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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

**Friday 9th November 2018**

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)  
Councillor Donna Bellamy  
Councillor Lisa Holmes  
Councillor Darren O'Donovan  
Councillor Sheikh Ullah

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

In attendance: Cllr Viv Kendrick, Cabinet Member for Children  
Elaine McShane, Service Director, Children & Families  
Steve Comb, Head of Corporate Parenting  
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning & Early Support  
Christine Bennett, Practice Improvement Lead, Family Support & Child Protection

Apologies: Councillor Edgar Holroyd-Doveton

**1 Membership of the Committee**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Edgar Holroyd-Doveton.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** - The Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 11 June 2018 were presented and approved as a correct record.

**3 Interests**

No interests were declared.

**4 Admission of the Public**

The meeting was held in public session.

**5 Draft Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017-18**

Members of the Panel received the Draft Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2017-18, and Sheila Lock, the Independent Board Chair attended the meeting. Ms Lock explained that the report was looking retrospectively about how well the Board worked during 2017 – 18.

Ms Lock informed the Panel that the Board was completing focused work in line with the Children's Services Improvement Plan and would be looking at the following areas of development:-

- Early Support
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Domestic Abuse

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- Voice of the young person.

Ms Lock explained that when she had attended the Children's Scrutiny Panel with the 2016 – 17 report, there were concerns about how many missing episodes were happening, given the known link between missing children and vulnerability. The focus would now be on vulnerability in the widest sense, to include homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse and gangs to get a broad sense of what was going on.

There was no room for complacency and a robust strategy for CSE was needed and this would be done in two strands:-

- A look at current practice and strategy to ensure that it was fit for purpose
- A consideration of the historic cases around what could have been done better, how it could inform current practice along with up to date research from commissioned work.

That report would be available around March 2019, and Ms Lock suggested that this could be brought back to a further meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted that children were reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety. Ms Lock advised that there was work being done around dealing with issues as early as possible and there were good initiatives being put in place in schools and the voluntary sector. Notably, she explained, the satisfaction rates for CAMHS had improved significantly. However, the Panel raised concerns about the amount of pressures placed on schools, with staff reporting to members of the Panel that they were struggling to cope with the additional work of supporting children emotionally, over and above the teaching that was expected of them.

The Panel questioned why the report didn't reference partners in the report, given the work that the Panel members knew was taking place. Ms Lock explained that this would be contained within an addendum to the report, and was an assurance statement of the commitment of partners. Ms Lock would ensure that the addendum was circulated to members of the Panel once it had been approved by the Board.

The Panel asked how if 100% of schools have procedures and policies in place, that only 45% of children and young people reported that their school dealt with bullying well. Ms Lock explained that there was a difference between having policies and procedures in place and the way that schools implemented them. She explained that as social media changed, so did the pattern and nature of the bullying, and keeping up to those changes often proved difficult.

Members of the Panel asked what work the Board was doing around young carers given the statistic of 1 in 12 children being carers, and also asked what contact did services have with these young people. Ms Lock acknowledged that the issue had received a lot of attention nationally and recognised that these children were often socially isolated. The Board was working on a strategy to support young carers, and this could be brought to the scrutiny committee for consideration. Elaine McShane, Service Director, Children & Families explained that when a parent contacted adult services around their disability, support was put in place for the

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young carer to reduce the impact on the child. Ms Lock explained that there was good practice in place around how young carers made contact with services.

Ms Lock concluded by outlining the restorative approach that had been adopted in Kirklees which built on the strengths that parents brought, and worked with schools to support parents and children. Kirklees now had robust performance data so that services could evidentially decide on a course of action. That evidence would be an important base for early help to measure the support to families.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Panel agreed

- (1) That Sheila Lock be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.
- (2) That the content of the draft report be noted.
- (3) That the addendum to the report which outlines the work with partnership agencies be circulated to members of the Panel.
- (4) That Sheila Lock return to the Panel meeting on 1 April 2019 to outline reflections on the lessons learned around Child Sexual Exploitation and to provide assurances that the current practice and strategy is fit for purpose.

### 6 Children's Services 10 Point Improvement Plan

Members of the Panel were provided with the updated 10 point Improvement Plan and Ms McShane outlined how the improvement plan worked to improve systems in Kirklees to ensure that children were protected from harm. The plan had been in place for 12 months, and it was felt that the plan needed revisiting and be refreshed to ensure the focus was in the right areas.

Ms McShane highlighted the following key points;-

- That partners were key in supporting families.
- Social care services were starting to improve
- Most permanent posts were filled, with the service currently holding just 6 vacancies.
- Agency staff had reduced from 70 down to 14
- Mel Meggs had been appointed as the new Director for Children's Services and would join the council on 3rd December 2018.
- Schools were now reporting that the same social worker visited children.
- Referral rates had fallen, which was an indication that early intervention was having an impact.

Ms McShane informed the Panel that social care needed to ensure that they intervened only when appropriate, accounting for the lived experience of a family. It was noted that poverty for example, was not necessarily a social work difficulty.

The Panel was advised that it was important to ensure that schools were supported given that they saw children on a day to day basis, and provided a level of care for those experiencing difficulties. Also of importance was ensuring that the voice of both the child and the family was heard, particularly around what it was like when social services intervened.

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Ms McShane explained to the Panel that the quality and timeliness of case recording was an improving picture. Ofsted had commented that social workers knew the families they worked with very well, but that this was not always reflected in the assessments.

The number of caseloads that social workers had was reducing with the average standing at 15.9. A number of social workers had a higher caseload, but Ms McShane explained that she had a weekly update on these, along with plans to reduce. Members of the Panel asked why some social workers had the higher caseloads. Ms McShane explained that there was a variety of reasons for it, for example a social worker might have been on duty and picked up a number of cases, but within a short time, they would reduce once the cases were allocated to a different social worker. Newly qualified social workers were protected in the caseload level at 15, along with the type of caseload that they held. This limited how caseloads could be allocated. Ms McShane informed the Panel that there would be an equalising of caseloads over the coming months.

The Panel were informed that the challenge for the service in moving from good to outstanding with Ofsted was ensuring that the data matched the quality of work being done. The service needed to demonstrate by entering to the electronic systems that visits and reviews were as close to 100% achievement as possible.

The Panel questioned whether partners working alongside social workers were resourced enough to help deliver the changes needed for children. It was noted that social workers were only part of what was needed to improve a child's life, as the service relied on partners for help and support. The Panel said that they wanted to see quality outcomes, not just around data, but evidence that the number of children experiencing abuse and violence was going down, and the CAMHS waiting list going down.

The Panel heard that all partners had finite resources, but if those resources were brought together everyone would benefit from the diversity of skills. Social workers should see the strengths in families and the support that they offered to children. Often families didn't seek support early enough as they often felt judged. However Ms McShane informed the Panel that asking for help should not be seen as a weakness. Ms McShane explained that partners were the services eyes and ears out in the community for those instances where situations had become more complex.

The Panel took the opportunity to recognise the work done by all staff within children's services and they were encouraged to see the progress made. The Panel commented that they were pleased to see the work the service had done to improve the outcomes for children in Kirklees. The Panel were more confident that robust processes to look after children were now in place.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Panel agreed

(1) Elaine McShane be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

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(2) That the Panel note the commitment and contribution of staff in improving services.

(3) That the Panel continue to monitor the progress of Children's Services

### **7 Children's Disability Service Update**

Christine Bennett, Practice Improvement Lead, Family Support & Child Protection presented a report advising Panel members of the work that had been undertaken around young people with additional needs including those with a disability.

Ms Bennett explained that the Children's Disability Service had been reviewed so as to re-align back under the oversight of Elaine McShane. Parents had reported that the transition from Children's Services to Adult Services was often problematic, and the service wanted to be able to be assured that families had a clear understanding of the packages available.

The Panel heard that the social workers in the Children's Disability Service now received the same level of training and shared knowledge with other teams across the service. Referral to social care now had one access point, and a family who had a child with a disability automatically had the right to a social work assessment.

The Panel asked how the current consultation with PCAN and other partner agencies was working. Ms Bennett explained that the Children's Disability Team formed part of the SEND Strategy Hub, they had met with PCAN and visited parent workshops. The services wanted to show that social care was not about doing 'tick box' consultation.

The Panel heard that the service had not lost the principles of All Age Disability and the service was able to plan for a child's transition to adult services from an earlier stage.

**RESOLVED** - Members of the Panel agreed

(1) That Christine Bennett be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

(2) That the Panel note the improvements to the Children's Disability Service.

(3) That the Panel will continue to monitor the progress of the Children's Disability Service.

### **8 Children's Scrutiny Panel Work Programme**

Members of the Panel agreed to receive a copy of the work programme via e-mail.

Members of the Panel noted that the next Panel meeting was scheduled for 10am on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018.