

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Present:	Councillors S Day (Chairman), C Harper, D Harrington, B Rush, Nawaz, J Shearman, D Fower	
Also present	Alastair Kingsley Alex Hall N Kingsley Russell Wate	Co-opted Member Youth Council Youth Council Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board
Officers in Attendance:	Sue Westcott Jonathan Lewis Belinda Evans Paulina Ford Elaine Lewis	Executive Director, Children's Services Assistant Director Education and Resources Complaints Manager, Corporate Complaints Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny Lawyer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Saltmarsh. Councillor Harrington was in attendance as substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of Interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of the meetings held 10 June and 22 July 2013

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 June and 22 July 2013 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. Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report (PSCB) 2012/13 and Business Plan 2013/14

The report provided the Committee with an update of the progress made with respect to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children's Board (PSCB). The Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board introduced the report and explained that the PSCB had a statutory duty to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of local arrangements and services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across all agencies in Peterborough. The following areas of the report were highlighted:

- Local context
- Actions from the last Ofsted inspection
- Monitoring the effectiveness of local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

- The eight objectives of the PSCB which were:
 1. Ensure that early help and preventative measures are effective
 2. Ensure that children at risk of significant harm are being effectively identified and protected
 3. Ensure that everyone is making a significant and meaningful contribution to safeguarding children
 4. Ensure the workforce has the right skills, knowledge and capacity to appropriately safeguard children in Peterborough
 5. Know and understand the needs of all sectors of our community and are able to identify safeguarding issues within them
 6. Know that children are fully protected by all agencies from the effects of domestic abuse and neglect
 7. Ensure that all children are fully protected from the effects of Child Sexual Exploitation
 8. Governance and structure of PSCB

Members were informed that a workshop was held in February where children were invited to attend and provide feedback as to how they felt they could be made safe in Peterborough. The feedback provided was slightly different from the priorities of the professionals.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members were interested to know what the difference was in what the children had said at the workshop and what the officers had thought would be a priority for them. *Members were advised that one of the main concerns of officers was child protection and that children were often harmed by people who were known to them. The children at the workshop highlighted that abuse also occurred through social media like Facebook or via texting and this had made them feel unsafe. It was also highlighted that many young people were not keeping themselves safe via the internet. An E-Safety sub group was therefore working on this with the Child Sexual Exploitation sub group.*
- Members asked what work the Board was doing to tackle the sexual exploitation of young people. *Members were informed that there was considerable work ongoing in relation to child sexual exploitation. The police had an ongoing investigation and there was also a partnership multi agency child sexual exploitation group in Peterborough which was chaired by the Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board. A Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy had been put in place for Peterborough.*
- Members referred to the Annual Report from the Child Death Overview Panel and referred to section six and Reported Child Deaths:

“Over the last year, sixty six children have died across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which is considerably more than the previous two years, which were 52 and 58 respectively, and is the highest figure since the CDOP process began in 2008.”

Members wanted to know if the targets set were actually being achieved as the statement seemed to indicate that there was an issue with regard to reported child deaths. *Members were informed that in terms of those reported deaths none were due to abuse or neglect within that reporting period. Not all deaths were down to abuse or neglect.*

- Members noted in the Safeguarding Annual Report that PCC had two lead members (Cabinet member for Children’s Services and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University) who had shared responsibilities on the Board and attended as participant observers. Members commented that the PSCB report states that six regular meetings were held during the year and the report had shown that a Lead Member had only attended one of the meetings. Members requested that the Chair of the PSCB speak to the Lead Members and explain the importance that the Scrutiny Committee and council see in the work of the PSCB and that they could attend more frequently. *The Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board informed Members that he had met with the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services four weeks ago*

regarding attendance and she had apologised for her none attendance. The Cabinet Member had assured the Chair that although she had not attended a meeting she had played an active part in safeguarding and was signed up to attend the PSCB in the future.

- Members referred to page 46 of the report regarding Agency Attendance at the PSCB between April 2012 – March 2013. Members commented that the co-ordination and liaison with partner agencies was very important and sought clarification of how this was being addressed. *The Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board advised Members that he had been quite concerned about attendance at the PSCB especially representation from Health. Since taking on the role of Chair he had been working hard to ensure that there was good representation from all partners. With regard to health he had been working with NHS England and they were now signed up to attend the PSCB as were the Ambulance Service and Fire Service. The Chair was assured that going forward there would be better attendance of all representatives.*
- Members referred to the Progress Against the Priorities Outlined in the 2012 – 2013 Business Plan, pages 48 and 49 of the report and noted that the document referred to various other documents which had not been supplied with the plan. Members were concerned that it was very difficult to scrutinise the outcomes of the objectives without seeing the documents referred to in the plan.
- *Members referred to page 47 of the report and the number of people who had visited the PSCB website. Members sought clarification as to the number of visits to the website in a year. The report had stated a figure of 2,975. Members were informed that the figure quoted was for one year.*

The Executive Director of Children's Services thanked the Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board for his work so far since joining the PSCB and the new robust Business Plan now in place. It was noted that the Chair had made enormous improvements since joining the PSCB.

The Chair also thanked the Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board for the work he had done so far and improvements made.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that the Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board:

1. Include links to all the documents referred to in the Business Plan.
2. Return to the Committee in one year with a Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report (PSCB) 2013/14 and Business Plan 2014/15.

6. Children's (Social Care) Services Statutory Complaints Process (Children's act 1989) Annual Report 2012/13

The report was introduced by the Corporate Complaints Manager which provided the Committee with details of the statutory complaints made about children's social care services in 2012/2013. The main points of the report were highlighted:

- The number of complaints received during 2012/2013 was broadly similar to the previous year.
- The number of complaints resolved informally had increased to 15% of complaints logged from 9% in the previous year. Informal complains were those resolved within three working days.
- There was an improvement last year in the Social Care team managers responding to complaints. The average response time was driven down to an average of 16 days from an average of 23 days in the previous year.
- There had been little change in the outcome of complaints overall with two thirds continuing to be wholly or partially upheld.

- There had been an increase in complaints being made by children themselves which was a good indication that young people were aware of their rights to access the complaints process and advocates when needed.
- Included in the report for the first time this year was a full picture of the service improvements which were identified following complaints showing that changes were being identified and delivered throughout the year.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members referred to the high level summary of complaints received in the report and wanted to know how as a percentage did the LA compared to its statistical neighbours. *The Complaints Manager informed Members that she was working with a number of other authorities within the Eastern Region to see if there was a way of benchmarking the number of complaints and how many were being upheld etc. What had been found so far was that it was very difficult to compare one authority with another due to population size, difference in numbers of children receiving social care services etc. The way forward to find the best starting point was still being established but the aim was to have established this by the next annual report.*
- Members sought clarification as to whether the number of complaints related to individuals or were there occasions where there was more than one complaint from the same individual. *Members were advised that there was a very low number of customers who make more than one complaint in a year.*
- Members referred to page 94 of the report, paragraph 5.4 which states “*To use the Children’s (Social Care) Services statutory complaints process the complainant must meet certain criteria*”. If you receive a complaint that did not wholly meet the certain criteria would you still investigate the complaint. *Members were advised that the complaint would still be investigated but not under the statutory complaints process.*
- Members commented that they were pleased to see that a conciliation process had been introduced.
- How many of the complaints received were considered to be vindictive. *Members were informed that in the Children’s Social Care area there were very few vindictive complainants. One or two a year might be received but were often due to a misunderstanding.*
- Members referred to page 97, section six – Accessibility. Table 5 provided statistics on who was making complaints. Members noted that the largest number (62) were from Parents/Guardians and sought clarification that some children in care could still be at home with their parents. *Members were advised that some children in care did still live with their parents but it was difficult to tell from the 62 who had complained how many of those complaints received were from parents with children in care and still living with them.*
- Members referred to page 98 of the report, section 7 Key Themes, table 6 – Complaint Categories and requested that an additional column be added to show the number of complaints that were up held or not up held.
- Members noted that there had been an increase in the percentage of complaints made by young people themselves indicating that young people were more aware of their right to complain. Was this being measured in a quantifiable way? *Members were advised that a large percentage of these complaints came in via the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) who provided the advocacy services for the council. When that happened NYAS were asked how the young person had come to their attention. Usually the young person would have had a meeting with their social worker or with a member of NYAS and been given a leaflet on their right to complain. A lot of work had been done promoting young people’s right to complain and this has raised the numbers of complaints from young people. This rise in complaints was a good indication of how well young people knew their rights.*

The Chair thanked the Corporate Complaints Manager for an informative and well-presented report.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Corporate Complaints Manager:

1. Add an additional column to the Complaints Category Table to show the number of complaints that were up held or not up held against each category of complaint.
2. That a further report is brought back to the Committee in one years' time.

7. Establishment of a Task and Finish Group for Improving the Educational outcomes for Children and Young People in Peterborough

The purpose of the report was for the Committee to consider a request to establish a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group for improving the educational outcomes for children and young people in Peterborough. The Assistant Director Education and Resources introduced the report and went through the proposed Terms of Reference and Membership.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members requested that the second bullet point in the Terms of Reference "*Monitoring of the performance of pupils with pupil premium funding (in receipt of free school meals)*" be expanded to include how the Pupil Premium was being used within schools.
- Members sought clarification that the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University understood that whilst he could not be a member of the task and finish group he may be called upon as a key witness. *Members were advised that the Cabinet member was fully aware of his position with regard to the task and finish group.*

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommended and approved:

1. The establishment of a Task and Finish Group for improving the educational outcomes for children and young people in Peterborough.
2. The Terms of Reference as set out in the report with the addition of how Pupil Premium was being used within schools.
3. The Membership of the Group and any additional members that might be nominated by Group Secretaries.

8. 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 July 2013. The key highlights of the report were:

- Slight decrease in referrals due to early intervention work. Lowest rate since January 2012.
- Continued decrease in re-referrals
- Initial Assessments in timescales reduced due to the reconfiguration at the front door.
- Number of CAFs increased
- Greater focus on raising quality. Every single case had a quality assurance audit.
- Monthly Safeguarding Assurance Days held in each
- Plans were being developed to re-shape the referral, assessment and family support service.

Members were informed that there were currently 37 unallocated cases due to staff shortage. Each case had been triaged and screened. The cases were children of low level needs.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members referred to page 110 in the report - 5.5 Core Assessments. Members commented that there appeared to be a disconnect between the core assessments completed within 35 days of assessment start July data of 219 and that of the commentary provided in the summary which stated 124. *The Executive Director acknowledged that it was incorrect and apologised.*
- Members referred to section in the report on Initial Assessments and the commentary provided. Members were concerned at the loss of two members of staff and the impact that this seemed to have had on Initial Assessments. *Members were given assurance that the loss of the two members of staff had not impacted on the referrals of work regarding safeguarding and those cases had been reallocated.*
- Members sought assurance that there was a plan in place to ensure the department would meet its statutory needs should there be a high influx of referrals. *Members were advised that the department would be able to meet its statutory requirement. All cases falling within the statutory responsibilities and obligations of the department would be immediately allocated to a social worker.*
- How much money would the department receive under the 'Payment by Results' scheme and what would be done with the money. *Members were advised that the exact amount would not be known as it was payment by results. Each agency had identified a person to become a dedicated connector within each agency. Each agency would therefore receive a portion of the money received.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that a report on Connecting Families be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

10. Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions, 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 Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions and requested that information be provided on Clare Lodge – KEY/22AUG13/01

11. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2013/14 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2013/14 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting including:

- Connecting Families
- CAF's

12. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11 November 2013

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.20pm

CHAIRMAN

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