

CYPFS Scrutiny Committee Meeting 30th November 2015

Public Questions submitted by representatives from GMB

- Can the Council give its assurances today that the vital work of the specialist Early Years Safeguarding Children Advisors and their posts will continue to be funded?

The saving plan, and associated MER, relating to EYSA posts has been withdrawn to allow consideration of further options that will necessarily link to a review and restructure of the Safeguarding Children Service.

Managers will be meeting with the early years staff and their union representatives in the near future to listen to their views and use this to inform the development of those options and the speed at which any change needs to be considered.

- The Safeguarding Children Advisory Service is already running at only 60% of its original capacity. This is a service that schools and early years rely heavily on. Can the Council give its assurances that this service will be protected from further cuts?

The Safeguarding Children Advisory Service is currently operating at 88% capacity. This follows the transfer of Specialist Safeguarding Health staff, who previously worked on the Advice Service, to work alongside Police and Social Care in the newly formed MASH. The implications and impact on the Advice Service have been considered at the Sheffield Safeguarding Executive Board. As a result of that discussion, some of the Health resource was restored to the Advice Service on a temporary basis to allow a planned transition to cessation of the Advice Service.

In the interim, work will be taking place to ensure that alternative sources of support and advice are accessible and readily available to schools and others from April 2016. New arrangements will be based on the development of locality based services with the intention of ensuring that the providers of advice are in proximity, and probably well known to, those requesting it. This direct communication should improve the sharing of information and, by implication, responsiveness to safeguarding concerns.

- Does the Council agree that further fragmentation of our Safeguarding Children's Service is in no-ones interests?

The Council continues to give priority to safeguarding children and the above changes are being implemented to strengthen the local response. Ofsted were critical about the advice line in their last inspection report. This was predominantly due to the potential of confusion in relation to referral routes for safeguarding concerns and consistency issues with Social Care. It is within this context that we are looking to implement a more robust model to ensure we will fulfil our safeguarding responsibilities as effectively as possible.

As a forward thinking authority we will continue to look at a range of options in respect of how we deliver services. Delivering differently can create more efficient services which achieve the same or better effect. By way of reassurance, in any proposed changes we are mindful of the public purse but our absolute driving force is to ensure that children are safeguarded.

Dorne Collinson
Director of Children and Families