

Contact Officer: Steve Copley

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 16th April 2018

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)
Councillor Donna Bellamy
Councillor Fazila Loonat
Councillor Paul Kane
Councillor Amanda Pinnock

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

In attendance: Councillor Julie Stewart-Turner
Councillor Viv Kendrick, Cabinet Member for Children
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and
Child Protection
Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Early Help &
Learning

1 Membership of the Committee

No apologies for absence were submitted or recorded.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Panel meeting held on 5 March 2018, were presented and approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

Cllr Fazila Loonat declared an interest in item 8 below.

4 Admission of the Public

The meeting was held in public session.

5 Ofsted letter to Director of Children's Services

Elaine McShane, Service Director for Family Support and Child Protection, introduced a copy of a letter from Ofsted (dated 9 April) which had been issued to Steve Walker, Interim Director of Children's Services, which summarised the findings from a monitoring visit to Kirklees Council and its children's services on 13 and 14 March 2018.

It was noted that the visit in March 2018 was the fourth monitoring visit since the local authority was judged, in October 2016, to be inadequate for services for children in need of help and protection and looked after children.

The letter described the changes and improvements made to-date, plus those areas and issues where further changes and improvements were still required.

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Cllr Viv Kendrick and Elaine McShane went on to answer questions from members of the panel which, in summary, focused on:-

- The progress made in introducing the changes and improvements to-date
- The issues which still need to be addressed from Spring 2018 onwards
- The desire for more pace and improvements but with balance and thought
- The need to encourage change and embed good practice more consistently
- The role and work of the Corporate Parenting Board
- The improved quality of the information being shared with councillors
- The improvements to the management of caseloads, staffing and teams
- The working relationships between officers in Kirklees and Leeds

RESOLVED: Members of the Panel agreed that:-

- 1) Elaine McShane be thanked for her attendance at today's meeting.
- 2) The receipt and content of the letter from Ofsted (9 April 2018) regarding the outcome of the monitoring visit on 13 and 14 March 2018, be noted.
- 3) News of subsequent letters and monitoring visits to be shared with members of the Panel in the 2018/19 municipal year.

6 **Statement of Purpose for Registered Children's Homes**

Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting, introduced a report which described the "Statements of purpose" for the three mainstream children's homes run by Kirklees Council, namely:

- Copthorne Gardens – 4 bed home (Bradley, Huddersfield)
- Healds Road - 6 bed home (Staincliffe, Dewsbury)
- Woodlands – 6 bed home (Lindley, Huddersfield)

The report explained that the running of children's residential homes is regulated by Ofsted and involves a full inspection once per year. Then, depending upon the outcome of that inspection and the issues raised, a home could be subject to more frequent inspections. The Children's Home Regulations 2015 provide the regulatory framework which Ofsted use.

Cllr Viv Kendrick, Steve Comb and Elaine McShane went on to answer questions from members of the panel which, in summary, focused on:

- The Panel and the issues highlighted by their recent visit to Woodlands
- The process for dealing with requests for improvements and repairs in homes
- Plans for the homes in 2018 and the refresh of their "Statements of purpose"
- Occupancy levels and the need to try to develop smaller residential homes
- The number of children in the care of the local authority at present
- Where they are placed – foster care, local homes or external placements
- Plans for a new "Local sufficiency strategy"
- The work of a new Specialist Accommodation Project Board
- Opportunities to bring some external placements back to Kirklees
- Working relationships with the 23 private children's homes in Kirklees

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- The work of the "Leaving Care Team" who help young people to live independently

RESOLVED - Members of the Panel agreed that:

- 1) Steve Comb be thanked for his attendance at today's meeting.
- 2) The report be received
- 3) Officers be asked to present a further report – or an annual report - on the development of the "Statements of purpose" for each of the three children's homes to the Children's Scrutiny Panel in 2018/19.
- 4) Officers to also provide more information in the next report on (i) the development of a local sufficiency strategy in Kirklees, and (ii) the help and support offered to young people after leaving care.

7 Children's Scrutiny Panel work programme

The Panel considered a report which described the progress made with those items proposed for inclusion within the work programme for 2017/18.

Cllr Cahal Burke also used this opportunity to offer his thanks to members of the Panel, plus the Cabinet Members and officers invited to the meetings to-date, for their contributions, help and support with the work programme in 2017/18.

RESOLVED - Members of the Panel went on to agree that the progress report on the work programme in 2017/18 be noted.

8 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Jo-Anne Sanders, Acting Service Director for Learning and Early Support, introduced a report which explained that, in the period from 2016-2021, all local authority areas will be subject to an inspection under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004, which will be carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, of the local area and its effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The report explained that the inspection in Kirklees (date tbc) will focus on:

- An evaluation of how effectively the local area identifies disabled children and young people and those who have special educational needs, and
- An evaluation of how effectively the local area meets the needs and improves the outcomes of disabled children and young people and those who have special educational needs

Three appendices to the report provided more information on:

- The official framework (April 2016) which Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will use for conducting the inspection

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- An Ofsted report (October 2017) titled "Local Area SEND inspections – One year on" which provides a further reference point to evaluate the approach which Kirklees should take in order to prepare for our inspection (date tbc)
- The preparatory work that is taking place in Kirklees in readiness for the inspection which is being overseen by a SEND Strategy Group consisting of representatives from Education, Health, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, parents and carers and the third sector. The SEND Strategy Group has considered areas where progress has been made and areas of work which still need development.

The report went on to explain that a continued focus on preparation for this inspection is required from colleagues in education, health and social care, along with a review of the SEND Assessment and Commissioning Team in order to be able to meet the council's statutory duties in relation to SEND.

Jo-Anne Sanders went on to answer questions from members about the preparatory work to-date and the issues which still need attention prior the inspection of services in Kirklees, explaining that further updates will be provided to members of the Scrutiny Panel in due course.

RESOLVED - Members of the Panel agreed that:

- 1) Jo-Anne Sanders be thanked for her attendance at today's meeting.
- 2) Today's progress report be received
- 3) Officers be asked to present further progress reports – including news of the work on the Kirklees self-evaluation framework – to the informal sessions of the Children's Scrutiny Panel in 2018/19.