

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

Meeting held 9 February 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Maroof Raouf (Deputy Chair),
Mike Chaplin, Safiya Saeed, Richard Shaw, Sophie Wilson,
Ann Whitaker and Cliff Woodcraft

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Sam Evans, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)
Alice Riddell, (Healthwatch Sheffield, Observer)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anne Murphy, Kaltum Rivers and Ann Woolhouse.

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 In relation to item 8 on the agenda (Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (Amber Project) - Annual Report 2020-21), Councillor Safiya Saeed declared a personal interest as a trustee of Voluntary Action Sheffield.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th November, 2021, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) reported that (a) Early Help Services would be considered at the Committee's next meeting, on 9th March 2022 and (b) whilst officers in the Children and Families Service had met with a number of adopters to discuss their concerns regarding the One Adoption Regional Adoption Agency, the meeting, comprising Members and relevant officers, to enable the adopters to raise their concerns/issues privately, as suggested by the Chair, had not yet been held, but arrangements would be made for this meeting to be held at the earliest possible opportunity.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

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

6. SHEFFIELD CHILDREN SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

6.1 The Committee received the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership - Annual Report 2020-21.

6.2 In attendance for this item were Carly Speechley (Director of Children and Families), Shelley Hemsley (District Commander, South Yorkshire Police), Tina Gilbert (Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) Safeguarding Partnership Manager) and Donna Taylor (Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance).

6.3 Shelley Hemsley introduced the report, which contained details of the achievements of the Partnership during 2020-21 with regard to the safeguarding of children and young people in Sheffield. The report also contained information on impact, the views of children and young people and families, how the Partnership priorities were supported and what it hoped to achieve in 2021-22. The report also set out details of Partnership activity, including Hidden Harm, Licensing Workforce Development, Audit and Performance and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

6.4 Ms Hemsley stated that she would like to place on record her thanks and appreciation to David Ashcroft, the retiring Independent Chair of the Partnership, for the excellent support and leadership he had shown in the role during the last three years. She added that recruitment for a new Independent Chair had been completed, and the new Chair would hopefully be commencing in their role in April 2022.

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

- One of the three main priorities for the SCSP was neglect, specifically the approach to assessing the needs of those children and young people potentially suffering from neglect and particularly, the cumulative impact of neglect. Training on the use of a new assessment tool developed by the NSPCC would start for relevant professionals across the Partnership in April 2022. The second priority was contextual safeguarding, where again, staff were looking at identifying early signs of risks facing children and young people, mainly regarding them going missing, being exploited, either criminally or sexually, or displaying sexual harmful behaviour or signs of violence. The third priority focused on the need to identify support for children and young people and families at an early stage in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health in order to stop problems escalating. The Council also had a role, as corporate parents, in terms of looked after children in the city, of which there were currently around 680. The Council needed to look at the best outcomes for such children, in terms of education, health and becoming

successful adults.

- The COVID-19 pandemic had caused a significant increase in the number of children and young people being electively home educated. Whilst the number had now almost dropped to pre-pandemic levels - around 500, there was a high number of children within this cohort who were more difficult to manage in schools, and who had Education, Health and Care Plans. During the pandemic, the Children and Families Service had increased its capacity to work with those families educating their children at home, with an increase from two to six officers. The officers would undertake more visits to check on the home circumstances and ensure that the curriculum was being followed, and would challenge parents in those cases where the curriculum was not being followed. The officers would also assist in terms of reintegrating the children back into school.
- The Government's plan to have a National Register for children receiving home education would only benefit the Council if such plans provided the Council with more powers. The only control the Council currently had was to ensure the curriculum was being followed, as well as the power to take action if there were any safeguarding concerns. The Council did have a Red Amber Green (RAG)-rating system for children being home educated, to ensure they were safe. Therefore, without any additional powers, it was not considered that such a Register would be very helpful, other than providing a figure for the number of children being home educated in the country at any one time.
- Statistics in terms of the number of primary and secondary schools in the city which had been graded outstanding by Ofsted since 2012 would be circulated to Members.
- The Council commissioned Learn Sheffield as its school improvement partner, and who undertook assessments of all schools in terms of their progress, and provided each school with a RAG-rating based on such assessments. It was not clear whether such information was publicly available.
- In terms of elective home education, and based on a social care perspective, it was not believed that there was an expectation on parents to teach the full range of the national curriculum, apart from English and Maths. Further advice would be sought on this issue and circulated to Members.
- In terms of neglect, there was a considerable amount of work ongoing with schools, nurseries, GPs and health visitors, both through the SCSP and as a local authority, in terms of helping them to notice, at an early stage, that families were struggling, and required additional support. A considerable amount of the Children and Families Service's budget was earmarked for early intervention services, and help and support was targeted to such families in an attempt to stop problems escalating. In cases where safeguarding issues were identified, social workers would be allocated and, in extreme circumstances, children would be removed from their parents. The Council had robust assurance mechanisms in place to try and ensure that services provided were

effective in terms of keeping children safe and supported. South Yorkshire Police had arranged force-wide training on identifying signs of neglect and on the effects of trauma on children, and understanding the signs of neglect and being able to evidence it. The police had emergency powers which could be used in the most extreme cases.

- As part of the SCSP, there was an exploitation tracker, which enabled partners, when information became available about children and young people being at risk of exploitation, to meet and discuss the circumstances, and identify any risks. A plan would then be put in place in terms of how the case would be managed.
- County Lines had been identified as a serious issue, and the Police Neighbourhood Teams were liaising with schools in terms of educating on the signs of exploitation in this regard. Some excellent work on tackling the issue had been undertaken in the Sharrow and Nether Edge areas which, it was hoped, could be rolled out to other areas of the city. It was not possible to identify whether children from specific areas or backgrounds were involved in such activity. Children and young people from any area or background, especially those who had possibly suffered from a lack of parental support or neglect, or were missing certain things in their lives, could be drawn into such activity.
- The time limits for the Child Death Overview Panel to review cases of deaths in children were variable due to the different circumstances regarding each case. In many cases, there would be delays due to the time taken for all the necessary evidence and information to be collated to enable the review to take place. The delays were mainly due to the collation of information regarding medical issues, and were generally not the cause of the local authority. Whilst officers were working with colleagues across South Yorkshire to obtain information regarding trends in this regard, details on the comparisons regarding the numbers and circumstances of the deaths, with other core cities, were not available, but could be circulated to Members.
- The Children and Families Service was currently £23m overspent, although there was an expectation that this would be brought back into line during the 2022/23 financial year. This would be a hugely challenging process. There was a budget strategy, which focused predominantly on investing to save. There were two main areas of expenditure within the Service - staffing and placements for looked after children, with the latter experiencing a serious overspend. The Service was seeking capital investment to provide more in-house placements, which would hopefully help to reduce spend on the placement budget. In addition, through continued investment in early help, the Service was also trying to achieve a reduction in demand for places. The Service was also reviewing its current business support arrangements, in terms of looking to make savings through the increased use of technology.
- It had been highlighted, as part of a serious case reviews where bereavement had contributed in some way to circumstances in families, and which had led to

tragic events. The Council was commissioning services for children, mainly therapeutic, but it was accepted that more systemic work was needed, which could be picked up through the SCSP.

- A residential placement for a looked after child would cost around £3,000 a week, with an external residential placement ranging between £5,000 and £12,000 a week. An Independent Foster Placement arrangement would cost around £950 per week, with a Council placement costing around £350 per week.
- There would be an element of freedom in terms of how the Annual Reports could be drafted going forward, and in the light of this, as well as the imminent arrival of the new Independent Chair, there could be an opportunity to review this, and provide more information in the Report in terms of the successful operation of the Partnership. The partners had regular conversations about what they consider to be concerns, and how such concerns could be addressed. There were a number of things the Scrutiny Committee could look at in order to get assurances that the SCSP was operating successfully, such as whether partners were actively engaged, and reviewing the Annual Delivery Plan, reviewing the dashboard containing data on what was working well or not, and reviewing the multi-agency audit activity.

6.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership - Annual Report 2020-21, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised: and
- (b) expresses its thanks and appreciation to (i) all SCSP partners and local authority staff, for the excellent work undertaken during 2020-21 to safeguard children and young people in the city and (ii) David Ashcroft, the outgoing Independent Chair of the SCSP, for the excellent work undertaken by him in his role during the last three years.

7. SHEFFIELD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION SERVICE (AMBER PROJECT) - ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

- 7.1 The Committee received the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (Amber Project) - Annual Report 2020-21.
- 7.2 In attendance for this item were Dan White (Head of Health and Targeted Services), Tina Gilbert (Sheffield Children Safeguarding Board Manager), Donna Taylor (Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), Shelley Hemsley (District Commander, South Yorkshire Police) and Carly Speechley (Director of Children and Families Service).
- 7.3 Dan White introduced the report, which provided an overview of the work of the Sheffield Child Sexual Exploitation Service during 2020-21 and setting out the

service user profile and key achievements during the year, together with priorities for 2021-22. The report also made reference to the formal launch of the Amber Project in January 2020, which involved the integration of the Sexual Exploitation Service with the Council's Criminal Exploitation Team.

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

- The lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions had resulted in an increase in the number of referrals to the Service, hence the higher numbers of referrals in Quarter 4. It was likely that there would be a similar number of referrals in early 2021-22, and the Service was currently looking at whether there had been any blockages in terms of referrals, or whether there had been a reduction in the number of referrals from particular agencies, with such details to be included in the Annual Report 2021-22.
- Whilst the vast majority of referrals were females, there had been a very small number of males referred to the Service.
- It was not unusual for there to be a higher number of referrals regarding young people aged between 14 and 16, which it was believed was due to them reaching the age of promiscuity and having more access to social media.
- Whilst the information was not available at the meeting, it was expected that details of the reduction in the number of referrals, as compared with other core cities, would be included in the Annual Report 2021-22.
- As a result of the reduction in the number of referrals, staff had more time to dedicate to those children and young people being referred. Staff also had more time to focus on the development of training which, in turn, would help them in terms of dealing more effectively with the children and young people referred to the Service.
- Whilst the Service would have data on the status of the children and young people referred, such as whether they were out of education, either having been excluded or were in exclusion centres, or being home-educated, this was not included in the report, and could be circulated to Members.
- Staff in the Service had visited colleagues in grassroots organisations to provide training in order to make them more aware of the referral processes into the Safeguarding Hub.
- The Service was currently based at Star House, Division Street, and comprised a nurse, police officers, youth workers and other professionals.

7.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service (Amber Project) - Annual Report 2020-21, the information now reported and the responses to the

questions raised; and

- (b) expresses its thanks and appreciation to all staff in the Service for the excellent work undertaken by them during 2020-21.

**8. IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON YOUNG PEOPLE -
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CO-OPERATIVE EXECUTIVE TOWARDS
RECOVERY FROM THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN
SHEFFIELD**

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) setting out four key recommendations of the Sheffield Youth Cabinet regarding the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people in the city, to be submitted to the Council's Co-operative Executive for consideration.

8.2 Further to an issue raised by Alice Riddell regarding the possible inclusion of views of young carers in the recommendations on the basis that this was raised as an issue when representatives of the Youth Cabinet attended the Scrutiny meeting, Alice Nicholson stated that she would talk to the Youth Cabinet to see if the recommendations could be reworded to include this aspect.

8.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made; and
- (b) approves the recommendations set out in the report, subject to any further amendment to the wording regarding the issue now raised.

9. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

9.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee approved its draft Work Programme for 2021-22 now submitted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 9th March 2022, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

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