

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 20 June 2019

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)
Councillor(s): M Hall, D Bradford, C Buckley, L Caffrey,
B Clelland, C Davison, S Gallagher, L Kirton, K McCartney,
E McMaster, M Ord, I Patterson and J Reay

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Tim Kynoch and Jill Burrell

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): P Craig, S Craig, R Oxberry and N Weatherley
Co-opted Member(s): Maveen Pereira and Cheryl Lain

F1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Craig, Councillor P Craig, Councillor Oxberry, Councillor Weatherley, Cheryl Lain and Maveen Pereira.

F2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - The minutes of the last meeting held on 4 April 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

F3 CONSTITUTION

RESOLVED - The Committee agreed the constitution of the Committee and the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair for the current municipal year.

F4 ROLE AND REMIT

RESOLVED - That the remit and terms of reference be noted.

F5 FOETAL ALCOHOL UPDATE

The Committee received an update report on the work underway to review the diagnoses of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

It was reported that it had been identified that there was some potential diagnosis without the relevant diagnostic criteria being clearly evidenced, therefore some children and young people were recalled for face to face appointments with

clinicians. The focus of the recalls were on LAC, this was done through their Review Health Assessment.

The figures provided were as at April 2019, showing how many cases were reviewed and how many of those were rescinded or confirmed.

The point was made that previously the Committee had been told that there was practically an epidemic in relation to FASD, but now this seems to have been scaled down. It was confirmed that from Dr Palmer's database not all of the cases fulfilled the diagnostic criteria and there was a lot of cases with missing evidence. It was confirmed that, of the 223 cases, 56 appointments were offered to LAC, this was due to clinician capacity, therefore there still remains 160 cases that are not known as of yet.

It was questioned as to whether there is any impact on Education Care and Health Plans for those young people who have had their diagnosis rescinded. It was noted that for these cases there are still additional needs however FASD cannot be evidenced. For the cases with no FASD evidenced but additional needs clinicians have referred them for such things as ADHD and learning disabilities.

It was questioned what the situation is in relation to those cases with outstanding information. It was confirmed that some young people have had genetics bloods taken and this can take eight weeks to progress. For some cases further discussions are ongoing with Social Workers, attempts have also been made to contact birth mothers, however to date nobody has got back in touch.

The review is ongoing until January 2020 when all Annual Review Health Assessments will be complete. Initially the upper end of the age scale has been a priority.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the report and the progress to date be noted.
 - (ii) That a further update be brought back to Committee at a later date.

F6 YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE

Committee received a report on the Youth Justice Service key priorities for 2018/19 and performance from April 2018 to date.

In terms of progress over the past year it was reported that the contract to provide the Liaison and Diversion scheme within Gateshead has been awarded to Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (NTW). The impact of this is being awaited and it was requested that information on this be brought back to a future meeting.

The Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM) was awarded and approved for a further three years. Adverse childhood experiences are routinely discussed in assessment and the Trauma Recovery training is planned for March 2020. This

training will help staff to incorporate appropriate responses to trauma within young person plans.

It was reported that the number of first time entrants is decreasing, the figures are positive in terms of the regional figure. There are two young people in custody, this is below the Northumbria PCC regional average and the national average.

In terms of re-offending the Gateshead figure is below the Northumbria PCC and national averages. Of this cohort 75% of re-offences were committed by males and 25% committed by female offenders.

The proven offences were by young people aged 12-18 years old, they were predominantly by 17 year olds with the average age of offender being 15.5 years old. There were no offenders aged 10 or 11. In relation to the type of offending the majority were public order and violence against the person, which includes common assault up to serious harm. Criminal damage is the next highest offence.

It was reported that the You Only Live Once (YOLO) project is being funded nationally by the Home Office to tackle knife crime. This has just been launched across the Northumbria Police Force area. The Youth Justice Service is working with Newcastle and Sunderland Football clubs, referrals are made into the project and the young person is assessed and referred into either football club to be mentored to reduce the risk of offending. It was pointed out that the funding is very recent and already a number of young people have accessed the project. It was requested that further information be brought back to Committee on the YOLO project.

Committee was advised that Susan Butler, Youth Justice Service Manager has now retired and Linda Kelly is now the new Service Manager.

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2019-2020 will be submitted to the Ministry of Justice in August. This will set the proposals for the year ahead and the key priorities for the Youth Justice Service.

It was questioned whether any of the cases of violence against the person was towards parents or carers. It was noted that this information would be sought and reported back, it was also acknowledged that Gateshead is a forerunner in terms of child to parent violent programmes. Gateshead has recognised this risk where many local authorities do not.

It was also questioned as to whether a high proportion of offenders are LAC. It was noted that LAC are slightly over represented, however benchmarking data tell us that the proportion of LAC who offend in Gateshead is not as high as in our Statistical Neighbour and North East neighbour authorities on average, also work is ongoing with partners around joint planning for these young people. There are also models of restorative work with young people where the information is being used to develop disruption plans across the borough if other young people are involved. In addition, Northumbria Police do a 10 point check and look at reparative work to keep young people out of the criminal justice system.

RESOLVED - (i) That the Committee receive regular updates on the

key priorities.

- (ii) That the Committee's comments on the report be noted.
- (iii) That updates be provided on the areas of work identified by the Committee.

F7 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - MAKING GATESHEAD A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES - END OF YEAR ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY 2018/19

Committee received a report on the year end assessment of performance and delivery for the period 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019 in relation to the Council's Thrive agenda.

For children and families 31 overarching strategic indicators have been identified to measure performance in respect of the Thrive agenda, 19 of which have improved (58%). The indicators fall under the following three thrive pledges;

- Put people and families at the heart of everything we do
- Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
- Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead

In terms of the 'putting people and families at the heart of everything we do' pledge it was reported that Complex Child in Need and Wrap around service has now embedded a model for safeguarding teenagers. This is showing positive signs of how the service is working with these young people. Another achievement is that the service restructure within Assessment and Intervention has reduced the number of potential changes in Social Workers. All three actions identified in the last report have all progressed as anticipated.

Actions for the next six months in relation to this pledge include the development of forums within Children and Families Service to gain views of families, and using online tools to gather families feedback for service improvement within Early Help.

Under the 'tackle inequality so people have a fair chance' pledge improvements have been made for six of the indicators but declined for seven. It was noted that reporting and oversight of children's issues through the Health and Wellbeing Board has improved. Public Health has been working on tackling smoking in pregnancy through a task and finish group. Training has also been undertaken to schools to ensure children and young people with hearing and vision impairment can be supported to have equal access to the curriculum. It was reported that the development of the audit process within Children and Families and Early Help and the writing of plans will continue to be developed following the feedback from the last Ofsted inspection. In terms of work over the next six months this will focus on the updating of core practice standards for Social Work and Early Help staff to build

consistency of practice for families.

In relation to the 'work together to fight for a better future for Gateshead' improvements have been made for all seven indicators. Following service restructures and reviews this has resulted in empowering families through an improved Child in Need offer. There has also been a safe reduction in the number of children who are looked after and subject to a Child Protection Plan. It was acknowledged that there is still more to do regarding the development of the Domestic Abuse Service, however the service has received favourable feedback at the last Ofsted inspection. In relation to the actions for the next six months it is proposed that the service builds on the work from the Team Around the School model, linking mental health professionals to schools. Work will also be undertaken with Adult Mental Health Services to see how work with parents who need specialist services can be improved. There will also be the development of the Reducing Parental Conflict programme.

Further information was requested with regards to the decline in the Progress 8 scores of vulnerable children. It was agreed that further information would be sought on this and reported back.

Committee was concerned at the decline in the number of children being offered a place at their preferred primary school, which is often due to outside decisions around house building. In particular the impact on poverty when people do not obtain a place at their local school. It was agreed that this question would be raised with the service and reported back.

It was questioned whether there are any cost implications in relation to the reduction of LAC. It was explained that these families will still be receiving services, albeit not in the Child Protection framework, therefore resources are being used differently at the edge of care. A report on the edge of care work is due back to Committee in the Autumn.

It was questioned what is happening now the Young Carers Contract has ceased. It was confirmed that support is still available through Gateshead Carers and Crossroad Carers.

Committee was concerned about the level of smoking in expectant mothers. It was reported that a lot of work is ongoing with the early help team, 0-19 public health nursing team and maternity services. A Task and Finish Group has been set up to look at what other support can be provided to expectant mothers. A number of the 0-19 team have been trained as smoking cessation advisors and training in very brief advice has been offered to the early help team. It was noted that there has been a reduction in the figures for quarter 3 for 2018/19 when compared with the same quarter for 2017/18 but this is not necessarily a trend. Committee requested that a further report on smoking in expectant mothers be brought back to a future meeting, looking also at whether there is any correlation with low birth weight.

The decline in the reduction of excess weight in 4-5 year olds was raised as a concern. It was acknowledged that the increase equates to 11 children and that work is in progress by the lead 0-19 service around breastfeeding and healthy weight and nutrition. There is also the whole system approach to healthy weight

which has been agreed by the Committee.

Committee requested that further information be brought back to the next meeting around the declined educational indicators, when there is an officer from education in attendance.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) Committee was satisfied that the activities undertaken during October 2018 to March 2019 are achieving the desired outcomes, in making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives.
 - (ii) The areas noted above were identified by Committee as requiring more detail and further scrutiny.
 - (iii) Committee noted that Cabinet will consider a composite performance report at their meeting on 16 July 2019.

F8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the work programme report setting out the provisional work programme for the Committee for the year 2019/20.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) Committee noted the provisional programme.
 - (ii) Committee noted that further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.