

## Children's Standing Overview Group

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The Children's Standing Overview Group (CSOG) of the People's Scrutiny Committee meets bi-monthly to review performance/service matters relating to children's safeguarding and social care services respectively.

At the last session on the **27 February 2017**, with Councillors Randall Johnson (Chair), Dewhirst, Hannaford and Hannan in attendance, the following issues were raised:

### Early Help and the MASH

- The MASH is undertaking a review with Early Help to become more locality aligned to mirror the locality structure plan of Children's Services.
- Thresholds and their standardisation. A key aspect of the MASH improvement plan is assisting partner agencies' understanding of the appropriate level of concern to pass to MASH. Good progress has been made, but there is more still to do.
- The weakness in the multi-agency Early Help system is a key risk.

### Early Help for Troubled Families: From programmes to system

- The Troubled Families Programme has brought structure and clarity to the system.
- There is no issue identifying troubled families (there is a broad range of criteria with all families that experience risk and need); it is getting the necessary level of response. Key is getting partners such as teachers and health practitioners to look at the underlying causes rather just the presenting symptoms.
- Early Help is now more high profile across the system. Professionals and organisations still need to be better held to account for their contribution.

### Delivery Plan for Devon's Children's Partnership

- The 5 key shifts that the Delivery Plan highlights are a locality based model; a strengthening of the Early Help system; an integration of services; bespoke and personalised services and asset or strengths based practice.
- The responsibilities of the Devon Children, Young People and Families Alliance is being merged with the Devon Safeguarding Children's Board, with the intention of having a streamlined governance structure in place by summer 2017.
- Work will start in June 2017 on the new strategy overarching strategy for Children's Services.
- Importance of the volunteer strategy, and the need to bring a new resource into teams around a child.
- Devon must continue to develop the quality of its social work moving forward.

### Children's Services: Re-procurement of Integrated Children's Services

- Integrated Children's Services has undertaken a lot of positive work but is not well integrated with education and social care. This is recognised and officers are hopeful that this deeper system integration will begin to develop.
- Concern about cuts to residential short breaks, and the anxiety this could cause parents.

- Referral to treatment time is an issue. Families need to access support when they need it and not wait for diagnosis.

### **Performance: Children's Social Work and Child Protection**

- Officers are looking at anomalies, understanding the details of the various performance indicators in a much more analytical way. Work is being undertaken with frontline managers and individuals, engaging staff in how to improve outcomes.
- The fall in the level of Early Help engagement is worrying, however the data should improve when the new recording system 'Right for Children' system goes live on 1 April 2017, along with the Early Help assessment and planning tools which are being piloted to also go live in April 2017. The new Council needs to ensure adequate focus is given to this crucial area of work.
- Need to ensure children are not taken off Child Protection Plans too early before the risks are fully addressed.
- 3+ placements is a key indicator for Children's Social Work. The Corporate Parenting Board is looking closely at this, with the importance of sustaining placements recognised right across the system.
- Need to improve work relating to the voice of the child.
- Concern about multi-agency attendance and input at Child Protection meetings.
- Officers agreed that it would be helpful under the new Council for the children's scrutiny function to continue with the standing overview group structure.

**Cllr Sara Randall Johnson**  
**Chair**