did not necessarily amend when the population of children and young people in care fell.
- There was a peak within the care system during 2019/20 and this pressure would be monitored as it worked its way through the system.
- All children's progress was tracked through the permanence tracker and the legal tracker was also reviewed weekly to monitor any delays. Management also held monthly meetings to review this with legal colleagues.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeker or refugee children numbers could fluctuate due to world events and York had welcomed more than its targeted allocation and would continue to help and support refugees.

The Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services was thanked for providing a detailed report and her staff were recognised and commended for their ongoing work. The Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, Assessment and Safeguarding was also thanked for his update and he agreed to provide Members with further details on the post pandemic core system capacity and the adoption scorecard performance measures.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure the Committee were kept up to date with progress of our children and young people in care.

18. 2021/22 FINANCE FIRST QUARTER MONITORING REPORT - CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Committee considered a report that analysed the latest performance for 2021/22 and forecasted the financial outturn position by reference to the Children's Services plans and budgets falling under the responsibility of the Children's Services elements of this Committee's responsibilities.

The Head of Finance for Adults, Children & Education was in attendance to present the report. He stated that a £6.6m overspend was forecasted. He highlighted some of the key reasons for the current budgetary position, which was primarily due to children's social care and the increase in the number of Looked After Children, temporary agency staff and the increase in the special educational needs element of home to school transport budgets.

During discussion and in answer to Members questions the Head of Finance, the Assistant Director of Education and Skills and the Executive Member for Children and Young People stated that:

- Agency staff had to be used in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Assessment Teams to support the pressure points within early help.
- The use of agency staff would always create a budget pressure.
- Some home to school transport budgetary pressures had been created due to increased pupil numbers at both Fulford School and Huntington School. This demographic trend would be monitored and could continue for the next few years.

The Assistant Director and her staff were recognised and thanked for their ongoing work to reduce the home to school transport budgetary pressures and the Chair thanked the Head of Finance for his update.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the Committee on the latest financial position for 2021/22.

19. WORK PLAN

Members considered the Committee's draft work plan for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Following discussion it was:

Resolved:

- (i) That the Assistant Director of Adult Social Care, Assessment and Safeguarding consider how all elected Members could be further supported in understanding their corporate parenting role.
- (ii) That an update on staff absence/sickness rates within the People Directorate be considered at the Forum meeting on 2 March 2022.
- (iii) That a Corporate Parenting Board update be added to the workplan for a future Committee date.
- (iv) That an update on the profile of children and young people in care be received on 13 April 2022.
- (v) That the Cultural Offer – REACH update and York Explore annual report be received on 13 April 2022.

Reason: To keep the work plan updated.

Cllr R Webb, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.28 pm].