

**FAMILIES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

18 June 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Bernadette Oliphant

Councillors: Adams, Caffrey, Clelland, S Craig, J
Graham, Hawkins, McNally and Ronchetti

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Malcolm Brown, Ray Tolley, John Wilkinson and Jill Steer

F1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McCartney, Simcox, and Carolyn Duffy.

F2 Minutes

RESOLVED - The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2015 be approved as a correct record.

F3 Constitution

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

It was noted that the vacancy for Primary Governor Representative from the Primary Sector was filled by Jill Steer, subject to approval by Council in July.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

F4 Role and Remit

A report was received outlining the remit and terms of reference of the Committee.

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

F5 Safeguarding Children – LSCB Annual Report and Plans

The Committee received the annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and a presentation was given by the independent Chair of the Board. It was noted that the LSCB is a statutory multi-agency partnership, it is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure the effectiveness of what they do.

Gateshead LSCB meets six times per year and is independently chaired by Gary Hetherington. The LSCB is also supported by a Business Planning Group and eight sub-groups. Production of the annual report is a statutory requirement and, as well as Families OSC, is shared with Cabinet, Children's Trust Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The findings of the annual report are used as a benchmark to inform the needs for the following year.

In terms of performance it was reported that there was one Serious Case Review published, an Action Plan was put in place and all actions have been completed. It was also noted that the LSCB made progress against its priority of Leadership, Challenge and Learning, through an inquiry into the increased numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans for neglect. The LSCB also carried out a section 11 audit of partner performance. It was reported that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) training was commissioned by the LSCB and training was delivered to over 2,500 young people and 500 professionals. It was pointed out that CSE does happen in Gateshead despite there not being the same high profile as in some other areas, so the LSCB invested in training in this area to ensure practitioners are vigilant and up to date and that young people are also aware of the risks and types of CSE which exist. Safeguarding e-learning was launched and all partners have been encouraged to partake, Councillors can also access this (through the LSCB website: www.gateshead.gov.uk/lscb). It was reported that strengthened links have been made between those young people vulnerable to CSE and missing from home episodes. Over the last year it was noted that the Child Death Review Sub Group was notified about the deaths of 12 children, each of these deaths have been scrutinised individually.

In terms of partner agency activity over the last year, it was confirmed that 100% of GPs have completed safeguarding training and the CQC described Gateshead CCG as 'solid' in relation to safeguarding. It was reported that there have been a number of high profile child abuse, rape and domestic violence investigations across the area and this has resulted in sentences equalling over 347 years imprisonment. In addition, the Gateshead Health NHS was involved in a historic investigation as part of the 'Savile Inquiry', however there was found to be no evidence of abuse in Gateshead.

The Committee was advised that 100% of schools have now signed up to Operation Encompass, this offers support to children who witness domestic abuse at home. It was also reported that Gateshead College has delivered online internet safety training to over 1300 students aged 16-18.

The Committee was provided with the data collected over the last year. It was reported that there were 6% fewer children made subject to Child Protection Plans, however this follows a large spike in the previous year. 67% of the Child Protection Plans were due to neglect. There were 864 episodes of young people missing from home, 66% of these were by looked after children. There were 8631 'contacts' made to Children's Social Care, which was an increase on the previous year. It was confirmed that levels of re-referrals to Social Care remain low, this suggests that families are receiving the services

they need at the first point of contact. It was acknowledged that more early intervention is having a knock on effect and therefore it is less likely that a child or young person will return to care.

Louise Gill presented the LSCB Business Plan to the Committee, it was noted that a three year approach is taken in business planning and focussed inquiries are also carried out throughout this time. The three strategic principles of the LSCB are; leadership, challenge and learning and the three strategic objectives are;

- Protecting vulnerable children
- Preventing harm
- Improving outcomes

In terms of 'Leadership' it was reported that the LSCB will arrange an event to share learning on CSE across the region and develop a Communications Strategy, as well as reviewing local arrangements. It was noted that event will be held in October and there will be 500 professionals attending, to look at national issues around CSE and also local issues and learning from Operation Sanctuary. In relation to 'Challenge' a CSE inquiry will be held, work will be undertaken to build on the section 11 audit and contribute to this OSC's review of Child Protection. The LSCB will also focus on a range of other key issues such as GP's, CAMHS and 'legal highs'. In terms of 'Learning' the findings of the inquiry will be used to inform practice and develop the Learning and Improvement Framework. Work will also be undertaken to bring the voice of frontline staff into the LSCB.

It was noted that the LSCB will build on lessons from the Neglect Inquiry and also take a partnership approach to the implementation of the National Child Protection Information Sharing Project. Work will also continue in relation to building links with schools and reviewing approaches to areas such as self harm and various forms of exploitation.

It was suggested that the LSCB should look at the damage done by alcohol as related hospital admissions are up by 300% and some of these relate to young people and issues around licensed premises. It was noted that there is no mention of this in the forward plan as it is often left to Public Health or previously the youth service. It was confirmed that this issue has been the subject of conversations recently and alcohol is ever present in risk areas, for example; it is a contributory factor in domestic violence and a risk factor in CSE. It was pointed out that Gateshead LSCB is one of the few Boards that sits on the Licensing Sub-Group so actively engages in licensing discussions. It was also noted that leadership is important in this respect as there is the potential for different approaches and therefore a joint approach is needed to ensure common language is used. It was also confirmed that a presentation is planned for the LSCB in September around Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. It was pointed out that although there has been an increase in alcohol related hospital admissions, consumption has dropped by 13% and there are less young people drinking. It was suggested therefore that the increase in admissions is more likely to be due to women 50+ and men aged 60+ and

therefore not necessarily a licensing issue. It was acknowledged that there is validity in both arguments, however it was recognised that this remains an area of risk and the LSCB will still look at alcohol as a risk to children and young people, especially when linked to domestic violence and legal highs.

It was questioned whether safeguarding work is challenging in areas with a diverse mix of residents. It was acknowledged that there are challenges in these areas, especially in the North East where diversity is increasing faster than elsewhere. It was noted that the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) has carried out work with faith groups and worked with Newcastle around getting into education to break down barriers.

The increase of 233% in sexual offences committed by children was queried. It was confirmed that this increase is from a low baseline and it is thought that this is partly due to the increase in reporting, which is a national picture. In addition, it was acknowledged that sexual offences does not only relate to rape but includes things like 'sexting' which may be part of the reason why there has been such an increase. Work is ongoing with schools to raise awareness that this is illegal. The Committee was advised that the YOT has a Sexual Offences Dedicated Worker to work with young people in a preventative capacity. Following last year's Police inspection measures were put in place to prevent young people being at risk of perpetrating such offences.

Concerns were raised around the future employment of 16-18 year olds. It was confirmed that information around this cohort would be provided under the performance report and was not reported through the LSCB.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the OSC was satisfied that the LSCB is effective and the comments of the Committee be considered.
 - (ii) That the OSC noted the LSCB and partner agency performance for 2014-2015 and endorsed the proposed priorities.

F6 Vision 2030 and Council Plan – Delivery and Performance – Annual Report

The Committee received the year end assessment of performance and delivery of the Council Plan 2012-17. It was reported that there are no huge changes in terms of the overall picture across the 16 strategic outcome indicators.

It was reported that the percentage of mothers smoking at the time of delivery has increased slightly but has remained roughly stable and is better than the North East average. It was confirmed that the target of 17.5% will be changed to ensure this is more challenging, this is because change is not being effected on the 15% who are the most committed smokers. It was noted that

this indicator is linked to infant mortality, infant deaths under 1 year of age has increased from 4.2% to 4.4% in the period 2010-2012. This rate is above the North East and England average and it is hoped that additional focus will impact on these figures. It was also noted that infant mortality is associated with, amongst other things, teenage conceptions, the end of year figure for 2013/14 has shown a significant rise and this will be monitored going forward.

Breastfeeding initiation rates have increase by 2.4% from the previous year which takes Gateshead above the regional average. Therefore this is an improving picture, although it remains below the England rate.

The reduction of excess weight in primary school children in year 6 remains a challenge, there is an increase of 4%, which is higher than the North East average and significantly higher than the national average. It was acknowledged that this is a similar picture in terms of reception aged children. It is hoped that that the healthy school framework will impact on these figures in the near future.

It was reported that there is no new data in relation to positive emotional mental health amongst school age children, measured through under 18 hospital admissions for self-harm. Data from the QE Hospital shows that there were 77 'cause for concern' forms completed in relation to self-harm.

In relation to education and achievement and in particular readiness for school, it was reported that 57% of children achieved a good level of development at age 5. This is above the North East average and shows that the gap between disadvantaged children and others is narrowing and is actually narrower than the national gap. Key Stage 2 attainment has remained consistent and Gateshead is performing above the national and local average. GCSE attainment, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs A*-C including Maths and English, remains above the regional and national averages. However, GCSE attainment of Looked After Children has significantly reduced from last year and is below target. In light of this, access to a part time teacher will be available for looked after children to help them prepare for GCSE's, it is hoped that this will impact on next year's cohort. It was noted that the gap in attainment of young people in receipt of Free School Meals and those with Special Educational Needs has reduced over the last three years.

The Committee was advised that since 2011/12 there has been an increase in referrals to social care, however, this stabilised last year and has reduced this year. Just under 94% of referrals resulted in child in need assessments, 97.7% were carried out within timescales, 45 days. It was noted that referral rates decreased by 29% over the past year. At the end of March 2015 there were 258 children subject to Child Protection Plans and there have been a high percentage of unborns being subject to plans. Gateshead is the highest rate of unborns subject to plans but it was noted that this has been recognised as best practice and ensures proactive multi agency support through pregnancy.

It was reported that the number of looked after children has decreased since 2013, with 341 at the end of March 2015. This figure is higher than the national and regional average, although the North East average has risen. Stability of placements has improved, with 104 out of 132 in the same placement for two and a half years or more. It was noted that adoption timescales remains a challenge and the target set by Government has not been met. However, work has continued to place those harder to place children.

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) has performed well in terms of first time entrants to the youth justice system. However re-offending rates remain challenging at 37.9%. In order to address this, the YOT has developed a live tracker tool, which tracks the re-offences of 160 young people over a 12 month period. It is hoped this will enable interventions and more focussed resources to be applied to reduce re-offending going forward.

It was noted that NEET (not in education, training or employment) figures for 16-18 years olds was up as at the end of January 2015. The rate of 7.6% is above the national average 4.7% and the North East average of 7%. It was acknowledged that this increase may have been impacted on following the work carried out by Connexions to identify those 'not known' young people.

It was questioned what interventions are in place to support the attainment of Looked After Children. It was confirmed that the approach for this year has changed, therefore this acknowledges that last year's approach may not have been fully meeting the needs for that particular cohort. It was also noted that work is ongoing to ensure Personal Education Plans are more robust and plans are in place to support these. The Committee was advised that, as part of its review last year, attainment for this group of young people was looked at, therefore further analysis of these figures can be looked at in the monitoring report which will be brought to Committee in October. The point was made that this is within the control of the Council and therefore an impact should be made on attainment for the Council's looked after children. It was acknowledged that this performance is not good enough, however it was pointed out that a lot depends on the cohort of young people and this year participation was poor. It was suggested that the Committee should look at the resource deployed, as previously there was a full time Virtual Headteacher, this is now a part time position in addition to a reduced REALAC team. Concerns were raised that there is now significantly less resources to help Looked After Children and it was agreed that further information on this issue would be brought back to Committee in the monitoring report and would also be remitted to the Corporate Parenting OSC.

It was queried why the target for percentage of mothers smoking at the time of delivery was not met. It was confirmed that this target has been met (this was an error) but there is further work to be done to ensure a more challenging target is in place going forward.

The point was raised that Children's Centre reach figures has reduced again even though there has been spend on increasing the reach through a one off project. It was acknowledged that some work is expected to continue and officers will be maintaining a focus on this.

It was questioned whether there are problems with home educated children and young people in terms of their contact with the Council. It was confirmed that there is additional work ongoing around making in-roads with these children, however there is no right to see them. There is only limited action that can be taken, support is offered however not all choose to take that up. Ofsted are aware of the children who are home schooled and expect to know the Council's offer in relation to those children.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Families OSC considered with the exception of performance around LAC educational attainment, the activities undertaken at year end are achieving the desired outcomes in the Council Plan 2012-17.
 - (ii) That further information be brought back to this OSC in relation to progress in this area and the resources currently being deployed.as part of monitoring the implementation of its Review of Educational Attainment recommendations. This information to also be reported to the Corporate Parenting Sub-OSC.
 - (iii) That the Families OSC agreed that the report be referred to Cabinet on 14 July 2015, with the Committee's recommendations, for their consideration.

F7 Five Year Targets

The Committee received a report outlining the proposed service targets for 2015/16 to 2019/20. The proposed targets were outlined and it was suggested that the GCSE target should be more aspirational, however it was noted that the goalposts have moved due to the possible changes to the curriculum.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee agreed the proposed 5-year targets set for the SOI and agreed they be referred to Cabinet for approval.
 - (ii) That Committee agreed that the report be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

F8 OSC Review – Child Protection in Gateshead – Scoping Report

The scoping report for this year's review was presented to Committee. It was felt it was timely to look at safeguarding and child protection this year. It was noted that the review will look at the child protection system from start to finish, including assessment, referral, child protection meetings, CP Plans and removal of children.

It was noted that the evidence sessions will aim to help the Committee understand the framework, how risks are managed and will include anonymous cases. It will aim to explain how the system work, the involvement of children and young people.

The recommendations of the review will inform the work of the LSCB in terms of how it oversees the whole system.

It was questioned whether there would be any scope for a site visit as part of the evidence gathering during the review. It was acknowledged that this may be a challenge in relation to this review, however officers would consider this and perhaps the possibility of looking at projects on edge of care.

RESOLVED - That Committee agreed the scope, process and timescale as set out in the report.