

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 7 September 2023

PRESENT: Councillor M Hall (Chair)

Councillor(s): D Burnett, D Bradford, B Clelland, P Craig,
K Henderson, K McCartney, E McMaster, J Mohammed,
L Moir, A Ord, D Robson and Rachel Walton

F96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caffrey, Kelly and Mullen.

F97 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

F98 SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

The Committee were presented with a report on complaints, compliments and representations for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Children's Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the procedure that Local Authorities have a responsibility to follow when a complaint is made about Children's Social Service, Regulation 13 (3) of this Act states that all local authorities must publish an Annual Report (1 April to 31 March) to identify the number, detail and outcomes to all complaints received. This information within the Annual Report fulfils Gateshead Council's obligations under this regulation and covers the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

The Committee were advised there are 3 stages to the procedure:-

Stage 1 – Local Resolution
Stage 2 – Investigation
Stage 3 – Review Panel

- The Committee were informed that the number of formal contacts received citing dissatisfaction about Children's Services decreased by 18% (72 from 88) compared with the number of dissatisfaction contacts received during 2021/22(88)
- However, during 2022/23, 63% (125) of all Children's Services

- contacts were compliments
- Children's Services received 8 Stage 1 complaints during 2022/23. This is a 27% decrease on Stage 1 complaints received during 2021/22 (11)
 - 62% (5) of complaints related to the quality of services provided
 - No statutory complaints were received regarding professional misconduct of workers
 - One Corporate Complaint was received about actions by a member of staff within the Children's Engagement Service. The complaint was later withdrawn by the complainant.
 - 25% (2) of complaints were regarding the quality or lack of support provided by individual workers or services
 - The number of complaint related queries (low level issues nor requiring a written response) decreased by 11% compared to those received during 2021/22 (23 from 26)
 - Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams received 52% (12) of complaint related queries received. However, it was found that a number were relating to court proceedings and subsequently closed.
 - All complaint related queries received about Children's Social Care were dealt with directly by either the Team Manager of the service complained about or by the Complaints Section after prior discussion with the worker concerned
 - There were four complaints registered at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure during 2022/23. Stage 2 is the progression from a Stage 1 complaint. The issues remain the same but require a more in depth investigation
 - There were also 3 Stage 3 Review Panels held during this time. All three Review Panels were progressions from Stage 2 investigations carried on in 2022/23
 - Two of the Panels held were from different members of the children's family and related to the quality of support provided by the workers concerned. Decisions taken by the service were also the subject of both complaints. One Review Panel was regarding the quality of a Child in Need Assessment, where it was alleged that key information had not been recorded.

The Committee received details of the themes of statutory complaints received, equalities monitoring and learning from complaints.

The Committee were also advised that between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, Children's Services received 125 compliments about either individual workers or teams. This means that compared with the number of statutory and corporate complaints received during 2022/23, (18) 87% (125) were compliments about Children's Services:-

- 16% (20) of compliments were regarding Access and Intervention Teams
- 4% (5) were regarding Children's Business Support Officers
- 3% (4) were about the Cared for Children Team

- 33% (41) were about the Children with Disabilities Service, including Grove House Respite
- 33% (41) were regarding teams within Early Help
- 6% (8) were about the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams
- 5% (6) were regarding the Safeguarding Unit, including FDAC and Children's Engagement

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) That the Committee wished to place upon record their thanks to the staff within the service and were satisfied with the performance of Children's Services in responding to complaints and that this results in continuous service improvement

F99 HMIP INSPECTION OF YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES IN GATESHEAD

The Committee received a report and presentation summarising the recent HMIP Inspection of Youth Justice Services in Gateshead and outlined recommendations and next steps.

On 19 January 2023, HMIP announced the intention to carry out an inspection of youth justice services in Gateshead during the week commencing 27 February 2023.

The inspection covered the following key domains:

- Organisational Delivery
- Court Disposals
- Out of Court Disposals
- Resettlement

The inspection found that Gateshead Youth Justice Service was rated 'Good' overall while rating its 'implementation and delivery' as 'Outstanding', due to the way high-quality, well focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Proposal and/or issues for consideration and communications implications were outlined to the Committee and the Youth Justice Service and Partnership Board responses to the recommendations made were outlined as follows:-

- Review the remit of the existing Performance Subgroup to ensure data is effectively scrutinised and analysed to ensure the needs of the children are fully understood and that these findings shape service delivery.
- Continue to have an active role in the review and evaluation of local, regional and national initiatives whilst further developing our in-house process to better understand the impact that Youth Justice Service involvement has had for children and their families.
- Review our resettlement policy and provision to develop clear guidance in relation to preparing children for release. This will include the responsibilities of the partnership to ensure robust and effective resettlement provision across wellbeing, accommodation, education, training and employment.
- Strengthen our understanding of diversity, language and communication

screening process for every young person coming into Youth Justice Service and strengthen our partnership arrangements and pathways to support with CAMHS, CYPS and North East Counselling to ensure young people have direct access to the appropriate counselling and support for emotional health issues.

- Work with Trusting Hands GATESHEAD to ensure that young people have quick access to specialist mental health provision and pathways into speech, language and communication provision is fully embedded.
- Establish an education lead worker within YJS and collaborate with education partners to strengthen the education offer for young people and ensure they receive appropriate and effective provision to meet individual need.

These actions will form part of a development plan which will be submitted to HMP as part of the inspection process.

The recommendations will be incorporated into the priorities in the Gateshead Youth Justice Service Strategy 2023-2024.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted

F100

EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2023-26 - PROGRESS AGAINST THE KEY PRIORITIES, INCLUDING FAMILY HUBS IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The Committee received a report and presentation on the Early Help Strategy 2023-2026, progress against the key priorities including Family Hubs implementation update.

The Committee were advised that the former Children's Centre sites and Deckham, Birtley, Felling, Blaydon, Chowdene and Teams have operated under Family Hubs branding from July 2023. Chopwell will follow in August 2023. Further sites at Wrekenton and Leam Lane will also host a Family Hub offer and the recruitment of the appropriate staff have been completed.

Pre-funding agreements have been reached with VCFS providers at St Chad's Community Project, Labriut and Teams Life Centre to provide a community outreach offer to supplement the core Family Hub network. Funding documents will be signed in August 2023.

Progress against the milestones of the Gateshead Delivery Plan is regularly reviewed with DfE Officers. Family Hubs were officially launched on 2 August 2023 and a comprehensive all age offer is being delivered across the Family Hub network.

The Committee were informed that work also includes:-

- Broaden and improved the range of virtual information and support available to families, including a clear Start for Life offer for families with young children
- Map and develop a range of prevention services for young people at risk of entering the youth justice system
- Improving access to early help services in education settings

- Develop and embed a clear Reducing Parental Conflict offer for parents and co-parents
- Develop and embed an improved offer of support for family relationships
- Review the early help assessment process with key stakeholders and align with other local assessments
- Develop data maturity across the early help system to further enhance analysis of performance
- Improve the strategic oversight of, and accountability within, the early help system and
- Communications implications

RESOLVED – That the information be noted

F101

GATESHEAD'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING LOCAL TRANSFORMATION PLAN 2023-24 UPDATE

The Committee were given a presentation which outlined the requirements of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Long Term Plan deliverables.

The plan is based on 5 themes within future in mind:-

- Promote good mental health, build resilience, and identify and address emerging mental health problems as soon as possible
- Ensure children, young people and families have timely access to evidence based support and treatment when in need
- Improve the experience and outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, ensuring they are adequately supported at key transition points
- Work in partnership to develop multi agency pathways underpinned by quality performance standards, which will be reported in a transparent way
- Continue to train and develop our workforce to ensure we have staff with the right mix of knowledge, skills and competences to respond to the needs of children and young people and their families, making every contact count

The next steps were outlined as follows:-

- Build on information available through 'Our Gateshead'
- Work with Family Hubs, Edberts House and development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams with a view to maximising the workforce and services available in Gateshead
- Looking to enhance Daisy Chain offer to provide an additional workforce training to improve accessibility of services and upskill staff
- Build Children and Young People's Peer Support Offer
- The Plan is to be presented at various forums including OSC's, Health & Wellbeing Board
- Narrative plan sent out to partners for comment (deadline 18 August 2023)

- Full plan - narrative and action plan circulated for final comments (deadline 15 September)
- Publication of the plan on or before 29 September 2023

RESOLVED – That the information be noted

F102 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

The Committee received a report which provided details on the development of the work programme for Families OSC for the municipal year 2023-24.

The proposed 2023-24 work programme was attached to the main report as Appendix 1 and remains provisional as:-

- Cabinet may wish to refer further issues to OSC’s for further consideration
- It does not take into account of new policy issues which may be identified during the year, which Cabinet may wish to refer to Overview and Scrutiny, and
- It does not include issues identified by members of committees on an ongoing basis during the year as a result of scrutiny decisions, call in and councillor
- call for action

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) The Committee endorsed the OSC’s provisional work programme for 2023-24 attached at Appendix 1, subject to any amendments arising from consideration of Appendix 1
 - iii) The Committee noted that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify and additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider

Chair.....