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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

**Monday 10th September 2018**

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)  
Councillor Donna Bellamy  
Councillor Lisa Holmes  
Councillor Sheikh Ullah

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

In attendance: Steve Comb, Head of Corporate Parenting  
Elaine McShane, Service Director, Children and Families  
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning & Early Support  
Saleem Tariq, Service Director, Children and Families

Apologies: Councillor Darren O'Donovan

**1 Membership of the Committee**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Darren O'Donovan.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2018 were presented and approved as a correct record, save that it was noted that Cllr Cahal Burke was in attendance and chaired the meeting.

**3 Interests**

No interests were declared.

**4 Admission of the Public**

The meeting was held in public session.

**5 Monitoring visit of Kirklees Children's Services**

Members of the Panel considered the letter sent to the Director of Children's Services following Ofsted's visit in July.

Sal Tariq, Service Director, Children and Families explained to the Panel that Ofsted had noticed the progress that had taken place in the following areas:-

- Stability in the leadership
- Recruitment and retention of social workers
- Reduction of caseloads, which is regularly monitored at a senior level.
- Families saying that contact with the service was improving.
- Improvements in stability of social worker for the child

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However, Mr Tariq went on to explain that the service was not complacent as there was still plenty to do, particularly around the consistency in the quality of practice. Ofsted had started to see strong foundations with the team travelling in the right direction. Areas that still needed improvement were:-

- Recording of the child's voice
- Assessment quality not being consistent
- Changes in social workers for some children
- Child protection chairs not consistently challenging drift and delay

Mr Tariq informed the Panel that writing good quality assessments, and appropriate case recordings was a skill that needed to be developed. Training was being implemented around recording and planning to ensure that all social workers were producing high quality assessments.

Elaine McShane, Service Director, Children and Families explained that she was confident that social workers knew the families that they were working with very well, but this was not always reflected on the case records. Ms McShane also explained that social workers were beginning to feel much more supported by senior managers and careful consideration was now given to the number of cases, with plans being put in place to reduce where appropriate.

The Panel heard that the service had recruited 45 new social workers, with the use of agency social workers reducing to 7%, which equated to a reduction from 70 agency social workers down to 10.

The Panel was pleased to see the changes being made and it was noted that the comment 'improve' or 'improving' was seen 19 times in total throughout the letter.

### **RESOLVED –**

Members of the Panel agreed that:-

- 1) Sal Tariq and Elaine McShane be thanked for their attendance at today's meeting.
- 2) That the content of the Ofsted letter be noted.
- 3) That the improvements in Children's Service be recognised and commended.
- 4) That future Ofsted updates be brought to meetings of the Panel.

### **6 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing**

Members of the Panel considered a report on the work that had been undertaken to prevent children being vulnerable to harm and abuse from going missing and to prevent children experiencing or continuing to experience sexual and or criminal exploitation.

Elaine McShane explained to the Panel that the government had changed its definition of CSE, which had in turn set the context of what happened locally. A review of the existing teams took place in December 2017 which recognised CSE, peer on peer violence and abuse, modern day slavery, including gangs and groups,

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criminal exploitations and going missing should not be seen or responded to in isolation as they often overlapped. This created a complex set of harmful circumstances and experiences for children, young people, families and communities. Following the review, it was agreed that in order to improve the arrangements for children and young people most at risk, the development of the Risk and Vulnerability Team would strengthen the safeguarding approach.

Ms McShane informed the Panel that understanding why children went missing was important with the need to look at services to reduce that. It was also essential to work along with families who often found it difficult to support a child with the behaviours they exhibited. The Panel heard that often a child didn't see the risks that they were taking and listening to their voice and taking their views into account was important. Ms McShane explained that the team would keep driving forward with the improvements especially to gain a deeper understanding of risks.

Ms McShane outlined what the key features often were in CSE and missing cases, and domestic violence was often the common factor. Family dynamics often created distress for young people with the child looking outside of the family for care. There were 10 identifiable risks that often influenced how a child behaved, and Ms McShane explained that it would be helpful for the Panel to have sight of those. However, the Panel noted that often there was no family reason to see why a child had become involved in CSE or was going missing.

The Panel heard that taxi drivers were undergoing training and extensive work had been completed with other local authority areas to work in partnership around enforcement. However, the Panel were concerned to note that the take-up of training for accommodation and takeaways was limited and requested information as to how these training events were promoted to invite as many providers as possible. Ms McShane explained that she would request that information from the Licensing Department.

The Panel also requested information around how the improvements that had been implemented were being measured, and where improvements could be seen.

### **RESOLVED –**

Members of the Panel agreed that:-

- 1) That Elaine McShane and Ophelia Rix be thanked for their report.
- 2) That the 10 identifiable risks common to children who go missing or become involved in CSE be sent to the Panel.
- 3) That the work being done to invite accommodation providers and takeaways to training be provided to the Panel.
- 4) That a further report be brought to the Panel outlining the multi-agency approach and that the report include details of progress made with all partnerships.

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### **Strategy for Partnership Working - Early Support**

Members of the Panel considered an update on development of the Early Support Strategy. Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning and Early Support explained

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that the approach was to improve services that offered support as early as possible to stop things escalating or becoming entrenched.

The Early Support related to what other authorities called the Early Help Service and also related to the term Edge of Care. The service was not just about what could be offered by the council, but would look to where the best relationships existed e.g. police, schools, Health and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector and how all services could collaborate to make improvements.

Following staff engagement sessions, it was agreed that the service should be called Family Support Service as it was about the partnership approach. The structure for the service was in place and had been developed so that it was locally based working along with schools as community hubs.

The Panel heard that the new teams would be focused on 3 key areas, following Innovation Funding being received:-

- Family Group Conferences (FGC's)
- Multi Systemic Therapy (MST)
- Family Mental Health Service (FMH)

An information event was planned for 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 and Ms Sanders invited members of the Panel to attend this event. Ms Sanders explained that work was not done in isolation, but by working in partnership, it was around having the right conversations at the right time.

The Panel heard that the funding support from the Department of Education would end in March 2019, however the service was looking at how they could sustain the service beyond that date.

Ms Sanders informed the Panel that there was still work to do with partners to meet regularly to ensure that the service was fit for purpose. Following questions from the Panel, it was explained that evaluation of the service's success would include:-

- Seeing better outcomes more quickly
- A reduction in referrals to the social work team
- Case by case learning to see quickly the need for change

The Panel commented that they were concerned about school's capacity and commented on concerns around not setting schools up for future problems. Ms Sanders informed the Panel that this was a serious consideration, and one that schools had already voiced, however all work was underpinned by the partnership arrangement. It may well be that a Family Social Worker or a health professional would be the most appropriate person to be involved, but it had to be recognised that schools often held the trusted relationships with families.

The Panel had observed some good practice with schools as community hubs, but that wasn't always replicated in all hubs. Ms Sanders explained that there was progress being made to ensure the sharing of good practice.

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### **RESOLVED –**

Members of the Panel agreed that:-

- 1) Jo-Anne Sanders and Michelle Attmere be thanked for their report, and Ms Sanders' attendance at the meeting.
- 2) That members of the Panel be invited to attend the information event on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018.
- 3) That a report be brought to Panel on the development of schools as community hubs by the end of 2018.
- 4) That a report on the success of the early support strategy, to include details of the partnership working arrangements, be brought to the Panel early 2019.

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### **Future Meeting Date**

Members of the panel noted that the next Panel meeting was scheduled for 10am on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018.

### **RESOLVED –**

Members of the Panel agreed that the next meeting be moved to 10 am on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018.