

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON  
TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2022  
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors L Robinson (Chair), S Hemraj (Vice Chair), M Farooq, S Farooq, C Fenner, S Lane, D Over, R Ray, H Skibsted and Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Michael Samways

**Also in attendance:** Kira Balogh and Tiffany Chan Youth Council Representatives.

**Officers Present:** Jonathan Lewis, Director of Education  
Nicola Curley, Director of Children's Services  
Lisa Riddle, Head of Service – Early Help  
Helen Freeman, Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager  
Ramin Shams, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Charlotte Cameron, Democratic Services Officer

**Also Present:** Councillor Ray Bisby, Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills and University

**13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rush and Cllr Ayres, Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills and University.

Apologies were also received from Statutory Education Co-opted Member Peter Cantley.

**14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

**15. MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 14 July 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 8 September 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**16. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS**

No call ins were received.

## 17. SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT: CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the Service Director report for Children and Safeguarding.

The purpose of the report was to give Members an overview of Children's Services performance in Peterborough.

The report introduced the new children's workforce framework and provided information about the Early Help redesign consultation. There was an update on budget issues for Children's Services within the wider corporate context and the report addressed preparation for the imminent Inspection by Ofsted of our Children's Services.

Information was also provided in relation to the national reports published that related to Children's Services – the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel review into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

The Director of Children's Services introduced the report and highlighted key points including:

Members were advised that this was the usual report that would come to Committee which would give a sense of how the service was doing regarding performance. It was noted that the data provided was a bit out of date but that it was the last full set of data available.

There had been an increase in Early Help activity and a reduction in child protection numbers which highlighted an improvement in service performance. The Director of Children's Services highlighted Appendix A, Children's Workforce Development Framework which was an update for the service post COVID. The Committee were provided with information on the Care Review, also known as the Josh MacAlister review, which had reviewed the entire Children Social Care and Early Help Landscape.

Finally, the Committee were advised that the service expected the next Ofsted visit to be a judgement inspection.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members noted that the report referred to the preparation for an Ofsted inspection and sought clarification on what that meant. The Officer advised that if the service practiced at a good standard, Ofsted would come and see that good. Members were also advised that preparation work entailed consistent evidence of work which had been written down and recorded.
- The Director of Children's Social Care informed Members that Ofsted had commented previously on the chronology and reflective actions recorded in care plans which had been something the service had improved upon.
- Members referred to the assessments for Autism Spectrum Disorder/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder diagnosis requests (ASD/ADHD) and sought clarification as to why there had been a significant increase. Members were advised that there had been a general increase in referrals which could be divided into 3 categories; behavioural, mental and emotional and ASD/ADHD.
- The increase could be seen as a result of the pandemic which highlighted that

families were struggling in ways they had not before, and that children with additional needs were being identified much more effectively than in the past.

- Members referred to the contact to referral performance target of 20%, noted the performance figure of 16.5% and queried if there were plans in place to reach the 20% target. The Officer advised that even though there was a target, a lower number was sometimes better as it depended on the specific case. It was advised that the service was targeted at supporting people at the earliest stage so that they would not need referrals in the first place. The Officer also advised that the lower figure identified the effectiveness of the support given at earlier stages.
- Members sought further clarification on how the service ensured that cases which would need to go to referrals were not being overlooked. Members were advised that social care was not an exact science and that it was difficult to know where targets should be. The Officer highlighted that the key indicator used for these targets was the re-referral rate.
- Members asked how the 20% referral target benchmarked against other authorities. The Officer advised that in the regional area the average was 23-24% which was a good indication that the Council were referring the right cases.
- Members sought clarification on what the Supporting Families Grant would be used on and whether the Council had received it or not. The Director of Children's Social Care advised that this had been a three-year programme which was renewed for a further three-years but under different criteria.
- The grant had been received through a payment by result system where the Council would get the money back after the action. The change in the way the grant was received reflected the effectiveness of the service. Members were advised that this was a compliment to the work of the Council's Early Help provision.
- Members asked about recruitment and how the Council were dealing with the national shortage of social workers. Members were advised that this was a challenge for all local authorities but that Peterborough in comparison did well in the retention of children's social care workers. However, Members were advised that there were gaps which the Council were looking to fill through the development of the Step Up to Social Work Scheme.
- Members referred to the completion of single assessments within 45 days at 75.8% and asked if the trend of completion had continued to rise. The Officer advised that this had been based on data from July and that the figure had risen to around 80%.
- Members asked if there was a data breakdown according to ethnic minorities or backgrounds. The Director of Children's Social Care advised that the data included in the performance report did include information on specifics such as ethnicity, age and gender.
- The Committee requested that the Director of Children's Social Care include in their next Service Director Report a section on the support given to children

broken down by ethnicity.

- Members noted that the report outlined that some young people would decline a health assessment and queried why that was the case. The Officer clarified that this section of the report referred to children aged 15 and above. Members were advised that these children were able to give consent, or not and were likely to not want to discuss personal topics.
- Members noted discussions around the performance and outcomes for Early Help support and requested a briefing note so that Members would be provided with more information.

### **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note and comment on the performance indicators and other measures of the effectiveness of Children's Services within the report;
2. Note and endorse the updated children's workforce framework
3. Note the publication of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel Report.
4. Note the likely inspection activity by our regulator, Ofsted, over the next 4 months

The committee also requested that the Director Children's Services:

- Include in their next Service Director Report the number of children and young people receiving support broken down by ethnicity.
- Provide the Committee with a briefing note detailing the performance and outcomes of Early Help support.

### **18. UPDATE ON BEST START IN LIFE, INFANT FEEDING STRATEGIES AND THE RECOMMISSIONING OF BREASTFEEDING PEER SUPPORT AND HEALTHY SCHOOL SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the work of the Children's Public Health Team regarding the Best Start in Life Programme and infant feeding strategies.

The purpose of the report was to update the Committee on the key priorities and work of the Children's Public Health Team, specifically on the Best Start in Life and activity in relation to infant feeding.

The Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager introduced the report and key points raised included:

The report referred to two pieces of multi-agency pieces work called Best Start in Life and the Infant Feeding Strategy. Members were advised that Best Start in Life work linked to the Family Hubs report that would follow. The report outlined the intention of the service to recommission some peer support work and the Healthy Schools Programme.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members referred to the infant feeding strategy and queried why there was the disparity of breastfeeding numbers across the area. Members were advised that numbers across the area had been traditionally split and that the last couple of years had been difficult, with the Peer Support offered weakened by the loss of face-to-face work.
- The Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager highlighted a joint piece of work from local authorities across the area focused on the development of the Infant Feeding Strategy.
- Members were advised that nationally there was no evidence to suggest what works and what does not. The best method would need to be focused on the area and developed with the individuals to determine what would be best for them.
- Members referred to the breastfeeding prevalence chart on page 49 and queried why there had been a dip in March and a rise in April. The Officer advised that there was no answer and that the service had determined that it may just have been the cohort at the time.
- Members referred to the Healthy School Support Service and sought clarification on impact COVID had on service delivery, and what work was being done to ensure new projects would deal with those impacts. Members were advised that Officers had been working in the community to determine what changes would need to be made. A Public Health Intelligence team had reviewed COVID impacts on children which would feed into new priorities for the service.
- Members were made aware of the need to strengthen work around mental health support for schools which would be incorporated into the Healthy Schools Contract.
- The Youth Councillor asked if the infant feeding strategy had included the thoughts and experiences of young mothers. Members were advised that the Council partnered with some voluntary agencies that worked with young parents and that the strategy was built with young parents in mind. The Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager highlighted that the main difference identified had been around delivery mechanisms such as attending groups with mums of a similar age.
- Members were advised that work had been started aimed at strengthening the anti-natal education offer through a different model of pathway to parenting specifically for young parents.
- Members queried whether the Healthy Schools Programme funding had been secured. The Officer clarified that the funding for the Healthy Schools Programme came from the Public Health Grant and that the contract would run until the end of August 2023.
- Members referred to the FoodSmart interventions and queried what they looked like. The Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager did not have the answer to hand and advised the Committee that she would provide them with the information at a later date.
- Members referred to the move to peer-to-peer support and the end of feeding practitioners and asked what would be done to offer a model with highly qualified practitioners. Members were advised that various qualified staff support individuals in various place, but that feedback had identified the success of peer-

peer support. The Officer referred to World Health Organisation guidance which stated that peer support is important and a mixed model with trained personnel would be the right model.

- Members were advised that the Family Hubs work had identified an opportunity to review the commissioning of infant feeding and strengthen the service offered.
- Members asked if parent voice had been included in this review work. The Officer advised that the service worked closely with parents and Northwest Anglia Foundation Trust (NWAFT) Maternity Voices. The Family Hubs work would mean that all service users would be included in the development of any strategies.
- Members commended the Raham and Lantern Initiative projects within the community that had been supporting those of ethnic and Asian communities. The Officer echoed the support for these projects and highlighted the importance of engagement with the community.
- Members referred to the ambition in the Best Start in Life strategy and sought clarification on whether it was on track to deliver the goals initially hoped for. Members were advised that it was a rewarding piece of work based on the idea that working together would allow teams to do more. It was highlighted that COVID had had an impact on service delivery but as the strategy started prior to the pandemic teams were able to work together collaboratively.
- Members were advised that COVID had highlighted some things that were not expected which saw developments in delivery mechanisms.
- The Officer ended by outlining that Family Hubs had come at the right time and would be beneficial in supporting the delivery and ambitions of the Best Start in Life programme.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the progress of the Best Start in Life Programme and how this supports the emerging Family Hubs development.
2. Review and endorse the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Infant Feeding Strategy.
3. Note the plans for the extension of the contract for the Peterborough and Fenland Breastfeeding Peer support service
4. Note the intention to undertake a procurement exercise for the re-commissioning of the Healthy Schools Support Service.

The Committee also requested that the Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager provide the Committee with a briefing note explaining the process of FoodSmart interventions.

## **19. FAMILY HUBS AND START FOR LIFE**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to work undertaken around the Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes.

The purpose of this report was to ask the Committee for endorsement of the way the Early Help team planned to sign up to and spend grant monies received from the Department of Education (DfE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) as part of the national Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

The Head of Service – Early Help and Children’s Public Health Commissioning Team Manager introduced the report and highlighted key items including:

The report focused on work around Family Hubs and Start for Life programme with the recommendation that the Committee endorse the plan to sign up to the national programme and the way the team had determined to spend the funds.

Family hubs are system wide model which would provide joined up whole family support. The support would be offered from pre-birth to 19 or to 25 for those with special needs or disabilities. This support could be provided in a hub, through a hub or digitally.

The Family Hubs agenda had begun in 2021 after the publication of the Andrea Leadsom Report ‘The best start for life: a vision for the 1001 critical days.’ As a result, a spending review was announced where £302 million would be shared across the 75 top tier authorities, of which Peterborough was one. This would be a 3-year programme where the Council would receive between 3.3 and 3.4 million pounds, spread evenly. It was noted that the DfE set spending percentages nationally and that the ways the money would be spent had been restricted.

Officers had worked in a partnership with the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to determine the programmes deliverables. It was highlighted that the Council’s team had been involved in the development of the design framework and the programme sign up would be completed by the end October 2022.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members queried why Peterborough had been identified as one of the 75 top tier local authorities. Members were advised that there were two elements that determined who would receive the funding. The first was based on deprivation data and the second was the rural urban classification, both of those combined placed the Council in the top 75.
- Members asked if the 3.3 million would be our final sum of money and where the hubs would be located. The Head of Service – Early Help identified that the 3.3-3.4 million was the proportion of the 302 million that Peterborough would receive. The Officer advised that the hubs would be placed in child and family centres that were operating already, with a view to explore wider options to build a better network.
- Member were advised that there would be no new buildings and that the Government had been clear that the proportion on capital spend is limited with the target to make best use of existing estates.
- Members queried what the restrictions on spending were and the Officer advised that they were about ring-fencing the project so that a certain amount was spent on certain areas. The Officer referred to page 71 in the report which highlighted what percentage spend each area would receive.
- Members sought clarification on the rural implications and how the hubs would be accessible to those areas. The Officer identified that a key concept in the delivery of the hubs would be outreach and that would be explored through the development planning stages.
- Members were advised that there would be no clear answer to this but that a digital offer would allow the service to be more accessible. This had been something which was reviewed as there was not a single joined up digital offer where users could access all their needs.

- Members followed up and asked whether Officers had considered working with voluntary organisations to develop systems in rural areas. Members were advised that the voluntary sector would be critical in the delivery of the programme.
- The Head of Service-Early Help highlighted a feasibility study which had been conducted that worked with end-users and allowed them to submit their suggestions on what they think would work for Peterborough.
- Members identified that the co-location of existing buildings where the hubs could be set up would provide an opportunity to rural areas that would make the scheme more accessible. The Children's Public Health Commissioning Team Manager advised that the guidance was clear and Family Hubs would comprise of a hub, an outreach offer and a digital offer.
- Members referred to section 7.1 where it stated that failure to meet the guidance would result in less funding and sought clarification on what those failures could be. The Officer advised that this was a risk that needed to be referred to but that the service knows how to feedback on the deliverables and that money would not be released until the Council met milestones and achieved desired outcomes.
- Members asked whether the 3.3 million would be sufficient for the programme to meet its delivery targets. The Officer advised that it would be a superb injection of service money but that less money would be allowed to be spent on capital investments. Members were advised that the Team had been looking at ways to future proof the programme should funding be withdrawn.
- Members sought clarification on how the Family Hubs programme would impact all of Peterborough. The Officers advised that the significant amount of funding for the Start for Life offer would allow the service to be better for all.
- The Head of Service - Early Help noted that they would be happy to come back to the committee with an updated report on the performance of the programme.
- The Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills and University identified the importance of Members letting Officers know how what was delivered within the local community could be improved.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Endorse proposals from the service in relation to programme sign up and how we spend grant monies received as part of the national Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

The Committee also requested that the Head of Early Help consider bringing a second report to the Committee based on the uptake and availability of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes.

## **20. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee received a report in relation to the next round of the Household Support Fund.

The purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with information on the proposed allocation of the next round of Household Support Fund (HSF). Whilst the grant was subject to the corporate leadership team views a paper would be taken to Cabinet to seek final approval for the scheme. Any feedback from this meeting would be



considered in the recommended final scheme.

The Director of Education introduced the report and key points raised included:

The Council had used the Household Support Fund to provide vouchers throughout the school holidays and the report highlighted the current proposals on how to use the next round.

Members were advised that the paper had been written prior to Government Guidance which had now changed. The key change was that local authorities would have greater flexibility on where funding could be allocated. However, Officers decided to continue with the original scheme as it was what best supported the needs of the city.

The Director of Education emphasised that the data in the report did not capture all need in the city as not everyone had signed up to the scheme and that the money was effective but a small contribution in relation to the pressures residents were facing.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members queried why the holiday voucher had been reduced from 15 pounds to 10. Members were advised that there was a reduction as a result of the ring-fence on spending and that there would be flexibility through refunds which could be reinvested. The Director of Education identified that for an extra £5 on the Christmas voucher, a sum of £50,000 would need to be found.
- Members referred to the difficulties in Winter and sought clarification on whether the scheme would be extended beyond March 2023. The Officer advised that there had been no announcement from the Government that it would be extended.
- Members further queried the reduction to 10 pounds when other local authorities in the area kept their voucher at 15 pounds. The Officer advised that Cambridgeshire topped their Household Support Fund with reserves to offer the 15 pounds where Peterborough did not. Members were also advised that demand had grown but the funding amount had stayed the same. There had been difficult choices made due to the financial ability of the fund and feedback had determined that protecting the summer holidays was more important to families than other times of the year.
- Members referred to the direct cost of schemes on page 85 and sought clarification on why the admin costs were disproportionate across the grants. Members were advised that each grant had been run in different ways. The Children and Young People scheme was dealt with by Council Officers and other schemes were run through third parties.
- Members asked whether work had been done to encourage those who were not claiming the support to do so. Members were advised that sustainability of uptake had been helped through working with third parties and that promotion of the scheme had been pushed through the schools as well.
- Members referred to Appendix 1 and sought clarification on how each local authority determined how to run their scheme. The Director of Education advised that there was a set of grant terms and conditions that had to be followed with some discretionary freedom.
- Members referred to access to warm spaces and sought clarification on how that would be set up and managed. The Officer referred to the Head of Think Communities who would be able to provide more information to the Committee at a later date.

- Members noted that they had not been aware that there were different choices that the money could be spent on and sought clarification on how Peterborough's scheme was determined. Members were advised that the proposal had been signed off by Cabinet and that the roll out of previous rounds had been time limited.
- The Director of Children's Social Care highlighted that the Household Support Fund was not the only support scheme for residents and referred to Early Help support provisions. Members were advised that the Council had used a wider range of eligibility criteria that included Early Help provision where other local authorities had not.
- Members asked if there had been any communication planned to urge people to sign up to the scheme. Members were advised that there had been and would continue to be lined up until the deadline for application had passed.
- Members queried how parents who did not reach the eligibility criteria for free school meals were being supported. The Officer advised that there was a bank of vouchers that were not claimed or unused and the Council approached schools to come forward with families who would benefit from them.
- The Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Childrens Services, Education, Skills and University thanked Officers in attendance for their work on these schemes.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider the report and make recommendations / comments on the operation of the holiday voucher scheme for the October to March round of the Household Support Fund. This will help to inform the final decision for Cabinet.

The Committee also requested that the Director of Education provide the Committee with a briefing note on how the Vulnerable Household Support Fund will be rolled out, with specific focus on the set up and management of warm spaces for vulnerable children.

## **21. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which included the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions containing decisions that the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the plan and where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

- Members referred to Forward Plan Item - Contract Award of Translation and Interpretation Service KEY/20JUN22/02 and queried if the decision had been taken. The Democratic Services Officer advised that the Forward Plan was published on a fortnightly basis and the decision date would be updated with the next publication.
- The Director of Children's Social Care advised that this decision would expire in November 2022 and would be based on those services working with families who need translation services.
- Following the discussion, Members requested a briefing note on Forward Plan Item - Contract Award of Translation and Interpretation Service KEY/20JUN22/02.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

The Committee also requested that the Director of Education provide the committee with a briefing note on Forward Plan Item - Contract Award of Translation and Interpretation Service KEY/20JUN22/02.

## **22. WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report which looked at the work programme for the municipal year 2022/23 to determine the Committees priorities.

- Members asked when the date of the next Group Representative meeting was, and the Democratic Services Officer confirmed it would be held on 10 November 2022.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the Work Programme for 2022/2023 and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Committee meeting was noted as being 2 November 2022

CHAIR

Meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 20:51pm