

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, 28 April 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Hall (Chair)  
Councillor(s): H Kelly, D Burnett, B Clelland, S Gallagher, K McCartney, E McMaster, J Mohammed, M Ord, R Oxberry and Reay

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS** Rachel Walton

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor(s): G Haley

**F36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bradford, Cllr Buckley, Cllr Caffrey, Cllr P Craig, Cllr S Craig, Cllr D Robson and Ayo Akin.

**F37 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

**F38 FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME / FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER - UPDATE ON NICE GUIDANCE**

The Committee received an update on the recently published NICE quality standards for Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) which were published on 16 March 2022.

The Quality Standard covers assessing and diagnosing FASD in children and young people and support during pregnancy to prevent FASD. It was noted that the Quality Standards help to improve care but is not guidance, it helps to identify gaps and areas for improvement, measure the quality of care, understand how to improve and commission high quality services.

Currently there is no commissioned FASD service in Gateshead, children with possible FASD will continue to be seen however access to detailed assessment for neurodevelopmental assessment is limited. It was acknowledged that there is not a joined up pathway.

At present, assessment, investigation and referrals are considered within the previously agreed regional guidance. Work is ongoing to look at neurodevelopmental pathways to join FASD and develop an assessment service to ideally provide a holistic approach, however there is no timescale around this.

It was questioned as to what services are available to help once FASD is diagnosed. It was confirmed that the majority are seen through the Designated Doctor, some are referred through social care, education, support organisations both regional and national support groups. It was acknowledged that long term prognosis is very variable but can lead to issues such as increased levels of criminality, poor mental health and unemployment.

It was questioned whether any authority is delivering gold standard in terms of FASD. It was confirmed that some areas are accessing and delivering services better than what is being delivered locally.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

### **F39 COVID-19 UPDATE - IMPACT ON NEW MOTHERS AND BABIES**

The Committee received a presentation on the impact of Covid on new parents and their babies.

It was reported that from the outset Maternity Services in Gateshead sought to protect mothers. This meant that some appointments were held over the telephone and attendance at face to face appointments had to be done alone. Birthing partners were restricted to the parent or co-parent and there was no visiting on the postnatal ward. It was noted that this meant a lot of new mothers had more time to speak to other mothers on the ward.

During the home visit, only the mother could be in attendance. In most cases the 10 day postnatal review appointments and transfer to health visitors, were held via telephone. The pregnancy app and website were kept updated and reviewed regularly.

In terms of the 0-19 service contacts were flexible at the start of the pandemic. Initially there was a short supply of PPE and certain areas were prioritised, such as child protection, based on government guidance. As a result of this, virtual clinics were developed and feedback from some mothers was that this allowed them to ask certain questions which they may not have felt comfortable asking in a Children's Centre setting. Face to face clinics were reintroduced from September 2021 and Children's Centres remained open throughout the pandemic. Throughout this time, advice was promoted through social media and the full offer was introduced from April 2021.

The Committee received two case studies of cases under both the Health Visiting Team and the Family Nurse Partnership.

It was reported that we are now starting to see the impact of Covid in terms of development and emotional impact and it is expected that this will be seen for a number of years to come. The next steps are to develop confident, positive and resilient parenting, offer high quality services and support, offer support to schools.

It was reported that Gateshead is one of 75 authorities to receive funding over the next three years to take forward Best Start for Life recommendations and the

following action areas; seamless support, welcoming hub, information, empowered workforce, continuous improvement and leadership for change. Notification of this funding was received at the beginning of April and is moving at pace.

It was questioned as to how cases are allocated to Health Visitors to ensure they are not inundated. It was confirmed that each Health Visitor is managed by one of five locality managers who look at the cases of each Health Visitor to ensure workload is allocated evenly. Regular supervisions are held and work rebalanced if required. In areas of high deprivation there is more health visitor safeguarding supervision and nurses support them. It was acknowledged that there remains some vacancies on the Team and that this is a national issue. It was also noted that there were changes to the budget for health visiting and school nursing which has meant a reduction in the number of staff in service.

Concerns were raised that Covid has impacted on children being school ready and that this is taking up time in early years settings. It was agreed that specific schools and support available would be discussed with officers outside of the meeting.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee noted the information presented.
  - (ii) That a further update be brought back to a future meeting.

#### **F40 CORPORATE PARENTING ARRANGEMENTS UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on corporate parenting arrangements, the fundamental requirements for looked after children and care leavers was set out.

It was reported that Young Ambassadors have continued to roll out training to Members which has been very well received.

The Corporate Parenting Partnership Group continues to meet on a quarterly basis, work is underway to review its membership and priorities to ensure it fits with the Corporate Parenting Strategy. A further report on this will be presented to the next Corporate Parenting Board.

It is also hoped that an annual engagement event can be organised to showcase the workstreams. It was agreed that this is a point of contact that has been lost over the last few years.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to have a representative from the DWP on the Board in particular in relation to the cost of living crisis. It was noted that there is no DWP representation on the Board itself but that it may be covered within one of the workstreams. It was confirmed however that PA's are assigned to Care Leavers to help with such issues.

It was suggested that more could be done around presenting 'proud moments' to the Board which would highlight milestone moments for our young people and show that they are being celebrated. It was agreed that more real case studies would be useful to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board as those minutes are circulated to

all Councillors in their role as corporate parents.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

**F41 WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22 AND DEVELOPMENT OF WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022-23**

Committee received the emerging themes which will be consulted on for next year's work programme.

RESOLVED - (i) That the Committee noted the work programme.

(ii) That the Committee noted the emerging issues for this OSC's 2022-23 work programme.

**Chair.....**