

Contact Officer: Andrea Woodside

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Friday 23rd August 2019

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

Apologies: Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Councillor Richard Smith

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R Smith and A U Pinnock.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 19 July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all agenda items would be considered in public session.

5 Number of Children in Care

Ophelia Rix, Children's Services, presented a report which provided the latest statistics regarding the number and profile of children in care. The report advised that there had been an increase of 10 children in care between the months of June and July 2019 and that overall, between the period of August 2018 and July 2019 there had been a reduction of 21. The Panel were advised that the current number of children in care equated to a rate of 62.7 per 10,000 population (aged 0-17 years). Ophelia advised the Panel that the steady decline had been due to robust planning measures having been put in place to meet the needs of children and to ensure that interventions were timely.

With regards to the number of children placed at a distance of more than 20 miles from their home address, the report advised that as at 1 July 2019, the total was 89 children, which represented a reduction of 18 children over the past 6 months. The Panel were advised that 62 of the children placed out of the area were currently in foster care.

The Panel noted the update report, and asked questions in regards to ensuring safeguarding in cases where special guardianship orders are put in place and how the views of the child are taken into consideration in such instances. Discussion took place with regards to the out of area placements and it was noted that some

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 23 August 2019

children had chosen to remain out of area, having settled within their new locality. The Panel were advised that a further 7 out of area children were expected to return to care within Kirklees within the next few months.

The Panel noted and welcomed the update report, which reflected the successful work undertaken by the service to reduce the number children placed into care.

RESOLVED - That the report be received and noted.

6 **Update on Exploitation Strategy and next steps**

Ophelia Rix presented a report which provided an update on the Exploitation Strategy and set out progress made regarding arrangements to safeguard vulnerable children and young people living in Kirklees. Ophelia advised the Panel that the strategy recognised various contributory factors to exploitation including county lines, safeguarding, gang culture and a number of issues impacting upon vulnerability.

The Panel were advised of the contextual safeguarding approach, as adopted by the Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Partnership (KSCP) and operational groups to develop and inform practice. The report explained that both the exploitation strategy and operational plan focussed on a model of 4 P's; Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue, and outlined the strategic aims to develop multi-agency response to (i) enhance early identification and support for children and young people and communities (ii) protect young people and children (iii) enable early identification of locations of concern where exploitation and abuse is perpetrated and (iv) pursue the diversion and prosecution of individuals or groups who seek to facilitate, exploit, abuse or harm children and young people. Ophelia informed the Panel that Ofsted had recognised the complexity of issues within the Kirklees area and had complimented the approach being taken.

The Panel were informed of the work of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation pathway (MACE), which met monthly to provide multi-agency oversight of child exploitation cases and ensure appropriate responses. It was noted that the MACE process was designed to capture concerns of the public and partners regarding risk of exploitation, and to enable referral to be made through a single point. Information was also provided regarding the development of a transition pathway and service to support vulnerable young people approaching the age of 18, with a view to providing a seamless service up until the age of 25 by considering the transitional needs of the young person and recognising the impact that childhood trauma may have upon progression into adulthood.

The Panel noted the update report, and asked questions in regards the application of safeguarding for children who may have elected home education, or following an exclusion from mainstream schooling. The Panel welcomed the proposal of the seamless service and the opportunity to monitor its progress.

The Chair of the Panel advised that he would feedback from Officers on how the role of the Panel could support the service in achieving its outcomes, and also sought further information on regards to (i) para 1.6 – the impact of crime upon community safety (ii) para 1.8 – the information sourced to allow risk and vulnerability to be better understood and (iii) para 2.3 – the context of 'better links

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 23 August 2019

with local communities' particularly the strength of links with more rural areas and contact with organisations.

RESOLVED - That the report be received and noted.

7 **Ofsted Report**

Elaine McShane presented key highlights of the Ofsted report, following the inspection that had taken place during June 2019.

The Panel were advised that the inspection had been undertaken over a period of three weeks, which had included intelligence gathering, and that the findings had reflected that the service had achieved steady progress, with increased workforce stability and engagement, and an increased corporate commitment. It was noted that the service was no longer considered to be inadequate and was now providing much improved services for children, and that the inspection had not identified any widespread or service failures.

In terms of next steps, the Panel were advised that the improvement journey would be continued to create conditions for further greater success in service position, aiming to achieve an outstanding status and aiming to increase the amount of time that social workers can dedicate to families, by reducing their caseloads.

The Panel welcomed the report and asked a number of questions regarding social worker time management, the effectiveness of the liquid logic management system, potential progress within the next 12 month and monitoring arrangements, improving partnership working and governance structures.

Councillor Marchington, in his capacity as Chair, advised that he would be attending meetings of the Improvement Board as an observer and advised any that any Panel Members also wishing to attend would be welcome to do so.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection regarding Children's Social Care Services be received and noted.
- (2) That the continuing work and actions to be taken to achieve improved outcomes as the next stage of the improvement journey, and the role of the Panel in supporting this, be noted.
- (3) That arrangements be put in place to arrange an informal Panel session regarding improving partnership working and governance structures.

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

RESOLVED - The Panel received and noted the latest version of the work programme and agenda plan for the remainder of the municipal year.