

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 26 February 2019
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bowler, G. Carr, Frost, Gollick, Hayward, W. Johnson, Makinson, Phillips, Pourali, Tattersall, Williams and Wilson toge

50 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

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

51 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillors G Garr, Tattersall and Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 53 'Ofsted inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in Barnsley' and Minute 56 'Children's Social Care Performance Report' insofar as the discussion related to the Corporate Parenting Panel of which they were Members.

52 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29th January, 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The Chair reported that information requested by the Committee at previous meetings in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Provisional Education Outcomes for Children and Young People in Barnsley 2018 had now been circulated by the Service Director Education Early Start and Prevention.

No further queries were raised by the Committee.

53 Domestic Abuse Services in Barnsley

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Wendy Lowder – Executive Director – Communities
 Councillor J Platts – Cabinet Spokesperson – Communities
 Jayne Hellowell – Head of Commissioning & Healthier Communities
 Rosemary Clewer – Commissioning Manager – Stronger, Safer & Healthier Communities
 Sam Goulding – Project Manager – Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS)
 Acting Detective Inspector (ADI) Adrienne Sheekey – South Yorkshire Police

The Executive Director Communities introduced this item by giving a brief overview of the progress so far on the local commissioned response to domestic abuse together with the current climate in Barnsley. The Committee also received case studies and real life accounts of the impact that agencies could have on the lives of

victims by working collaboratively through the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process together with information on the Domestic Abuse Public Awareness Campaign.

The Executive Director commented on the success of the project and of proposals for developing the service in the future. She commented that the arrangements were seen as a model provision being one of the best, if not the best in the region.

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

- The ways in which people could access the service was outlined and particular reference in this respect was made to re-referrals and self-referrals. Arising out of this discussion reference was made to emotional and therapeutic recovery options and the special arrangements in place to deal with children and young people by the involvement of specialist teams/services including Social Care
- There was a discussion of multi-agency involvement and of the ways in which a common/unified approach was ensured. This was achieved in a number of ways including having appropriate governance arrangements in place (which was seen as a key element), appropriate reporting arrangements and a true partnership approach. Particular reference was made to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which was a meeting between different statutory and voluntary sector agencies where information on the highest risk cases of domestic abuse was shared
- Reference was made to future plans and challenges and particularly the arrangements for training which were welcomed.
 - It was particularly pleasing to note that an organisation called Human Kind was to deliver a training programme to develop professionals' skills in working with men as victims. It was also suggested that specific focused training should be provided for Elected Members
 - Arising out of the above, reference was made to the 'Speak Up' Campaign details of which were outlined within an appendix to the report. This campaign aimed to get the message across that domestic abuse would not be tolerated and that individuals suffering such abuse would be encouraged to speak up and would be listened to by all services involved
 - Once an instance of domestic abuse had been identified arrangements were in place to ensure that the individual(s) concerned were referred to the most appropriate agency to deal with the specific issues raised. Training had been put in place to ensure that all agencies involved were aware of such arrangements
 - Arrangements had been put in place to ensure that all employees entering domestic premises (such as those in Berneslai Homes Construction Services) had been trained in spotting instances of domestic abuse
 - It was reported that a conference had been held in 2018 for local businesses/employers. The aim of this had been to raise the awareness of domestic abuse, to check whether or not employers had the necessary policies and protocols in place and to ensure that they knew what action to take in the event that an instance of domestic abuse was discovered

- The ways in which children and young people could report issues was outlined. It was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken with schools on this and arising out of this, reference was made to the work of young person's domestic abuse advisors
- Reference was made to the successful bid made to the Ministry of Justice for capital funding of £250,000 to develop a new women's centre with accommodation which was to be developed in collaboration with partners and providers:
 - The matched funding arrangements were touched upon and the centre would provide access for women to drop in to talk about issues including those emanating from the 'Speak Up' Campaign.
 - Women would be able to access counselling and training opportunities.
 - It was also hoped that a social enterprise could perhaps provide a crèche and a café.
 - An additional four units of accommodation were to be provided to ensure that women subject to domestic abuse had access to a place of safety
 - No specific site had been identified, however, it would be on a good bus route and the site would be chosen in liaison with the Police
- In response to specific questioning regarding hours of operation, it was reported that South Yorkshire Police were always available for victims of abuse and arrangements would be made for overnight accommodation for victims and their families. Concerns were expressed about financial restrictions and questions were asked as to whether or not appropriate responses would continue to be made prior to an issue escalating. In response Acting Detective Inspector Sheekey outlined the ways in which calls were logged and triaged to respond. She went on to describe the steps that could be taken as a result of any complaints received about inappropriate response times so that lessons could be learned. She pointed out, however, that after investigation, not all response times were judged to be inappropriate and that each request for response was taken on its own merits. It was noted that alongside the Women's Centre, a telephone helpline was available until 11.00 pm seven days a week – this enabled services the opportunity to identify where vacancies were available across the country and ensure that victims did not have to wait unduly for support
- The work of the Independent Domestic Abuse Service (ISAS) was referred to and the rationale for adopting this arrangement was outlined. It was particularly noted that other Authorities were now looking to the Barnsley approach as a model of excellence. Sheffield City Council had also awarded the contract to IDAS and this service was to be rolled out from 1st April, 2019
- The difficulties associated with referrals from the LGBTQ section of the community were referred to. It was noted that the service worked hard to understand barriers that prevented people from accessing services they required
- Reference was made to the way in which the quality and equity of provision could be ensured bearing in mind that referrals could come from a variety of sources
- The service was working hard to change 'hearts and minds' so that domestic abuse was seen to be perceived with the same stigma and as offensive as 'drink driving'

- The Committee were pleased to hear that Claire Throssell has become an ambassador for IDAS. Her relentless campaigning had come about as a result of her abusive husband killing her two sons in a house fire in Penistone. She was also helping to raise the Speak Up campaign through the media.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report be noted and that witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution and for answering Members questions; and
- (ii) that training be provided for Elected Members on Domestic Abuse.

54 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in Barnsley

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Rachel Dickinson – Executive Director - People
 Mel John-Ross – Service Director – Children’s Social Care & Safeguarding
 Margaret Libreri – Service Director, Education, Early Start & Prevention
 Councillor Cheetham – Cabinet Member for People (Safeguarding)
 Councillor Saunders – Cabinet Support Member for People (Safeguarding)

The Executive Director People introduced this item by explaining that following an Ofsted Inspection of Children’s Services on the 8th – 19th October, 2018 Barnsley’s Children’s Social Care (CSC) Services had been judged to be ‘good’ across all areas with only four recommendations being made. She asked to place on record her thanks to all staff and to Elected Members for their dedication and hard work in helping to secure such a fantastic achievement.

The Committee received a joint report of the Executive Director Core Services and Executive Director People summarising the main findings of the Inspection and the full Ofsted report was appended.

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

- In response to specific questioning, the Committee was informed of the changes introduced to the Service’s IT system to ensure that it was fit for purpose. It was noted that this was a bespoke service tailored to the needs of Barnsley and was also used by Stockport. Staff within Children’s Social Care Services had all benefited from the provision of new devices so that they could now work flexibly and remotely and this had made a significant difference to efficient working practices
- It was noted that there were strong multi-agency partnerships within the Borough which ensured good participation at child protection conferences, with children offered the opportunity to have advocates to support them. There was political commitment and financial investment and self-evaluation showed that leaders knew their services well. There was also a commitment to protect the budget as well as continued investment
- Work was now progressing on the four outstanding Ofsted recommendations
 - The Action Plan had been prepared and submitted

- Recommendations for improvement were being managed and progressed within the Service Improvement Plan
- Work was progressing within the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board which had agreed a strategy and resource allocation to address all forms of child exploitation which included appropriate training
- Risk assessments were being undertaken to ensure that there was a better understanding of the wider risks to which young people were exposed in the community including the timeliness, appropriateness and quality of return to home interviews in situations where children were reported missing from home and in care. It was anticipated that a preliminary report on the findings of meetings held with appropriate staff and agencies would be available by the 8th March, 2019
- It was reported that significant progress had been made in the timeliness of the Section 47 assessments. Arising out of the discussion, reference was made to recent audits which indicated that in relation to Private Fostering, no children were seen to be at risk of harm and that the appropriate arrangements were robust
- Members in expressing their congratulations to the Executive Director People and her staff for their hard work and dedication in the progress that had been made since the previous Ofsted inspection questioned how this momentum was to be maintained.
 - The Executive Director commented that this was a team effort and needing to ensure that the right staff were in post
 - She commented that there was a tried and tested architecture in place to ensure continuous improvement both within the Authority and with Partners
 - In relation to future resourcing, she commented that the Authority had invested, and continued to invest additional resources into the Service and it was important in the future to look to protect those resources notwithstanding the fact that difficult decision would have to be made
 - Early intervention was key and the benefits of this could be demonstrated by the way that services had been shaped and developed from 2015/16 in relation to Children's Centres and the shaping of Family Support Services
 - In addition she felt that the scrutiny process was key in ensuring developments took place and continued into the future as the Committee acted both as a critical friend but also held her and her staff to account and offered significant challenge
- It was noted that Ofsted had determined that children and families benefit from a good early help offer. The Service had been redesigned to be delivered through a family centre 0–19 model and this ensured a more equitable distribution of targeted support at the heart of communities and where it is most needed. It was also noted that a Select Committee report recently published indicated that the first 1,000 days of a child's life were critical to that child's success and this view was shared by witnesses present. It was felt important, therefore, that despite difficult funding decisions, work with early years should be continued as this was deemed to be critical. The Executive Director reported on the significant progress made by the authority to ensure that children were 'ready for school' and the benefits of this could not be overestimated. She commented that Barnsley had a network of support for families in early years and beyond. Arising out of this discussion, reference was also made to the impact of good early help services

- Ofsted had commented on how Barnsley schools worked with other services and agencies to improve the safety and educational outcomes of pupils. There was, however, always a need to improve the outcomes of vulnerable pupils (those with SEND, Free School Meals, Pupil Premium etc.) and the way in which the Service used available data to measure successful outcomes was outlined
- In response to detailed questioning the Executive Director outlined how the Service had addressed gaps in mental health provision through a respectful challenge to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This had contributed to an improvement in timeliness for access to the child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) initial assessment, and senior managers from both services who were jointly tracking timeliness of interventions offered by CAMHS. Some children in care who required direct mental health provision and support had not been receiving a timely enough service for treatment and following appropriate meetings between all involved it was pleasing to note that performance was now continually improving. The CCG was keen to ensure the best possible service locally and had commissioned a review into the work of CAMHS, the outcome of which would be key in driving performance improvements
- Arising out of the above, reference was made to pre-birth and milestone assessments and the work undertaken by Public Health Nursing and Early Help Services in ensuring that appropriate support was in place was outlined
- The support to care leavers and those leaving education was outlined. It was noted that a National Government Advisor had been impressed with the services available and Barnsley had been held up as an example of good practice. It was essential that services were individually tailored for the child/leaver concerned and that they were appropriately supported so that they could fulfil their aspirations
- The Executive Director commented that an aspirational audit had been undertaken of Y9 pupils in care. It was important to ensure early intervention, to engage pupils in the curriculum and with school, to improve the quality and access to post 16 education and improve the care leaver experience by providing links to both education and employment offers
- Questions were asked about Social Worker retention and recruitment given that some authorities appeared to be increasing the number employed. The Executive Director commented that Ofsted had commented on the good work undertaken by Social Workers. The majority of Social Workers lived and worked in Barnsley and were proud to work for the Authority. They also felt valued and supported. The Authority undertook an annual Social Worker 'health check' and over three years there had been significant improvements in provision. Their casework had been reviewed and the workload was now manageable, however, the workforce would be kept under review to ensure that there were sufficient staff in post

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution and for answering Members questions.

55 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item because of the likely disclosure of exempt

information as defined by Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

56 Children's Social Care Performance Report

The Following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Mel John-Ross - Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
Cllr Saunders - Cabinet Support Member – People (Safeguarding)

The Service Director introduced this item and gave an overview of performance indicators for children's safeguarding and social care up to the end of December 2018. It was reported that although there are no significant changes and performance remains good across children's social care, there are some seasonal and monthly fluctuations. Barnsley's rating for adoption is 'outstanding' but there was always more to do.

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

- The proportion of Section 47 investigations converting to child protection conferences had decreased notably and was the lowest ever reported, however, the number of investigations ending in no further action had increased to the highest level reported
- It was noted that reporting on the timeliness of initial child protection conferences were within 15 days and was now in line with the national definition
- The number of children in care were still relatively low compared to other authorities
- Information was provided with regard to a recently introduced performance measure embedded into the CSC Monthly Reporting Process in relation to Visits to Care Leavers which indicated that performance improvements had been made. There were no reasons to believe that this would not be sustained
- Reference was made to the success of the Christmas dinner for Care Leavers and to the benefits this had made particularly for the morale of such leavers. It would be nice if this could be repeated this year

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note the report, and
- (ii) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution.