

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 19 October 2023

PRESENT: Councillor M Hall (Chair)

Councillor(s): D Burnett, D Bradford, L Caffrey, B Clelland, P Craig, K Henderson, H Kelly, K McCartney, E McMaster, J Mohammed, L Moir, R Mullen, A Ord, M Ord, D Robson and D Weatherley

IN ATTENDANCE: A Houlahan; H Fergusson; C Hulme; C Horn; L Wood.

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): Rachel Walton

F104 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

F105 YOUNG PERSON'S AMBASSADORS (CARE LEAVERS)

The OCS were presented with a summary of the work carried out by Gateshead's first care experienced young ambassadors. Aisha Imran, Jake Curbison and Mariceu Neto took up their posts in January 2022. The posts were contracted for 6 hours per week and fixed term for 18 months.

Aisha, Jake and Mariceu were involved in many pieces of work including:

- Delivering training to Elected Members
- Working directly with young people to champion their needs.
- Attending an event at the Houses of Parliament to lobby MPs about the independent review of Children's Social Care.
- Delivering their own projects e.g. Healthy Relationships Sessions.
- Being part of many meetings/project working groups representing other children and young people.
- Reviewing the Care Leavers App.

The OSC received the Ambassadors work plan for information.

Recruitment for the next round of young ambassadors has taken place. Seventeen young people submitted applications and were interviewed. Three candidates have been offered posts subject to references.

The OSC heard positive feedback from officers and services about the impact and professionalism of the Young Ambassadors and the work that they had done. Aisha

will be taking on the role of Vice Chair for Gateshead Council's Corporate Parenting Board.

The OSC praised the work of the Young Ambassadors and an appreciation for the confidence and lived experience that has been brought to the roles.

The care leavers app ('Gateshead has your back') development was discussed. The previous iteration was commissioned independently but a new one is now being developed in house to bring a greater level of control over the app and more interactive options. The app sets out everything that care leavers are entitled to from Gateshead Council as corporate parents. It has information on services, activities, contact information, housing, benefits and more.

Feedback from the Young Ambassadors for future consideration was that the next step from having successful ambassadors is finding ways for care leavers to have more direct contact with management to create their own changes.

REOLVED:

- i. 'Gateshead has your back' app to be circulated to the OSC.
- ii. The presentation and report were noted.

F106 UPDATE ON SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS

An update was given to the OSC on practice and developments in supporting children and young people who go missing from home or care and young people at risk or victims of child exploitation.

Between July 2022 and June 2023 there have been 1548 young people were recorded missing and a Return Home Interview was offered following every episode (100% offer). This equates to 338 Young People.

During the period a total of 1056 offers of an RHI Interview were accepted and subsequently proceeded to being undertaken. This is an increase of 114% on the 723 missing episodes from the previous year. This increase is in line with regional neighbours and is a direct result of the pandemic.

79 Cared for Young People have been reported missing in the past 12 months. 54 (68%) have accepted their latest offer of a Return Home Interview. 25 (32%) did not accept an offer of a Return Home Interview. This is an increase of 32% in the same reporting period last reporting year, and continues to increase.

259 young people who are not included in the Cared for cohort have been reported missing in the last 12 months. 168 (65%) have accepted their latest offer of a Return Home Interview. 91 (35%) did not accept an offer of a Return Home Interview.

Since the appointment of the Return Home Support Worker, RHI engagement rates have improved along with evidence of high-quality interventions. Overall RHI engagement rates were at an all-time high of 93% in March & April 2023. Overall

engagements rates have risen from 60% between January & June 2022 to 87% between January and June 2023 which is a 27% increase.

Engagement rates for children in our care have risen to a 97% high in April 2023. Young people have shared intelligence in relation to concerning activities in the community such as underage alcohol sales which have been reported to the relevant authorities who have responded accordingly.

The Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficked (MSET) framework has been implemented across the 5 local authorities within the Northumbria Police force wide area.

The OSC was given an overview of contextual safeguarding within Gateshead Childrens services, including what was working well.

In Nov 2022 funding for 2 years was secured for a young woman and girls intervention worker to provide intensive support to young woman and girls involved in exploitation or gangs.

The report highlighted a concern that there is currently no central function or responsible team in children's services to provide specialist oversight of young people who do not meet the criteria for MSET multiagency oversight, who may be open to children in care teams as an example to help develop contextual safeguarding disruption plan or prevent young people who are vulnerable to exploitation to build their awareness and resilience and prevent them becoming victims.

The report notified the OSC of the following future developments:

- Develop the Contextual Safeguarding – level 2 offer, in partnership with Community safety and Edge North East.
- Develop robust systems to record, track and monitor all young people who are at risk of contextual safeguarding issues.
- Develop a toolkit and consultancy offer to social workers and lead practitioners across children's services to ensure all young people and their families get a consistent offer of support where there are concerns about child exploitation.

Develop a framework to provide independent oversight of young people who are victims of harm outside the home with IRO service and safeguarding partners.

The OSC was told that this response focuses mostly on children aged 14-16, and that there is a different response system for younger children which is much less commonly needed. Responses are adapted to the experiences of young people, for example if:

- This is the first or multiple time they have gone missing.
- They are spending time with someone who is an active concern.

- They are considered to be at risk of exploitation or involvement in gang activity.

The OSC asked about the impact of the pandemic. There are still issues emerging such as school refusal, anxiety and mental health referrals which have been caused by the pandemic. While the current impacts are still being unveiled it is not possible to evaluate the length of time the pandemic will have on children's lives.

There are some current concerns about radicalisation, particularly around grooming. Any children who are a concern are responded to within the Childrens Social Service team via Channel Panel. This is a meeting to raise concerns about cases and get specialist involvement.

RESOLVED:

- i. Lisa Wood to provide an update for the OSC with data to gauge Gateshead's performance on a regional impact.
- ii. To add a 12 month update on the Birtley Project to the work programme.
- iii. The report was noted.

F107 TRAUMA INFORMED TEAM UPDATE

The OSC received a report providing an overview of the development and progress of 'Trusting Hands Gateshead', the integrated Trauma Informed Care service.

The service aims to meet the needs of 'high risk, high harm, high vulnerability' cohort through trauma informed approaches with care teams and systems.

The team can offer a range of support around the child including:

- consultation, advice, and signposting
- 'Understanding the story' formulations
- Speech, Language and Communication Need clinics
- input to care team meetings
- multi-agency liaison
- scaffolding, collaborative working, and enabling interventions

The report detailed examples of ongoing work including:

- Referrals
- Connected conversations: service contact to consider the young person's needs, and whether further involvement is appropriate.

- Consultations.
- Understanding the Story: Multiagency formulation sessions to develop a collaborative understanding of the young person's risks, needs and vulnerabilities.
- Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) clinic
- Foundations for Attachment ("FFA") therapeutic parenting programme.

The team consists of highly skilled clinical psychologists, nurses, psychological therapists, social workers, and speech and language therapists with experience of working across a range of specialist community and inpatient children's mental health services, including, secure children's homes, forensic services, and local authority settings.

Recruitment for Peer Support Worker and Speech and Language Therapist posts are in process.

The OSC were updated on the planned next steps for Trusting Hands Gateshead.

The launch of Trusting Hands Gateshead was commended by the OSC. It was noted that Trusted Hands Gateshead is keen to work in tandem with other local service providers and ensure that they support ongoing community work.

RESOLVED:

- i. To invite Kate Ward (Clinical Psychologist) to speak to the committee.
- ii. To add a 12-month update on Trusted Hands to the work programme.
- iii. The reported was noted.

F108 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A joint protocol between Housing Services and Children's Social Care was shared with OSC, outlining the action to be taken where a young person aged 16/17 approaches either Housing Services or Children Social Care and are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The protocol was attached as an appendix to the report given on progress to date. The Protocol will be reviewed annually and when changes in legislation determine by both Children's Social Care and Housing Services.

The protocol sets out that:

- Children's Social Care and Housing Services have agreed to adopt a one front door approach which aims to ensure that there is a consistent approach to all 16- and 17-year-olds who seek help from the Council who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. All these children will be referred to the Integrated Referral Team (IRT), Assessment and Intervention, Children's Social Care.

- If the young person is homeless or at risk of homelessness, a Children and Family assessment will be offered to the young person to find out whether the young person may have any other additional needs that would warrant Children's Social Care intervention and assistance under the Child in Need framework other than housing.
- The allocated Social Worker will co work with the YPHPW jointly assessing what support is required. The key aim is to avoid homelessness and allow young people to remain in the family home where possible, as this will be in the long-term best interests of most young people.
- A mosaic contact record (Children's Social Care system) will be created for every young person that is assessed and deemed homeless or threatened with homelessness, which details the concerns regarding the young person.
- The YPHPW will also create, log and maintain details of each case on NEC (Housing Services system) in line with HCLIC specification.
- and within the parameters of the homelessness framework.
- If the young person does not wish to become a child in our care, and/or refuses a Children and Families Assessment, and accommodation is required, the YPHPW will determine which Duty is owed to the young person.

The OSC received a review of the response to 16/17 homelessness in Childrens Services. The Review highlighted a need for consistent practice when young people require a social worker as part of the prevention of homelessness and to assess the holistic needs of 16/17 year olds who need to be considered as children in need.

The Contextual Safeguarding Management Team will provide management oversight of both the support to prevent 16/17 homelessness and the statutory social care response when a young person is on the edge of homelessness or prevents as homeless.

An agreed data set has been agreed by senior managers within Housing and Childrens Social Care. This will be included in future performance reports.

The service has had 195 conversations about individual children which has led to 95 consultations.

The OSC asked about accommodations at Eslington House. An update was given that there hasn't been a capacity issue with this accommodation and that there are alternative accommodations for young people to be housed in. There haven't been any cases of needing to find accommodation outside of the Borough.

REOLVED:

- i. The OSC noted the report.

A presentation was given to OSC updating on the Gateshead local area SEND inspection.

A summary of activity through the inspection period included the following:

- Parent carer forum involvement critical.
- Young people's involvement and voices critical and very powerful.
- 100's of responses to the survey.
- Over 100 documents and pieces of evidence uploaded.
- 6 deep dive cases and multi-agency audits.
- 53 children's cases tracked over 3 weeks.
- 12 visits to settings across the local area.
- 33 practitioners meeting with inspectors.

The inspection covered children with and without EHCPs. The presentation included key strengths in the local area, areas for further development, and next steps.

The governance of the next steps from this review sits with the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board.

The OSC noted that school budgeting systems are often short term and are unable to plan more than 1-2 years in advance, which affects the ability to implement more costly SEND support. The OSC were informed that a review has been planned on the future of SEND funding for schools.

There was discussion about wasted medical equipment and how schools may be able to share this equipment where possible.

REOLVED:

- i. The OSC noted the report.

F110 WORK PROGRAMME

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 consider 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.
- iv. Addition of 12-month update on Birtley project.
- v. To invite Kate Ward, Clinical Psychologist, to speak to the committee regarding Trusting Hands Gateshead.
- vi. To add a 12-month update on Trusted Hands to the work programme.

F111 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Families OSC will be held on 30 November 2023, 13:30 in Bridges Room, Gateshead Civic Centre.

Chair.....