

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

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

Meeting held 21 January 2021

(NOTE: This meeting was held as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.)

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Mike Levery (Deputy Chair), Francyne Johnson, Alan Law, Joe Otten, Kevin Oxley, Colin Ross, Jim Steinke, Garry Weatherall, Cliff Woodcraft and Kaltum Rivers (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Chaplin, Anne Murphy and Alison Teal, with Councillor Kaltum Rivers attending as Councillor Teal's substitute, and from Sam Evans (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member), Peter Naldrett (Parent Governor Representative - Non-Council Voting Member), Alice Riddell (HealthWatch Sheffield, Observer) and Alison Warner (School Governor Representative - Non-Council Non-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 19th November 2020, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) reported that further to the attendance by a number of members of the Sheffield Youth Cabinet at the meeting, a number of Members of this Committee had met further with the Youth Cabinet on 13th January 2021, to listen to their views following recent further Government announcements regarding schools, learning and summer assessment.

4.2 Ms Nicholson referred to the document circulated to Members prior to this meeting, which set out a number of recommendations of the Youth Cabinet, following the meeting on 13th January, and specifically to the consultation which had just commenced on the arrangements with regard to examinations in Summer 2021.

4.3 The Chair stated that it was important to ensure that the Council was being supportive of the issues currently being faced by young people, both with regard to their education and general wellbeing. He referred to the importance of the Youth Cabinet being able to influence policy and/or participate in some form of event or process in order to highlight the issues they are having to face on a daily basis.

4.4 RESOLVED: That, in the light of the information now reported, the Committee approved the suggested recommendations set out in the paper circulated prior to this meeting, and for the recommendations to be forwarded to Councillors Abtisam Mohamed (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families) and relevant officers for further consideration.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) read out a question received from Jane Wratten, who worked in an early years setting, requesting that nurseries be only open for key workers so as to limit the amount of mixing of households, that funding be made available for private nurseries to keep afloat while children stay at home, and for nursery staff, as key workers in the frontline, to be prioritised for vaccination.

5.2 In response, the Committee agreed that (a) the emails received with the questions be sent to relevant Executive members and officers for consideration and (b) the Executive replies to the individual who posed the question, with a copy of the response being sent to all Members of the Council.

6. SHEFFIELD CHILDREN SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, People Services, attaching the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership - Annual Report 2019/20.

6.2 In attendance for this item were David Ashcroft (Independent Chair of the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership), Tina Gilbert (Manager, Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership), Carly Speechley (Director of Children and Families), Dan White (Head of Health and Targeted Services, Sheffield Futures) and Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families).

6.3 David Ashcroft introduced the report, which provided an overview of safeguarding activity in Sheffield, and contained information on the key achievements during 2019/20, the priorities for the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP), and the joint priorities for the SCSP and the Sheffield Adults Safeguarding Partnership (SASP) for 2020/ 21. The report also attached, as an appendix, a list of the Executive Group members of the SCSP.

6.4 Mr Ashcroft reported on the formal move from the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board to the multi-agency partnership (SCSP), and referred to a number of key

achievements during 2019/20.

6.5 Mr Ashcroft indicated that he wished to formally place on record his thanks to Victoria Horsfield (former lead officer and professional advisor to the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board) for her contribution to the success of safeguarding in the city, and to Tina Gilbert and her staff in terms of sustaining a strong response to safeguarding across the City, both in 2019/20 and through the Covid-19 pandemic this year.

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

- The Partnership was well aware of the problems caused by the increase in online gambling, and had undertaken work in this area. It had been identified as an emerging issue, and the Partnership was looking at the risks and issues such activity presented for young people.
- There was a direct correlation between the increase in the number of young people on Child Protection Plans, as a result of neglect, and the levels of deprivation and poverty faced by many families across the city. This position made it more difficult for many families to protect their children against neglect. The Partnership would continue to scrutinise those young people on Child Protection Plans and, whilst there had been a slight increase in the number of young people on such Plans, following Lockdown 1, such numbers had now stabilised in terms of performance and levels of concern. The Children and Families Service had seen an increase in demand with regard to both children in need and children on Child Protection Plans over the last 12-18 months, and whilst there had been a slight dip in referrals, there had been an increase in the number of such children throughout the pandemic. The increase in the figures was partly due to the Service having decided to keep some children on the Plans for longer than normal as it had not been deemed safe to step them down due to the lack of universal providers available during the pandemic. The numbers now on Plans were currently in comparison with other local authorities. In addition, the Council was currently in the process of renewing its Neglect Strategy, which would be accompanied by a series of training and awareness raising sessions. As part of the Strategy, there was a new neglect assessment tool, which would help practitioners review cases and enable them to understand whether there were signs of neglect.
- The Council made every effort possible to ensure that every adoption arranged was successful, and whilst it was accepted that this sometimes took a long time, it was considered more important in the long-term. Members and officers met regularly with adopters, to listen to their views, with the aim of improving how the Council supported them. Also, the Council had recently become part of a Regional Adoption Agency which, amongst other benefits, would result in the Council having access to a wider variety of adoptees.
- Whilst it was important for the Partnership to continue monitoring the adverse

impacts of online gambling and gaming on young people and their families, the effects should be taken into perspective on the basis that it was not a ubiquitous issue. There was the possibility that the move to online learning, as a result of the pandemic, had resulted in some young people being distracted, and straying onto online gambling and gaming sites, and this needed to be monitored. The Partnership was confident that online learning was being adequately supported in Sheffield. The Partnership would continue to support the positive aspects of online learning, as a means of mitigating the risks of young people being drawn into online gambling or gaming. The Partnership offered training on the risks of young people using social media and other online platforms, which highlighted the risks to them and their families.

- The former SCSP Workforce Development Manager had recently retired, and due to the pandemic, it had taken longer than normal to reappoint to the post. The new postholder was now in the position of reviewing the multi-agency training offer to ensure that there was support for the areas identified following the workforce development questionnaire, where practitioners identified further training and/or development opportunities.
- The Partnership was in agreement with the principle of adopting a more collective voice in connection with safeguarding issues on the basis that there were a number of common issues faced by families. The Children's Commissioner had been a very powerful and effective voice for children's interests over the years, particularly in terms of identifying vulnerability prior to any safeguarding intervention. Independent Partnership Chairs in the Yorkshire and Humber area met regularly to discuss various cross-cutting issues. There was a strong and active network which provided support for the Independent Chairs and Business Managers.
- The Partnership was aware of the adverse effects of the pandemic on young carers, and this would be addressed in more detail in its Annual Report 2020/21.
- Mental health had been a high priority area for the Partnership for some time. There were issues as to whether there were sufficient mental health services in the city, as was the case nationally. The Partnership could work with the Sheffield Youth Cabinet in connection with disseminating messages about the problems and pressures faced by young people linked to the use of social media.
- The Partnership would welcome more involvement with this Committee, although this could be difficult due to time constraints on both the Independent Chair and the Committee. Consideration should be given to the Partnership providing an additional update report, over and above the annual report.
- The regular turnover of senior police officers represented an ongoing challenge for the Partnership in terms of maintaining strong and effective

relationships with such officers. Work had been undertaken to ensure that incoming officers were adequately briefed on all relevant safeguarding issues in the city.

- The Partnership would look at the possibility of producing its Annual Report earlier, so as to ensure it could be submitted to this Committee earlier in the Municipal Year.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership - Annual Report 2019/20, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks David Ashcroft, Tina Gilbert and Councillor Jackie Drayton for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests that consideration be given for (i) the Annual Report to be produced earlier, so as to enable its submission to the Committee earlier in the Municipal Year, and (ii) David Ashcroft being invited to attend meetings of the Committee as and when appropriate, in connection with the consideration of safeguarding issues.

7. SHEFFIELD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION SERVICE - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive Officer, Sheffield Futures, attaching the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service - Annual Report 2019/20.

7.2 In attendance for this item were Dan White (Head of Health and Targeted Services, Youth Services), David Ashcroft (Independent Chair, Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership), Tina Gilbert (Manager, Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership), Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families), Councillor Abtisam Mohamed (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) and Carly Speechley (Director of Children and Families).

7.3 Dan White referred to the introductory report, which contained information on the service user profile for 2019/20, key achievements in 2019/20 and priorities for the Service in 2020/21.

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

- The relationship between the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (SSES) and South Yorkshire Police remained very strong, with a number of police officers being co-located within the Service at Star House. The highest number of referrals to the Service came from the police, and regular, weekly discussions were held between the two parties as a means of sharing information. There had been an increase in the number of referrals of children looked after to the Service in 2019, and the strong relationship

between the Service and the Children Looked After Team had helped to ensure that any issues of concern were identified and dealt with at the earliest possible opportunity. It was believed that such work had helped to ensure that the number of referrals from this cohort had not increased further. Following the issues experienced in Rotherham and other areas of the country, a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to raise awareness and ensure that all partners were aware of how to refer cases to the Service. Relationships between the Service and schools remained very strong, with steps being taken to ensure that all school staff were aware of the correct process, and had a contact number, in terms of referring cases.

- It was too early to tell whether there had been any effects caused by the pandemic in terms of those cases dealt with by the criminal justice system. The Service had identified a reduction in referrals at the start of the pandemic, but once staff had organised themselves in terms of being able to continue to support those cases at the highest need, the next step would be to identify if any such issues were apparent. It was not yet clear whether this had resulted in a knock-on effect in terms of cases further on in the process, and which were going to be referred to the criminal justice system. The SCSP had noticed, when taking reviews of cases, that there had been delays during the pandemic in terms of toxicology reports and post-mortems.
- The work of the Service was largely driven by referrals. As a result of the extensive work undertaken over the last few years in terms of raising the awareness of partners, cases had generally been referred to the Service at the earliest possible opportunity. Despite this, the Service was looking at what could be done to enable more referrals. Further to a drop in referrals after Lockdown 1, in March 2020, the Service had undertaken a piece of work on looking at the pathways for referrals to see if there were any blockages and, although no such blockages had been identified, this work would continue.
- Identifying specific patterns of crime that were not being referred to the Service would require more oversight from other partners, particularly the police, social care and education. It was considered that the Service had a good oversight in terms of current trends, but would include this as an area of work to maintain its focus on.
- As a result of the high profile sexual exploitation cases in Rotherham, and elsewhere in the country, the police had learned a lot in terms of how it should respond to such cases. This had resulted in a profound change, both locally and nationally, in the understanding and willingness of senior police officers to engage in the issue of young people's confidence in coming forward and reporting cases of exploitation. It was considered that extensive progress had been made in this area over the past few years. The Amber Project had been established as part of the contextualised Safeguarding Strategy, the role of which was to help support and develop the wider workforce around their understanding of what contextualised safeguarding was, the risk factors involved and who was included in this cohort, as well as

working with children and young people who had been affected by sexual exploitation. Also, as part of the launch of the Strategy, the Amber Ambassador Scheme had been launched, where children and young people were encouraged to have a trusted adult relationship with an ambassador, to enable them to discuss issues of concern with them.

7.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service - Annual Report 2019/20 now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Dan White, Tina Gilbert, David Ashcroft, Carly Speechley and Councillors Jackie Drayton and Abtisam Mohamed for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests:-
 - (i) that consideration be given for (A) the Annual Report to be produced earlier, so as to enable its submission to the Committee earlier in the Municipal Year, and (B) Dan White being invited to attend meetings of the Committee as and when appropriate, in connection with the consideration of issues regarding sexual exploitation; and
 - (ii) the Director of Children and Families to provide more detailed information for all Members of the Council on the Amber Project, contextualised safeguarding and signs of safety.

8. YOUTH SERVICES - SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

8.1 The Committee received a presentation from Laura Hayfield (Head of Service, Youth Services), on an update on the transition of the Youth Services to Sheffield City Council.

8.2 Ms Hayfield reported on the work undertaken to date, the aims of the Service, the phase two steps undertaken, work in terms of stabilisation and recovery, current service delivery, youth work, young people's involvement, and the work of the community youth teams and key workers. She also referred to the proposed timeline in terms of the various stages of transition of the Service back in-house.

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

- Those cases involving young people deemed to be at the lower end of need with regard to sexual and criminal exploitation were referred to the Community Youth Teams, based in the Youth Service. All staff within the Teams were trained to work with vulnerable young people, and would work through a variety of services and programmes with them, either through direct delivery or through colleagues and/or partners. The Service had

focused on this work during the transition.

- The aim was to co-produce the Vision and the Strategy, with local communities, and the Service was looking to have a wide engagement with partners, including community organisations and young people. Youth Services had recently moved to the Council's Communities Portfolio, with the idea that the Service could work closely with the Local Area Partnerships and community organisations. In addition, a stakeholder mapping exercise had been undertaken, as part of the preparation for engagement, with the youth workers, who had considerable experience in working in local communities.
- The Service was well aware of the need to be more evidence-based, and was using the tracking tools to enable young people to be monitored across different services. The Service would be able to track what worked most effectively and would implement continuous improvement processes into this.
- The Service would be happy to refer the initial proposals, as well as the amended proposals, following consultation, to this Committee for consideration prior to adoption.
- The Council had worked, and would continue to work, very closely with Sheffield Futures throughout the transition period, and would continue to maintain a strong working relationship in order to ensure that both parties were aligning their services for young people in the city. Sheffield Futures would continue to offer some excellent services for young people, which were not part of the Council contract. The survey undertaken of staff has shown that they had all been happy with the transfer, and that they had all been given the relevant equipment required. All staff had been reassured in terms of their positions, having met with senior management and relevant Cabinet Members. All staff were working well, and undertaking a great job, in very difficult circumstances, and had all been fully integrated in the transition process.
- Work to improve the performance regarding return interviews following young people going missing formed part of the improvement plan currently being worked on by the Service. This work would involve the use of the new screening and tracking tools. It was not always easy to make contact with the returning young people within the required 72 hour timescale, with some young people not wishing to engage with the Service. Some face-to-face interviews were still being held, where required, but mainly, at the present time, interviews were held by telephone or by virtual means. The return interview process was very much similar to that used by Sheffield Futures, and potential improvements were being reviewed as part of a wider service review. It was envisaged that now the Service was back in-house, and with the other improvements, such as the Amber Project, there was likely to be an increase in the number of return interviews.

- In terms of the next steps regarding the Make Your Mark ballot, the three local priorities had been voted for. The Sheffield Youth Cabinet would now be asked to draw up a series of action plans in terms of the action they would like to see in terms of the three priorities - Homelessness, Domestic Violence and Improvements to places to go and things to do.
- The 84 young people highlighted as being at potential risk of being NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) were aged between 14 and 16. They had been so identified due to school attendance and other risk of NEET indicators and, whilst schools had the statutory responsibility to support the children through career pathways whilst at school, the Youth Service would provide services over and above this. A number of the children had elected to be home educated, and the Service was also working with them.

8.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information reported as part of the presentation now made, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Laura Hayfield for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests that arrangements be made for (i) the Make Your Mark Action Plans to be shared at a future meeting, when completed and (ii) the revised Youth Services Strategy, to be submitted to a future meeting for comment.

9. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

9.1 The Committee received a report submitted by the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) containing the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2020/21.

9.2 Ms Nicholson referred to the five items set out in the report that could be scheduled for the meeting on 25th February 2021, and following discussion, Members agreed a preferred selection priority order of Home Schooling, MAST, an update on the pandemic impact work with the Youth Cabinet and the Sheffield Youth Cabinet Action Plans following the Make Your Mark ballot.

9.3 RESOLVED: That, subject to the addition of the three items now referred to, on the agenda for the meeting to be held on 25th February 2021, the Committee approves the draft Work Programme for 2020/21 now submitted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 25th February 2021, at 10.00 am.