SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 15 January 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Cliff Woodcraft (Deputy Chair), Kieran Harpham, Adam Hurst, Mohammad Maroof, Abtisam Mohamed, Bob Pullin, Jim Steinke, Alison Teal, Sophie Wilson and Colin Ross (Substitute Member)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Gillian Foster, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)
Alison Warner, (School Governor Representative - Non-Council Non-Voting Member)
Sam Evans, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)
Peter Naldrett, (Parent Governor Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)
Alice Riddell, (Healthwatch Sheffield, Observer)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Bainbridge, Lisa Banes, John Booker, Craig Gamble Pugh and Vickie Priestley (with Councillor Colin Ross attending as her substitute), and from Joanna Heery (Parent Governor Representative - Non-Council Voting Member).

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 In relation to Agenda Item 8 (Special Educational Needs in Sheffield), Sam Evans declared a personal interest as he knows Tim Armstrong (Head of Special Educational Needs) personally, and Mr Armstrong was a volunteer on one of the projects he ran as part of Forge Youth.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th December 2017, were approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Item 1 (Apologies for Absence), by the addition of Alison Warner (School Governor Representative - Non-Council Non-Voting Member), and arising therefrom, the Chair stated that:-

(a) further to the comments made in connection with how Members would like to see the scope of the scrutiny exercise on Child Poverty narrowed down, a decision had been taken, based on Members' comments, to focus on the link between child poverty and access to free school meals/breakfast clubs/nutritious meals during the holidays, and which had now been included on the Committee's Work Programme 2017/18 to this effect;

(b) he had forwarded the briefing paper – Social Market Foundation – 'Commission on Equality in Education' to the Sheffield Executive Board for comment, but had not yet received a response;

(c) once the issue of clarity had been established as to how child trafficking was to be dealt with at a local, political level, the Committee would have to decide whether it wished to look into the issue further; and

(d) that further to Item 8 (Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service - Annual Report 2016/17), he was awaiting guidance in terms of how the Committee's request to have more detailed information in future Annual Reports on how the Sexual Exploitation Service works with those young people who have experienced sexual exploitation, in the long-term, in order to help them deal with the trauma involved, and to plan an appropriate survival strategy, could be dealt with.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 Andy Shallice referred to the question he raised at the meeting of this Committee held on 11th November 2017, together with the response from Pam Smith (Head of Primary and Targeted Intervention), and stated that, following the meeting, he had heard that the Children and Families Service was to end its dedicated resource (half a post) working closely with gypsy and traveller children, their families and the schools they attended. He considered that this would end a long history in this City of recognising the particular needs of gypsy and traveller children, and the various difficulties and barriers they faced in securing good quality, continuous education. He questioned whether Members could be secure that this decision had been made on the basis of sound educational principles, and knowledge/understanding of gypsy and traveller families, rather than because of the continual pressures of the budget.

5.2 Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families) stated that, whilst she was not aware of the original question raised at the meeting of the Committee on 11th November 2017, nor any decision made with regard to ending the dedicated resource for working with gypsy and traveller children, their families and the schools they attended, the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) was supported by the Dedicated Schools Grant and, as far as she understood, this Service would be continuing.

5.3 Councillor Bob Pullin stated that he had been informed by the postholder that the post was to be deleted and, as a consequence, the postholder had been forced to cancel a conference which they were in the process of organising, at which Councillor Pullin had been asked to make a keynote speech. Councillor Pullin

expressed his concerns at this decision, indicating that Sheffield had a national reputation in terms of how it dealt and worked with gypsy and traveller children, and that, on the basis that there would always be gypsy and traveller children requiring assistance in terms of their education, this was likely to cause future problems for the Council.

5.4 The Chair stated that in the light of the issues raised as part of the question, and the concerns now expressed, Councillor Jackie Drayton be requested to investigate the assertions now made, and take any steps possible to reverse the decision, and provide a response to Mr Shallice, and the Committee, on her findings and any action taken.

6. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT AND RECOVERY PLANS

6.1 The Committee received a joint report of the Executive Director, People Services, and the Executive Director, Resources, providing a financial outlook for both Adult and Children's Social Care in Sheffield against the budget available over the period of the medium-term financial strategy (up to five years) and attaching, as appendices, Improvement and Recovery plans for both Children's Services and Adult Social Care. The joint report had been submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting held on 20th September 2017.

6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families) and Carly Speechley (Director of Children and Families).

6.3 Carly Speechley introduced the report, indicating that there had been a number of reasons for the overspend, the two main reasons being recent funding cuts and increasing demand on services. The increased demand on services included the referral of a further 80 children and young people to the Authority's care, the increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and an increase in the number of children and young people having more complex needs. Ms Speechley stated that in addition to this, 32 experienced social workers had left the Authority to work for other local authorities, which had led to a number of issues regarding inconsistency in performance and, over the last six months, there had been a near total change in the Children and Families Service's Senior Leadership Team. She referred to the various initiatives and programmes, as set out in the Improvement and Recovery Plans, focussing on the Children and Families Service, and which it was hoped would go some way to improving the current financial position.

6.4 Councillor Jackie Drayton stated that whilst the Council obviously had to be mindful of its budget position, the most important issue was ensuring that the children and young people in the care of the Authority were adequately looked after, and had a quality of life. She stressed the importance of the Authority assisting, where possible, with regard to accepting more UASC, pointing out that Sheffield had

been one of only seven authorities who had responded to the request for help from authorities in the Kent area, which had resulted in the Authority accepting a further seven children. Councillor Drayton stated that the funding provided by the Government was never going to be sufficient, resulting in local authorities having to manage their budgets more efficiently to enable them to deal with such issues.

6.5 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- Whilst it was obviously the intention to place as many local children and young people in Sheffield, the current nature of the provision had been insufficient to meet the need locally, forcing the Service to purchase an increasing number of out of city placements, thereby further increasing the Authority's financial pressures. Whilst providers, working in a competitive market, were able to sell their placements to anyone, the Authority was working closely with local private providers to try to get them to prioritise places for local children and young people. In addition to this, the Authority was also trying to identify foster carers who would accept sibling groups and older children, on the basis that younger children were much easier to place. A further initiative being considered was Multi Systemic Therapy, which comprised an intensive programme working with children of 11 years or older in order to reduce risk of removal from their families due to social or behavioural issues. Through this initiative, the Authority aimed to provide alternative support to keep families together safely, and avoid the need for further long-terms placements over the next five years.

- The loss of a number of experienced social workers over the last few years has had a very damaging effect on service provision and, in an effort to combat this problem, the Authority was still operating the 'Grow Your Own' scheme, via the 'Step Up To Social Work' scheme, funded by the Apprenticeship Levy. The main problem, however, was the difficulty in recruiting and retaining experienced social workers. In order to deal with this, the Authority had looked at a number of measures, including reducing their caseloads and increasing the support available. These early interventions had already resulted in a number of social workers returning to Sheffield from neighbouring authorities. At present, the Authority had 202 social workers, with 70% being three years or less qualified, therefore there was a need to shift this balance. One way of doing this had included appointing a number of experienced agency social workers, although this obviously came at a cost.

- The nature of the children and young people entering the care system, which was increasingly comprising older children, with

more complex needs, would require the Authority to refocus the types of interventions/resources that it had available to support such children to remain in Sheffield, whether in Council resources or private providers' provision. There had been an increase in such children presenting themselves as missing or having issues relating to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), sexually harmful behaviours and/or gang activity, and whilst the numbers involved were not large, the costs involved were much bigger. There was a need to provide more, and better, local services, including Multi Systemic Therapy.

- The Service was focusing on improving efficiency, which included looking at its IT system, which had not been deemed effective enough, and looking at the increased use of Multi Systemic Therapy which, although costing approximately £350,000 over two years, it was hoped this would result in a reduction in the number of children and young people entering the Authority's care, and subsequently resulting in a reduction in spend.

- In terms of progress made with regard to the Children and Families Improvement and Recovery Plan since the submission of the report to the Cabinet on 20th September 2017, there had been a large increase in the number of foster carer enquiries, with the Service receiving around 400 enquiries so far in the 2017/18 Municipal Year, as compared to 106 enquiries in the whole of the 2016/17 Municipal Year. Whilst the majority of projects and initiatives referred to in the Plan were currently in operation, following the required preparatory work, they were in the early stages, therefore it was difficult to report any definite improvements or changes at this stage. The Fresh Start programme was progressing well, which involved working with expectant parents who had already had children removed, to prevent any further removals, and which should provide better outcomes through alternative support, and avoid the need for an estimated 36 long-term placements over the next five years. The Domestic Abuse Project (previously known as Growing Futures) and other parenting support programmes were also in progress, and which were addressing parental resilience, and aimed to avoid the need for an estimated 44 long-term placements in the care system over the next five years. A further initiative, Family Group Conferencing was also in progress, and which involved restorative practice techniques to work with families subject to early legal action or child protection plans, to reduce risk by engaging wider family and community supports. It was hoped that this would prevent the need for a further 20 long-term placements over the next five years. The Service was also looking at expanding this service to support families to prevent early entry into care and reunification of children back with

families. Two other initiatives involved Multi Systemic Therapy, which had been referred to earlier in the meeting, and the Reunification Programme, which involved working with children currently in care to return back to their families through identification of appropriate kinship care. There were positive early signs in respect of all these programmes and initiatives.

- Whilst the full details in terms of salary differences were not available, it was believed that Level 2 Social Workers could earn approximately £6,000 more elsewhere than those on a similar level in Sheffield.

- The costs of implementing the changes were set out in the Investment Plan, within the report now submitted. The Authority had invested an additional £1.1 million into the Children and Families Service to deal with the issue.

- The Director of Human Resources and Customer Services was leading on the plans to attract those experienced social workers who had left the Authority, back to Sheffield. Several options were being considered as part of an overall recruitment package, which included the payments of benefits in kind, nine-day fortnights and more flexible working arrangements.

- Some of the initiatives/programmes and changes in working practices had not been in place 18 months ago, and had been implemented to deal with the recent increases in the numbers of children and young people coming into the Authority's care, together with the increasing complexity in the needs of such children and young people. The figures in terms of how the initiatives/programmes would hopefully prevent the need for additional long-term placements, were set out in the report.

- The expected target in terms of recruitment was to have an approximate 50% split in terms of those social workers having three years or more experience, and those having less than three years' experience. This would involve, if required, the appointment of agency staff.

- Whilst the Authority would always prefer to place children and young people with foster carers in the City, it could not rule out recruiting foster carers from outside Sheffield. Nottingham had a specialist unit for children and young people suffering CSE, and the Authority was looking at undertaking partnership work with that Authority.

- The Authority was currently responsible for the care of approximately 60 UASC. However, due to a lack of capacity, and no likelihood of further resources being provided by the

Government, the Authority was not in a position to accept any further such children.

- The average caseload for social workers had been reduced significantly, and currently stood at 19 for those at Level 2 or above, and 13 for newly qualified staff, which was considered comparatively low. The social workers also received support from an on-site consultant social worker, which comprised approximately two hours a month for social workers at Level 2 or above and once a fortnight for newly qualified social workers. Whilst there wasn't a national caseload average, such levels in Sheffield were deemed to be manageable.

- Whilst most local authorities had their own in-house fostering agencies, which were regarded as better quality and which authorities had better control over, they were all dependent on independent fostering agencies to some extent. Whilst some independent agencies were better than others, the Authority was looking to utilise examples of good practice in terms of the better quality agencies, as well as looking at a wider 'wrap around' offer that it could give to its foster carers.

- The early results of the recruitment and retention strategy had indicated that there had been an element of shift in terms of more experienced social workers, together with a reduction in levels of turnover of staff, staff sickness levels and frequency/ regularity of supervision.

- The time spent by social workers' line managers in terms of supervision was deemed as time well spent, particularly in those cases when it resulted in a reduction in caseloads, thereby aiding the retention process.

- 32 social workers at Level 2 or above had been lost to the Authority within a period of 18 months. The departure rates had now slowed down, and due to the work undertaken as part of the recruitment and retention strategy, a number of experienced social workers had returned to Sheffield.

- The reference to "not significant change" in the report, regarding the need for consultation, reflected no change in fulfilling statutory responsibilities. However, it was accepted that it did represent significant change in some areas. Regular consultation took place through various governance structures, such as the Foster Carers Group and Care Leavers Union. The Authority's Children in Care Council undertook some excellent work in terms of trying to change the lives of those young people who had been brought up through the care system.

- It was proposed that the funding in respect of 'Invest to Save' would be coming from the Council's unearmarked reserves, with a proposal to pay back this sum over five years. Approximately £4 million was to be invested in the various programmes and initiatives, as part of the Recovery Plan, in the long-term.

6.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the responses to the questions raised;

(b) supports the planned approach as set out in the report now submitted; and

(c) requests the Executive Director, People Services, and Executive Director, Resources, to submit a further joint report to a meeting of this Committee to be held in September 2018, containing details on the progress made in respect of the Improvement and Recovery Plan, and setting out statistical information to enable Members to measure the progress made, further details on the recruitment and retention package offered to social workers and clarification in terms of conversations with the user groups involved.

7. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN SHEFFIELD

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Strategic Commissioning and Inclusion Services containing details on the current provision and practice in regards to supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the City, together with the response to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms.

7.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families), Joel Hardwick (Head of Commissioning – Inclusion and School Services) and Tim Armstrong (Head of SEN).

7.3 Joel Hardwick introduced the report by referring to the Sheffield Inclusion Strategy, of which a refreshed version was currently in the process of being completed, and would be consulted on, and which would provide clear outcomes in 4 key themes – (a) Identification and Assessment of Needs, (b) Support, Provision and Commissioning, (c) Improving Outcomes through High Quality Partnership, Leadership and Practice and (d) Engagement of Children, Young People, their Families and the Workforce and Good Communication.

7.4 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- In terms of the current SEN provision in Sheffield, there were a number of special schools across the City, including independent specialist provision, attended by over 1,000 children. The SEND reforms, which had been implemented in September 2014, under the Children and Families Act, represented the largest changes to the way children and young people with SEN were supported in over 30 years. The changes included, amongst others, a holistic approach to meet the needs of those with SEN from age 0 up to 25 from across Education, Health and Care Services, a graduated approach to meeting a child's SEND, ensuring effective preparation for adult life for those with SEND and the replacement of School Action and School Action Plus with SEND support, and the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC) to replace SEND statements, with a requirement that all statements should be reassessed to provide a EHC Plan by the end of March 2018. There were a number of different services offered by a variety of service providers. The services offered by the Authority included educational psychology support, speech and language therapists, autism support, deaf and hearing impairment support, visual impairment support and independent travel training support. Other services were offered by health and care providers, such as the Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), and other specialised provision. There were also the Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST). The Service operated on a referral and evidence-based system, and undertook regular reviews of the children's progress, being mindful to listen to the views of the children's families.

- Whilst some progress had been made in terms of reducing the backlog with regard to the reassessment of SEND statements to provide a EHC Plan by the end of March 2018, there was still a considerable amount of work to do. As well as the required work with regard to the reassessment, the Service was also receiving an increased number of requests for an EHC Plan, but it was hoped that with the additional resources put in place, which included the employment of a number of Senior Business Support Officers to oversee the process, and the secondment of staff from within People Services, it was hoped that the targets would be met.

- The Authority would continue to monitor levels of provision required in respect of each child having SEN. There had been an increase over time in the numbers of children moving from mainstream to special schools, as well as those moving from special schools to out of City specialist provision. Whilst the main focus was on what was best for the child and their families, such increases had a financial impact on the Authority. Whilst there was a need for flexibility, there needed to be a balance in

terms of the child's individual needs. The new specialist provision planned in the City would be part of the answer to dealing with these issues, as well as reviewing provision more generally.

- Whilst it was not always the Authority's view that out of City placements for some children were the most effective course of action, the SEND reforms highlight the importance of parental preference.

- The Authority was working with schools and health and care practitioners to ensure that there were clearly defined processes for identifying needs early, particularly through key transition points, and joined up with other assessment processes. The Authority was trying to look at a more common offer in the City, which it was hoped could be found through a number of different ways, including the training of the Early Years workforce. It was accepted that there may be too many children starting in school without an adequate support plan in place.

- Sheffield had developed the use of the MyPlan as a tool to support good and consistent identification and assessment of need at SEND Support Level. There had been no intention on the part of the Authority to use the MyPlan to delay assessment or provision.

- There were still delays in terms of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment and, in recognition of this, officers were looking at how the process could be improved through additional leadership capacity, staffing and training.

- External plan writers had been appointed specifically, and were supporting a number of Inclusion Officers, to transition the SEND statements to an EHC Plan. In addition to this, additional staff from other Services within People Services, had been seconded in order to try and clear the remaining transition cases. At the present time, there were approximately 600 cases which needed to transition from a statement to an EHC Plan. The Department of Education were very clear that the deadline of the end of March 2018 should be met.

- It was hoped that parents, particularly those who required help, would be assisted by a Council officer or a representative from the health and care services, in terms of referring their child for an assessment. It was accepted that some parents, particularly those in hard to reach areas of the City, or with language problems, would find it harder to request a Plan, and it was hoped that such people could receive assistance.

- Work had already commenced on the development of Early Years Centres of Excellence from within existing structures, to align with the localities, to support the prevention and early intervention agenda by working with Early Years providers to identify and support children aged 0 - 5 with SEND as early as possible, through supporting improved practice across providers.

- There were currently 25 full-time posts within the SEN Team, who were responsible for dealing with the reassessment of SEND statements, as well as any new referrals and reviews of EHC Plans.

- Early responses from the review were pointing towards a lack of capacity in terms of provision between mainstream and special schools, and efforts were being made to look at how this gap in provision could be filled.

- One of the biggest criticisms of the SEN Team by service users has been poor communication. One of the steps being taken to address this was talking to the Parent Carer Forum to seek their views on how this could be improved.

- The Service was not aware of any specific sanctions facing the Authority if the March 2018 deadline in respect of the reassessment of SEND statements to provide EHC Plans was not met. There may, however, be a certain level of criticism from parents.

- Whilst bullying was prevalent in all schools in the City, it was particularly unsavoury in those circumstances where SEN children were victims. There was a need for the Local Authority to work with all schools and associated support services in connection with the schools' bullying policies. There was also a need to identify specific support for those children with SEN attending mainstream schools. The SEN Team would investigate the allegations made at the meeting by Councillor Bob Pullin.

7.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the responses to the questions raised;

(b) thanks Councillor Jackie Drayton, Joel Hardwick and Tim Armstrong for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and

(c) requests the Director of Strategic Commissioning and Inclusion Services to submit a report to a meeting of the Committee to be

held in September 2018, providing an update on the progress of the development and implementation of the Inclusion Strategy, specifically with regard to the conversion to EHC Plans.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which set out its Work Programme for 2017/18.

8.2 Deborah Fellowes (Policy and Improvement Officer) referred to the agenda items for the meeting on 12th March 2018, being the last meeting of the Committee during the 2017/18 Municipal Year.

8.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee approves its Work Programme for 2017/18.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday, 12th March 2018, at 10.00 am, in the Town Hall.