
Meeting	Children, Education & Communities Policy & Scrutiny Committee
Date	26 February 2020
Present	Councillors Webb (Vice-Chair in Chair), Daubeney, Fenton, Fitzpatrick, Heaton and Hollyer
Apologies	Councillor D Taylor (Chair)

51. 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.

52. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair.

53. Public Participation

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

54. Overview of Children's Services

Members considered a report that provided an overview of children's services using the new children's inspection framework.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services was in attendance to provide an update and she highlighted how the Local Authority were using self-assessments to respond to the thorough and challenging framework that would bring a different emphasis and feel to the way children's services was inspected.

She also discussed the quality and impact of social work practice in York and Members noted:

- The improvement priorities over the next 12 months and those improvements that were already demonstrating impact.
- Officers were working to strengthen the approach to attract, recruit and retain Social Workers and were investing in staff and culture change to encourage employees to learn and develop their practice.
- Structures in some key areas had been revised to support a better focus on the needs of the most vulnerable children.
- The tight focus on the six core priority areas in the improvement plan.
- The right plans were in place to strengthen the approach to permanence.

In answer to Members questions, it was confirmed that:

- Staff would continue to be supported through the improvement journey and their working conditions were regularly monitored.
- Drift and delay was improving in most areas although some challenges remained within child in need and child in protection and support would be targeted to bring some stability into those areas.
- An Adolescent Strategy was being developed with key partners to support the vulnerable cohort of children and it would focus on county lines, child criminal exploitation, neglect and transitional safeguarding.
- All staff were communicated with regularly and work continued to ensure self-assessments were accurate and that all staff knew the system well.
- Support, training programmes and supervision packages were in place for all levels of staff and a confidential health check survey would be issued shortly.
- The demand throughout the whole service was monitored and single assessments, through audits and deep dives, were taking place to ensure the thresholds were right.
- The U Matter Survey results had improved and officers could share the outcomes with Members.

Following further discussions around recruitment, retention and the support and supervision packages for newly appointed and

experienced staff, Members noted that a full 2 week inspection of Children's Services was imminent.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for answering their questions and confirmed they would support officers in the ongoing improvement journey. The Assistant Director requested Members contact her for any further clarity they may require on any points raised.

Resolved: That the report be noted and officers be supported in the ongoing improvement journey for Children's Social Care.

Reason: To ensure the Committee were kept up to date with progress in Children's Social Care.

55. Regional Peer Review of our Children and Young People in Care (CYPIC)

Members considered a report that provided a summary of feedback of the recent children in care regional peer review which was undertaken in November 2019.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services provided an update and informed Members that the Peer Team were asked to consider 5 key lines of enquiry and to complete an audit of a selection of case files. She highlighted the methodology, the key findings and top tips as recommended by the Peer Team.

Members noted the actions following the review which included the development of an effective joined up response to meet the needs of teenagers, which would include key partner agencies (housing, health and police) and that managers were now "Live Auditing" two cases with staff on a monthly basis.

Following further discussions, the Assistant Director answered Members questions and confirmed that:

- Children in Care figures had risen from 207 to 257 and the children were of various ages although a significant amount were adolescent. Members noted that addressing neglect in adolescent was a significant challenge and that where possible older children were kept within their family setting.

- The voice of a child was strong and listened to, ensuring every child felt valued, understood and equal in the process.
- New practice models take time to embed and training would be rolled out to staff and partners.
- Recruitment open days, apprenticeships, step up and front line programmes, as well as the normal recruitment process had attracted a much better level of application, enabling some successful filling of posts at all levels. The next front line recruitment programme would take place in September 2020.
- A Workforce Development Strategy would be produced to address a number of issues related to recruitment and retention to ensure City of York Council was an employer of choice.
- The social work academy was offered to all staff and ran three times a year and the front line programme was aimed at graduates with a 2.1 degree or above or people working in other sectors who wanted to come into social work.
- All key partners were involved in the development of the Adolescent Strategy and Members would be able to view the document after April 2020.
- There was a better understanding in the organisation of what good looked like and an enhanced commitment to improve outcomes for children.

Members agreed it was important that all partners were involved in the ongoing improvement journey and the Assistant Director agreed to confirm if those Members who were Corporate Parents should be DBS checked.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for her update and for answering their questions.

Resolved: That the report be noted and officers be supported in the ongoing improvement journey for Children's Social Care.

Reason: To ensure the Committee were kept up to date with progress in the ongoing improvement journey for Children's Social Care.

56. **Young People's Mental Wellbeing in York**

Members considered a report that presented the initial information and draft remit proposed by the Task Group set up to examine young people's mental wellbeing in York.

The Chair highlighted the proposed aim and objectives and confirmed that Members had the following 3 options to consider:

- i. Endorse the draft remit proposed by the Task Group;
- ii. Amend the draft aim and/or objectives;
- iii. Add any further objectives the Committee agreed were relevant.

It was brought to the Committee's attention that a similar review had taken place by the Health and Wellbeing Board in 2016 and the Scrutiny Officer agreed to investigate this further and report her findings back to Committee Members via email.

Following discussion it was agreed that a reference to schools and other bodies was required in objective ii.

Resolved:

- i) That the suggested remit be endorsed with the following amendment to objective ii):

To review the policies and practices City of York Council, *schools and other bodies* has in place to help, support and intervene early where young people self-harm and whether these processes are timely, effective and cost efficient.

- ii) That the Health and Wellbeing Board be consulted regarding the recommendations arising from the self-harm needs assessment reported on 7 September 2016.

Reason: To enable the Task Group to proceed with work on the agreed scrutiny review.

57. **Work Plan**

Members considered the Committee's draft work plan for the 2019/20 municipal year.

Following discussions regarding the current work plan, Members agreed the following:

- That the Foster Carer remuneration update, due to be considered at the 24 March meeting, be moved to 20 May to enable the Placement Review to be included but that Members receive correspondence that briefly explained the current Foster Carer payment arrangements, including the independent review, which resulted in an agreed pay lift of 2% to level 1 and 2 carers.
- **Tuesday 24 March 2020**
Home to School Transport Report
To provide Members with an overview report of the current offer and the financial and legal impacts and to give Members an opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding.
- **Wednesday 22 April 2020**
Cultural Entitlement Update
Report to be provided by the Chair of REACH, the Local Cultural Education Partnership.

Nursery Provision Update

To provide Members with an update on the current early years provision across the city, including information from the annual Sufficiency Review, the impact the 30 hours of free places had on providers and Section 106. Members also suggested that sector representatives, from a large nursery and a childminder, be invited to the meeting or contacted for feedback.

Skills Report

To be moved to the September 2020 meeting due to the consultation period concluding at the end of July.

- **Wednesday 20 May 2020**
To receive the Adolescent Strategy and an update on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), including the audit work, impact and review of the Front Door.

Placement Review/Foster Carer Remuneration

To provide Members with the Placement Review, including the allowances and pay to Foster Carers.

Following further discussions regarding the 2020/2021 work plan, it was suggested that at an appropriate time:

- Make It York be invited to attend a Committee meeting to give an update on the cultural offer.
- Members receive the Permanence Strategy, including the resources for placements outside of the city.
- Consideration be given to invite appropriate service users, partners and clients to attend specific meetings where items for business were relevant to them.

Members noted that the provisional 2020/2021 meeting dates for this Committee were detailed on the Council's Corporate Calendar.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved subject to the above amendments/additions.

Reason: To keep the Committee's work plan updated.

Cllr R Webb, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30pm and finished at 7.35pm].

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