

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 September 2019

Present:-

Councillors R Hannaford (Chair), D Sellis, S Aves, F Biederman, C Channon, J Hawkins, L Hellyer, R Hosking, T Inch, A Saywell and C Mabin

Apologies:-

Councillors J Brazil, I Chubb, G Gribble, M Squires and A Connett

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillor J McInnes

* **132** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2019 be signed as a correct record.

* **133** **Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Mrs Mayes who was attending the meeting in her capacity as a Co-opted Member of the Council's Standards Committee to observe and monitor compliance with the Council's ethical governance framework

* **134** **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

* **135** **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from members of the public.

* **136** **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

RESOLVED that the current Work Programme be approved subject to inclusion of the following topics for future consideration:

- Changes to Children's Community Health Services (Children & Family Health Devon)
- Monitoring of the Local Area Written Statement of Action for SEND
- Best Start in Life and integration with Children's Centres
- Recruitment/retention of qualified Public Health Nurses
- Impact of Eclipse (new social care system)
- Improving Scrutiny engagement with local partnerships and boards
- Children & Young People's Plan (refresh)

* **137** **Children & Young People's Involvement in Services**

(Councillor McInnes attended in accordance with Standing Order 25(1) and spoke to this item at the invitation of the Committee)

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Commissioning of Children's Services (CS/19/25) which gave an overview of the activities that promoted the involvement, engagement and participation of children and young people and plans for improvement.

Recent inspection outcomes from SEND, focused visits, peer reviews and the Council's own review showed that participation and engagement currently happened across the partnership and children's services in pockets well, but this was not systematic, routine or embedded. A significant increase to the participation team had recently been agreed in local authority and partnership resources to enable the team to reach an increased number of young people from a wider demographic.

The Report set out the following areas of participation and engagement that were currently underway and how they would be developed, namely:

- Children's involvement in SEND services
- Parents' involvement in SEND
- Children Looked after and Care Leavers
- Mind of My Own
- Advocacy Services
- Young Carers

The Appendix to the Report set out the health check of current activity against the Hear by Rights programme, with some work already planned and underway where the initial self-assessment had identified gaps or areas of development.

In discussion, points included:

- the Advocacy services described was the contract providing support through child protection or children in care plans, and not through Devon Information Advice Service which supported the families of children with special education needs;
- it was hoped to see the impact of the additional resources received into the participation team in around 12/18 months' time;
- the participation team planned to work with communities and the voluntary sector to build mechanisms for young people to engage locally;
- the Bright Spots survey was Devon-specific, but questions had been set nationally;
- future action plans would include dates for proposed actions; and
- the Chief Officer undertook to circulate to Members information on the Champions for Change fund day in September.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hannaford, **SECONDED** by Councillor Sellis and

RESOLVED that Members of the Committee work with Officers to improve mechanisms for children and young people and parents to engage with Scrutiny, including exploring the potential for a 'Young People's Children's Services Committee'.

* 138

Young Carers & Young Carers Support Services

The Committee received the Report of the head of Commissioning of Children's Services which gave an overview of Young Carers and the Young Carers' offer. It described how young carers were a vulnerable group of children often putting themselves and their childhood to one side to support the needs of a parent or relative.

Nationally, Young Carers were reported to have worse outcomes than their peers in education, physical and mental wellbeing impacted by caring roles. As a result, the National Carers Action Plan was launched in 2018 and the NHS announced in June a 'care for young carers' offer in GP surgeries designed to help young carers who might be 'hidden', unpaid and under the age of 16.

Members noted that the Young Carers Support Service contract with Westbank Community Health and Care (Devon Carers) had been in place for 18 months and the annual review held in June 2019 showed an increased reach from the service with good awareness raising in schools and an increasing number of young people receiving one to one support.

Discussion points included:

- that the recommendations of a previous Scrutiny task group report that looked at Carers, in particular Children Carers, should be reviewed;
- that no referrals had been received from domestic abuse, adult substance misuse, young people's substance misuse or adult learning disability services;
- the countywide reach of Devon Carers at Westbank;
- encouragement for all schools to have a Young Carers Champion;
- concern that Young Carers may be vulnerable to bullying; and
- the Key Priorities as listed in the appendix to the Report was last updated in July and was due to be reviewed September 2019.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hannaford, **SECONDED** by Councillor Saywell and

RESOLVED that a visit to Westbank Community Centre be arranged to allow Members to meet with young carers and those providing the support service to them.

* 139

Commissioning Liaison Member - Autumn briefing

Members considered the Report of the Commissioning Liaison Scrutiny Member (CS/19/23) updating the Committee on current and future children's services commissioning activity. This included continuing priority areas in Placement Sufficiency, Support for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability, and Joint Commissioning.

The Report outlined the Commissioning Programme for the year ahead where activity was undertaken across the Commissioning cycle throughout the year. Scheduled to be looked at in the Summer/Autumn 2019 was Learner Support Services and Short Breaks. Activities launched in the Summer and concluding in the Autumn 2019 with contract award over the Winter of 2019/20 included Residential children's homes block contract tender; Youth service tender; and Information advice and guidance service.

The Report also highlighted the first quarter outcomes for services tendered in 2018/19, for example, Supported Living Options Homelessness prevention, Independent Sector Fostering Services and Children's Centres.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hannaford, **SECONDED** by Councillor Sellis and

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Commissioning Liaison member work with the Head of Children's Commissioning to consider how best Scrutiny Members can input into the recommissioning of Learner Support Services and Short Breaks going forward; and
- (b) that a Scrutiny review be established to consider the Sufficiency of Children's Residential Care (including Crisis Care) comprising Councillors Biederman (Chair), Saywell and Hosking.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 4.15 pm