

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
Committee Room 2 - Town Hall  
15 January 2015 (Times Not Specified)**

**Present:** Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Jason Frost (Vice-Chair), Nic Dodin, John Glanville, Joshua Chapman, Philippa Crowder, John Wood, Keith Roberts and Roger Westwood

Co-opted Members: Phillip Grundy, Julie Lamb, Margaret Cameron, Emma Adams and Lynda Rice

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of an emergency evacuation of the building becoming necessary

Apologies for absence were received from , co-opted member Jack How and

**56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Jack How (Special Schools). Councillor Roger Westwood substituted for Councillor Carol Smith

**57 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were presented.

**58 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The chairman advised that she had attended a joint meeting with the Individuals Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee, which had a focus on educational care and the plans for children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. Health and Children's and Learning OSSC's had arranged to have a joint meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> February to discuss children's health services available in Havering.

The work plan was to be forwarded to all members, and brought to each meeting in order to keep up-to-date on future topics of discussion.

**59 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

Due to the judicial process requiring all minutes of Overview & Scrutiny Boards to be signed and bound, a review of the signed copies of minutes was conducted. Several meetings records from 2012 were not available, and required a signature. Councillor Ford asked all present, as she had been the vice chair at the time would all present vouch that the records of the period of March – August 2012 were accurate and allow her to sign the copies. All members **agreed**. Chairman Ford signed the minutes as a true and accurate record for posterity.

Under item 45 (SEND travel), the documents had still not been provided to the Committee. Kathy Bundred took on this item to address and ensure the information was shared.

Item 46, Children's Public Health- At the forthcoming joint meeting, the list of public health functions delivered by Public Health and the CCG commissioned services, was due to be addressed. Outcomes and delivery plans had been requested ahead of the meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Panel was seeking reviews of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board report provided. Feedback would be provided to this scrutiny board once complete.

## 60 **LSCB ANNUAL REPORT**

Brian Boxall, Chair of LSCB gave an update on the headline issues of 2013-14.

National issues were understood because they had become local issues, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) which had links to gangs and Youth Offending. The Introduction of MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub), was as a result of the Children's Services provision having been integrated with Adult Services, including the mental health services.

The vacancy rate of social workers was approximately 30%, with the agency rate also at approximately 30%.

The Police CAIT (Child Abusive Investigative Team) has challenged Scotland Yard. There were a number of items still to be addressed, and as a result there was a potential worry that children were being abused in the meantime.

Another CAIT challenge was that Barking & Dagenham and Havering services were both situated in Redbridge, which was a distance away physically. Additional concerns were that there was an increase in Looked After Children (LAC), child protection and CSE.

Mental health provision for adolescent children included self-harm, and a potential increased risk. The LSCB had asked schools to understand the risks involved.

The LSCB had been liaising with the coroner more on child deaths to identify potential issues and address any concerns.

There had been some struggles within the LSCB with how best to deal with youth violence, but every service had started to pull together to give their input.

Provision for adults didn't take into account their role as parents, just as individuals. The transition of children into adult services had helped improve this service. Some of the major issues involved were issues of parental neglect including mental, physical and sexual. The mental health of the individuals as parents was a concern which was being addressed.

Schools were doing well, but still had some work to do as not all schools were forthcoming in providing the right level of safeguarding concern. A Safeguarding review was being planned within schools, as some schools were not meeting the requirements, including some academies and sixth forms. Safeguarding was paramount for all children. Weak schools were to be identified and sent to the committee.

A safeguarding officer had been dedicated for schools, to ensure a single point of contact for all schools was established.

The LSCB reported to the Children's Board Strategy Body since 2006, to look at Child Protection. Everyone had to be treated the same as per section II, and the LSCB had the statutory power to demand their support. It was well known that if the board wanted something to be done, then it would be completed.

A report to the Chief Executive was both intended to report to and change the direction of children's services.

There were robust links with schools out of the borough. The LSCB's job was to challenge the people placing children out of borough, and ensure the right provision was given to each school.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was a key item in a joint meeting with the Local Authority in which midwives were part of the discussion. A specific conference on FGM recently showed that roughly 10 cases had been identified through maternity services; however some GPs were not engaged with reporting back on these issues. It was suggested that teachers may be able to identify some of those at risk, taking messages back into schools, as this item is a new and sensitive area. It is considered that a child is at risk if the mother is a victim of FGM. Guidance for schools from the DFES is being published on FGM.

Some schools lacked engagement for child protection, but overall the services were much improved. The schools were engaging better due to

MASH, as they had a better picture of the children within the context of their families.

The Local Authority had responsibility to make sure working within schools was taking place. Agencies were monitored to ensure their processes were robust. The Virtual Head for Looked After Children had been appointed in order to achieve those ends.

The board wanted to visit two schools - one that does and one that doesn't engage with safeguarding processes.

## 61 **YOUTH OFFENDING & PROBATION**

John Taylor, the new Youth Offending Service (YOS) Group Manager was in attendance to provide a report on the YOS. Previously YOS had been a shared service between The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham and The London Borough of Havering. The service had been brought back into Havering. A changing culture to a holistic approach was evident, as the service worked with the perpetrators, their parents, siblings, friends and their whole families.

The policies and procedures were in-line for review to ensure they were rigorous and robust.

Training for front line staff and volunteers included evidence-based methods such as:

- Victim awareness
- Weapons awareness
- Drug awareness
- Substance misuse

Youth Offending in Havering was predominantly the in 10 – 18 profile group. Specifically, the typical incidents were perpetrated by those aged 16, ranging from low-level to serious incidents. A person of 17 years and 9 months if they met the criteria, would not be considered a youth, they would automatically be held accountable as a full adult.

Only two persons had received custodial sentences within the financial year. Havering had seen a big decline in those cases. Out of court disposal at the police station however had seen a big increase. Intervention was now conducted at a much earlier stage.

MOPAC had reviewed and advised there would be more complex cases arriving in the borough due to residential movement. Havering were ensuring that they were equipped and ready for more complex cases, and that all services were rigorous and robust. There was hope that this would put off some boroughs from deliberately moving their complex cases to Havering. MOPAC were impressed with the gangs strategy and panel, the

training put in place for front line staff, and were waiting to see if the predicted influx of cases would arrive.

A 'live' reoffending tracker toolkit was in use, but did not go back very far. As time went on, more data would be available for cross-checking.

## 62 **OFSTED CHILDRENS SERVICES**

Children's services presented a report on OFSTED expectations upon their arrival, which could be at any time.

Some of the main elements of the report stated that:

- OFSTED arrived unannounced. Children's Services had prepared a presentation which was updated on a regular basis in order to have the information to hand when OFSTED arrived.
- The methodology required Children's Services to look at individual cases that OFSTED identified, audit them and then score themselves based on how they have met the framework and what level they think they are working at. OFSTED arrived at random, but they aimed for every three years. Their last visit was approximately 2 years prior. Havering usually had 190 Looked After Children (LAC). Within the year, this had risen to 222-225 (minor fluctuations around this number). The number of LAC had risen nationally in the last year. A high proportion were known to be previous LAC.

Children's Services wanted to deliver the best possible service. They benchmarked against cost effectiveness. Recruitment and retention of Qualified Social Workers was making progress - previously 30% now 22% agency staff. They were still using too many agency staff which was inconsistent the LAC.

The previous OFSTED result had advised that the service was 'good' but was too early to establish. The troubled families service within Havering was among the best in London, at stage 2.

Some of the challenges included that the workforce stability had been an on-going issue. Social work was not an attractive profession but was now seen as much better as a career option. The participation worker strategy was due to be completed the following week, but had to be continued to be a challenge

Members were generally sympathetic to children's services.

Fast reaction and retention was needed to keep the children in their homes as much as possible, but where they could not remain at home, the aim was to keep as many children as possible within the borough, and not only within a 20 mile radius.

There was a big emphasis on Looked After Children education.

Social work pay was benchmarked and was a good rate. Pay was not what was putting people off from working in Havering. Most staff leaving were going into agency work. There was a long term problem, but staff were now converting from agency to permanent employees. A new programme was in place for social work development.

22% of vacancies were covered by agency staff. The recent recruitment day had been successful.

Supporting children to complete work experience within schools was considered. It was considered that in some cases it was difficult to get teachers to write references for children, and insurance was a concern for employers. Careers worked with schools in order to provide work experience, but it was not within the jurisdiction of the Local Authority to intervene. It was considered that inviting the Youth Council to meet the committee may provide a way in to help support the work experience schemes, and provide an opportunity to scrutinise the offer provided.

The Chamber of Commerce was to speak to the Youth Council, to engage with young people.

#### 63 **BUDGET PROPOSALS ON YOUTH PROVISION**

The implications of expansion within the forthcoming 2-3 years was that more staff and more services were required. The expansion of already large, popular schools was a detriment to the less popular schools which were overlooked for expansion. All of the schools in the borough should have been given equal consideration for expansion. The committee agreed to lobby for additional funding for the expansion programme of schools requiring attention.

A report was requested for information on extra facilities that expanded schools required, such as meals, lavatories etc.

Work on policies for sexual exploitation, FGM, safeguarding and other systems was outstanding. Special Educations Needs considerations were highlighted as required in all policy work.

From the following academic year, the benchmarking of schools would be monitored as 'progress achieved', as opposed to attainment levels.

Educational Attainment for all children would be a topic group going forward, date to be agreed.

The budget proposals were **agreed**.

#### 64 **DECISION ON WHICH TOPIC GROUPS WILL BE TAKEN FORWARD**

As above, the Committee would take forward the Educational Attainment of all children as a topic item.

65 **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION REPORT**

Due to time restrictions, the report on Child Sexual Exploitation would be circulated ahead of the following meeting.

66 **REPORTS PACK**

No comments were made on the reports provided.

67 **URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was raised.

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**Chairman**