

Minutes

of the Meeting of the

Children & Young People Services Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 14th November 2014

Item 4

held at the Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am Meeting Concluded: 11.55 am

Councillors:

P Colin Hall (Chairman)

P Sonia Russé (Vice-Chairman)

P Mary Blatchford

P Donald Davies

A Catherine Gibbons

P Anne Kemp

P Linda Knott

P Terry Porter

P Arthur Terry

P Liz Wells

P Charles Cave

P Bob Garner

P Hugh Gregor

P Clare Kingsbury-Bell

A John Norton-Sealey

P Annabel Tall

P Richard Tucker

P Deborah Yamanaka

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Also present: Councillors Jeremy Blatchford (Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services) and Lisa Pilgrim (Assistant Executive Member)

Added Members: Justin Templer (Diocese of Clifton) and Rachel Ling (Parent Governor Representative)

Right to Speak: Fiona Walters (Weston College)

Officers in attendance: Sheila Smith (Director of People and Communities), John Wilkinson, Eifion Price (People and Communities Directorate), David Jellings (Corporate Services)

Apologies: Councillors Catherine Gibbons and John Norton-Sealey; Helen Fenn (Diocese of Bath and Wells)

CAY Declarations of Interest by Members (Agenda Item 3)

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None

CAY 18 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th September 2014 (Agenda Item 4)

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

CAY 19 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2018 – Update Report (Agenda Item 5)

The Panel considered this reference from the Executive.

In order to assist each Panel's responsibilities for scrutiny of the directorate's budget within their remit, this reference was covered by the separate workshop for the People and Communities Directorate, to which elected members of all Panels were invited.

The Director of People and Communities responded to Members' questions and queries on the budget overspend on Children Looked After

Members queried the approach to setting an annual target for the number of Children Looked After.

The Director of People and Communities advised of the intention to focus on the placements budget with the aim of providing more realistic projections. Additionally, effective early interventions were essential to not only reduce the number of children entering cadre but also reduce costs.

The Director added that in part, the budget overspend on Children Looked After reflected the budget reductions dating back to 2010. The Panel was reminded that just one high cost residential placement usually cost more than 3-4 in-house placements.

The representative of the Director of People and Communities in response to more detail regarding costs referred the Panel to the percentage breakdown in the appendix to the Performance and Finance Monitor relating to the different types of placement. He undertook to provide the Panel with a numeric breakdown of the costs.

It was pointed out the average cost of £156 per week of placements in North Somerset was considerably less than the national average. If North Somerset spent at the national average, the annual total cost would rise by approximately £2 million.

CAY 20 Report of the Life Course (Cradle to Grave) Working Group (Agenda Item 6)

The Panel and the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services complimented the working group on their thorough investigation and for producing an excellent report. The Executive Member specifically commented on the comprehensiveness of the report and the high quality of scrutiny undertaken. He added that he welcomed and supported the recommendations.

Councillor Kemp, Lead Member of the Working Group expressed thanks for the support provided and the work carried out by the officers.

Councillor Kemp and the representative of the Director of People and Communities responded to Members' questions and queries. Key points-

(i) The focus of the working group

- Focus on the cohort of people with the most complex needs. It was considered that if successful the lessons could be applied to other cohorts where applicable.
- The initial focus was on the 18-25 age range having regard to the wish of the working group to improve services and promote independence across the life course.
- It was more helpful to explore a "single seamless straight-forward pathway" for children and young people through services rather than a single team or service. This would reflect the direction of policy and service delivery in children and adult services over recent years.
- Focus on transitions and developing services contributing to a single pathway.

(ii) Develop the concept of key working - focus on coordination, communication and supporting families along the "pathway". The provision of key workers is something that parents and carers of disabled children and young people and children and young people with SEN have consistently raised as something they would wish to see considered.

(iii) Personal budgets

These offered choice and flexibility. Pilots had started and the take-up had been positive. Over 100 parents were on personal budgets.

(iv) Engagement

Following on from the success of the Older People's Champions Group, officers would be exploring and developing an engagement process for the parents of disabled children to enable them to communicate directly with Members.

(v) Housing

The possibility of broadening the scope of the post in housing services currently working primarily with people with a learning disability to cover people with a physical or sensory impairment would be explored.

(vi) Employment of young people with learning disabilities – staff had been engaged specifically to work with and encourage employers.

(vii) The development of a 14-25 service was key

The working group was aware of the outcomes of the Respite Care and Short Breaks Working Group regarding the development of a 14-25 service which will provide more effective transitional arrangements between children's and adults' services, will promote individuals' journey towards independence and will ensure that high quality short breaks remain available to those families which need them.

Concluded:

That the Executive Member for Adult Care and the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services be recommended to approve

(1) that officers continue to develop and implement effective pathways for disabled children with complex needs to take them through to adulthood, to ensure that their progress through the health, education and social care cycles brings about the best outcomes for them and their families, with the aim of developing a near seamless pathway from childhood to adulthood, with particular emphasis on transition protocols;

(2) that officers further explore the funding implications of the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans introduced by the Children and Families Act with particular regard to the provision for the age range 18-25 years;

(3) that officers further explore, consider and report back on the challenges and benefits of a developing the role of a 'key worker' for disabled children with complex needs to take them through to adulthood, with the aim of developing a near seamless pathway from childhood to adulthood;

(4) that having regard to the success of the Older People's Champions Group, officers explore and develop an engagement process for the parents of disabled children to enable them to communicate directly with Members;

(5) that officers explore the possibility of broadening the scope of the post in housing services currently working primarily with people with a learning disability to cover people with a physical or sensory impairment;

(6) that the report and recommendations be referred to the People and Communities Governance Group;

(7) that officers report back on the above matters in six months' time to the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel and the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel;

(8) that this working group endorses the outcomes of the Respite Care and Short Breaks Working Group.

CAY 21 Report of the Assistant Executive Member, Councillor Lisa Pilgrim (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Lisa Pilgrim updated the Panel on her work and responded to Members' questions and queries regarding the following areas of activity

(information had been circulated to the Panel and a copy placed in the minute book)-

(1) Invest to save

Information about IAAMs (It's All About Me) would be circulated to the Panel.

(2) Sharing of services

An update would be provided to the Panel when available.

(3) Foster Care Recruitment

North Somerset was successful in our application to be part of the Fostering Networks project to help 25 local authorities with foster care recruitment and retention. An initial meeting had taken place and the guidance was available.

The recruitment week was held in October with a presence throughout North Somerset including Cadbury Garden Centre, Clevedon, Morrisons in Weston super Mare and the Town Hall. Foster carers were thanked for their support and interest.

(4) Care Leavers Week

A coffee morning was held with care leavers during their drop in session. It was good to meet with them and to hear from them first hand. Supported living seems particularly valuable

(5) CLA Review

The Assistant Executive Member was beginning to review the progress of the recommendations made in the report.

Reference was made to the instruction of Judge James Mumby, President of the Family Division of the High Court that care orders with a plan for adoption, placement orders and adoption orders were a last resort.

The Director of People and Communities said that local authorities were seeking to reconcile this approach with the statutory guidance issued by the DfE.

CAY 22 Performance and Finance Monitoring (Agenda Item 8)

The representative of the Director of People and Communities presented the report covering core information on finance and performance. The following topics were highlighted, details of which were set out in the report and responses made to Members' questions and queries.

(1) Inspection and Performance

The Panel was pleased to note that following an Ofsted inspection, Hutton Church of England Primary School was judged to be good for overall

effectiveness and that in relation to the focussed set of inspections of 17 primary or infant schools that took place during March and April, the growing proportion of good and outstanding primary schools in North Somerset was encouraging.

(2) Key Corporate Performance Indicators

The 60.2% of children who achieved five or more A*-C grade GCSEs (including English and Maths) was positive. It was explained that that the GCSE results were provisional and were subject to reconciliation with DfE provisional figures before being finalised.

(3) Numbers of Children Looked After

The number of looked after children had increased slightly since January 2014 but was well below the peak of 2012.

The current benchmark data used was that of our CIPFA statistical neighbours. Officers were keen to present more meaningful data that compared like with like and were looking to provide data from comparators who were seaside local authorities and neighbouring authorities.

(4) Financial Monitoring

(5) Case Audits

(6) To what extent is family preference being met in the allocation of school place and how does this vary by pupil characteristics?

A Member queried whether 87% of all on time applications being offered their first preference was good enough. The Director of People and Communities commented that having regard to DfE policies and constraints plus strong parental preferences, 87% would be deemed as very good performance.

It appeared that the difference between the percentage of black or other minority ethnic origin children receiving one of their three Reception preferences compared with white British children was not significant.

Reference was made also to the Learning Exchange. The Panel was advised that the Learning Exchange was under review regarding continuing financial viability.

Discussions had taken place with the Weston secondary schools and with Weston College regarding the College's introduction of the North Somerset Enterprise and Technology College (NSETC) which focused providing 14- 19 year olds with the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them for work. It was considered that NSETC would not have a significant impact on the secondary schools' intake. The latter were modelling in the possibility of pupil transfers.

Panel Members complimented the format, style and themed content of the performance and finance monitor and commended it as an example for the other Scrutiny Panels to adopt.

**CAY
23 The Panel's Work Plan (Agenda Item 9)**

The Scrutiny Officer updated the Panel as follows-

(1) Life Course (Cradle to Grave) Working Group would move from Section 1(Current Work) to Section 2 (Issues awaiting response from the Executive).

(2) CSE Working Group

With regard to the issues involved and the need to ensure a thorough investigation, it was not realistic for the investigation to be completed in time for reporting back to the Panel in January. Therefore, the Working Group would report back to the Panel meeting on 27th February 2015.

Concluded: that the work plan be updated to reflect work in progress.

Chairman
