

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

15 May 2019 – At a meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Cloake (Chairman)

Mr High	Mrs Hall	Mr Wickremaratchi
Mrs Bennett	Mrs Jones	Mr Lozzi
Mrs Bridges	Ms Lord	Mrs Ryan
Ms Flynn	Mr Petts	

Apologies were received from Mrs Russell, Mr Cristin and Mr Oxlade

Also in attendance: Mr Burrett, Ms Goldsmith and Mr Marshall

Part I

1. Declarations of Interests

1.1 The following personal interests were declared:

- Mr Cloake declared a personal interest in item 5 (Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services) as his wife is a social worker employed by West Sussex County Council (WSCC).
- Mr High declared a personal interest in item 8 (Education and Skills Annual Report) as a member of his family has an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

2. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

2.1 Resolved that the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 January 2019 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

3. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

3.1 The Committee considered a tabled paper which was a new version of the Forward Plan dated 13 May 2019 (copy appended to the signed minutes). This version of the Forward Plan was not included in the Committee papers as it has been published following the statutory despatch of the agenda.

3.2 Resolved - that the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

4. Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services

4.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Assurance. The Chairman considered the report as a challenging and disappointing read and invited Louise Goldsmith, Leader of the County

Council, to give some reflective words. A summary of the points made by the Leader were as follows:

- The Ofsted report highlighted a devastating and painful snapshot of the service. This was a watershed time for Children's Social Care.
- It is unacceptable for any council that a service be deemed as a lottery, and that some children were not having a good experience.
- A systemic approach was required throughout the whole council; everybody has a role to play in improving the service.
- The voice of the child has been quiet, there has not been a relentless focus on this, as is required to improve.
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as a gateway to services, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Care Leavers, and efforts into risk and exploitation work were all highlighted as good in the report. Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) also had the right focus but had perhaps distracted from other areas. An inward look needed to be taken to learn from the successes and move forward.
- Collective working for the Children Looked After (CLA) cohort will consider what can be done differently. The Leader had also spoken and apologised to the Children in Care Council (CiCC).
- The lead inspector did accept that things were improving, but that it was not currently sustainable. Work was undertaken before the report was published, such as action taken at Full Council on 5 April 2019, to redesign the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP).
- The next snapshot inspection will show that the work put in together has improved the service.

4.2 The Chairman thanked the Leader for her summary and comments, and noted it appeared to be understood throughout the authority the importance of the action required going forward. Paul Marshall, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, made the following reflective comments:

- The Cabinet Member felt it highly appropriate to offer a sincere apology to those families involved with the service. He added there was a big commitment to providing the best support possible, and thanked the team for undertaking what will be a very diligent piece of work.
- The Cabinet Member and senior officers accept wholeheartedly the 12 recommendations made in the Ofsted report, and commit to undertaking these improvements.
- Although the outcome is a disappointment, it was not unknown that the service required drastic improvement. Turbulence within the social worker cohort, and the closure of Seaside last year identified the need to make a step change, and develop a more robust Children and Family Services.
- A peer review undertaken in the autumn of 2018 identified the service as fragile, which started several internally and externally led reviews.
- Investment has been made into a social worker recruitment and retention programme to bring some stability to the cohort, recognising the tough working environment and significant caseloads.

- £5m has been made available to put pace to the wider transformation. The new Interim Director of Children and Family Services will take the authority on a journey of improvement.
- Governance arrangements will be reviewed and restructured with Cabinet, the Leader, Executive teams, CPP and scrutiny playing a key role to drive the improvement plan.

4.3 The Chairman welcomed John Readman, Interim Director of Children and Family Services, who explained he joined the county council at a critical time. The Interim Director of Children and Family Services outlined his experience of working with local authorities on improvement journeys, and gave the following summary of the inspection:

- There were 7 inspectors at WSCC for 2 weeks.
- 12 key areas for improvement were identified, which included the following:
 - Caseloads
 - Staff recruitment and retention
 - Frequent changes in social workers for children
 - Poor consistency in practice
 - Local management and supervisory oversight
 - Child centred systems and processes, including quality assurance arrangements
 - Permanence planning for CLA
 - Care planning, recording and analysis
 - Leadership and partnership
 - Rigour and impact of the CPP
- 'Children First' is the working title for WSCC's approach to improvement. The absolute priority is to make children safe.
- The improvement journey will be a long programme of work; commitment must be sustained.
- An Improvement Plan is in development, with an independently chaired Improvement Board to review and challenge this plan. The Improvement Board has already met, and is now taking on a more formal role in addressing the issues outlined by Ofsted.
- A social worker training and development programme is in the early stages of being established. £5m was also invested at the end of 2018 to boost recruitment and retention of social workers in West Sussex.

4.5 Jackie Wood, Head of Children's Social Care for Placements, and Sarah Daly, Head of Children's Social Care, outlined the positives acknowledged in the Ofsted report, and improvement activity to date:

- The MASH was identified as a timely and effective service, this needed to be repeated in other areas. The UASC team and Care Leaver's Service were seen to be providing effective support. The CiCC champions the views of children in care, and foster carers were receiving effective support.
- In September 2019, around 40 Newly Qualified Social Workers would join the authority.
- A focus on good performance and compliance was being taken.

- Training to identify and assess neglect had been delivered to all Children's Social Care staff.
- 2 social workers have been appointed to lead on pre-birth work, which at the time of the inspection was identified as a concern with unallocated cases.

4.6 The Interim Director of Children's Services introduced the 'Children First' model, and the 7 themes grouped under this improvement plan:

- Learning and Development
- Compliance
- Effective Leadership
- Workforce
- Effective Business Processes
- Effective Partnerships
- Whole Service Design.

- He explained a commissioner would be appointed by the Department for Education (DfE) to work with the County Council.
- Cabinet Board and the Improvement Board will consider the draft improvement plan to be submitted to the DfE and Ofsted in June.
- Quarterly monitoring visits would then take place in which the subject area to be considered would be agreed against the improvement plan.
- The Interim Director of Children's Services noted he valued the important role of scrutiny alongside the formal Improvement Board, and felt there was a commitment, determination and energy by all to improve the service.

4.7 The Chairman invited the Committee to consider what they could do to support the Cabinet Member and leadership team in the improvement journey. A summary of key questions in response to the report were as follows:

- Members considered the recent improvements made to the service and questioned if the outcome would have been different if Ofsted had undertaken their inspection in May or June. The Interim Director of Children's Services explained the inspection process was complex, and it was not possible to determine which cases Ofsted would see. The Executive Director of People added that Ofsted may have seen greener shoots, but it was unlikely that the outcome would have been different. The Cabinet Member added the report cited systemic failures which realistically the service could not overcome in 2 or 3 months. A root and branch realignment was required.
- The Committee questioned how WSCC was working with partner agencies, and whether there could be learning from other local authorities. Members heard that the newly established Improvement Board comprised a number of partner agencies and was chaired independently. All partners of the Board recognise the seriousness of the report, and this was the correct landscape for constructive engagement with the improvement plan. The Executive Director of People advised WSCC was being more assertive in partnership arenas, which was beginning to deliver results in better

engagement. WSCC had informally connected with Hampshire and will wait to be appointed a Partner in Practice. The Interim Director of Children's Services also noted best practice and learning from the Association of Directors of Children's Service.

- Members were concerned that previous reporting to the Committee had indicated things in the service were a lot better than in reality, and considered their role in undertaking more robust scrutiny. The Leader advised how the service deal with data was currently being considered, including how that data is validated. The Chairman and members agreed it was important to consider meaningful data, and the importance of affected families behind these numbers. The Committee also considered how it could engage with frontline staff; a visit to the MASH in the near future would help to start enable this.
- Members of the Committee expressed concern about the instability of both senior officers in Children's Social Care, and of membership of the Committee. The service was rated as Requiring Improvement 3 years ago, and in that time had continued to deteriorate. It was discussed that stability was crucial in order to bring about the change required. The Leader advised that the inspection was more granular than the previous regime, that she had confidence in the Cabinet Member and his 2 advisors, and that churn on the Committee was inevitable and unavoidable. The Leader agreed that improvement had not been accelerated enough, and that a cultural shift was required.
- The Committee were concerned about the burden carried by social workers, and although acknowledged the retention package, considered if there was a professional development programme for those already in place. The Interim Director of Children's Services agreed that for frontline practitioners to grow and develop, they needed to feel safe and valued and advised a major training and development programme was being established.

4.8 Resolved that the Committee:

1. Expects to be continuously updated with the opportunity to consider the delivery of the improvement plan at each meeting, in particular, the outcome of quarterly inspection meetings, and invite the Chairman of the Improvement Board and Chairman of the CPP to attend future meetings at the appropriate time.
2. Ask that the CYPSSC Chairman meet with the Cabinet Member, Chairman of the Improvement Board, Interim Director of Children's Services and Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) on a regular basis and feed back to the Committee.
3. Invite the Chairman of the CPP to all BPG meetings to explore current issues and ensure Children Looked After (CLA) are at the centre of work programme planning.
4. Explore the use of witnesses both in and away from formal meetings, and how Committee members can best understand all areas of the service to ensure that members hear the voice of families, service users and frontline staff.
5. Will meet informally to reflect upon the outcomes from the Ofsted report, with a special focus on effectiveness and impact, and agree

an approach for how the Committee will scrutinise Children's Social Care items moving forward, to include how information is shared with the wider membership of the County Council.

6. Requests progress on all recommendations of the above to be reported to the September meeting.

5. Redesign of the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) service

5.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of People. The report was introduced by Hayley Connor, Head of Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH). The Chairman welcomed Daniel Sartin, Branch Secretary for UNISON, who had been invited to speak on this item. The Committee heard the following key points from the Head of IPEH:

- A Cabinet Member decision in January signalled a review of the IPEH service. Both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered, and the Committee requested to review the direction of travel.
- Engagement activities took place all over the county, and involved a number of staff, partners and stakeholders.
- Online surveys were completed, the feedback would be embedded in the overarching review and design.
- Key themes to emerge from the engagement included the positive culture of IPEH, co-location with partners and linkages with MASH were identified as working well.
- Areas signposted as requiring improvement included a lack of data sharing, duplication of work, and ineffective technology.
- Four characteristics will be used to define the future operating model for IPEH:
 - A retained focus on core priorities in community settings, for example supervised contact visits in IPEH hubs of Children and Family Centres. This has added value in that it helps introduce families to other services
 - IPEH will be closely integrated with Children's Social Care, the Healthy Child Programme, and Education.
 - IPEH to be closed aligned with public health priorities, recognising West Sussex as diverse having both urban and rural localities.
 - There will be clear, simple pathways for children, ensuring the interventions delivered are having the right impact.

5.2 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explained that IPEH worked with a number of partners, including the NHS, the voluntary sector and Education to deliver a range of services and both a universal level and at higher stages of intervention. He also told the Committee:

- IPEH required a refocus of some support to areas demonstrating as having the greatest need, such as the coastal strip and Crawley. There were also pockets of demand in Horsham, Chichester and Mid-Sussex.
- Some services could be more targeted at the preventative level.

- Efficiency saving required was indicated as £4.9m, however the priority is to ensure the voice of the child lives within the centre of the service.
- The arrival of Ofsted and subsequent outcome has allowed WSCC to reframe their services and review the offer.

5.3 Daniel Sartin from UNISON made the following points:

- In January 2019, the Performance and Finance Select Committee identified a cut to the IPEH service. This sparked concern for UNISON, and for IPEH as an effective and highly regarded service.
- The evidence base for this review and redesign was not available to UNISON. The previous IPEH review had been fractious, and the union wanted time to consider.
- The risk of destabilisation carried consequences, such as staff anticipating redundancy, the impact on morale, and people leaving.
- Improved listening and reflection would bring about the required change in culture.
- The union welcomed the refocussing of the IPEH review, and requested it proceed at an orderly pace.

5.4 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People apologised to staff to who felt unstable as a result of the IPEH redesign, and indicated the motive was always to look at efficiencies and effectiveness; it was not a cost-cutting exercise. The Executive Director of People, and Interim Director of Children's Services advised there was no sense in running separate reviews when a wider service transformation was necessary following the Ofsted recommendations.

5.5 Resolved that the Committee:

1. Emphasises the importance of communication, especially with members of the IPEH service to ensure maintenance of staff morale.
2. Recognise the opportunities of developing and redesigning IPEH in view of the wider improvement required across the service.
3. Wishes to be closely involved in any developments regarding IPEH, and that the Committee have the opportunity to consider any Cabinet Member Key Decisions within a suitable timeframe.

6. Relinquishment of Beechfield Secure Unit

6.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of People. The report was introduced by Jackie Wood, Head of Children's Social Care – placements. The Committee heard the following:

- Beechfield Secure Unit did not run at a profit, and did not meet the need in West Sussex. Huge improvement would be required.
- The opportunity to run the secure unit in partnership had been explored, but no expressions of interest were received.
- Staff and members have visited other secure units throughout the country, which has contextualised and consolidated WSCC's lack of requirement for this type of accommodation.

- There was no obligation for WSCC to provide a secure unit. To re-open the site would require significant investment.
- It is more appropriate to concentrate the focus at the present time on WSCCs in-house residential estate.
- All 14 staff from Beechfield had been redeployed, there could be some risk of redundancy, but opportunities existed within the residential team.

6.2 The Chairman explained he felt there was no clear incentive to retain Beechfield given the information in the report. A summary of questions and responses considered by the Committee were as follows:

- Members asked if the site could be used in a different way. The Executive Director of People advised that in the last 2 years, only 4 children had been placed in the secure setting. She added the service for complex and high risk adolescents was providing a positive level of intervention and support.
- The building was not fit for purpose, and the focus must now shift to the recommendations as laid out by Ofsted, in order to improve the more fundamental elements of the service.
- The Committee recognised Beechfield was surplus to requirements, but in those extreme circumstances where it might be required, where would these young people go. It was discussed that secure accommodation tended to have detrimental effects on mental health, and that opportunities for alternative, preventative units were being explored as a preferential option. For those rare cases where it was absolutely necessary, an out of county placement could be sourced.

6.3 Resolved that the Committee:

1. Support the proposed Cabinet Member decision to permanently cease the operation of the Beechfield Secure Unit, and that it be declared surplus to service requirements, and asks that any proceeds from the sale of the site are reinvested in the Children Services budget.

7. Education and Skills Annual Report

7.1 The Committee considered a report by Paul Wagstaff, Director of Education and Skills. The Director of Education and Skills advised the Committee the report demonstrated the directorates improvement journey, outcomes achieved by schools, and the key priorities to embed the School Effectiveness Strategy. Mark Jenner, Head of School Effectiveness highlighted the following key points:

- The report had been in creation for 18 months. Result data was validated in February.
- The report had taken on a new format which clearly indicated targets, and the performance matched against those targets.
- The School Effectiveness Strategy was now firmly in operation.
- The report indicated the priorities that will mean further progress is made towards the targets set for 2022.

- A Census survey indicated pupil numbers were continuing to increase.
- There had been a significant reduction of sugar in school meals.
- Pupils with EHCPs in West Sussex had a higher percentage of attainment (3.1%) when compared to England (2.9%).
- Disadvantaged pupils in Crawley at KS2 were performing better than similar children nationally, however this was not reflected in other areas of the county, where this cohort were not meeting the national attainment levels.
- The Virtual School remained at the centre of work for the Education and Skills team.

7.2 The Chairman thanked the Head of School of Effectiveness and the Director of Education and Skills, and congratulated them on the improving figures. The Committee considered the following questions:

- Members asked how the completion of timely EHCPs could be increased and improved. The Director of Education and Skills advised there were 2 measures for the completion of EHCPs; either 16 weeks for a review or 20 weeks for a new assessment. He advised that over 90% of these were completed within the appropriate timescales, and that WSCC was doing well to achieve this.
- The Committee questioned what happened to excluded children. The Director of Education and Skills advised the Timpson report had indicated that CLA and children with SEND were more likely to be excluded. Harnessing an inclusive curriculum, better use of therapeutic support and awareness would help to avoid these exclusions. A culture shift needed to take place in order to understand why a child might behave in certain ways.
- Members of the Committee considered if there was support for children with SEND in academies. The Director of Education and Skills advised any school with pupils with EHCP statements received additional funding to help meet the needs of the child. This was annually reviewed. Although there was no jurisdiction with academies, the local authority can challenge and approach the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- Members asked how schools accommodated pupils with physical disabilities. The Director of Education and Skills advised there were currently 10 special schools within the county for those with very complex needs, and this provision was expanding with the Special Support Centre (SSC) proposal. He added all schools need accessibility plans.

7.3 Resolved that the Committee:

1. Noted the content of the Education and Skills Annual Report, and asked to consider next years report at a future meeting.
2. Requested that the Director of Education and Skills provide the Committee with timelines and actions in order to reduce the number of EHCPs not completed within the statutory timescales.

8. Business Planning Group Report

8.1 The Committee considered a report from the Business Planning Group, which was held on 25 April 2019. The report was introduced by the Chairman, and Helena Cox, Senior Adviser Democratic Services.

8.2 Resolved that the Committee:

1. Approved that Paul High be nominated to report to the Committee on the SEND strategy board.
2. Would welcome a visit to the MASH.
3. Noted the additions to the Committee's Work Programme as stated in the report.

9. Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 19 June 2019 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 3.04 pm

Chairman