

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

Thursday, 16 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)
Councillor(s): M Hall, C Buckley, P Craig, S Craig,
S Gallagher, M Ord, R Oxberry and Reay

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Nicola Barrass and Malcolm Hedley

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor(s): G Haley

CP18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Clelland, Cllr McMaster, Cllr Bradford and co-opted member Penny St Bernard.

CP19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

CP20 HEALTH OF LAC ANNUAL REPORT

Committee received a report on the work of the LAC Health Team in Gateshead for 2018-19.

During the year there were 172 notifications for Initial Health Assessments (IHA), 157 of which were completed. For those that were not completed this was due to the young person leaving care before an appointment could be arranged.

Compliance is measured by the completion of IHA's within 20 working days, for 2018-19 this was 62%, a decrease from 65% the previous year. This was due to cancelled appointments and delays in obtaining parental consent from Social Workers. However, at present the compliance rate is 81% and once consent has been received 96% of cases are seen within 20 working days.

In terms of Review Health Assessments (RHA) 94% of these were completed within 28 days of their due date which is a slight improvement on the previous year.

The Key Performance Indicators were reported on; 97% of Health Assessments were completed, compared to 90% nationally, 96% of dental appointments were carried out compared to 85% nationally and 95% of the LAC cohort were immunised compared to 87% nationally.

It was reported that 2 young people had pregnancies this year, one young person engaged with the Family Nurse Partnership and the other declined. It was noted that within the Leaving Care Service a support group was set up for these mothers, the work of the Family Nurse Partnership continues and is overseen by the Health Visitors. They are also monitored under their pathway plans up to the age of 25.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

CP21 MISSING FROM CARE ANNUAL REPORT

Committee received the annual missing from care report which informs on missing episodes between December 2018 and November 2019.

During the year there was 908 missing and absent episodes, 624 (68.7%) of which were from LAC, this is an increase from 65% the previous year. A small cohort of 159 young people went missing for over 24 hours, 63% of which were LAC.

It was reported that a significant number of missing episodes were from residential homes, however this was due to a small cohort of young people. In relation to residential homes, including out of borough provision, one young person went missing 27 times, another went missing 23 times and a further five young people went missing between 16 and 19 times each. This accounts for 136 or the 202 missing episodes.

In terms of foster care placements, the majority of missing episodes related to seven young people who have over 10 episodes each.

Return interviews are offered by experienced workers in order to identify any risks and to try and break the cycle of missing episodes. It was noted however that a lot of young people do not engage, 292 return interviews were offered during the year with only 155 (43 young people) taking up the offer, this is only an uptake of 53-58%. The intelligence received from these return interviews is fed into the MSET and information is shared across the service and various agencies. Work continues to reduce missing episodes with incentives being offered to young people, for example driving lessons.

It is anticipated that the statistics will remain similar due to the types of young people in care. There are concerns around young people meeting older men off the internet and work is underway to educate as well as preventative work. It was noted that there is a balance between keeping young people safe but also working with the networks each young person has.

It was questioned as to what happens if a young person goes missing to their birth families. It was confirmed that staff continue to try and work with families and in some cases the Police can issue Child Abduction Notices. It was noted that some families help and send the young person back to care.

It was queried whether there is any evidence that missing episodes are in relation to county lines. It was confirmed that there is no evidence at this point although this is

being monitored and that there are some young males who have been involved in drug running.

It was suggested that in the next report the last five years figures should be shown. It was agreed and noted that episodes are increasing year on year but still in relation to a similar number of young people.

Committee questioned what support Foster Carers receive when a young person in their care goes missing. It was noted that this is one of the reasons why foster care placements break down. Support is offered through Link Workers and the safe care policy can be adjusted. The point was made that those young people going missing regularly will end up in residential care.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the information be noted.
 - (ii) That the Missing from Care reports continue to be received on an annual basis.

CP22 EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT

Committee received the annual report on the Education of LAC, the Virtual School (VS) Report.

The priorities of the Virtual School were highlighted as;

- Personal Education Plans
- Pupil Premium Plus
- Pathways to work
- Pupil progress and Attainment data
- Teaching and learning
- Education enrichment
- Reducing exclusions

During the year the VS prevented a number of Permanent Exclusions through early intervention and close working with schools. In addition, the timely returns of Personal Education Plans continue to increase year on year, the quality of which has also improved.

It was noted that at present there are 398 LAC, 264 of whom are currently at school age. Currently years 6 and 10 have the largest number of LAC. 35% of the LAC have Special Educational Needs, this amounts to 132 pupils, 58 have an Education Health Care Plan and 77 receive school SEN support. The highest incidence is social, emotional and mental health need, followed by Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Pupil Premium Plus stands at £2,300 per pupil. This funds delivery of; individual private tuition and a VS teacher to help close the attainment gap, supporting the wider educational requirements, individual interventions and therapies and the funding of Educational Support Workers.

In relation to Personal Education Plans (PEPS), this is a statutory document that must be completed for every LAC. Returns of the PEP have increased and there has

been a greater attendance by the VS at these meetings, however there has been a decrease in attendance by Social Workers.

It was reported that 23 LAC have received fixed term exclusions over the year. The VS intervenes quickly to ensure this does not escalate to a permanent exclusion. Where necessary the VS can contribute to the cost of alternative provision, however could not fund a full time alternative, this would be funded through pupil premium.

In terms of supporting education, the VS has a 0.5 qualified teacher who provides support and plans individual one to one teaching and learning. There is also 1.5 Education Support Workers who provide support to encourage active engagement in education. The VS Head is also the SEND and Inclusion Consultant for Gateshead and provides advise and support regarding identifying barriers to learning and appropriate interventions.

It was reported that the VS continues to commission an Education Psychologist for one day per week. This provides child based therapy for building and enhancing attachment, self esteem, trust in other and joyful engagement in school. The Education Psychologist also offers training for schools on the effects of early trauma and attachment, positive feedback has been received for this service.

Committee was advised that priorities for the VS for 2019/20 is to focus on progress and performance and to use data to target those at risk of falling too far behind, therefore ensuring the gap does not widen.

In terms of results it was reported that in Key Stage one there was 36% achieved expected levels in writing, a decrease of 10%. 50% achieved expected levels in reading, a 4% increase, and 36% achieved expected levels in Maths which is a 5% increase. 14% of this cohort had SEN. In Key Stage 2, 57% achieved expected levels in writing, a 28% increase, 53% in reading, a 3% increase and 47% in maths which was a 14% increase. 47% of this cohort were SEN. In Key Stage 4 there were 38 LAC pupils in year 11, 29 achieved 1 GCSE at Grade 1 or above, 25 achieved 5 GCSE at Grade 1 or above, 11 achieved 5 passes at Grade 4 or above and 8 achieved 5 passes at Grade 4 or above including English and Maths.

In terms of post 16 progression the VS monitors the destinations of LAC. Progress to higher education for this cohort remains low and the VS continues to offer a bursary for year one of University.

Plans are in place to develop regular Network meetings for parents of previously LAC and adopted children and a training programme using the additional funding for 2019/20.

It was queried as to why the PEP return is only 87% when this is a statutory requirement. It was noted that returns vary, for example some schools do not return them and they have to be chased up. Work is ongoing to raise the profile of PEPS with the inspectorate group.

Committee was concerned with the attendance of Social Workers at PEPS meetings and it was agreed that this would be taken back to the Service.

It was reported that there is difficulty in keeping LAC in apprenticeships, however a coordinator post has been created which will be in place in the next couple of months. This role will look at recruitment and retention of apprentices and ensure support is in place for staff and the young person. It was acknowledged that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area. The point was made that it is important to change young people's opinions on apprenticeships as well as management opinion. The aim is to ensure all support is in place as every child is different.

RESOLVED - That the Committee considered the annual report and the recommendations contained in the report.

CP23 HOW WE ASSESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN CRISIS

Committee received a report looking at how services work with children and young people in crisis.

It was noted that an end to end pathway has been developed to support and assess young adults, this is known as the Supported Accommodation and Independent Living Service (SAILS) and is in relation to young people aged 16 to 25 years old. National guidance helped develop the Council's support pathways to accommodation to help support young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness and Care Leavers requiring accommodation.

Through the SAILS commissioned service various providers were successful in their bids for each lot;

- Changing Lives – Eslington House, assessment and emergency accommodation unit
- Home Group – Alexander Road and Poplar Crescent, shared living supported housing service and semi-independent living and floating support in five dispersed properties
- Barnardos – supported lodgings accommodation service for LAC / Care Leavers
- The Gateshead Housing Company - dispersed accommodation, 30 Taster flats with two hours floating support per week

In terms of Eslington House there has been a total number of 194 referrals from July 2018 to June 2019, 91% (175) of which were accepted and accessed services. 22 young people moved to the next stage, Alexander House. 46 young people moves outside the pathway, for example moved in with family or went in to custody. 35 young people were successfully referred to the Housing Company for taster flats. It was reported that out of the 194 who accessed support, 18 have been evicted from the service due to anti-social behaviour.

It was noted that young people enter Eslington House to be assessed over a period of 56 days. During this time the assessment will look at the skills as well as the goals of that young person.

28 of the 30 taster flats have been used and some have been taken on as permanent tenancies, therefore the Housing Company is looking at alternative flats

to be used as taster flats in the future. It was acknowledged that there are issues that flats are not readily available as it also depends on where the young person wants to be in relation to their support networks. It was reported that initially the service commissioned 30 flats, 15 for LAC and 15 for non-LAC, however it is more like 70% non-LAC who are utilising them, although LAC have priority.

It was questioned what floating support offers and it was confirmed that there are currently two posts offering four hours per week to the young person as and when needed.

It was also queried what happens to those young people who have been evicted. It was confirmed that if they are LAC they would continue to be monitored, however if they were not LAC and over 17 the service would not necessarily know where they have gone.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information provided in the report.

CP24 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

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

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee endorsed the provisional work programme for 2019/20.
 - (ii) That the Committee noted that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

CP25 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with the indicated paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

CP26 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. The report also looked at developments within the service, linked to the placement sufficiency strategy for 2018-2021.

RESOLVED - That Committee noted the contents of the report.