

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

### Meeting held 3 April 2014

**PRESENT:** Councillors Gill Furniss (Chair), Karen McGowan, Lynn Rooney, Colin Ross, Andrew Sangar (Deputy Chair), Ian Saunders, Diana Stimely, Stuart Wattam, Cliff Woodcraft and Geoff Smith (Substitute Member)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Jules Jones, Education Non-Council Voting Member  
Gillian Foster, Education Non Council Voting Member  
Alison Warner, Education Non-Council Member

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Talib Hussain and Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, and Councillor Geoff Smith attended the meeting as the duly appointed substitute, and Joan Stratford (Education Non-Council Voting Member).

#### **2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2014, were approved as a correct record, and the Committee noted the Actions Update attached to the minutes and, arising therefrom, further to a query by Jules Jones regarding the response provided under Item 6 – Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2012/13, relating to the level of funding allocated to deal with cases of sexual exploitation, Diane Owens, Policy and Improvement Officer, stated that she would refer the query to Simon Richards, Head of Quality and Safeguarding, Communities, to request a response.

#### **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

#### **6. UPDATE ON THE REDESIGN OF EARLY YEARS SERVICES**

- 6.1 The Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, submitted a report containing an update on the redesign of Early Years Services.
- 6.2 In attendance for this item was Dawn Walton, Assistant Director, Prevention and Early Intervention, Children, Young People and Families.
- 6.3 The report contained details on the progress made since the decision of the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, to approve the redesign of Early Years Services, and focused on the four key areas in terms of the redesign – Children’s Centre Areas, Quality of Provision, Contracts for Procurement of Prevention and Intervention Services and Childcare. Ms Walton emphasised the fact that, despite the levels of concerns raised, particularly with regard to the decision to reduce the number of children’s centres from 36 to 17, all the issues raised had been addressed.
- 6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- Whilst it had been appreciated that there was likely to be a significant level of anxiety in connection with potential redundancies, the feedback received from staff, following the redesign, had been generally positive.
  - Further to the concerns raised by parents who, following the reduction in the number of Children’s Centres, would have to travel long distances to find their closest Centre, by working with other providers and schools, provision had been identified locally for all those children affected by changes in childcare provision.
  - It was accepted that there was not a significant amount of detail in the report, but it was considered that Members had already been provided with considerable detail in terms of the proposed redesign. It had also been considered that, on the basis that there had been very few problems as part of the redesign, it had not been considered necessary to provide significant detail as part of the update.
  - The lower super output area level referred to those areas of deprivation, where special consideration had been given to studying the analysis of the data regarding the take-up of places and the gaps in provision. The Service was aware that there were going to be issues regarding take-up of the Free Early Learning places for two-year olds, in the light of the expected increase in demand through the Government’s expansion.
  - The process in terms of securing quality in the early year’s

childcare provision had been outlined as part of the previous scrutiny exercise. The Early Years Service had used OFSTED data in order to identify where there were any gaps in provision, or whether such provision was of sufficient quality, and had taken any relevant action it deemed necessary. Efforts had been made to ensure that there was sufficient provision available to give parents a good choice. In those areas where inadequate provision had been identified, of which there were only a few, providers had taken up the support being offered by the Local Authority to improve quality. Special efforts had been made to ensure that the relevant safeguarding procedures were in place in connection with all the provision.

- Full details of the financial implications had been reported at a previous meeting of this Committee. The financial implications relating to the TUPE transfer of staff had been built into the financial planning for the 2014/15 Financial Year. This may change as the Service develops a future commissioning strategy. Full financial details would be made available in with any future strategy.
- Although there was no detail on the issue in this report, the Service was well aware of the need to focus on issues surrounding the readiness of children when attending school. This would be taken into consideration when the new provision with regard to Early Years Services was being set, and would be detailed in a report to this Committee in future.
- Although discussions with OFSTED, following the inspections, had been generally positive, any areas of concern would be considered as part of the future planning in terms of other children's centres.
- There had been delays in the commissioning of contracts to deliver prevention and intervention services. Therefore, the Service will be considering support through these services, as part of a future commissioning strategy, which will be procured for delivery from April 2015. There was a need for a clear understanding of the parents' requirements to shape future services and therefore, consultation with parents and key stakeholders would inform future delivery. The Service was also planning to consult with schools in the near future in terms of their requirements regarding prevention and intervention services.
- The Local Authority had to follow a statutory process as part of the redesign of children's centre provision, which had involved a significant level of consultation with the Area Forums (previously Advisory Groups). It had been considered that the process regarding the reduction of Children's Centres from 36 to 17 had

progressed very well and had resulted in an increase in provision delivered through volunteers.

- As part of the Healthy Child Programme, the Service was planning to undertake a joint assessment of children at two years old and when they started reception class, in order to monitor their progress.
- The overall cost savings in terms of the redesign of the Services amounted to £3.5m.

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information contained in the report now submitted, together with the information now reported and the responses to the questions raised, with regard to the developments made in connection with the redesign of Early Years Services; and
- (b) requests that the Committee look at Early Years Services as part of its future Work Programme.

## **7. SHEFFIELD'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT**

7.1 The Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, submitted a report containing an update on the progress of Sheffield's Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

7.2 The report made reference to the City Council's Looked After and Adopted Children Multi-Agency Strategy 2010-13, in which a number of strategies, ambitions and actions had been defined under the following six key priority themes – Engagement and Influence of Children and Young People, Education, Achievement and Attainment, Health and Wellbeing, Permanence, Integrated Placements and Placement Stability and Safeguarding and Vulnerability. The report contained details of the progress made in connection with each of the priorities, together with proposals in terms of the priorities for 2014. Reference was also made to a new one-year Looked After and Adopted Children Strategy, which was currently being developed for launch in April 2014, and which included a further priority theme – Care Leavers.

7.3 In attendance for this item was Jon Banwell, Assistant Director, Children and Families Service, Children, Young People and Families.

7.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The process for monitoring and reviewing on a regular six monthly basis is carried out by the Independent Reviewing

Service. Outside of these reviews, checks would be made as and when specific problems were identified. It was important that the Local Authority was informed of any problems at the earliest possible opportunity, to ensure that any relevant action could be taken.

- The increase in the number of children subject to Special Guardianship Orders was seen as positive in that whilst there was an element of permanency in terms of the placement, it still allowed input from the Local Authority, which gave longer-term stability for the child.
- All Looked After Children were placed in schools which were deemed to be most suitable for their individual needs.
- As part of the five-year Fostering Business Case, actions implemented had increased the choice, range and number of placements available, and the number of foster carers over the last five years. A new target had been set for the 2014/15 Financial Year, and there continued to be an increase in the number of foster carers.
- An additional resource has been created whereby the Local Authority had access to 25 properties to enable care leavers to move into their own tenancies. It was believed that this number of properties was adequate at the present time as not all the children would want to live independently.
- In terms of the Pupil Premium Plus, the Virtual School would be responsible for managing the connection between the schools and the Local Authority. The Virtual School was aware of where all the Looked After Children were, and therefore, was aware of where the Pupil Premium Plus was directed. Any challenge in terms of use of the Pupil Premium Plus for Looked After Children could be made through the six-monthly review and monitoring of each school.

7.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the progress made in terms of the City's Looked After Children and Care Leavers, the proposed publication of the 2014 Looked After and Adopted Children Strategy, and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests the Policy and Improvement Officer to circulate (i) the handbook on Looked After Children and (ii) details on how regularly the Looked After Children and/or their schools were contacted by the Virtual School, in order to check how they were getting on in their respective schools, to Members of the Committee.

## **8. PUPIL PREMIUM TASK AND FINISH GROUP - DRAFT REPORT**

- 8.1 The Committee considered a report of Councillor Gill Furniss, Chair of the Pupil Premium Task and Finish Group, on the outcome of a review undertaken by the Group to identify best practice and any recommendations in terms of the use of the Pupil Premium and its impact on attainment in Sheffield primary schools.
- 8.2 The Task and Finish Group comprised Councillors Gill Furniss and Diana Stimely, Jules Jones and Alison Warner, and the review had taken place between January and March 2014.
- 8.3 Councillor Diana Stimely introduced the report, referring to the approach taken by the Task and Finish Group. Jules Jones reported on the key themes and context of the Group and Alison Warner focused on the Group's recommendations.
- 8.4 All Members of the Group confirmed that the review had been a very positive and worthwhile experience.
- 8.5 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- The primary schools visited by the Task and Finish Group had been chosen by the Children and Young People Service, and were geographically spread across the City, and had varying numbers of children receiving the Pupil Premium. The Group heard evidence of a wide range of services and activities that the schools were spending the Pupil Premium funding on. A significant amount of the funding had been used to fund the provision of staff and staff training in connection with the provision of education and activities targeted specifically at the children concerned. It had not been easy, due to the short period of the review, to identify any outcomes, in terms of cost benefit analysis.
  - The types of activities differed between the schools, in that in those schools with higher numbers of children attracting the Pupil Premium, there was more emphasis on group activities, whereas, in the other schools, the activities tended to be more individualised. In some schools, the funding was used to employ a worker to visit the homes of children who, for various reasons, had difficulties getting to school on time, and would work with the families involved in order to overcome this problem.
- 8.6 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

- (a) approves the report of the Pupil Premium Task and Finish Group now submitted, and notes the comments made and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) thanks the members of the Task and Finish Group for the valuable work they had undertaken as part of the review.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 9.1 It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.