

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 9 January 2018
TIME:	3.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors W. Johnson (Chair), P. Birkinshaw, G. Carr, Charlesworth, Clarke, Clements, Franklin, Gollick, Daniel Griffin, Hayward, Lofts, Makinson, Mitchell, Pourali, Sheard, Tattersall, Unsworth, Williams and Wilson together with co-opted members Ms P. Gould, Ms J. Whitaker and Mr J. Winter and

45 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from Kate Morrith in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

46 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillors G. Carr, Charlesworth Tattersall and Wilson each declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute nos. 48 and 49 in so far as discussion related to their positions on the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Councillor Lofts declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute nos. 48 and 49 in so far as discussion related to his positions on the Adoption Panel.

47 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th December were approved as a true and accurate record.

48 Children's Social Care & Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director – People, BMBC
 Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
 Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson – People Directorate, BMBC
 A number of Front Line Social Work Practitioners

The item was introduced by Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC. A video by young people in the Care4Us Council preceded consideration of a report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director People in respect of the Children's Social Care & Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework and the Continuous Service Improvement Framework. It was explained that this is an interim report and will be amended to reflect a full year once all case file audits have been analysed.

Questions were asked and challenges made in response to the report and introductory presentation, which included the following points:

- There is a culture of open-ness and an open working environment which enables Social Workers to challenge and report poor practice. All Social Workers have monthly supervision meetings with their manager at which issues can be raised and respectful challenge takes place amongst workers. This year's Annual Social Work Health Check was very positive in this regard. All staff have Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) which identify individual strengths and areas for improvement as part of a robust performance development process.
- The case file audit process was explained for the benefit of Members. After each audit a report is compiled with individual actions for Social Workers. The views of children and young people are consistently recorded as part of assessments and are recorded on file to ensure their voice is heard. Visits take place every six weeks, within timescale and with a clear line of accountability.
- There is clear evidence that Barnsley children are well looked after here in Barnsley. Staff go above and beyond what is required, contacting carers regularly via a variety of means so that children have a positive experience.
- Social Workers would prefer to have fewer children on their caseload and this is recognised in Barnsley as a significant issue. There is a rolling programme of recruitment and Barnsley is able to attract high calibre staff due to having a good reputation. Funding has been secured to appoint an additional 14 Social Workers across all teams. Barnsley supports a large number of Student Social Workers, many of whom come back to work for Barnsley when they have completed their training.
- The Quality Assurance Framework sits on top of the work that everybody is doing, from front line staff to senior management. Efforts are continually being made to improve children's lives so that they can have the best possible childhood. The role of Elected Members as Corporate Parents is a huge responsibility.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Representatives be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) The report be noted.

49 Barnsley Provisional Education outcomes for Looked After Children 2017

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Margaret Libreri, Service Director - Education, Early Start and Prevention, People Directorate

Gary Kelly, Head of Service – Barnsley Schools' Alliance, People Directorate

Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children, People Directorate

Jon Banwell, Head of Children in Care Services, People Directorate

Cllr Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Member, People (Achieving Potential)

The item was introduced by Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children, People Directorate. The report outlined the education outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in Barnsley, broken down by pupil group, from assessments taken in 2017. The report provided an overview from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Key Stage 4 (KS4), comparing the performance of Barnsley LAC against all children nationally and all Barnsley children. A further report will be provided in March 2018 once the Statistical First Release (SFR) data has been released nationally.

The SFR cohort for 2016/17 comprises all pupils looked after by Barnsley on 31st March 2017 who have been in care continuously for the previous 12 months. The SFR cohort for 2016/17 was very small, with only 5 children fulfilling the criteria for inclusion in the data.

Questions were asked and challenges made in response to the report and introductory presentation, which included the following points:

- There is a robust system in place for daily monitoring of LAC school attendance. This happens whether the school is an Academy or not. If a child is not in school, the reason for absence is determined and Foster Carers or Social Workers take action as appropriate. If children are missing school this triggers an absenteeism report. Nationally LAC have poorer educational outcomes, therefore school attendance is crucial. Education Welfare are in regular contact with every school who has a Looked After Child and weekly placement oversight meetings take place.
- Only 14.2% of BMBC children in care in the SFR cohort achieved the national standard for phonics. This cohort has a high proportion of children with special educational needs and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Improving phonic outcomes for children in care is a priority and work is underway to support this outcome through the 'Letterbox Literacy' project, whereby children receive age-appropriate books and activities through the post for 6 months from the summer to Christmas to help them with this. Foster carers will receive training on how best to support the children in their care with phonics.
- Welfare calls are made for those children who are persistently absent from school. There are currently 12 children whose attendance is being tracked. Sometimes there is a valid reason for absence such as a hospital operation etc. The Educational Psychology service explores the barriers to education for these children.
- Members were assured that there is a robust system in place for retaining personal information, which is fully compliant with data regulation requirements and is regularly tested for breaches. Information on children placed for adoption is not included, as they will have a new identity once the adoption takes place. Over 120 other Local Authorities use the same IT system.
- The Letterbox Literacy project and Welfare Call initiative were taken from other Local Authorities' best practice – a Yorkshire and Humberside good practice development plan is currently being developed. The Care4Us Council has been instrumental in developing the Virtual School web pages, arising as a direct result of children's wishes and feelings which were fed into the Care4Us Council.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Representatives be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) The report be noted.

50 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described by the specific paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, as follows:

<u>Item Number</u>	<u>Type of Information Likely to be Disclosed</u>
51	Paragraph 2

51 Children's Social Care Reports

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson – People Directorate, BMBC

An introduction was given to the report circulated and a number of areas were discussed, including the positive open culture amongst the social care workforce and the following:

- Members queried the amount and frequency of information they receive in relation to the performance of Children's Social Care services. The service responded that it is important for Members to receive detailed information regarding activity so they are aware of trends and comparator data with other areas. The service agreed to consider narrowing the summary information however still presenting the report in its totality.
- Members challenged the tracking of Early Help Assessments to which the service provided reassurance that these are monitored to ensure they don't drift and prevent escalation in need. Also, that families may require early intervention over a longer period and action would be taken should an issue escalate.

RESOLVED that

- (I) Representatives be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (II) The report be noted;
- (III) The service considers narrowing the information provided in the covering report.