

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE  
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH  
ON 23 JULY 2012**

**Present:** Councillors S Day (Chairman), Harper, N Arculus, B Rush, B Saltmarsh, J Shearman

<b>Also present</b>	Alastair Kingsley	Parent Governor Representative
	Tim Jeffery	CEO, Spurgeons
	Jane Morton	Senior Assistant Director, Barnardos
	Irfan Damani	Youth Council Representative
	Chloe Fuller	Youth Council Representative
<b>Officers in Attendance:</b>	Malcolm Newsam	Executive Director, Children's Services
	Wendi Ogle Welbourn	Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention
	Adrian Chapman	Head of Neighbourhoods Services
	Paulina Ford	Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
	Marie Southgate	Lawyer

**1. Apologies**

No apologies for absence were received.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2012**

The minutes of the meetings held on 11 June 2012 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions**

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

**5. Portfolio Progress Report from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report which provided the Committee with an overview of Children's Services performance since her last attendance at Committee on 14 November 2011. Highlights included:

- Children's Social Care
- Two year old funding Pilot Status
- Young Peoples Drug and Alcohol Services
- Children's Centres

The Committee were informed that the two new Assistant Directors, Sue Westcott responsible for Safeguarding Families and Communities and Wendi Ogle Welbourn, responsible for Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention had had a positive impact on the department since joining. The new Liquidlogic IT system had now been implemented and this had also had a

positive impact on the way social workers were able to carry out their work. The Cabinet Member for Children's services acknowledged the hard work and effort that all the staff and Directors had put into improving the performance of the department. The Committee were informed that the Scrutiny Task and Finish group were receiving regular detailed reports on the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

The Cabinet Member also informed Members of the various groups and activities available for girls and young women across the city. The issue of activities available had been raised at the meeting in November by the Committee. The Cabinet Member advised that a complete list could be provided for the Committee.

Fostering to adoption and the issue of foster carers who wished to adopt but had not been able to due to financial disadvantages was also mentioned as this had been highlighted at the meeting in November. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that when adopting a child they become a part of the family and therefore accept the financial responsibly. In a few exceptional cases there may be additional needs for a child that had challenging circumstances and additional financial support may be provided.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Are you now able to say what a realistic number of cases each social worker should have? *Members were informed that there was a much better understanding of what this should be and there was a daily monitoring system of case loads now in place. The case load sizes were now within the boundaries and the extra money approved by Council to increase the number of social workers alongside the clearing up of the backlogs had had a dramatic impact on workloads reducing the caseloads. Good focused management of teams would also ensure good management of caseloads.*
- The report states "we have commenced the commissioning of high level family support". Please can you explain what this means. *Members were informed that this was work that had been started by the new Assistant Director Wendi Ogle Welbourn and a report on the work would be brought to the Committee at a future meeting. The work involved targeting the families most in need of help and providing them with high level targeted support and early intervention.*
- Do you expect to have addressed all the weaknesses identified by Ofsted within the 18 months time table that you have set? How will you know that you have successfully addressed all the weaknesses and how can this Committee help you with the challenging time table that you have set yourself. *Members were informed that a good start had been made to Phase Two of the Improvement Programme and the Independent Advisory Board, Internal Advisory Board and Scrutiny would help in validating if the programme was on track and when all the weaknesses had been addressed.*
- Two Year Old Funding Pilot Status. Why had the Voyager area of the city been selected for the funding and not the PE1 area? *The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention informed Members that she would seek clarification but had understood that the funding was around deprivation and had to be targeted at child poverty. There had been a shortfall in child care places in the Voyager area and therefore this area had been selected to receive the funding.*
- Was the High Level Family support the same as the Family Intervention Project. *Members were informed that it was not. There were many services and initiatives in place in Peterborough and they needed to be put into a coherent framework to ensure that the right services were getting to the right children at the right time.*
- The Chair advised that the members of the Scrutiny Task and Finish group monitoring the Children's Services Improvement Programme had been meeting with social workers and attending visits with them. The visits had proved beneficial to be able to see first hand the excellent work that was being done by the social workers. The Chair asked if the social workers received any recognition for the good work that they did. *Members were informed that there was a recognition scheme within the council which provided staff awards for Excellence. At a recent Staff presentation from the Chief Executive there had been a*

*section on Excellence awards and approximately 50% of the awards had gone to those who worked in children's services and the largest proportion had been in social care. The Director of Children's Services informed Members that there had been a real recognition of the achievements and engagement that staff had had with the improvement programme which had been most noticeable in the turnaround of referral and assessment service. Personal Development Reviews were being completed for every member of staff within Children's Services and within that there had been recognition of past performance and clear targets were also being set. The social work forum was also now in place.*

- *What was happening with regard to the shortfall of social workers? Members were informed that thirty new staff would be starting during August and September. Newly qualified social workers and experienced social workers were now applying to work at Peterborough. A good induction programme, reasonable work loads, a high standard of training and development and high quality supervision and support all provided an environment to keep social workers in Peterborough. The environment was much better than last year. The average time it took from applying to arriving had been reduced from 18 ½ weeks to 6 ½ weeks.*
- *How confident was the Cabinet Member that when the current Director left Peterborough that a suitable replacement of the same calibre would be found. Members were informed that the process of advertising had started already and interviews would take place during the middle of September. The Cabinet Member was optimistic and an early indication was that the calibre of person applying was of the calibre that would be required to fulfil the role.*

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

That the Committee note the report and;

1. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services provide a further progress report to the Committee in January 2013.
2. The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention to provide the Chair with a list of where the additional 2 year old child care places would be provided in reference to the Two Year Old Funding Pilot.

## **6. Children's Services Improvement Programme**

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report. The report informed the Committee on progress that had been made on the Children's Services Improvement Programme which had been put in place following an Ofsted Inspection in August 2011. The progress report had been a regular report to the committee and the last update to the committee had been in June 2012. Members were advised that good progress had been made on Phase Two of the programme. Completing initial assessments within ten days had reached 99% which had exceeded the target of 74% in the improvement notice. Completion of core assessments within 35 days had reached 92% which had exceeded the target of 85% in the improvement notice.

There had been an independent visit from Jane Held, the Independent Chair of the External Improvement Board who had provided a progress report to the Minister, Tim Loughton. Her report back to the Minister had stated:

*"The Council has continued to progress its improvement activity robustly and swiftly. This is demonstrated, not only by the data, but by what social workers are saying 'on the ground'. There is a clear understanding politically of the tasks ahead and the determination to sustain the trajectory."*

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Now that more time was being spent on quality had this impacted on the performance. *Members were informed that Phase two of the improvement programme was about the quality of the care planning in the long term teams and all the indications were that this was an area for improvement. All cases had been audited and each case had an action plan which would inform social workers of what work would be needed to be done to bring a case up to the required standard. Almost 95% of assessments were completed in the referral and assessment team and those team managers had to sign off the quality before the case was signed off. Indications were that the required standards were being met.*

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Safeguarding Improvement Plan and the progress that had been made since the last report in June 2012.

## **7. Children's Centres**

The report informed the Committee on the progress of the Children's Centres and implementation of the new children's centres contracts.

Tim Jeffery, CEO gave a presentation on Spurgeons which highlighted the following:

- Spurgeons was an organisation that was child centred and focused on helping children achieve the best possible outcomes and was founded in 1867 by Charles Spurgeon.
- Core values were: "we are Caring, Holistic, Inclusive, Responsive, Professional, and Hopeful"
- Strengths: Focus on Leadership, Community based, Learn from experience, Relational, Focus on Strengths, Innovative and Creative, Values-based.
- What they did:
  - 95 projects in England in 2012/13
  - Third largest voluntary sector provider of Children's Centres nationally
  - Managing Sure Start Children's Centres for 12 years
  - Spurgeons Children's Centres were linked together locally and nationally.
  - Early Years
  - Young Carers
  - Family Support specialist services
  - Support to Parents
  - Children separated from their parents
  - Children who have been bereaved
  - Work with prisons and prisoners' families
  - Excluded young people at risk of offending
  - Youth and Community Services
  - Support for community and faith based groups through Spurgeons Network

Building on strengths and working together:

- Working with all stakeholders
- Integrated services
  - mainstream, specialist, commissioned and community services
- Multi agency professionals and linking to statutory services
- Parents as partners
- Partnership in Children's Centre governance
- Community involvement
- Sharing good practice

Harnessing strengths and resources:

- Needs in Peterborough were varied, wide-ranging, and changing

- Geographical diversity and distinctiveness
- Responsive to offer flexible, accessible, locally focused services
- Using evidence and data to help make decisions and targeting services to have the greatest impact
- Early identification of needs and opportunities
- Employ Community Engagement Coordinators
- Drawing on local expertise and services

Jane Morton, Senior Assistant Director, gave a presentation on Barnardos which highlighted the following:

- Barnardo's as an organisation and its vision: *"Our vision is of innovative children's centres which act as a community resources for families supporting and facilitating all to achieve their aspirations and potential"*
- Values:
  - Respecting the unique worth of every person
  - Encouraging people to fulfil their potential
  - Working with hope
  - Exercising responsible stewardship
- What Barnardo's hope to achieve in Peterborough Children's Centres:
  - A Locality service which worked as a cluster and was a community resource of targeted and universal services to families with children from pre-birth to age 5 that identified needs early and prevented emerging problems for children and families from escalating.
  - The commitment was to focus resources and efforts on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families that would benefit the most from the support within a universal setting

How Barnardo's would achieve those objectives:

- Building on the best
- Cluster working
- Partnership working
- Innovation through empowerment
- Resources to front line working
- Safeguarding
- National and local expertise
- Out reach to in reach
- Increase use of volunteers providing routes into employment
- Skilled and supported workforce

Changes that had taken place so far included an induction for staff in:

- IT Skills
- E Learning
- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding
- Data Protection
- Information sharing
- Equality & Diversity
- Skills audits
- E Learning and Training Events

The journey forwards would include:

- A restructure as necessary during July to September and re-launch of the service in September.
- A dynamic and vibrant service which actively seeks to meet the needs of young families and children
- Continuous consultation with all stakeholders
- Continuous empowerment of service users
- Happy and thriving children

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- How would the changes that you are both making feed through in a positive way to the delivery of the service to young people. *Jane Morton for Barnardos informed Members that there was an ongoing continuous dialogue with young people and their families to ensure that what was being delivered was what they wanted.*
- *Tim Jeffrey for Spurgeons informed Members that when there was less money some things would have to give and that they would look at targeting the families that were most in need and the most vulnerable children. They would also find ways of working with local community groups and with other providers in the area and make use of more signposting out to things that were going on. The children's centre would become much more of a vehicle for the whole community. More parent led pier groups would be started so that parents would be able to volunteer and contribute to help others. There would eventually be more groups co-ordinated by the children's centres but led by the community.*
- Members wished to ensure that whilst the targeted groups received more focus that the other services did not decline. They felt it was important to ensure a good consultation process was in place.
- Had the consultation with the users of the centres taken place? *Tim Jeffrey informed Members that consultation was ongoing and continuous. The process of restructuring had started and there had been some changes in Management but the services had remained the same. Jane Morton advised that there had been a four month stand still period where they were getting to know the services and therefore no consultation had taken place as yet. It was a key factor of children centre delivery that consultation regarding any change must take place.*
- Were you still employing the same number of staff as you were when you took the contract over? *Members were informed that no changes had taken place in the first four months but that the changes were now beginning to take place at senior level staff.*
- Members were concerned that no engagement had taken place with the local ward councillors as yet.
- The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention advised Members that Barnardos and Spurgeons had been appointed because they had a track record of delivering Children's Centres in an environment where there had been a reduction of funding. Both organisations would create economies of scale. A reduction in staff did not necessarily mean a reduction in delivery. They would be looking at innovative and different ways to deliver the service needed.
- The Chair quoted an example of Honeyhill Children's Centre where there had been several agencies delivering services from the centre but that this had not been identified to the Spurgeons when they took over and it had caused some confusion. Had this been sorted out? *Members were advised that the situation had now been clarified and all partners had been identified and also those who were working within the management of Spurgeons.*
- The Chair advised that she had recently attended a meeting of a parent run group at Honeyhill. The parents had been upset that the centre manager had been moved without them being notified and that they had not been consulted. They had been concerned that they would not have the same team at the centre. There were a lot of vulnerable people attending the children centres and they gained confidence in the people that worked with them. The Chair sought assurance that the people attending the centres would still feel

confident to attend and use the facilities having had staff changes. *Tim Jeffrey advised that during the next few months there would inevitably be staff changes but every effort would be made to ensure that the key worker relationships would be affected as little as possible.*

- Would all the centres deliver the same activities? *Tim Jeffrey advised that they would not deliver the same activities as they would need to be responsive to each community. There would be some core activities that would be delivered at all centres and then different ones dependant on the needs of the community.*
- Do you feel that the length of time that you have the contract for is long enough for you to invest in. *Jane Morton responded that Barnardos had run contracts across the country for varying lengths and felt that the timeframe for this contract would allow them to get the services to the way they needed to be commissioned to deliver them in an appropriate manner.*
- You have stated that there had been a reduction in funding which would lead to a reduction in staffing and that you would be using more volunteers. Can you assure the Committee that you are not soaking up the staff you are losing by bringing in volunteers to take those places? *Tim Jeffrey responded that in terms of the money that was available for the contract and the work that was done Spurgeons would provide the maximum number of staff that was possible within that. Included in that was the provision to recruit and support volunteers to do as much additional work within that. The focus was to provide the very best service for children.*
- Can you assure the Committee that those people that work for you are from the community in which the children's centres were based? Therefore if the centre was based in Gladstone Street there would be a cross section of staff for example from the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities. *Tim Jeffrey responded that this would definitely be the case and had always been a priority for Spurgeons to employ people from the local communities.*
- The Youth Council representative asked what was the age range that they worked with. *Members were advised that they worked with young people up to the age of 25.*
- Members noted that the report had stated that "significant changes had to be agreed with the Local Authority prior to implementation". Could you clarify what a "significant change" was, who would make that decision and would the Committee see what those changes were when they were made. *Members were advised that significant change was the transformation of the service as had been talked about during the meeting and did not refer to anything else.*
- Who reviews and discusses the changes. *Members were informed that there was regular monitoring of the contract to oversee the changes. The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention advised that the monitoring fell within her responsibility.*

The Chair thanked the CEO of Spurgeons and Senior Assistant Director of Barnardos for attending the meeting and providing an informative presentation and response to questions.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Committee agreed that:

1. Spurgeons and Barnardos return to the Committee in a one year to provide a progress report.
2. Spurgeons and Barnardos actively engage with and invite local ward Councillors to visit the Children's Centres.

## **8. Poverty Reduction Strategy**

The report provided the Committee with a final draft of the Poverty Reduction Strategy for comment prior to formal approval. The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention advised the Committee that the Action Plan now included timescales and group leads for each theme.

The Chair asked Councillor Shearman to report on the work that he had completed whilst he was the Poverty Champion for the Committee from January to June 2012. Councillor Shearman gave an account of the work that he had undertaken during this time. This included attending a conference on tackling poverty prior to being appointed Poverty Champion in November 2011. Meetings with the Lead Officer for Poverty to discuss the role of the Poverty Champion. The role of the Champion had been identified as someone who would raise the profile of child poverty issues, assist with activities and initiatives that support progress with the eradication of child poverty and make a personal pledge committing to action to eradicate child poverty. The poverty champion would put poverty into the public eye and would recruit other poverty champions (younger and older people) and key messages would be put out in the media in terms of poverty. Councillor Shearman had also had discussions about fuel poverty and attended the Fuel Poverty Conference in March 2011.

Councillor Shearman had at a previous Scrutiny meeting held 12 March 2011 suggested to the Principal / Head of Service at City College Peterborough who was in attendance to contact the PCC Lead Officer for Poverty to talk about putting on courses that could address the needs of families or parents who were in poverty.

At a recent council meeting Councillor Shearman had asked the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning what the council was doing about fuel poverty. A full answer was received.

Councillor Shearman advised that the Lead Officer, Sian Peer had now left the authority.

Councillor Shearman welcomed the initiative from the Chair of the suggestion that there was no longer one Member responsible for Poverty but that each member of the Committee took responsibility for each of the seven strands of the Poverty Reduction Strategy to share the workload.

The Chair thanked Councillor Shearman for the work that he had done whilst in the role of Poverty Champion.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Had the lead officers been in place long for each of the seven objectives and key deliverables of the strategy? *Members were informed that some officers were already doing the work as their day job e.g. PCVS were leading on the work regarding objective 5: Increased financial capability, employability and take-up of benefits as this was the work they normally did. Everyone leading on the agenda was passionate about it.*
- Please could you clarify objective 6: "Improved mental health within the local population to reduce the gap in health inequalities and to promote healthy lifestyles". Should it read "to improve mental health services". *Members were informed that it meant improving mental health across the whole city rather than individuals. Wording could be added to make it clearer.*
- Members wanted to know if officers agreed with the statement "Poverty is considered as specific incomes, domains alongside multidimensional frameworks and particular movements in time". There were parts of the report that were obliquely worded and the objectives were not clear. How did the objectives fit in with other policies? *The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention informed Members that the draft policy had been in circulation for a long time and agreed that some of the terminology within the strategy was difficult to interpret. The strategic objectives had come out of a lot of work that had been done with strategic partners across the city. The action plan would provide the detail behind the objectives and this could be provided to Members along with the Single Delivery Plan which supported some of the objectives in the Strategy.*
- Members suggested that the Lead Officers and Councillors responsible for each of the strands meet to discuss the objectives in more detail.



- How do you measure and understand Poverty? *Members were informed that the current measure of poverty according to Government was defined by people who were 60% below the median income nationally. Government had recently announced a move away from this single measure and may also now look at people who were in criminality or substance misuse and to take a much broader view. Guidance was still to be issued on the change.*
- The report lists areas where Peterborough did well and areas for concern and action. Are you able to say which of these were more important and should be focussed on? *The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention informed members that all the information had been considered and it was then decided which were the most important areas and these formed the seven Strategic Objectives.*
- Objective 5: “Increased financial capability, employability and take-up of benefits amongst families”. Do we really want to encourage and increase benefit take up? *Members were informed that the first priority would be to support people in gaining employment however there were some people where this was not the case. There were some vulnerable groups who were elderly or disabled and those groups would be supported within this objective.*
- Members wanted to know what the next steps were for the Strategy. *Members were informed by the Director of Children’s Services that the Committee needed to agree to adopt the strategy but was unsure of whether it would then go to Cabinet and would seek advice.*
- Members requested that the wording in the Strategy be looked at again and the comments of the Committee be taken into consideration regarding the rewording of the Strategy. *The Assistant Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Prevention welcomed the opportunity to revisit the wording and advised that the comments of the Committee would be taken into account.*

The Chair proposed that rather than one Poverty Champion supporting the Poverty Reduction Strategy that each Member of the Committee take a lead in representing the Committee on each of the seven Strategic Objectives. The Committee agreed to this proposal. The Senior Governance Officer would write to the Head of Neighbourhood Services advising him of which committee member would be the Lead Member for each of the seven strands. This proposal replaced the decision made at the meeting held on 11 June 2012 to have one Poverty Champion.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

1. The Committee endorsed the proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy.
2. The Committee requested that the Head of Neighbourhood Services:
  - I. Provide the Committee with a copy of the Action Plan.
  - II. Arrange a meeting between the Lead Officers for each of the seven Strategic Objectives and Lead Members assigned to each of the seven strategic objectives to meet and discuss the objectives in more detail.
3. The Governance Officer to write to the Head of Neighbourhood Services with the names of the Lead Members appointed to each of the seven strategic objectives within the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

## **9. Forward Plan of key Decisions**

The Committee received the latest version of the Council’s Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee’s work programme.

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan.

### **10. Work Programme**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2012/13 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

## **ACTION AGREED**

To confirm the work programme for 2012/13 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

It was highlighted that the unvalidated examination results would be published at a later date this year and therefore the report to committee would have to be rescheduled. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next Group Representatives meeting.

### **11. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 10 September 2012.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.15pm

CHAIRMAN