

Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 16th December 2019

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Councillor Richard Smith

In attendance: Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support
Martin Wilby, Acting Deputy Assistant Director, LA Statutory Duties Learning and Skills
Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting (Children in Care and Care Leavers)

Observers: Councillor Viv Kendrick
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Alison Munro

Apologies: Councillor Paul White
Toni Bromley (Co-Optee)
Dale O'Neill (Co-Optee)
Mel Meggs

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Paul White, Dale O'Neill and Toni Bromley (Co-optee).

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on the 10th September and 24th October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

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5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

7 Number and Age of Children in Care

The Panel considered a report giving an update on the number and age of children in care presented by Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting (Children in Care and Care Leavers).

Julie Bragg highlighted a number of key issues, as follows:-

- 641 children in care in October 2019 and this number had recently increased slightly to 651;
- The largest cohort of children coming into care was in the 11-15 age group;
- 78 children in care living outside of Kirklees as at 30th September 2019 compared to over a 100 children in December 2018; Kirklees was continuing to reduce the amount of children from Kirklees living more than 20 miles outside the district;
- In some cases children, particularly those 16 or over, might choose to stay in the areas they had been living due to friendship groups they had formed and other connections they had made.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to issues with placement and social worker stability, Julie Bragg advised that if an indication was given by a carer that there were issues with a placement, then a stability meeting would be arranged with the Placement Support Team to look at what support could be offered to the carer to prevent the placement breaking down. Julie Bragg further explained that a review was currently being undertaken of the Placement Support Team to improve the offer and they would be looking at how could use the support from the Multi Systemic Therapy Team to help prevent placements breaking down.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding examples of best practice for placement stability within other Local Authorities where lessons could be learned from, Elaine McShane advised that Kirklees was in a better position than some other Local Authorities and that there were some good examples where Kirklees had ensured children could remain in a family setting wherever possible and that this demonstrated good practice. The Panel agreed to consider scenarios at a future meeting, which demonstrated examples of good practice of placement stability.

Tom Brailsford advised the Panel that in terms of the initial Child Protection Case Conferences, performance had been reducing over the last 3 months and detailed work was being undertaken to look at this and improve performance. Tom Brailsford advised the Panel that those children who had not received a Child Protection Conference within the statutory 15 days were still being overseen by a Social Worker.

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RESOLVED -

1. The Panel noted the report on Number and Age of Children in Care and thanked Julie Bragg for her contributions.
2. That the Panel consider scenarios at a future meeting, which demonstrate examples of good practice of placement stability.

8 Children's Service Improvement Journey 2019

The Panel considered a report giving an update on the Review of the Children's Services Improvement Journey during 2019 presented by Elaine McShane, Service Director (Family Support and Child Protection).

Elaine McShane advised the Panel that a report attached to the agenda summarised the Kirklees Annual Conversation with Ofsted in the autumn of 2019, which covered the whole of the Children's Service. The Panel was informed that at the last Ofsted Inspection in June 2019, Ofsted found that children in Kirklees were safe and that was a key priority for the service. Elaine McShane advised that throughout the journey there had been political support, investment and challenge across all areas and this had been welcomed by Children's Services and seen as an important part of the journey.

Elaine McShane advised that the next stage of the journey was to achieve Outstanding and that additional capacity had been put into the service with the appointment of the Service Manager for Resources Improvements and Partnerships and some additional Service and Team Managers across the service.

Elaine McShane reported that the Children's Service was continuing to improve and embed the restorative practice approach, which was about building relationships and working with people.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to the position on knife crime, the Panel was informed that there were emerging challenges in terms of gang and knife crime in Kirklees. Elaine McShane explained that Ofsted had confirmed that the Children's Service were working well to divert children from this activity and recognised that the work being undertaken by Kirklees was positive and innovative. Elaine McShane explained that the Children's Service had been successful in securing funding from the Youth Endowment Fund for the next 2 years to develop a Multi Systemic Team to undertake exploitation work. The Panel was informed that the Children's Service would be working with 3 other local authorities on a research project looking at gangs and knife crime.

Elaine McShane advised that Kirklees was working with children and partners, for example the Police, to identify children on the periphery as early as possible to ensure the right type of support was put in place. Elaine McShane informed the Panel that she was leading a piece of work looking at a Youth Model bringing together different services such as Youth Intervention Team, Youth Offending Team and Risk and Vulnerability Team which would help to identify as quickly as possible the most appropriate team to work with a young person to ensure positive outcomes. The Panel was informed that the work on the Youth Model would be shared with the Panel in the near future.

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Tom Brailsford advised that he had recently attended a regional meeting attended by representatives from Youth and Crime Commissioning and that there would be a review of the West Yorkshire Strategy looking at knife crime.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding the key areas of preventative work and early intervention in terms of knife crime, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that the Social Care Front Door were receiving a lot of contacts but that the percentage of those which converted to social work action was quite low. The Panel was informed that young people could be supported much earlier as part of the early partnership work. The Panel was informed that the Children's Service was working in partnership with Kirklees Children's Safeguarding, had a task and finish group and wanted to grow in capacity and confidence and would invest and put in more capacity at the Social Care Front Door, as well as working with partners in local areas so that the right support could be offered in the early stages. Jo-Anne Sanders advised that a lot of work was planned to take place over the next 2 to 3 months and that the results and outcomes of this, including statistics, would be shared with the Panel.

The Panel noted that there was some positive work going on in schools with children and young people on gangs and knife crime.

Elaine McShane advised the Panel that Detached Youth Workers were deployed over the summer and had gone out into communities to get to know young people and what their experiences were to help shape the work being done in the service. The Panel was informed that the voice of the child was very important to inform what support was required.

The Panel advised that they were scrutinising partnership working and data in the Children's Service and had attended multi-agency meetings and visited teams to observe the work going on as part of this scrutiny role. The Panel agreed that the voice of the child and their experiences should be reflected in all areas of work undertaken by the Children's Service.

RESOLVED -

1. The Panel noted the report giving an update on the Review of the Children's Services Improvement Journey during 2019 and thanked Elaine McShane, Jo-Anne Sanders and Tom Brailsford for their contributions.
2. The Panel agreed to consider the Youth Model at a future meeting – date to be determined.
3. The Panel agreed that the voice of the child and their experiences should be reflected and lessons learned in all aspects of work undertaken by the Children's Service.

9 Almondbury Community School

The Panel considered an update on the implementation of the Council's decision to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from the 1st September 2020 presented by Martin Wilby, Senior Strategic Manager (Education Places and Access) and Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director (Learning and Early Support).

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Martin Wilby advised the Panel that an email had been sent to all parents and carers of children affected by the proposals on Friday 13th December 2019 informing them that letters had been sent to offer a school place to match the preferences made by parents and carers for either King James's School, Netherhall Learning Campus High School or Newsome High School. The Panel was informed that the email to parents had contained information regarding the fact that the Council had offered financial support in relation to the provision of uniform items which contained school branding. Martin Wilby explained that a school uniform voucher would be provided for each child and in cases where children had already moved to their new school via an in-year admission, a financial contribution would be made to any branded uniform already purchased.

The Panel was informed that there had been a small number of non-returns of preferences, but officers were continuing to make contact with these families. Martin Wilby advised the Panel that where no preference had been made, a place had been allocated at the child's catchment school, but parents could still make a change to this decision by contacting Kirklees. Martin Wilby advised that officers were tracking all parents to ensure a response had been received in every case.

Martin Wilby advised that the consultation process had started on the proposed changes to the catchment areas in that King James's School, Netherhall Learning Campus High School and Newsome High School would become part of Almondbury Community School's catchment area, which would match the current temporary admission arrangements in place approved by the Adjudicator and normalised those arrangements for the future. The Panel was informed that Stakeholders had been invited to comment on the consultation process and that their feedback would be taken into account when decisions were made in 2020.

The Panel agreed that the offer of financial support towards branded uniform was positive and welcomed this. The Panel were also pleased to hear that all parents were being tracked where no response had been received.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding concerns raised by parents in relation to transport, Martin Wilby advised that the Council was aware of 3 cases where help with transport costs had been requested and that these cases were being looked at individually.

The Panel agreed to continue to monitor progress on the implementation of the Council's decision to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from the 1st September 2020 via future Panel meetings and Lead Member Briefings.

RESOLVED –

1. The Panel noted the update on the implementation of the Council's decision to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from the 1st September 2020 and thanked Martin Wilby and Jo-Anne Sanders for their contributions.
2. The Panel agreed to continue to monitor progress on the implementation of the Council's decision to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from the 1st September 2020 via future Panel meetings and Lead Member Briefings.

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10 Children's Scrutiny Panel Work Programme and agenda plan for 2019/20

The Panel considered the work programme and agenda plan for the 2019/20 and will consider issues for inclusion.

The Panel reported back on key highlights from a recent visit to the Single Point of Contact at Northorpe Hall and the Front Door Multi Agency Team meeting and raised the following key points:-

- Impressive team working by multi agencies and the Panel were supportive of collaborative working;
- There were significant backlogs of numbers waiting for a referral at Northorpe Hall and this was a concern but was due to volume and capacity, it was also noted that a lot of contacts had to be sign posted to other areas for support;
- The care, compassion and professionalism of staff was highly evident;
- There was application of lessons learnt from multi agency meetings and issues were taken forward for future consideration;
- Staff were not afraid to question decisions which had been taken previously and re-examine the cases.

The Panel thanked the respective teams for inviting them to observe their work.

The Panel agreed they would like to learn more about the preventative work of the Youth Offending Team with young people and care leavers and partners. The Panel acknowledged that the Corporate Parenting Board were also looking at that issue and that there was some crossover. The Panel was informed that Cllr Marchington was an observer and Cllr Smith was a Member of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Panel was advised that they could visit and observe the Corporate Parenting Board meetings.

Elaine McShane advised the Panel that a Christmas dinner on the 25th December 2019 was being organised at the No 11 Drop in facility for young people in care and care leavers and that gifts were also being organised for the event.

The Panel agreed to visit the following:-

- Youth Offending Board and that details of future meetings be shared with the Panel;
- Youth Offending Team to observe the preventative work being undertaken with children and young people; and
- Multi Systemic Therapy Team which connected with exploitation services and early help.

RESOLVED –

1. That the 2019/20 Agenda Plan and Work Programme for the Children's Scrutiny Panel be noted and updated as agreed.
2. That the Panel visit the Youth Offending Board and that details of future meetings be shared with the Panel.
3. That the Panel visit the Youth Offending Team to observe the preventative work being undertaken with children and young people – date to be determined.
4. That the Panel visit the Multi Systemic Therapy Team which connects with Exploitation and Early Help Services – date to be determined.

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5. That the Governance Officer be authorised to liaise with officers on agreed actions.

11 **Dates of future meetings**

RESOLVED -

The Panel noted the future meeting dates of the Panel during the 2019/20 municipal year:-

- 17th January 2020, 11 am
- 13th March 2020, 11 am
- 17th April 2020, 11 am