

## CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 11 March 2019 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room G3/4, Addenbrook House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

**Present:** Councillors A D McClements (Chair); S Barnes, E A Clare, J A Francis and E J Greenaway and co-optees C Healy and M Ward.

**Also Present:** H Loveridge, Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting; A Mason, Chair, Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board; E Smith, Service Delivery Manager, School Performance and Development; S Worthington, Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer - TWC.

#### **CYPSC-11 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors M Boylan and J Jones; Co-optee L Fowler

#### **CYPSC-12 Declarations of Interest**

Mrs M Ward declared an interest in minute number CYPSC-15 as a Governor of High Ercall Primary School.

#### **CYPSC-13 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2018**

The Minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record.

#### **CYPSC-14 Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report**

The Committee welcomed the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board to the Committee. The Chair of the Board provided an update of the work completed by the Board over the last year and updated the Committee on the work of the Board since the report's publication.

*A discussion took place and Members asked the following questions:*

*Did the Board meet quarterly? It was disappointing to see low attendance by some partnership colleagues, particularly the NHS.*

The Chair of the Board confirmed that the Board did meet on a quarterly basis. The Board's lay members had left for various reasons and a decision had been made not to replace these members until the new recommendations on the Boards make up where approved. In respect of the NHS, NHS England stated that Health would not attend unless there was an issue of importance to them on the agenda. CAF/CASS had not appointed a representative, but this had been pursued.

*Although the number of children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan had fallen over the past year, the rates in Telford and Wrekin were still almost 50% higher than the national average. What work was being undertaken in this area to reduce this?*

It was noted that although the Board would like to reduce the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan, there were very clear thresholds in place and if a child met those thresholds, then they would become subject of a Child Protection Plan. The work performed by Early Help had an effect but there were areas of deprivation in the Borough. It was important that the numbers of children subject to Plans did not reduce due to falling standards.

*Were the training courses open for Members to attend?*

The Chair of the Board confirmed that he had attended a number of these courses himself and had found them invaluable. Members could contact the organisers if they wished to attend any of the courses.

*Members praised the introduction of the School Safeguarding Boards, especially those in primary schools. What number of secondary schools in the Borough had their own safeguarding boards?*

Three or four of the Secondary Schools in the Borough had a dedicated safeguarding board, but many of the remaining schools stated that the matters that the board would deal with were managed by the School Council. The Local Safeguarding Board did not mind how the boards took place, as long as the issues were being discussed and managed.

*Members suggested that those schools which did not have a dedicated safeguarding board could be encouraged to have safeguarding as a standard item on their school council agenda.*

*Members raised concern about Female Genital Mutilation and the importance of the NHS in identifying this.*

FGM had become part of the Domestic Violence work stream. Historically, too little work had been undertaken with perpetrators of Domestic Violence, especially those who don't meet a criminal level, to tackle these issues so they do not happen again. It was noted that training on issues around Domestic Abuse was well attended. It was vital that issues like this were not looked at in silos, but to look at the effect of trauma on a child, wherever it came from. It was noted that FGM was also an incredibly difficult crime to prove.

*A discussion was held regarding the child's day and support offered for families.*

*Had the Board been provided with a timetable of the Review by SaTH into neonatal deaths?*

The Board had not been provided with a timetable. The Board had looked back on the reports from the Child Death Overview Panel to make sure that nothing had been missed during this process and confirmed that nothing significant had been found in this process. The Chair of the Board confirmed that it was his understanding that SaTH had reviewed every case put forward.

*A discussion was held regarding delays in obtaining police data.*

It was confirmed that critical data is received from the CATE team, who get involved at a very early stage.

### **CYPSC-15 Education Attainment**

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting and the Service Delivery Manager: School Performance and Development to the meeting. The Committee received a presentation on school results from 2016 / 17 and 2017/18.

*A discussion took place and Members asked the following questions.*

*Were the Early Years hubs located around the Borough?*

It was confirmed that the hubs were located around the Borough. The hubs would include schools, childminders and providers and would provide opportunities to share effective practice and to provide flexible childcare to meet the needs of families..

*Had many children been withdrawn from KS2 tests?*

This had not been raised as a significant issue recently, although it was acknowledged that tests often put a lot of pressure on children. New Ofsted inspection framework was being developed which aimed to take the pressure off the use of tests.

*Although it was encouraging to see results above the national average in many areas, what support was being put in place in respect of maths?*

It was confirmed that there were several schemes in place. The maths curriculum had recently changed and there had been a period of adjustment. It had been acknowledged that some children were struggling with the language of maths, so work had been put in place around this. A Member stated that there had been improvement in the synergy between primary schools in the methodology of teaching maths, which was having a positive impact at secondary level.

*Concern was expressed that children were having to take repeated practice tests before the final exams. Many children had raised concerns that they were taking too many tests. Members noted that once children reached secondary school, the new school would assess the children again.*

*How was the Early Investment team tackling the word gap?*

This was still in the early stages of development, the Department for Education had recently announced a Professional Development offer which aimed to support Early Years providers to address the word gap. Telford and Wrekin would benefit from this funding although the final amount was not yet known. The programme would run from September this year..

*School improvement services had been very successful in primary schools, how good was sharing good practice at secondary level?*

It was noted that schools within each Academy trust support each other. There was also a secondary heads forum which was well attended and encouraged sharing ideas. It was

noted that there was not an active secondary teaching school in the Borough. The Severn Teaching School works very well in the primary sector.

*How had the re-grading of KS4 GCSE bedded in?*

It was noted that schools had struggled with the 4 / 5 level distinction however, they are now more familiar with grading. It had been a big adjustment for schools.

*Did the attainment figures include all children on role or just the children who had taken the test? Concern was expressed that some schools had asked children not to attend for the day of the test to improve the overall scores.*

It was confirmed that all children on role were entered to tests. There was a national initiative taking place in respect of 'off-rolling' and this was one of OFSTEDs focuses.

*It was noted that phonics did not work for every child.*

OFSTED had also raised this as an issue and adjustments should be made to the curriculum to meet every child's needs. A range of techniques should be used by teachers.

*Were there figures available for the results of children who had left care?*

Results were broken down into several categories, such as children who had English as an Additional Language (EAL), Pupil Premium children and children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Care Leavers were not specifically looked at, although they would be eligible for public premium. SEND children within Telford and Wrekin do well, as do EAL children. Pupil Premium children do better in the Borough than the national average, although there remains a gap to peers.

#### **CYPSC-16 Review of the Young Carers Service – Recommendations Report**

The Chair advised that the report summarised the evidence that had been heard during the last Committee and the provisional recommendations made by the Committee at that time.

Members considered that recommendation 1 – that schools should include a question about young carers on their enrolment form, should be qualified that it was not necessary to complete this information. Members were advised that a child's status as a young carer was included in their school passport.

Members agreed that recommendation 2 – link governors should be established in every school for young carers, could be incorporated within a governor's existing role, for example to become the link governor for looked after children and young carers.

Subject to the inclusion of the above amendments, Members agreed the recommendations and that they should be presented to the relevant cabinet member for discussion.

#### **CYPSC-17 Chairs Update**

The Chair advised that this was the final meeting of the Committee before the Council elections in May 2019.

Members stated that they remained concerns about the impact of exclusions, particularly unofficial exclusions, on children and highlighted this as their preferred focus of work in the next municipal year.

The meeting ended: 7.43pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....