

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Tuesday 3 July 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Select Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2012.

Members:

- * Clare Curran (Chairman)
- * Liz Bowes (Vice-Chairman)
- * Dr Lynne Hack
- * Bill Barker
- A Keith Witham
- * Geoff Marlow
- * Margaret Hicks
- * Yvonna Lay
- * Pauline Searle
- * Fiona White
- * John Butcher
- * Nigel Cooper

Substitute

- * Dorothy Ross-Tomlin

Ex officio Members:

- A Mrs Lavinia Sealy (Chairman of the Council)
- A Mr David Munro (Vice-Chairman of the Council)

In attendance:

- * Mary Angell

* = Present for all of the meeting

A = Apologies

PART 1
IN PUBLIC

34/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Keith Witham. Dorothy Ross-Tomlin substituted for Keith Witham.

35/12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 24 April 2012 [Item 2]

The Committee agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

36/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]

Members raised a point of issue with the wording of the declaration of interest and requested clarification. Pauline Searle declared a personal interest as a patron of a children's home in the county.

37/12 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

The Committee received two public questions. The responses were tabled at the meeting and are attached as annexes. The Committee noted both the questions and answers provided.

38/12 RESPONSE FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The Cabinet response to the Committee's recommendations following the report on Contacts and Referrals at the last meeting was noted. The Cabinet Member endorsed the comments made by Cabinet and the meeting was informed that eligibility criteria will be discussed at the September committee meeting.

39/12 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

- The forward work programme and recommendation tracker were noted.
- Democratic Services will look at the future dates for the Committee to manage any potential clashes..
- Members were informed that that there is a joint Select Committee induction and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) meeting on 31 July in Leatherhead

40/12 THE SURREY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME [Item 7]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Sean Rafferty, Head of Family Services, Surrey County Council
Julie Shaw, Manager – Waverley Family Support Team

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The item opened with a presentation from the Head of Family Services who is responsible for the Family Support Programme, this presentation is attached as an annexe. This is an emerging piece of work, which has been underway since May 2012 and the programme focuses on families who present a range of problems such as offending and substance abuse. This is a key government policy that the Prime Minister referred to as the second most important domestic issue after the financial crisis. By working with problem families the intention is to end the risk of children going on to repeat the cycle.
- The programme was first mentioned by the Prime Minister in December 2010, and received impetus after last year's riots. Louise Casey is the national lead for the programme and there will be £448m central funding in addition to £200 European funding also targeted at families with multiple problems.
- The government is trying to turn around the lives of these families by firstly identifying who they are, getting adults into work, getting children to attend schools and by reducing offending. Through working differently to achieve better outcomes and have more cost effective solutions, this will help these families and improve the communities they live in. There is a further business case to support the proposals and to underline the potential savings to the public purse. The government funding is for each family successfully helped, although this will only cover around 40% of the input with £4,000 of this being payment by results linked. Surrey can receive been £700 or maximum of £4,000 for successes. Some of this money has been paid in advance to the Council to help pump prime the work.
- The County Council will be the lead authority in Surrey responsible for the programme. The aim will be to bring together partners and be the main link with central government. Waverley was chosen as the pilot for the programme and the intention was to work with 20 families to identify how to best support them and ensure a more cohesive way for agencies to ensure better outcomes. The proposal is to use Waverley to develop a model and practice for the service and the intention is to establish a similar team in each district and borough alongside the NHS and Police.

ITEM 2

- The project is currently at the stage of identifying the families to work with. The government has set Surrey a target of working with 1,050 families and the key criteria to identify users will relate to school attendance, adult unemployment, and the involvement of crime/anti-social behaviour. The service expects there to be up to 250 families who meet all three of these key government criteria in Surrey. In addition to these families, local areas can focus on families that meet 2 of the key government criteria as well as locally determined criteria. This provides an opportunity to build as locally relevant and responsive service as possible.
- Ideally the programme will target families with multiple needs and will aim to manage their move away from using acute services and will build family resilience. The local teams will be managed by the districts and boroughs and will coordinate activity by public agencies around these families. The County Council will host a central team to support the local management of the project.
- The local team will work intensively with families, for example by making sure the children are ready for school. The intention is to advocate for the family and to let them take control of their lives. The programme will analyse interactions with local agencies to simplify their services and make sure they access all the support they are entitled to.
- Members asked whether domestic violence and mental health are included in Surrey's criteria and how local committees will be involved in the oversight of the programme. Members agreed that these families need sustaining for more than one year with access to step down services to avoid a revolving door system. In response the Head of Family Services said that discussions are starting with the other districts and boroughs and other partner agencies and there is a desire to include mental health, domestic violence and whether families live in certain neighbourhoods in the criteria matrix.
- Members asked for further detail on how outcomes are measured and monitored, and a further question was asked about whether increased school freedoms will have a negative impact on the service and lead to different provision across the County. Witnesses informed the meeting that they are currently generating local success measures and are investigating what good outcomes look like for both the family and the wider community. The service accepts that there are new challenges in working with schools but hopes that they will see the benefits of engaging with the programme.
- Members asked for more information about how the central team will involve members in its management. Witnesses informed the meeting that the Chairman of the Council and Overview Scrutiny Committee had identified a need for a cross cutting oversight of this programme. This will be a countywide policy that will be locally based and will cut across a range of themes. The service has also been working through a range of central issues such as confidentiality and information sharing protocols that will need a contribution from members.
- The Committee inquired about how this programme will fit into the transformation work underway in youth services and how it will work alongside family support services. Work will continue to support all Surrey families who do not meet the criteria and the intention is for all of the

County to benefit from the programme. The Waverley team undertook an analysis of all the local service provision for families in the area and made links with the voluntary sector. As a result arrangements have been agreed with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the furniture service. Also a worker has been seconded into the team from Guildford Action for Families. This has broadened the services on offer to families in the programme by offering debt management support and financial capability training. The local teams can generate increased resources through working with the voluntary sector and co-location provides massive potential benefits.

Services are already working with these families this approach aims to develop a better service for working with them.

- Given the cross-cutting nature of the Family Support Programme, Members discussed setting up a cross select committee task group to give effective oversight and scrutiny to the programme.
- The service has included a range of issues to discuss as possible Surrey criteria. These include multiple pregnancies, single parents, intervention from probation services, literacy and numeracy skills and areas of deprivation. At the recent Local Government Conference Louise Casey referred to the programme as opening Pandora's box and the essential point is identifying emerging issues with families who have been poorly engaged with services.
- The programme has helped to stimulate a useful and helpful discussion to support the directorate's wider change programme. The service has been getting buy in from local districts and boroughs and the aim is to have plans formulated by autumn and for the teams to start working in January 2013.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

- None

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee reviews and evaluate progress with the Family Support Programme in due course, including the developing approach to sustaining changes within families.
2. That officers inform and consult with local committees from an early stage through informal meetings with Members.
3. That a Task Group consisting of members from the Children and Families Select Committee, Education Select Committee, Communities Select Committee, Adults Select Committee and Health Scrutiny Committee, be established to give effective oversight and scrutiny to the programme.

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

41/12 SOCIAL WORKER RECRUITMENT [Item 8]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Caroline Budden, Deputy Director – Children’s Services and Safeguarding,
Surrey County Council
Emily Boynton, HR Relationship Manager, Surrey County Council

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Committee noted the report, which was an update, and moved straight to questions. Members raised social work training bursaries and asked whether follow up work had taken place with students to get their perceptions on how they had been supported and to see if they felt equipped as social workers. In response Members were informed that Surrey has been a pilot for the newly qualified social workers network and staff had received additional supervision and focus groups, which had been referred to as supportive. Witnesses accepted that more work needed to take place to better identify potential social workers. There was also a tension between teams supporting newly qualified workers due to workload issues.
- The service needs to operate within the corporate pay framework but there is an issue in retaining staff in critical areas, a paper is being taken to the People Performance and Development committee to look at introducing specific measures for the retention of social workers. The department needs people with good skills at all levels and are looking at a range of pay and benefits ideas.
- Members inquired about Surrey’s use of locums compared to other county councils. In response the Committee was informed that most locums are involved in child protection work which tends to be less attractive for social workers. Locums tend to be reluctant to change their status as they have high financial rewards. There is a case for local authorities working together to manage the market and makes rates more sustainable through the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS). There are 39 locums employed by the County however this is a small percentage of the wider establishment and is affected by geographical issues as some areas have higher numbers of locums than others.
- Members asked whether the service has looked at reducing the burden of work on social workers through increased use of support staff to free up available time. The HR Relationship Manager confirmed that there are family support workers but certain tasks can only be undertaken by professional social workers and this has been affected by the move to personalisation. A deep dive recently took place into child protection

plans and paperwork and minuting were raised as concerns due to being time consuming. In response, the service increased business support staff to remove some of these burdens.

- Members asked the service whether they had considered setting up a bank of locums to avoid paying agency fees. There is a contract with Manpower which is currently under review due to possible renewal in August. The service has explored flexible retirement as an option for staff.
- Witnesses were asked to provide information on stress related sickness and absence in children's services over the past few years, and on the amount of changes in named social worker looked after children had experienced.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

- Children's Services to provide figures on the work sickness rate in the department to Democratic Services, for circulation to the Committee.
- Children's Services to provide figures of how many changes in named social worker that looked after children have experienced over the past few years.

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet supports the children's social worker pay review which would allow career progression and introduce a career framework distinct from the Surrey payscale.
2. That Cabinet supports the Children's Service in exploring the greater use of workers with other skills or qualifications rather than full social work degrees; and,
3. That Cabinet works with other local authorities to raise with Government the need for a focus on the costs of social work reform and the impact of raising the status of the social care profession for employers on the recruitment and retention of social care staff.

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

42/12 SAFEGUARDING UNIT ANNUAL REPORT [Item 9]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member – Children and Families
Caroline Budden, Deputy Director – Children, Schools and Families, Surrey
County Council

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- A recent rapid improvement event (RIE) on domestic violence was well attended and created a detailed action plan with a number of cross cutting workstreams. The previous week there had been the first part of an RIE on contacts and referrals, the second part will be taking place in August.
- Examples of actions taken around domestic violence include an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) being agreed between schools and the police to raise awareness of children who might be experiencing problems. A task group assesses this multi agency issue and is moving to a more holistic overview of domestic abuse, such as looking at sex trafficking and Looked After Children (LAC) in care out of County.
- Following recent media coverage there is concern nationally over the welfare of children who are being accommodated a significant distance away from their homes. Surrey has a number of children's homes and is able to support many of the most challenging groups. In Surrey 68% are housed within 15 miles of their home address and those who are based outside of the County have complex additional needs. The issue is how children from care homes are monitored and to ensure that consideration is given to the long term welfare and destination of care leavers. The Leader has indicated concern over where children in care are moved to and how often social services are in contact with them, the council needs to be aware of their lifestyles and whether they are safe. Considering recent reports whether they are in a private home is an important factor as well. Following support from a number of Members, Surrey has signed up to Barnardo's national 'Puppet on a String' campaign to highlight the needs of LAC.
- Members raised concerns over the report and felt that it needed more data and evidence to support its recommendations. Members asked for further information around how the safeguarding board monitors issues such as incidents that may occur along the lines of the recent scandal in Rochdale.
- Members felt that in the next municipal year it would be best to have all safeguarding reports on one meeting agenda. Some felt that this would support effective scrutiny. It would ensure Members had sight of all evidence and reports before making recommendations or approving

reports concerning safeguarding. The Committee noted the report (John Butcher did not approve the report).

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

- Deputy Director for Children's Services to share the leaders briefing report on children's homes with the Committee
- Safeguarding Unit to amplify the structure chart to show the five distinct teams and include some commentary of what it does. To circulate to the Committee in hard copy

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee will receive the Domestic Abuse Rapid Improvement Event Action Plan via the Committee bulletin.
2. That a qualitative audit of permanence plans for Looked After Children be added to the audit programme.
3. That a single session be scheduled in 2013/14 to address safeguarding issues, bringing together Safeguarding Unit Annual Report, the Local Authority Designated Officer report, the IRO report and the Quality Assurance Report.
4. That the Safeguarding Unit be commissioned to develop with partner agencies a local performance framework in line with government guidance. This will be reviewed by the Committee at a future date.

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

43/12 QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS IN SOCIAL WORK [Item 10]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member – Children and Families
Caroline Budden, Deputy Director – Children, Schools and Families, Surrey County Council

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The report was noted by the Committee.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

- None

Recommendations:

1. None

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

44/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 20 September 2012 at 10.00am.

[Meeting ended: 13:05pm]

Chairman