

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 4 April 2017
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

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

60 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

61 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillors Carr, Charlesworth, Sixsmith, Tattersall, Unsworth and Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Minute No. 63 on the agenda due to their membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

62 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th February 2017 were approved as a true and accurate record.

63 Barnsley Safeguarding and Looked After Children Continuous Service Improvement Plan

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director, People Directorate, BMBC
- Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, BMBC
- Julie Govan, Improvement Programme Manager, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, BMBC
- Sharon Galvin, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children, Barnsley CCG
- Liz Gibson, Virtual Head teacher for Looked After Children, People Directorate
- Nina Sleight, Head of Early Start, Prevention and Sufficiency, BMBC
- Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson - People (Safeguarding), BMBC

The Service Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, introduced this item. Members were reminded that in 2012 Barnsley Children's Social Care Services were judged by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) to be 'inadequate' for child protection services and 'adequate' for looked after children services. As a result a Continuous Service Improvement (CSI) Framework was developed through strong leadership and member engagement, with a shared vision to get beyond 'good' through the CSI Plan. Following a positive inspection in June 2014, the improvement notice was lifted and scrutiny of the CSI Framework and CSI Plan was transferred from the Improvement Board to the Children's Trust and the Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB).

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning, the following matters were highlighted:

The CSI Framework includes aspirational outcomes around Early Help, Front Door Assessment, Pathway Planning, Domestic Abuse, Substance Misuse and Mental Health, Neglect and Child Abuse and Access to Therapeutic Support and is driven by a multi-agency officer group. Each of these elements has an individual service improvement plan within the CSI Plan, with timescales, responsibility and progress to date.

Members suggested that provision of historical detailed information regarding Barnsley's improvement journey since 2012 would be welcome. Members were advised that this could be provided and were assured that processes to monitor progress towards 'good' are robust and rigorous. Under new inspection arrangements, Barnsley could be re-inspected at any time from 3 years after the June 2014 inspection and as a result is always 'inspection ready'.

The Safeguarding Children's Board (SGCB) has statutory responsibility to ensure children and young people in Barnsley are safe. There is strong partnership working in sub-groups focussing on various aspects of safeguarding (including licensing arrangements for taxi drivers, audit work following the Casey Review, Home to School Transport and Child Sexual Exploitation) together with multi-agency training and various activities to support the community, detailed on the website. There is a planned Safeguarding Awareness Week to raise awareness of how children in the Borough are safeguarded.

The Improvement Programme Manager proactively co-ordinates improvement activity and monitors the CSI Plan under a strict regime, checking evidence is quantified, measured and substantiated. Progress for improving outcomes continues to be scrutinised at a joint annual event, the last one being held in November 2016, at which it was agreed that the CSI Plan evidenced that improvements had been made.

All Looked After Children (from pre-school to post 16) have an individual Personal Education Plan (PEP), which identifies how a child's education needs can best be met. It includes a child's aspirations, strengths, barriers, outlines clear expectations and identifies how the Pupil Premium Plus Grant will be spent. The PEP is updated regularly and the Social Worker ensures that the child's voice is always captured. The procedure for PEPS for children placed out of authority is exactly the same.

Social Worker caseloads are monitored on a weekly and monthly basis to ensure that they have the capacity to address priorities and respond appropriately. Numbers are within national tolerance levels. Social Workers are well supported and work-life balance issues are addressed. The workforce is stable, as is the management team. The number of child protection cases has fallen.

The Early Help offer is driven by a multi-agency steering group, following a sector-led peer review in 2015 which looked at the effectiveness of early help. Systems and processes are in place to ensure resources are aligned responsively, with checks and balances built into the performance tracking system to ensure the protection of vulnerable children.

Listening to the 'voice of the child' is essential. A programme of audits indicates that the child's voice is strong in assessments so that their experience is clearly understood. The Care4Us Council is active in ensuring that what matters to children is included in the Children's Plan. Although many secondary schools have several looked after children, they are unlikely to share their experiences of care at school but may choose to do this through accessing the Care4Us website, which has been written by young people in care themselves.

It is difficult to estimate the number of children at risk. There are clear processes to follow regarding identifying concerns before escalation. Thresholds have been embedded across the partnership so that it is clear when to respond and when to refer. There is no room for complacency and Members should continue to be vigilant and pick up issues from their community.

There are no dedicated resources for children from minority groups. In Barnsley children mainly come from the white British community but there has been a steep learning curve around unaccompanied asylum seekers. Barnsley has had to go to partners across the Yorkshire and Humber region to learn from them.

Looked after children are prioritised when accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), with a two week wait and an initial assessment period of five weeks. When young people accessing CAMHS are leaving care, there is a national policy which is followed by South West Yorkshire NHS Partnership (SWYFT) to ensure they do not get lost in the system. At the age of 17 ½ discussions usually take place with the young person and their family to establish if they need ongoing help. Some may be transitioned to their GP or to adult services.

Witnesses were thanked for their attendance and contribution.

Action points:

1. Service to provide historical detailed information to Members regarding Barnsley's improvement journey since the Ofsted Inspection in 2012.