

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 14 April 2016

PRESENT: Councillor M Brain (Chair)

Councillors: J Adams, L Caffrey, B Clelland, J Graham,
D Robson, S Ronchetti, C Simcox and A Thompson

CO-OPTED: John Wilkinson, Jill Steer, Sasha Ban and Maveen Periera

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S Green

F38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geddes, McCartney, S Craig, Hawkins, Oliphant and McNally.

The Chair welcomed the new parent governor representative, Maveen Pereira, to the meeting.

F39 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March were agreed subject to the inclusion of the following points that were made under Minute F36 'OSC Review – Evidence Gathering';

- Whether there is the possibility of creating a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for Children in the future.
- In order to monitor safeguarding, a breakdown of referrals from individual organisations was suggested.

F40 REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION IN GATESHEAD - FINAL REPORT

Committee received the draft final report on the review of child protection in Gateshead. The scope of the review was to look at how safeguarding works in Gateshead, with the Committee looking at potential future developments. Committee was reminded that the review took place over four evidence gathering sessions, particularly focused on the legislative framework and the child protection process and the journey from referral to assessment. During the evidence gathering sessions the indicators of need were looked at and a detailed case study of the journey of a family was discussed.

It was noted that from the evidence gathering sessions recommendations have been drafted, these are;

- Additional work to be undertaken to further improve the availability of GP

reports at Initial Child Protection Conferences and Review Child Protection Conferences.

- Improvement to the detail of data provided in relation to school referrals to children's social care: Providing a breakdown by school to facilitate the Committee's scrutiny of safeguarding within education.
- Review the evidence in light of the latest Ofsted inspection findings published on 11 March 2016.

The Committee also agreed to add an additional recommendation around further looking at the possibility of a MASH for children in the future.

In terms of GP reports, it was suggested that a report should be taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board as the CCG and GP Federation are represented there.

A query was raised about the retention of Social Workers following the recent loss of some workers to another local authority which had received an inadequate rating by Ofsted. It was confirmed that some staff have left to go to another authority which is in a position to pay significantly more for Social Workers, Gateshead is not in a position to compete with the rate of pay. There are plans to replace the staff who have left and at present the loss is being managed. Staff have been briefed about the difficulties of working for an inadequate authority and the advantages of working for a good authority. It was noted that Gateshead is able to attract good staff because it is the only local authority in the region with a good rating from Ofsted. It was questioned whether there has been a risk assessment carried out in case more staff leave. It was confirmed that good agency staff have been secured in case they are needed to be put in place quickly, in addition there is a rolling continuous advert for the recruitment of Social Workers. It was agreed to bring back a report to Committee on the recruitment and retention of Social Workers in Gateshead.

RESOLVED -

That the Committee agreed the recommendations, subject to the additions discussed, and agreed that the Chair present the report to Cabinet as representing the Committee's findings and recommendations of the review.

F41 MONITORING REPORT - REVIEW OF ROLE OF THE COUNCIL IN SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The Committee received a monitoring report following last year's review of the role of the Council in supporting the educational outcomes of vulnerable and poorly performing pupils.

It was noted that schools are continuing to be challenged around gaps in attainment and currently the biggest issue is at Key Stage 4. Governing Bodies and inspection teams have received training around giving robust but appropriate challenge to schools. The strategic delivery of education services is a key part of the Council's ongoing review as a response to the reducing budget. It was noted that this financial year there has been a 40% budget reduction, however there have been no redundancies as services have traded more.

In terms of Special Schools and specialist support from the NHS, work is continuing and will form part of the Committee's annual discussion with Special School Headteachers. Since the final report, Eslington School is now on two sites so there is double the capacity. It was suggested that teachers from ARMS units should be invited to future Special Schools Conferences.

It was acknowledged that the impact on pupils is difficult to measure, however the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others has increased by the end of Key Stage 4.

Next steps include, developing the skills of Governors to challenge leaders, this will continue to be reviewed. Following the publication of the White Paper consideration will need to be given as to where school improvement will sit in the future. Consultation between the local authority and Special School Headteachers to ensure the correct number and types of places in special education are available. In particular, there has been an increase in autistic pupils and it is therefore important to have enough adequate places for all pupils. It was also noted that analysis of 2015/16 exam data will be carried out to assess the level of impact in closing the attainment gap between vulnerable pupils and others.

A summary of the White Paper was provided and the main points highlighted. It was noted that there is a push to move to multi-academy trusts chains, which can be cross authorities. There is also proposed a new government power to convert underperforming schools to academies. The White Paper also sets out the future role of local authorities, this is to ensure every child has a school place, the needs of vulnerable pupils are met and acting as champions for all parents and families.

It was questioned whether local authorities can become sponsors for multi-academy trust. It was noted that there are currently talks with the DfE ongoing around potential models, however no further information has been provided yet. Concerns were raised about the impact on the whole borough if the local authority is no longer driving attainment. It was confirmed that there is a motion to full Council next week and a meeting is planned for May to meet with Headteachers and Governors about where to go next.

RESOLVED - That the Committee is satisfied with progress against actions to date.

F42 CLOSING THE GAP ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report highlighting the academic performance of disadvantaged and poorly performing pupils. Following Committee's review in 2015/16 it was recommended that an annual report be brought to Committee on the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils.

It was noted that at foundation stage, the achievement gap in Gateshead has narrowed since last year, this is just below national gap. In terms of end of year 1 phonic assessment it was noted that the achievement gap remained static within

Gateshead, however the achievement of disadvantaged children increased nationally. It was reported that at Key Stage 1, nationally the achievement of disadvantaged children has increased, gaps have grown in attainment in maths in Gateshead but it is not a significant increase. At Key Stage 2, 72% of disadvantaged pupils got level 4, this was a 2% increase in Gateshead, however, in terms of national ranking Gateshead dropped from 40 in 2014 to 46 in 2015.

It was questioned whether the ethnic make up of Gateshead is a factor in attainment figures and that Gateshead's figures may be skewed in comparison to more diverse areas. It was acknowledged that this may be the case as white working class boys are usually at the bottom of attainment figures, however there are no statistics to analyse this.

It was reported that at Key Stage 4, achievement of 5 A*-C's including English and Maths fell and national ranking dropped from 50 in 2014 to 105 in 2015. It was acknowledged that this is disappointing as work is continuing to close the gap but is not reflected in outcomes. Therefore, officers are waiting for the new data set to see whether there are improvements and if the ongoing work is effective. It was confirmed that Link Inspectors continue to challenge school on the impact of pupil premium funding, which is hoped will help narrow the gap.

The point was made that more needs to be done to look at the underlying issues as to why young people are not learning and look at different models, for example the impact of cutting support services to some vulnerable groups like youth services and careers advice. It was acknowledged that narrowing the gap is not straightforward and more needs to be done to unpick examples of good practice. Cardinal Hume English department was used as an example, there are no gaps in attainment at Cardinal Hume for English. It was recognised that there is a lot of work ongoing with schools to inspire and motivate to reduce gaps at a time when educational pathways are being removed.

It was suggested that some schools pay lip service to such issues, for example many secondary schools stream pupils from the start, this can have an impact on outcomes for some pupils. It was also suggested that some schools chase headlines for the best results which does not account for gaps between that and the lower attaining pupils.

The point was made that pupil premium is paid for a child being in school 30 out of 52 weeks, therefore some of this funding should be redirected to support pupils outside of school. It was acknowledged that previously schemes were in place, for example extended schools, however in real terms school budgets are going down.

It was requested that data be broken down into gender for the next report.

RESOLVED -

That the Committee's comments on the position of schools and the authority in relation to the 'Closing the Gap' agenda be noted.

F43 REVIEW OF TEST OF ASSURANCE

The Committee received a report on the effectiveness of assurance arrangements put in place when the statutory roles of the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Social Services were allocated to a single chief officer, the Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning.

In accordance with statutory guidance a local test of assurance was carried out. Cabinet agreed in September 2014 to bring together the functions and it was agreed that Committee would review the new arrangements after one year. It was noted that the report was delayed due to a number of changes within the Care, Wellbeing and Learning Service.

The test itself has been reviewed with partners and the Chair of the LSCB and it has found to still be relevant. In addition Ofsted found the test to be coherent.

The test has been revised and updated to reflect the changes in senior management. The former Director retired and was replaced on an interim basis. The test requires the new Director is a social care professional, the scope of the position includes children and adult services and public health commissioning, therefore looking at the life course and transitional points between child and adult services.

RESOLVED -

That the Committee was satisfied that the assurance arrangements set out in the revised Test of Assurance are sufficiently robust and that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in relation to children and vulnerable adults.

F44 INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS

A report was presented informing Committee of the findings from Ofsted's inspection of the services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and their review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

It was reported that the overall judgement of Children's services in Gateshead was good. Seven inspections were carried out within the region, with only Gateshead and Hartlepool receiving a good rating. Nationally 85 inspections were carried out, only 20 were graded good and two outstanding.

Gateshead was found to have eight Annex O's, these are where inspectors observe best or innovative practice, it was noted that this was the highest numbers of Annex O's. Each area of the inspection was highlighted; children in need help and protection was found to be good, the multi agency arrangements were good and the thresholds well embedded. Early help was found to be good and there was recognition of good relationships between social workers and families. It was also noted that Gateshead has a proactive approach, seen through the number of unborn

plans. It was found that LAC permanence was good and the voices of LAC were heard and well supported, placement stability was found to be good.

Risk areas, child sexual exploitation and substance misuse, was found to be appropriately supported. Ofsted also noted that there was good planning in terms of rehabilitation to return home and the prevention of family breakdown. Adoption performance was rated good and it was noted that there is minimal disruption.

In terms of care leavers it was found that improvement was required, however there were good practice examples highlighted.

Leadership, management and governance was found to be good and there was a strong ethos of collective responsibility across the Council. It was also found that the OSC gave 'robust challenge'.

A number of recommendations were highlighted by Ofsted, including; improving quality of plans, however this was flagged up by management prior to completion of the inspection. It was also recommended that all children subject to child protection processes should have access to independent advocacy. It was noted that this is well promoted but a lot of young people prefer to go through the Children's Rights Officer rather than seek independent advocacy, this was an area highlighted under an Annex O.

It was reported the review of the LSCB found that it required improvement. Ofsted recommended that the LSCB needed to engage more effectively with the community and that there should be better links between the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

A regional overview of inspections was provided.

It was queried what it would take to tip the balance to outstanding. It was confirmed that those reports from outstanding local authorities are currently being looked at to see what Gateshead needs to aspire to.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee noted the contents of the report.
 - (ii) That the Committee agreed to scrutinise and monitor the subsequent improvement plan relating to the Ofsted findings.

F45 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Committee received the 2016/17 work programme, the case studies and review topic were highlighted. A number of topics were suggested during the consultation period; a report on FGM and radicalisation obligations for schools will be slotted into the programme during the year. Teen pregnancy is not currently on the work programme but will be monitored and slotted in if performance worsens.

It was confirmed that the review will look at review of children's oral health as it has been found that this has a massive impact on health as an adult. Oral health is also

an indicator of other issues, for example neglect. There are significant differences in the level of oral health across Gateshead and there has been an increase in the number of hospital admissions due to dental health. A broader methodology for evidence gathering was welcomed.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee agreed the review topic and areas it wishes to progress as case studies in 2016-17.
 - (ii) That the Committee endorsed the provisional work programme for 2016-17 and referred it to Council on 26 May 2016 for agreement.
 - (iii) 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.

F46 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Cllr Robson for all her work during her time on the Committee as this was her last meeting.