

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL
MONDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2014**

Councillors: Berryman, Hearn (Chair), Ibrahim and Morris

Co-opted Members: Ms. Y. Denny (Church of England Representative), Mr. L. Collier (Parent Governor representative) and Mr. K. Taye (Parent Governor representative)

CYPS9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Blake and Hare.

CYPS10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

CYPS11. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

CYPS12. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 29 September 2014 be approved.

CYPS13. SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Sir Paul Ennals, the Chair of Haringey Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), outlined its role within child protection and gave the Panel an update on current safeguarding issues.

He reported that he had begun his work as Chair in May. He did not currently live in Haringey but have previously done so and had held senior roles in a number of organisations concerned with children's welfare. The inspection of the LSCB by OFSTED had taken place shortly after his arrival.

The LSCB brought together all of the key agencies involved in child protection and had two distinct roles:

- To co-ordinate child protection work across agencies; and
- To encourage all agencies to hold each other to account.

Agencies involved included the Police, NHS bodies, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), schools and probation organisations. In addition, the voluntary sector was involved and there was both a designated GP and a nurse representative. There also had to be at least one lay member and an independent Chair. Representatives from agencies were expected to be of a senior level and in a position to speak on behalf of their organisation. Work was currently being undertaken to develop the means by which the Board received the views of children and particularly those in care.

The Chair of the LSCB was appointed by the Council but was accountable to the LSCB's board and the Chief Executive. Although the Council was the largest

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single organisation involved in the LSCB as well as the principal funder, this did not confer any special status on it and it was regarded as one of the many partner agencies on the Board. The LSCB had a small number of staff but all its substantive work was undertaken by individual agencies.

The formal role of the LSCB was outlined in "Working Together". There was a particular role in scrutinising and understanding thresholds of care. In addition, the LSCB co-ordinated multi agency training, undertook audits and was responsible for serious case reviews. They also analysed trends and themes. The Cabinet Member for Children and the Assistant Director for Children were both active members of the Board.

The Board had recently submitted its action plan to Ofsted in response to its recent inspection of the LSCB. Only four areas had been identified by OFSTED as requiring improvement. Amongst other areas, the LSCB's membership, processes and arrangements for serious case reviews had been found to be satisfactory.

Improvements were nevertheless required in some areas including the involvement of schools, arrangements for addressing issues regarding the possible sexual exploitation of girls on the fringes of gangs and data on children missing from home and from care. A task and finish group had been set up by the Deputy Chief Executive to address all of these issues. The Action Plan had been approved by the Board but still required endorsement by OFSTED.

The Board had set a number of long term priorities as part of its business planning process. These included:

- Consideration of arrangements for addressing child sexual exploitation and, in particular, identifying where accountability lay. A task and finish group had been set up to look at this and would be reporting back in January; and
- Addressing historical sexual abuse. This related to recent allegations dating back to the 1980s. The perpetrator had since been charged and convicted. The case had generated a lot of learning and the Board was wishing to capture this with a view to guidance being updated. It was possible that other cases from the same period would come to light in due course.

The focus of the Board was on learning, with agencies being encouraged to share.

The Panel noted that local authorities across London were all looking at the issue of child sexual exploitation and an audit tool had been developed to assist with this. It was a pan London issue and Haringey was working with Enfield and Hackney in developing its approach.

In terms of historical abuse in schools, it was conceivable that disclosure could take place at any school within the borough. Schools had a pivotal role to play in encouraging disclosure. It was possible that whistle blowing policies might need further development so that they were more sensitive to the needs of children and young people. The Police were considering how they could intervene at an earlier stage and measures were being taken to put all relevant data on the appropriate IT system.

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In answer to a question, Sir Paul stated that OFSTED wanted the learning from recent cases of historical abuse that had come to light to be shared. A meeting of LSCB Chairs across London and the Children's Minister had been arranged as part of this.

The Panel noted that the voluntary sector had an important role to play in child protection and development work had been undertaken with HAVCO. However, more was required as the local infrastructure was not as strong as in many other London boroughs. This would include an on-line training package.

In respect of early help, it was the role of the LSCB to ensure that the move to earlier intervention did not inadvertently place children at risk in situations, such as where the level of involvement was stepped down. The Board needed to be satisfied that children were safe.

Panel Members felt that it was essential that representatives from schools regularly attended Board meetings and that attendance should be a top priority. Sir Paul commented that lack of attendance should not be equated with lack of interest. There was a high level of commitment from schools but Headteachers could often find it difficult to be away from their schools.

The Panel thanked Sir Paul for attending and looked forward to receiving further reports from him in the future. He stated that there might be opportunities for the Panel and the Board to align their work on issues of mutual concern and would be happy to explore this further.

CYPS14. CONTRACTS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Charlotte Pomery, the Assistant Director for Commissioning reported that contracts were part of a larger process of procurement and commissioning. Expertise in both of these areas within the Council had now been centralised. There were a large range of contracts that the Council had in respect of services for children and young people and these varied considerably in size. Commissioning was now more focussed on impacts and outcomes. There had been a tightening up of contract management so that there was now greater clarity on outcomes expected. The Council commissioned from a wide range of providers and these included in-house providers, NHS organisations and voluntary sector bodies.

In answer to a question, Ms Pomery stated that the decisions on commissioning tended to be based on where the necessary expertise and resources lay, with no preference towards a particular type of provider. Sometimes there could be a mix between external and internal providers. She reported that the Council's contract with Impower was a partnership with CYPS and success would be judged based on delivery and outputs. Some contracting processes were very open in nature and allowed potential providers to come back with suggestions regarding how the desired outcomes would be met. In some areas, there was a lack of significant competition and it was important the market was sufficiently strong. There was accountability through contract monitoring. There was nevertheless a need to invest further in it.

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Ms Pomery reported that work was undertaken to develop capacity amongst providers and that this was done in liaison with officers responsible for economic development. Support was given to help providers improve but this needed to be balanced against the need for services to be of good quality. An example of this was work undertaken to develop capacity for the two year old early entitlement offer which was focussed on attracting more providers and helping them to expand to meet demand.

The Panel noted that the work of Impower would contribute to the achievement of savings required as part of the Mid Term Financial Strategy. Impower's work on the Haringey 54000 project was of particular significance. It is aimed at rebalancing services towards early help and enhanced working with local parents and families. The Cabinet Member stated that the decision to appoint external providers to recruit foster carers had been taken as they had been shown to be more efficient. Putting children in care was expensive and savings needed to be made. Long term plans were being put in place to ensure sustainability.

AGREED:

1. That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel on the further development of the Haringey 54,000 programme; and
2. The further details of the 17 stand alone Children and Education contracts held by the Council be circulated to Panel Members.

CYPS15. PROGRESS ON THE RECRUITMENT OF NEW IN HOUSE FOSTER CARERS AND ACTIONS BEING TAKEN TO ADDRESS OFSTED'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

Neelam Bhardwaja, Assistant Director for Children's Services - Safeguarding and Support, reported on progress with increasing the number of in-house foster carers. It was aimed to increase the numbers by 45 by the end of March 2015. In order to help achieve this, cross borough promotional activity had been undertaken, including leafleting, posters and information and advice sessions.

The contract for recruiting was held by NRS. Their appointment had released fostering staff from responsibility for this and enabled them to concentrate instead on supporting, developing and training foster carers. In particular, there is now more frequent contact with supervising social workers and enhanced engagement processes. Arrangements had also been put in place to celebrate the achievements of foster carers.

Panel Members reported that children who were fostered were provided with mobile phones and bus and leisure passes. Not all families who fostered children could afford this for their other children and this could cause tensions. Ms Bhardwaja reported that bus and leisure passes were issued to all children in care as part of the Council's commitment to them as a corporate parent. In addition, mobile phones had become essential items for contact with them. She could nevertheless appreciate how this could lead to issues within some families. She agreed to take the issue back and raise it with support workers so that they were vigilant towards the matter.

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Panel Members were of the view that fostering involved all family members including the foster siblings. They noted that provision for leisure passes had only been introduced within the last two years. One possibility would be for the pass to be extended to whole family.

Panel Members also raised the issue of engagement with foster carers. They were of the view that it was important that foster carers did not feel inhibited by officers when providing feedback so a true picture could be given. Ms Bhardwaja reported that engagement had been improved and representatives from Haringey Foster Care Association met regularly with officers to pass on the views of their members.

The Panel noted that information was being collected on the effectiveness of marketing. In particular, respondents were being asked for details of how they heard about fostering. Children had asked for an event to celebrate fostering. The cost of arranging this had been relatively modest. Engagement was undertaken with a range of local communities to encourage them to consider fostering.

Ms Bhardwaja agreed to circulate details of the cost of the NRS contract. A key reason for this was that the Council had not been recruiting enough foster carers of its own. The improvements would increase the numbers of permanent placements and reduce the need for residential placements, which could be very expensive.

AGREED:

1. That the Children and Young People's Service be recommended to give further consideration as to how any tensions arising within families arising from items provided to foster children might be avoided or mitigated;
2. That details of the size of the contract between the Council and NRS to provide assistance with the recruitment of foster carers be shared with Panel Members; and
3. That a further report on progress, including information of retention rates, be submitted to the Panel in due course.

CYPS16. WORKPLAN

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

**Cllr Kirsten Hearn
Chair**