



## Agenda Item No:4

### **Bristol City Council Minutes of the People Scrutiny Commission 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

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#### **Members Present:-**

Councillor Alexander (Chair), Councillor Campion-Smith, Councillor Clark, Councillor Hickman, Councillor Kirk, Jenny Smith, Rob Telford.

#### **Officers in Attendance:-**

Karen Blong – Policy Advisor Scrutiny, Claudette Campbell – Democratic Services Officer; Airlie Fife – Service Manager, Primary; Mike Hennessey – Service Director Care, Support & Provision; Sheena Huggins – Service Manager; Paul Jacobs – Service Director Education; Netta Meadows – Service Director Strategic Commissioning; Jean Pollard – Service Director Children & Young People Services, Children and Families; John Readman – Strategic Director People;

#### **Also in Attendance:-**

Councillor Massey – Assistant Mayor for People.  
Sally Lewis – Independent Chair of Bristol Safeguarding Board  
Judith Brown – Expert Witness to the Commission & BOPF

### **1 Apologies for Absence, substitutions and introductions**

- Apologies Cllr Jethwa, Cllr Norman

### **2 Public Forum**

One public forum item was received and noted.

- Alderman Brian Price – spoke on item 8 Children's Services Improvement Plan.

Copies of the statements and officer answers are held on public record in the Minute Book.

### **3 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Minutes**

##### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the commission held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

#### **5 Action Sheet**

- The Action sheet was noted.

#### **6 Whipping**

- None.

#### **7 Chair's Business**

- None.

#### **8 Children's Services Improvement Plan**

The Commission received a report on the plan to be put in place following the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Jean Pollard presented the report explaining that the Council was required to submit the Children's Service Improvement Plan to Ofsted within 70 days of the inspection, the due date being 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015, this was in accordance with the 2006 Education and Inspection Act. The Council was accountable to both Ofsted and the DfE for the implementation of the Plan and ensuring the achievement of the required improvements.

The two key priorities for improvement were:

- The outcomes for Care Leavers, to maintain regular contact with social workers, undertake effective Pathway Planning and increase the number of care leavers engaged in education, employment and training.
- The educational outcomes for Looked After Children, to ensure the attainment gap in relation to their peers continued to close and complete all Personal Education Plans to a high standard.

The report setting out the findings and judgments had been published by Ofsted in December 2014. The overall judgement was that services for children in

Bristol “require improvement”. Similarly the Bristol Safeguarding Board was judged as requiring improvement.

Services were considered to be adequate in terms of protecting children from the risk of harm, and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in care. Minimum requirements were in place; however the authority was not yet consistently delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families.

The Ofsted report stated that the local authority had a good understanding of the main issues for children and their families in Bristol and of the strengths and weaknesses in the services provided.

Strengths included:

- Well targeted and coordinated early help service for children and families;
- Speed of response to child protection concerns; good quality adoption services;
- The relationships between Looked After Children and their social workers;
- A stable committed and skilled workforce; and
- The multi-agency working for vulnerable children and families, in particular in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation.

Ofsted noted the plans and activity taking place to improve services in Bristol particularly the Signs of Safety (SoS) model and other work but due to the timing of the inspection, the outcomes of these activities had yet to demonstrate their full impact. The plan therefore incorporated a number of these activities.

A time limited Improvement Board was being established to ensure the timely implementation of the plan and monitor the delivery of performance outcomes. The Safeguarding Children Board would monitor the progress of the Plan which would be shared with the Children and Families Board.

Members were invited to comment and the following is a summary of comments and observations noted:

- a. The report made reference to percentage figures without reference to any base line data for proper assessment of the intended action/activity. It was acknowledged that proper data monitoring could not be undertaken without this information. **(Action: JP)**
- b. The percentage improvement to 90% of Care Leavers with Pathway Plans was felt to be achievable and reflected the cases where young people refused to engage.

- c. The Pupil Premium grant allocated to Children was subject to defined criteria. For looked after children (LAC) the fund was managed by the Virtual School Head in line with Government guideline targeted to improving their educational attainment.
- d. The action in the plan to build capacity and reduce caseloads in the Care and After team conflicted with the need to reduce budget spend. Officers hoped that the implementation of the new working model for social work would release capacity. Social workers would be working in smaller units managing a smaller caseload. Key benefits anticipated for families were the additional contact time with workers that would allow for improved outcomes for children. **(Action KB & JP briefing on the new working model)**
- e. Information was requested on the Signs of Safety (SoS) model mentioned in the plan. The model concentrated on the strength of the family and engaging them in drafting their improvement plan. Officers confirmed that staff were undergoing training on the SoS methodology. Members requested a briefing to include social workers giving feedback on the model. Cllr Massey – Assistant Mayor for People indicated that an all Member briefing on the SoS would be arranged. **(Action: JP Briefing on SoS model)**
- f. There was discussion about how the work of Health Visitors and other partner agencies would feed into the plan. Social care acknowledged and welcomed contributions from professionals and partners dealing with children in their early years. Experience had proven that early year interventions had a positive impact on the overall solution.
- g. The Council was open to seeking input from authorities of excellence to input into the improvement activities for social care services. The Council was working with 10 other LA's and Professor Eileen Munro, CBE, who led the review of child protection resulting in the report on 'A Child-centred system', on the SoS implementation.
- h. Members called for Officers to be open about their response to the Ofsted assessment recognising that Ofsted was clear that there were strengths in the service such as its speed of response to children in danger. Officers acknowledged the draft improvement plan template issued by government failed to capture the passion and the desire of key workers to implement changes.
- i. The commission members wanted Cabinet to be advised of their concern that a lack of resource would impact on the implementation of the plan and the urgent need for short term investment to be made available to support the service. **(Action: The Chair and KB to draft comments for the Cabinet report – to be agreed with Commission Members via email)**

## **Resolved:**

- i. That the Commission Members will receive regular updates on the Children Services Improvement Plan – three monthly information report updates and six monthly formal reports.**
- ii. The Commission Members agreed that their comments as detailed above would be included in the Cabinet report.**

## **9 Annual Safeguarding Children's Report**

The commission considered the Annual Safeguarding Children's Report presented by Jean Pollard who then introduced the New Independent Chair of the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board, Sally Lewis, appointed in September 2014.

The report provided a summary of the work done by the Council and Bristol Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) to ensure the discharge of safeguarding responsibilities set out in the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013.

The Council was engaged in Remodelling Social Work, which involved the creation of smaller children's social work units, and adopting the Signs of Safety approach to child protection casework. The service had adopted the Quality Assurance Framework policy, the basis for monitoring and evaluating the work undertaken by the service.

The BSCB Annual Report 2013-14 and Business Plan 2013-14, detailed the impact of the work undertaken in the year and comments on the effectiveness of the BSCB.

- The Business Plan was currently being refreshed for 2015-16.
- BSCB introduced the Threshold Guidance in January 2014.
- BSCB had not published a Serious Case Review(SCR) over the past year but is currently planning the publication of 2 SCR's.

Sally Lewis explained her background and impression of the Council formed from the two Ofsted inspection process. She perceived a culture where people could be honest and open, free to share opinions and feed those thoughts into the delivery of the service. SL felt reassured that the conversations she had had with staff and the conversations within the inspection arena were the same. The inspection process reinforced the positive view held of the Council service,

demonstrating a culture that had good management in an atmosphere of calmness, openness and honesty.

Sally Lewis shared her observation that when a local authority does a good job of running a service local partners tend to “step back” to allow them to take the lead. Looking forward, there needs to be a push to wider involvement of local partners and the gathering of their perspective on services.

Members were asked to note the section in the report that set out the BSCB's 5 Strategic Priorities to be addressed between 2013 and 2016. The priorities reflected the priorities of the Board as identified in consultation with the Shadow Board and highlighted through Serious Case Reviews and other audit activity. The Shadow Board represented the voice of the child and work continued to maintain the relationship and ensure regular input.

There was a need to ensure appropriate communication of BSCB messages to the wider community to encourage the public to approach the Board as a body with concerns about safeguarding issues.

The Members raised the following main issues during the decision:

- a. Board Attendance. The Board met four times a year and although it appeared from the attendance report that a number of representative failed to attend this may have been because as Associate Members attendances was not required at every meeting. Board members make decisions and the Board associates provided vital input to inform the decisions. Work would be done to ensure appropriate attendance at each meeting.
- b. Inter-agency Safeguarding Training. BSCB provided a range of high quality training courses to a range of professionals working with children. The statistics in the report gave figures for number of places and actual attendance. Take up of training provided by the Board had increased due to recent sexual exploitation cases. Members were concerned that the report identified that no one from an education setting attended any of the courses provided during 2013-14. Going forward, work would be undertaken to identify the partners not taking the opportunity to participate in training.
- c. BSCB worked hard to maintain strong relationships with other Boards across the southwest and the groups that link through the work undertaken by Avon and Somerset police.
- d. Referrals thresholds. First Response was established during 2013-14 to be the single point of contact with Children's Social Care. Concerns were raised about those who failed to meet the referral thresholds and the outcome of those enquiries. The service was still evolving and data gathering would continue to give more meaningful analysis during 2014/15. Confidence in a

service was based on the service received and if users stop seeking assistance issues would be left unresolved having a detrimental effect on the overall effectiveness of safeguarding.

- e. Shadow Board. The Board identified Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as an area of concern. A presentation had been given by a group from Bristol on FGM at a national conference; Bristol was seen as the taking a leading role on this issue.

**Resolved:**

- i. **The Commission noted the findings of the report and the contents of the Bristol Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) Annual Report 2013-14 and the Business Plan 2014-15.**

## **10 Annual Education Performance – All Key Stages**

The commission received a presentation from Airlie Fife, Service Manager and Paul Jacobs, Service Director Education, detailing the performance outcomes from all the education key stages for Bristol schools. A copy is attached to these minutes. Bristol schools were ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> amongst the core cities for 'Good level of Development'. Only one school in the region was noted as 'inadequate' and generally schools across Bristol achieved the national average.

The following points were noted from the discussion that followed:

- a. The Ethnicity graph detailing achievement by Ethnic groups achieving 5 A-C GCSE's including English and Maths showed a decline in the attainment figure for Pakistani young people. Questions were asked about this change. Further research was suggested as a means to obtain best practice in improving under performance across the Ethnic groups.
- b. Concerns about the continued failing performance of Black Caribbean children in Bristol. The statistics given were below the national average for this group of children. The service would look at this issue in the wider national arena to ascertain the reason behind this poor performance. Officers shared that statistics demonstrate that value is being added over all key stages.
- c. Members agreed that further discussion on Annual Education Performance was required and requested an informal briefing be arranged (**Action: KB**)

**Resolved:**

- i. **The Commission Members noted the presentation.**

## 11 Review of Shared Lives Programme Presentation

The Commission received a video presentation on the Shared Lives Service and future options from Sheena Huggins (job title) Shared Lives provided approved carers to share their home and family life with a vulnerable person. This covered adults of any age who needed help with everyday living. That person could have learning difficulties, dementia, mental health issues or another disability. The service aimed to maximise people's independence providing;

- An alternative to residential living in a group environment
- Respite
- Day Services

The service was previously known as Family Link and Adult placement team. The service had been proven to provide value for money in comparison to other forms of residential, respite and day services. Managers were looking to develop services for Adults with Dementia and Complex Needs. Work would also take place on a marketing campaign that continued to raise awareness of Shared Lives as an alternative to traditional residential and respite services.

The members made the following comments and observation:

- a. Members wanted to be satisfied that service users were receiving a better quality service. An extensive in house evaluation programme had been established. Shared Lives workers were expected to liaise regularly with users to ensure quality. The service was also registered with the Care Quality Commission to ensure rigor.
- b. The scheme kept Adults in the community ensuring those with complex needs were matched appropriately. Both the user and the carer were "on a journey" fostering long term relationships resulting in consistency of care.
- c. Carers were paid on a scale depending on the needs of the user and the number being supported.

### Resolved:

- i. **The Commission noted the presentation, together with the above comments.**

## 12 School Road

The Commission received a presentation from Mike Hennessey on the Respite, short break residential care home known as School Road. The following main points were noted:



- School Road opened in 2003, located in Brislington.
- Residents were Adults with Learning Disabilities.
- School Road was owned and operated by the Council.
- The property was a domestic house with accessible bedrooms but with narrow stairs and hallway which limited certain users from using this premises because it was too small for a lift to be added.
- Adaptations to the building were not possible because of the quarry which lies beneath.
- Many users had attended School Road for a number of years and as they were aging, the accessibility issues no longer made it a suitable option.
- Use was decreasing as users looked at wider options now available because of the direct payment scheme.

As part of the 2014/15 Council budget process it had been proposed to provide School Road services in different ways. The Mayor had deferred taking the final decision on the possible savings in this area until he was satisfied that there were appropriate alternatives for the families affected by this change.

The consultation that was commissioned listened to those who started the petition, working with them to produce an alternative solution. School Road impacted on the lives of 50 families so their views were sought. The staff at School Road had worked with users and their families, linking with new providers to ensure that the needs of users were understood.

Members raised the following issues.

- a. Feedback picked up the real concern of User losing contact with friends. Experience and knowledge gained from other reviews demonstrate that even when opportunities were provided for user to meet socially, eventually these activities were unsupported because users made friends with other groups.
- b. The report was timetabled to go to Cabinet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015.
- c. Members sought reassurance that although there were alternative options and wider choice they wanted to know if a service was available in terms of emergency respite care and in the case of provider failure. Government directives meant that processes should be in place in the event of a failure.
- d. Members would be provided with a briefing on the Peer Challenge – Mental Health Services that is to take place between 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015.  
**Action: MH/KB to send out email invitation.**

**Resolved:**

- i. That the presentation was noted and that the Commissions comments forwarded to the Mayor and Cabinet.

### **13 Supported Housing Element of Home Care Re-commissioning**

- This item was deferred to a future scrutiny meeting.

### **14 Date of Next Meeting**

- 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015 Scrutiny Inquiry Day – Skills and Employment for all

The meeting ended at 1.18pm

CHAIR