

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 27 January 2014 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 27 March 2014.

Elected Members:

- * Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- A Mr Robert Evans
- * Mr Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman)
- * Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
- * Mr Ken Gulati
- A Miss Marisa Heath
- * Mr Colin Kemp
- * Mrs Stella Lallement
- * Mrs Mary Lewis
- A Mrs Marsha Moseley
- * Mr Chris Townsend

Ex officio Members:

Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council
Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council

Co-opted Members:

- A Cecile White
- A Duncan Hewson
- * Derek Holbird
- A Mary Reynolds

Substitute Members:

Tina Mountain
Simon Parr

In attendance

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families

1/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Cecile White, Robert Evans, Marsha Moseley, Mary Reynolds and Colin Kemp. Tina Mountain acted as a substitute for Marsha Moseley. Simon Parr acted as a substitute for Mary Reynolds.

2/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 28 NOVEMBER 2013 [Item 2]

These were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest.

4/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

5/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

No items were referred to Cabinet at the last meeting of the Committee, so there were no responses to report.

6/14 SURREY'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS [Item 6]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Caroline Budden, Deputy Director, Children, Schools & Families
 Sheila Jones, Head of County-wide Services, Children, Schools & Families
 Peter-John Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
 Patrick Ward, Interim Headteacher, Virtual School for Children in Care
 Vicky Stobart, Executive Nurse, Director of Quality and Safeguarding,
 Guildford & Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group
 Mark Rapley, Interim Project Manager Looked After Children, Guildford &
 Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee asked for details about the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to health assessments for Looked After Children. It was explained that it was the duty of the child's social worker to inform the health service that the child had become looked after. Children under-five were required to have two health-checks a year, while children over-five were required to have one. The Committee was informed that the health service commissioned a provider to undertake this assessment. It was clarified that all Looked After Children were also able to access a GP in the same manner as any other young person if any health issues occurred outside of this

assessment. It was highlighted that some older Looked After Children would refuse to attend this health-check.

2. Witnesses outlined the measures in place through the Guildford & Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to address concerns around the health assessments for Looked After Children. It was commented that there were concerns about the quality of these health assessments in other local authorities. It was explained that there had been additional investment in doctors, and that the Corporate Parenting Board had set a specific target for the backlog of health assessments to be resolved by the end of March 2014. It was confirmed by witnesses that they would ensure that, where a Looked After Children had not had an in-year assessment, a reason was noted on the young person's record.
3. The Committee held a discussion around the provision of residential homes. It was noted that the Council has seven children's homes, and was distinct from many local authorities in that respect. It was also highlighted that the term 'residential care' was applied to a wide spectrum of care provisions, including mother-and-baby units. The Committee was informed that all children's homes, both within the County and outside of it, were subject to Ofsted inspections; or Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections where the home was a health provision. The Committee was informed that the Head of Children's Services had commissioned an independent report on residential care homes, and that this would be shared at a future meeting.
4. It was commented by officers that the decision to place a child out of county was made on an assessment of their needs. It was highlighted that this might be because the young person in question required a specialist provision, or education provision that Surrey could not provide. The decision to place Looked After Children out of county was based on identifying their needs, and then responding accordingly. Officers commented that a young person placed out of county would always receive the necessary statutory visits from their case worker. The Cabinet Member highlighted the role of the Care Council in delivering road shows to visit children and young people out of county.
5. The Committee questioned what results had been seen from the adoption of a regional protocol for youth justice. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the protocol had been in place for a month, and there was no information to report at the present stage.
6. The Committee held a discussion around the role of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) in adoption. It was commented that the special guardian in such instances would emerge through the care process; this could be either a foster carer or a member of the young person's friends and family network. The SGO was intended to create a permanency to a care arrangement, as an alternative to adoptions. It meant that a child who was looked after would retain a legal link with their birth family, but with the special guardian having increased rights and responsibilities.
7. The Committee asked what work was being undertaken to recruit foster carers. Officers commented that the Council was part of a

national pilot that intended to develop new ways of recruiting, such as values based recruitment. It was also commented that retention was a key area to ensuring placement stability and better outcomes for both Looked After Children and foster carers. The Committee asked in which instances fostering agencies might be used, and it was clarified that this option would be considered where there were specific specialist needs. The example of child asylum-seekers was cited as being such a case where specialised foster care might be considered. Members asked if there were efforts made to match a child with a foster carer of similar ethnic or cultural background, and whether this caused delays. Officers commented that this would be done where possible, but not to the detriment of the timeliness of placing the young person in a suitable care provision.

8. The Committee discussed educational outcomes for Looked After Children and expressed concern that the GCSE attainment for Looked After Children was half the national average. Officers commented that a high proportion of Looked After Children held at Statement of Special Education Need, and that the attainment did not always reflect the progress made by individual students. It was highlighted that Ofsted were in the process of changing the performance indicator, so that it was more orientated to measure progress. The Committee was informed that a number of the current Key Stage 4 cohort were considering or undertaking educational pathways that did not include GCSEs. However, officers also recognised that it was important to raise expectations for Looked After Children around their educational attainment. The Committee discussed the role of Pupil Premium Plus in improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children. Officers agreed to bring an expanded report that would demonstrate both the measurements for educational progress, and the role of Pupil Premium Plus, to a future Committee meeting.
9. The Committee had a discussion around the timeliness of services provided to young people. Officers commented that in the case of Special Educational Needs, the Directorate took a rigorous approach which was measured against a series of national timescales. It was highlighted that there was need to ensure that any proposed plan was adequately tested. Some Members challenged such timeliness and requested that further scrutiny was conducted into this matter.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Committee receive a report at the meeting on 14 May 2014 on health outcomes for Looked After Children from the Guildford & Waverley CCG, with particular focus on:
 - progress made against the backlog of health and dental assessments
 - future arrangements to ensure Looked After Children have health and dental checks in line with statutory requirement

Action by: Deputy Director, Children, Schools and Families

- b) That the independent report on residential care homes, commissioned by the Head of Children's Services, be presented to the Committee at a future date.

Action by: Deputy Director, Children, Schools and Families

- c) That the Committee receive a report on progress on learning outcomes for Looked After Children, from the acting Head of the Virtual School at the meeting on 27 March 2014, to include details of the process for timely completion of an up to date Personal Education Plan.

Action by: Head of the Virtual School

- d) That the Chairman & Vice Chairman discuss with officers the most appropriate way to receive information on timeliness of services provided to children.

Action by: Chairman/Vice Chairman/ Children's Services

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee will consider the reports indicated in the recommendations at its future meetings.

7/14 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - REVIEW OF HEALTH AND DENTAL CHECKS - CHILDREN IN CARE 2013/14 [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Caroline Budden, Deputy Director, Children, Schools & Families
 Sheila Jones, Head of County-wide Services, Children, Schools & Families
 Sue Lewry-Jones, Chief Internal Auditor
 Pascal Barras, Compliance Auditor
 Vicky Stobbart, Executive Nurse, Director of Quality and Safeguarding, Guildford & Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group
 Mark Rapley, Interim Project Manager Looked After Children, Guildford & Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman informed the Committee that Internal Audit had undertaken a review of health and dental checks for children in care in October 2013. The report produced as a result of the review attracted an audit opinion of "Major Improvement Needed" and, in line with

Council policy, the matter had been referred to the Children & Education Select Committee.

2. An officer from NHS Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) stated that the issues around health and dental checks had already been acknowledged before the audit, and that work subsequently undertaken meant that, to some extent, the actions detailed in the Management Action Plan (MAP) had been superseded.
3. The Committee was informed that officers were examining the data available to identify specific operational issues and ensure that resources could be reconfigured in order that assessments were undertaken promptly. It had become apparent during the diagnostic phase that information governance could be improved, and data was now better shared between agencies.
4. The Committee highlighted a number of actions in the MAP and queried whether they had been completed. An officer stated that work had moved on significantly since the MAP had been produced and that the actions detailed may not longer be the most appropriate course to take.
5. It was added that it would be sensible for officers to revisit the MAP to ensure that the actions were still relevant and to update accordingly.
6. The Chief Internal Auditor stated that it was important that services informed Internal Audit when there had been a change in circumstances. It was further added that there would be a follow-up audit which would assess progress made.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

The Committee to receive an updated Management Action Plan.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

**8/14 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2012-2013
[Item 8]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Caroline Budden, Deputy Director, Children, Schools & Families
Sheila Jones, Head of County-wide Services, Children, Schools & Families

Belinda Newth, Head of Rights and Participation, Children, Schools & Families

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee received a report setting out the process by which the County Council managed Children Social Care complaints. The Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2012-13 was also enclosed.
2. The Chairman explained that the documents had been requested following a recommendation from the Communities Select Committee that Members scrutinise performance against the target response rate for Children's Social Care complaints.
3. An officer provided the Committee with an overview of the complaint handling process, including the various formal stages a complaint could pass through and the various statutory timescales that officers had to adhere to. The officer highlighted that the complexity of individual complaints could vary significantly although timescales remained, for the most part, rigid.
4. It was clarified that there were nuances to the way in which data was recorded and presented in the Annual Complaints Report, and data was not always directly comparable. Officers provided clarification on a number of specific queries and Members stated that they were satisfied with the explanations.
5. Members noted that very few complaints were in relation to initial handling by the contact centre, which was considered positive. It was also noted that the majority of complaints were in relation to decision making, as opposed to the Council's underlying policies and procedures. Officers were working hard to ensure that all complaints were dealt with to the same high standard irrespective of how or where within the organisation the complaint was received.
6. An officer stated that the nature of social care work meant that the service could be perceived as intrusive, and that complaints were inevitable. It was also highlighted that the service was in the process of changing the assessment process it undertook and therefore operational data for past and future years would not be directly comparable.
7. The Committee had a discussion on the content of reports provided to the courts. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families assured Members that the information provided was of a high standard and, most importantly, accurate.
8. Officers clarified that satisfaction surveys were sent to those that had complained, although the reality was that people would rarely be satisfied unless they had achieved their desired outcome, something that was not always possible.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Committee notes the report
- b) That the Committee notes the key learning arising from complaints during the previous fiscal year, detailed in section 8.7.9 of the annual report, and changes made as a result.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

9/14 INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE MEMBER REFERENCE GROUP UPDATE [Item 9]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee received an update on discussions that had taken place with the Head of Commissioning and Development for Young People in relation to the Skills for the Future strand of the Public Service Transformation Programme.
2. Following a query from a Member, the Chairman clarified that the role of Skill Centres was acknowledged, but that Skills for the Future was wider and itself part of a much bigger programme.

Recommendations:

- That the Committee note the work of the Information, Advice & Guidance Member Reference Group.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

**10/14 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
[Item 10]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker. There were no further comments.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

11/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

The Committee noted that its next meeting would be held on 27 March 2014 at 10am.

Meeting ended at: 12.57 pm

Chairman

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