

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

Meeting held 16 September 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Mike Levery (Deputy Chair), Olivia Blake, Mike Chaplin, Julie Grocutt, Francyne Johnson, Joe Otten, Kevin Oxley, Jim Steinke, Alison Teal, Sophie Wilson and Richard Shaw (Substitute Member)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

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)

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Law, Colin Ross and Cliff Woodcraft, with Councillor Richard Shaw attending as substitute for Councillor Woodcraft.

1.2 An apology for absence was also received from Alice Riddell (Healthwatch Sheffield).

**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 9 (Inclusion Update) (Item 8 of these minutes), Sam Evans – Diocese Representative declared a personal interest as a friend of Tim Armstrong – Head of SEND.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

4.1 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2019

4.1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, it was requested that all

documentation previously circulated to Members referred to in Item 4.1 – Minutes of Previous Meeting (i to vii), be circulated again to ensure that new Committee Members had all necessary information.

4.2 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2019

4.2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, it was requested that all documentation previously circulated to Members referred to in Item 5.1 – The Council's Response to Ofsted on the Recent Inspection of the SEND Service (a to b), be circulated again to ensure that new Committee Members had all necessary information.

4.3 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2019

4.3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019 were approved as a correct record.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions.

**6. OFSTED REPORT OF INSPECTION OF SHEFFIELD'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES - JULY 2019**

6.1 The Committee received a report regarding the recent Ofsted inspection judgement.

6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families), John Doyle (Director of Business Strategy), who had been Acting Executive Director – People Services at the time of the inspection and Andrew Jones (Head of Primary and Targeted Interventions).

6.3 Councillor Jackie Drayton circulated a document which outlined the headline areas for improvement arising from the Ofsted inspection and the progress made to date.

6.4 As an introduction, Jackie Drayton gave thanks to all foster carers, adoptive parents and front line staff, and explained that the last inspection in 2013 had rated the service as needing improvement. However, steady progress had been made since then and the 2019 inspection had rated the service as good. There were still some areas that needed improvement however and these had been identified by officers in the pre-inspection self-assessment. The Inspectors had found no further areas for improvement.

6.5 John Doyle stated that the report was a good assessment of the service, but the Council could not afford to become complacent. Children were at the centre of all practises and much had been done to improve over the last couple of years. The

views of children were valued and the Council was supporting them to grow up well supported. The Council was looking to improve the service further and would continue to challenge itself.

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

- The inconsistency of the application of the threshold to step up to children's social care from early help had arisen in one or two cases where the Council had been trying too hard to keep the children out of care and had not passed the cases to social care early enough. At no point had children been at risk. Further training for the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) had been identified and arranged.
- All children were contacted following a missing episode, but not all of them were contacted within the prescribed timescale. The Council was working with Sheffield Futures who were responsible for making contact with children who had missing episodes and would consider bringing the service back in-house in the future. An audit of the service was to be carried out to ensure that the work was carried out in a timely manner. The policy and procedure was also being reviewed.
- The service had worked hard with Human Resources to make Sheffield attractive when recruiting Social Workers and had developed a package including training, mentoring, possibility of career breaks etc. and a good senior management structure was in place. However, there were still gaps in some areas and contract workers were used.
- Life story books were now considered for all looked after children.
- Further Teachers had been appointed to the Virtual School and all Personal Education Plans (PEP) were reported to the Child Protection Board. However, PEP's needed to be more consistent across local authority areas. This was to be raised nationally.
- Aspire – a virtual hub worked with foster carers and those on the edge of care to try to keep children with their families wherever possible, with support.
- Operation Fortify was in place to look at the prevention of exploitation of children for criminal activity but the Council was still looking to see if it could do better.
- Recruitment and retention of staff in MAST was an issue. There was currently a very varied team and staff were encouraged to train to become social workers.
- It was suggested that numbers of young people in care accessing further education were lower than general population.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) records its thanks to all those involved in the Ofsted Inspection; and
- (b) requests that:-
  - (i) a report be submitted to the Committee in six months' time with an update on the areas for improvement along with progress on maintaining the areas that are good and moving towards outstanding;
  - (ii) details of the statutory timescale for conducting a missing child interview and the Council's performance against it be circulated to Committee Members;
  - (iii) statistics of the number of children in care who access and complete higher education courses be circulated to Committee Members;
  - (iv) the issue of different PEP processes be raised nationally in the appropriate forum; and
  - (v) update reports be submitted to the Committee on the following:-
    - (A) an update on the performance with regard to missing children interviews by Sheffield Futures;
    - (B) a performance/impact report on Aspire;
    - (C) an update on the new process with regard to PEPs and the national conversation; and
    - (D) recruitment and retention of staff within MAST (this could be covered in a scheduled report, if available).

## **7. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Commissioning, Inclusion and Schools regarding Elective Home Education.

7.2 In attendance for this item were Joel Hardwick (Head of Commissioning, Inclusion and Schools), Andrew Jones (Head of Primary and Targeted Interventions) and Venetta Buchanan (Elective Home Education Advisory Teacher).

7.3 It was explained that Elective Home Education (EHE) had previously been under the remit of Education, but had recently been moved to sit with the Virtual School. There had been an increase, both locally and nationally, of parents who were electing to educate their children at home, especially those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This area of work focused on ensuring that children educated at home were safe and well, ensuring that suitable education was being provided and ensuring that the school system was

able to support all children.

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

- 'Off-rolling' was a recent development and work was being developed to combat the issue. It was a national problem and a process had been drawn together over the last month which was family focused. Work was underway to embed the new process. An increase in funding for SEND needed to be discussed with schools. A clear policy regarding reintegration to school was also needed and conversations needed to take place with both the school and families.
- There was no evidence that families in Sheffield were being pressured to remove children from school, however, there was some anecdotal evidence. Families were supported in their reintegration process with schools.
- There was a large cohort of home educated children in Sheffield, but the Council needed to put in support measures that didn't overstep legislation. Parents could always ask for advice. Parents were able to access tutoring and children at KS4 had access to Sheffield City College.
- EHE was divided between children who were vulnerable and parents who wished to home educate. The Council could signpost parents towards exam venues etc. but the final decision was with the family. There was no requirement to enter exams.
- It was difficult to monitor EHE as the rules around it were vague. Families who withdrew children from schools were contacted as soon as possible for an initial information visit, but it was difficult to track as there was no set criteria to follow. Parents with children who had never been to school did not have to inform the local authority, but some chose to and were offered support. There was no national definition of a suitable provision.
- The updated 2019 consultation had coincided with the work on the Virtual School, therefore no further comment had been made.
- Non statutory guidance had been issued by the Government and there was support to make the guidance statutory.
- It may be possible to look at a set of local indicators to measure performance of home educated children.
- There was a need to have conversations with families to ensure that the right support and the right access was available.
- Whilst some parents elected to home school, safeguarding was important and needed to be a duty on the Council. A letter should be sent to the

Secretary of State to highlight the issue.

7.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) requests that it receives information on the following:-
- (i) what percentage of home educated children are receiving suitable or unsuitable education
  - (ii) what length of time, on average, are children home educated
  - (iii) what systems can be put in place to measure performance of home educated children
- (b) requests that a letter be sent to the Secretary of State for Education in lieu of a consultation response focusing on safeguarding and vulnerability issues of home educated children; and
- (c) encourages schools to accept flexible/part time school proposals from families to help keep children in school.

## **8. INCLUSION UPDATE**

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Director of Commissioning, Inclusion and Schools regarding SEND and the Inclusion Strategy.

8.2 In attendance for this item were Dawn Walton (Director of Commissioning, Inclusion and Schools) and Tim Armstrong (Head of SEND).

8.3 It was reported that a wide range of views had been sought about SEND and Inclusion in the city and how the needs were being met across education, health and care services. Consultation was ongoing and the results would be collated and analysed to inform the strategy development. A co-production session had been set to develop the draft strategy.

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

- The Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was being monitored on a monthly basis. Progress had been made, but there had not been enough of a culture shift to recognise this process.
- There was a perception from families and organisations that the statutory SEND Service was not performing well. The service was improving with 79% of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans now completed in timeframe for the year.
- All actions in the WSOA would be completed by the time of the review and would be monitored by the Department for Education and NHS England.
- The Council, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England were working on robust joint commissioning arrangements.

- The Council was working on a training programme with the Department of Education to ensure that enough officers who write plans were appropriately trained, recognising that there was no national framework for training.
- The CCG were intending to increase the time of the designated clinical officer.
- There was a clear graduated approach and expectation of schools to put in place 'my plans' for children with SEND when they were needed. These were live documents and should be owned by the school.

8.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee requests that a copy of the Ofsted Report, the WSOA, details of what the Council is doing to achieve the actions and proof of progress, be submitted to its meeting to be held on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer containing the Work Programme for 2019/20.

9.2 A draft scope for a task and finish group (Voice and Involvement of Children and Young People in this Committee) was included in the report and Members were requested to contact the Policy and Improvement Officer if they wished to be part of the group.

9.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information now reported, and approves the contents of the Work Programme for 2019/20.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

10.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019, at 10.00am, in the Town Hall.

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