

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 1-Town Hall - Town Hall
27 April 2016 (7.00 - 8.35 pm)**

Present: Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Carol Smith (Vice-Chair), Jason Frost, Nic Dodin, John Glanville, Keith Roberts and Frederick Thompson (In place of Joshua Chapman)

Co-opted Members: Jack How, Julie Lamb and Lynne Bennett

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 Councillors Philippa Crowder and Joshua Chapman

51 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15th March 2016 and 31 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52 OFSTED UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received a brief update on the rolling programme of inspections being carried out by OFSTED. It was explained that almost half of England, and half of Greater London had been inspected and it was expected that Havering would be inspected in the coming months.

Officers were in place to support staff and members to ensure they were as ready as could be for the inspection.

OFSTED would look at all aspects of the service from the Front Door, how Social Workers dealt with cases, and follow them through over a four week period. They would speak with families, children, senior officers, social workers and members. OFSTED also looked into safeguarding to ensure that vulnerable families received the help

OFSTED look at the good practices within the organisation, from the young person and their families' point of view, care leavers, adoption and fostering panels through to the leadership and governance. A good authority would

all be moving in the same direction. Of the 23 boroughs already inspected, where there was inadequacy in leadership, this was also shown throughout the whole service.

The Sub-Committee noted that the next round of inspections would be in May, June and July and it was possible that Havering may be inspected in that time.

Officers explained that there had been substantial changes made in processing the requests for help and the flow of traffic at the front door. This was in the best interest of families and children and reflected what changes had been made to deal with vulnerable children and families.

Members raised concerns about the resource implication and if the service was in a position to be inspected. Officers stated that a lot of work had been done and there was confidence on what to expect from the inspection. Given the increase over the last year in larger families with complex needs coming into the borough, the service has reflected and changed its practices to have a clear direction to give consistency across all areas of the service.

Officers added that there were strong partnerships with the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, the Probation Service, Police, Health, Children in Crisis Centre and the Adoption and Fostering Council.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the update.

53 MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The purpose and how the MASH worked was explained. It was noted that the service was the front door for the Children and Young Persons Service. There was a triage team for all referrals. These referrals were given a BRAG priority (Blue – No further action necessary, Red – immediate safeguarding issue and decision within 4 hours, Amber – decision within 24 hours and Green – decision within 72 hours and Early Help referral).

It was noted that the MASH had a number of partners and its key functions included:

- Identification and early intervention:
 - Working with localities and early intervention service providers
 - Support children and young people
- Harm identification and reduction:
 - Identify the highest levels of harm
 - Partners working together.
- Co-ordinating partner agencies

- Working with vulnerable children and young people.

This was with a view to improved informed decisions leading to appropriate outcomes.

The Sub-Committee noted that a LEAN review had taken place following a high volume of cases going through the MASH, with a high level of referrals processing to social work assessment. This had resulted in a streamlined business process with a reduction in paper and with 28% of all referrals requiring no further action. It was noted that an initial £100,000 had been saved in staff costs. The review had led to significantly less interventions and more early help or signposting to other services.

The Sub-Committee was informed that there was good intelligence across the three Child Sexual Exploitation Police boroughs, and both borders and liaison was good. There was good tracking and triangulation to gang work and established relationships with other borough MASH.

Members asked what the next steps would be for the MASH. Officers explained that it would be difficult to estimate demand at the front door, but with the Early Help service this would assist with the flow at the front door. The service was looking to support families to become independent and if a family re-presented at the front door, investigations would be undertaken to find the correct threshold for that particular family. The benefits would be a reduction in case loads and more successes.

The Sub-Committee thanked officers for a very informative presentation.

54 EARLY HELP

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the Early Help service. The definition of Early Help was explained as:

- To holistically engage with families at the earliest opportunity, offering the right service at the right time.
- Reduce the demand for complex services.
- Increase positive outcomes.

The creation of one Early Help service had brought together a number of teams. Since its creation there had been an increased number of referrals to the Early Help Service with a greater number of cases being managed by partner agencies. This also reduced the number of cases needing statutory interventions and services.

Officers explained that the service needed to be more flexible and that all family situations were different. The service was delivered in a more cost effective way. The new structure would create a service that was able to deliver its objectives in a reduced budget, the offer for under 5's would

provide a “hands-on” style of delivery, a holistic service would be delivered to build resilience within families, and a lighter assessment tool would give practitioners more time with families.

Officers explained that each family would be given an “outcome star” which they could use to visualise the work, set their own goals and aspirations and could carry out an assessment on their progress. The “outcome star” provided a grade against 5-6 demands which were reviewed on a 6-12 week basis. A shift should be seen over the review period with more cases being stepped down to Early Help.

The Sub-Committee noted that Early Help would be available from birth, with information being available at the midwife stage. There would also be liaison between pregnant girls on the Youth Offenders Team and daycare/nursery settings. Intelligence was key in ensuring that early help was in place to improve the outcomes for the whole family.

Officers reported that the Children’s Centres across the borough were successful in engaging with families, they were now more attractive and accessible and provided details of live birth data that could be used to identify any potential concerns. The two-year offer was essential for vulnerable families in securing daycare at an early stage to enhance life chances for the children.

The Sub-Committee thanked officers for a very informative presentation. It agreed that it would wish to see further information on Early Help be presented to a future meeting together with details on Children’s Centres and usable data from the Outcome Star.

The restructuring of the Social Work Team and Early help would commence in June/ July 2016.

Members asked if staff had been made aware of these changes. Officer stated that the views and opinions of staff had been taken on board. Social Workers were already involved in the decisions about the step down process to Early Help and were clear about the Local Offers for both Social Work and Early Help.

It was important that consistency and trust of families was maintained, with a fluid approach to all cases. It was noted that the Early Help Service would also be included as part of the OFSTED review.

55 DEMAND MANAGEMENT CLUSTER NAVIGATOR

The Sub-Committee received an update report on Demand Management and the Cluster Navigator pilot. Following an increase in demand across children’s services over recent years it had been necessary to find ways of stabilising and/ or reducing this demand. The cluster navigator was a demand management pilot funded for the academic year 2015/16, and so

had only been in operation for two terms. There was no quantitative data available but some community links for schools had been developed and support to schools to navigate information sources within the local authority as well as national organisations was available. School representatives had discussed the identification of sources of quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure impacts of this. Whilst the primary and secondary phases were working well, the link with Early Years' settings was not fully embedded.

The schools involved had reported that the cluster navigator's post had reduced their frustration about the identification of services; giving them access to support, demystified the changing face of the local authority and they felt more able to identify key contacts that could support families. The schools involved in the pilot were aware that there was no further central funding for the cluster navigator post for the next academic year. Similar arrangements would therefore need to be sourced by the schools or external funds. Importantly, it was crucial that the benefits from this type of approach were woven into the recently reviewed Early Help offer moving forward.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report.

56 **FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Chairman advised members of a future visit to the Children's Social Care department. This would be a tour of the service with a sense of what was being done.

The Corporate Parent Panel had been invited to the Children in Care Council on 9th May. Members were reminded to dress smart/casual. The meeting would be held in two parts. The first would be in the Committee Room with an informal discussion, and then the second part would take place in the Council Chamber with a number of questions posed on the Pledge using the voting system for an element of fun for the young people.

Chairman

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