

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING

Thursday, 17 January 2019

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Hall, S Craig, E McMaster, D Bradford,
C Davison, P Craig, L Kirton, K McCartney, C McHugh,
M Ord, R Oxberry and S Ronchetti

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Malcolm Hedley and Jeremy Cripps

CP48 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clelland, Haley and Weatherley.

CP49 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Minutes of the last meeting held on 11 October 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

CP50 MISSING FROM CARE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received the report providing an updated summary of missing from care episodes from December 2017 to November 2018 and an update regarding protection and monitoring of child sexual exploitation.

It was noted from the report that Gateshead Council has clear procedures regarding missing children and young people which incorporate a joint protocol between Northumbria Police and Children's Social Care. The procedures and data systems form part of the Local Safeguarding Children's oversight of arrangements. It was also highlighted that a designated officer is a legal requirement for each Local Authority and that this remit is delegated to the Service Manager for Looked After Children.

From the report the Committee were advised that an Initial THRIVE Assessment is carried out upon receipt of an incoming missing report. The Committee were also advised of the differences between a child classified as 'missing' or 'absent'.

It was highlighted from the report the different categories of risk that will apply to a missing case from high risk to low risk. It was also noted that there were 948 missing episodes in total between December 2017 and November 2018 of which 65% were

looked after children.

Within the report the Committee were provided with a summary of data to illustrate the number and frequency of missing and absent instances. The data provided also demonstrated that from May 2018 to October 2018 there was a significant amount of missing episodes from in house residential provision.

The Committee were advised that when a child is reported missing from home or care for the second or subsequent time in a six-month period or for a single episode lasting longer than 24 hours they are offered an Independent Return Interview. Within the report a breakdown of reasons a child has chosen to be absent or go missing was provided, reasons ranged from domestic violence to bullying.

It was asked what 'THRIVE' stood for in terms of the initial assessments that are carried out. It was advised that THRIVE stood for Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Evidence.

A question was asked as to whether foster carers receive any support when a child in their care who has gone missing. It was noted that foster cares do receive emotional support as it is required in addition to the ongoing support they will receive from their social worker. It was further noted that foster carers are involved with the child's plan and will attend TAF meetings.

It was suggested that children could be tracked via GPS devices to ensure that they were safe. It was noted that this would not be possible as it is seen as a deprivation of liberty. It was further noted that children need to be encouraged to be responsible for their own safety and that trust with carers needed to be maintained to develop this; officers commented that GPS tracking may hinder that trusting relationship.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee accepted the report and agreed to receive a further annual report in the next municipal year.

CP51 EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - REALAC VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report to provide an update on the work of the Virtual School.

From the report it was noted that as of November 2018 there were 415 Looked After Children (LAC) in Gateshead between the ages of 0-18 years old. It was highlighted that this total has greatly increased in the last year. It was noted that the largest number of LAC within the secondary sector in in Year 11, it was also noted that of all the LAC year groups those at Key Stage 4 were the most challenging in terms of behaviour and risk of permanent exclusion.

The report provided the Committee with a breakdown of the numbers of LAC within Gateshead schools; it was highlighted that the overall number of Gateshead LAC and LAC from other Local Authorities attending Gateshead secondary schools has

decreased from the previous academic year.

It was noted that there is a significant number of Gateshead LAC being educated out of the borough, it was further noted that some pupils are placed beyond the local region with children being placed in London, Cumbria, Scotland and other areas.

The Committee were advised that school attendance by LAC is good; it was highlighted that 27 LAC have achieved 100% attendance for 2017/18.

An overview of exclusions was provided from the report, the Committee were advised that in Gateshead REALAC has an agreement of no permanent exclusions with our schools with alternatives solutions being explored where necessary such as managed moves.

The Committee were provided with additional information in relation to teaching and learning from the report including information on the Letterbox Club, private tuition and learning mentor support. An overview of education psychology was also provided noting that a trainee Educational Psychologist has some time allocated to the REALAC team.

A breakdown of pupil outcomes from also provided from the report from Key Stages 1 – 4 in addition to a snapshot of post-16 progression routes. It was highlighted that a number of LAC have gone on to further education and work experience placements.

It was asked whether the Virtual School have a governing body as with traditional schools; it was noted that there is no formal governing body in place but that regular internal evaluations are carried out in addition to reports to OSC.

A question was asked with regard to Gateshead's performance against national standards; it was stated that this information would be available from March 2019.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee agreed the recommendations and noted the contents of the report.

CP52 GATESHEAD LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH TEAM - ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The Committee received the report providing a summary of the work and outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) and Young People Health Team in Gateshead 2017-18.

From the report an overview of the work and achievements of the Looked After Children's Health Team for Gateshead 2017-18 was provided. It was noted that the team received a total of 154 notifications of children and young people becoming looked after in 2017-18 of which 148 had IHA's completed.

Information relation to Review Health Assessments was provided within the report

highlighting that 94.3% of these were completed within 28 days of their due date which is an improvement of 85% for the previous year.

A summary of LAC Leaving Care was provided from the report. It was noted that the LAC Health Team are commissioned to provide services for Looked After Children up to their 18th birthday. It was further noted that Leaving Care Health Passports had been provided to 42 of the 42 young people recorded a leaving care; an improvement on the previous two years.

The Committee were provided with an overview of statistical returns from the report; it was noted that the team have achieved good returns as reported by the Local Authority in their SSDA 903 returns to Central Government. The report also detailed the figures with regard to Health Assessments, Dental Appointments and Immunisations.

The report provided the Committee with additional information in relation to:

- Children and Young Peoples Services
- Safeguarding
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Drug & Alcohol Services
- Sexual Health Services
- Adoption & Fostering

Within the report, the Committee were advised of the service priorities for 2018/19 as follows:

- The program of audit will be ongoing and improvements made from the recommendations made.
- To continue to develop work supporting the care leavers.
- The regional pathway for the diagnosis and management of children with FASD will be further developed. Review of the work that has already happened in Gateshead will feed into this process.
- To continue to work closely with the Local Authority to improve the overall timeframes for Initial Health Assessments.
- Support to Designated Doctor LAC who will be new in post.
- To monitor the updated process for SDQs and to use the score as part of the health assessment.
- Obtain feedback from young people regarding the leaving care health passport.

It was asked what support is in place to help LAC who are suffering from mental health problems; it was noted that a holistic approach is taken covering all health and wellbeing matters including lifestyle and sexual health.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive further updates at a future meeting.

CP53 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the report setting out the provisional work programme for the Corporate Parenting OSC for the municipal year 2018/2019.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee endorsed the OSC provisional work programme.

CP54 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

CP55 REGULATION 44 REPORT

The Committee received a report outlining Ofsted regulation 44 independent visits and inspection outcomes carried out in the Council's children's homes between October 2018 and December 2018.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.