

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Present: Councillors S Day (Chairman), B Rush, B Saltmarsh, R Ferris, M Jamil, N Sandford

Also present

Alastair Kingsley	Co-opted Member
Stewart Francis	Education Co-opted Member
Russell Wate	Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board
Cllr Holdich	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University
Louise Ravenscroft	Family Voice Peterborough
Emily Fisher	Youth MP, Representing the Youth Council
Michelle Nyani	Deputy Youth MP, Representing the Youth Council

Officers in Attendance:

Sharon Hawkins	Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding & Communities
Belinda Evans	Customer Service Manager
Jonathan Lewis	Assistant Director Education and Resources
Adrian Chapman	Assistant Director For Communities and Targeted Services
Gary Perkins	Head of School Improvement
Paulina Ford	Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nawaz, Councillor Shearman, Councillor Fower and Miranda Robinson. Councillor Ferris attended as substitute for Councillor Shearman and Councillor Sandford attended as substitute for Councillor Fower.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of Interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 14 July 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2014 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) 2013/2014

The report was introduced by the Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board which provided the Committee with an update on progress with respect to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board. Areas highlighted within the report were:

- Business Priorities 2013/2014 and 2014/2015
- Child Sexual Exploitation – update on action plan and strategy
- Serious Case Reviews
- New slogan – Keeping Children Safe Together
- Engaging with other partners

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked what the priorities were for 2014/2015 following the revelations in Rotherham and asked if there would be further focus on child sexual exploitation. *The Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board stated that this was already a priority and would continue to be so. The Rotherham report was over a year old, and there had been visits by the Safeguarding Children Board to Rotherham.*
- Members referred to page 21 of the report which stated “*what graph below*” but no graph had been shown. *The Independent Chair of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board noted the error and advised that it would be corrected.*
- Members asked what percentage the number of people trained represented in terms of the overall target audience. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children stated that levels 1 and 2 represented a smaller percentage of overall training in Peterborough. The PSCB were trying to capture exactly how many people had been trained. Currently capacity was reached at what the Safeguarding Board could deliver.*
- Members referred to page 26 of the report and noted that one of the challenges was extending Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) education in to schools. Members noted that the CSE drama production “Chelsea’s Choice” had been delivered to Year 8/9 students across the city but wanted to know what other ideas had been developed. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children stated that the drama productions were a one-off instance. It was hoped that this could be integrated in the PSHE curriculum at schools but it was still a challenge as not all schools wanted to engage.*
- Members asked how the action plan had been promoted and marketed. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children responded that this was an area which needed more work. A Community and Engagement sub-group had been set up to deal with this matter. There was a newsletter published every six months and the Annual Report was published on the website. The Board had also started using Twitter and there were plans to hold a Safeguarding week.*
- Members had noted that there had been a low attendance at Board meetings by some of the members specifically the Lead Cabinet Member and the designated doctor. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children responded that there was continuing activity outside of the Board meetings and there was other opportunities to keep the Lead Cabinet member informed. If the designated doctor was unable to attend a substitute attended.*
- Members referred to page 75 and asked for clarification on the graph showing the “*correlation between domestic violence incidents and deprivation levels*”. The graph had only highlighted Central and Orton with Hampton wards. Members felt that all wards should be named in the graph to give a better reflection of where the domestic violence incidents were. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children responded that all of the wards in Peterborough were represented but had not been named on the graph and would look into the reason why.*
- Members stated that there was a wide population in Peterborough and many were hard to reach communities. What was being done in order to reach those communities? *Members were informed that a conference had been held last November in relation to existing and emerging communities in Peterborough and an action plan had been written in order to reach these hard to reach groups.*
- Members asked what the feedback from schools had been. *Members were informed that there had been lots of feedback from schools which had been developed over the last 18*

months. There was also a multi-agency safeguarding hub which assessed referrals and would decide on the appropriate action.

- Members referred to page 69 of the report and the graph relating to the “category of abuse or neglect which triggered a child protection plan”. Members noted that under the five categories listed the category for neglect and this had shown an increase and asked why. *Members were advised that this was due to an increase in national recognition of neglect and the contributing factors to neglect.*
- Members stated that there was a lot of positivity around the delivery of Safeguarding and asked this be acknowledged.
- The Youth Council Representative asked how children were differentiated between those which were exploited and those which were abused. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children responded that there were four categories of how child exploitation was classified. One of the most difficult ones was the boyfriend and girlfriend relationship in which one party was 17 or 18 and the girlfriend was 12 or 13 this was exploitation but the girlfriend would not consider this to be the case.*
- The Youth Council Representative asked how else young people were being made aware of child exploitation. *The Independent Chair of Peterborough Safeguarding Children stated that there was PHSE at schools. There were also trained staff in schools who were able to look for the signs of child sexual exploitation.*
- The Chair suggested that the Committee hold a special meeting to look into Safeguarding and Child Exploitation in more detail.
- The Youth Council Representative commented that PHSE was only delivered to children in years 7 and 8 and suggested that older age groups be included.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that the graph within the Annual Report showing the Correlation between Domestic Violence Incidents and Deprivation Levels be made clearer by naming each of the wards represented by a point within the graph. This information to be provided to Members of the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board that more work is done within Secondary Schools to raise awareness regarding child exploitation and in particular that all young people from years 7 to 13 are within the cohort targeted.

6. Children’s (Social Care) Services Statutory Complaints Process (Children Act 1989) Annual Report 2013/2014.

The Customer Service Manager introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update about the Children’s (Social Care) Services statutory complaints process and Annual Report on complaints made during 2013/2014. Members were informed that there had been an increase in complaints by 22% this year and this had been reflected across other Local Authorities and across all services. This did not necessarily mean that the quality of service was diminishing but that people had a greater awareness of their rights to complain.

Members were also informed that there had been a significant increase in complaints regarding staff attitude and conduct. This had been reviewed and it had not been confined to a few individual staff. It was noted that many staff in this service would regularly need to make important decisions about the care of children which may sometimes be at odds with the parents’ wishes. Sometimes parents would use the complaints process as a means to voice their disapproval of decisions that they did not agree with and the staff making those decisions.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members expressed concern about the increased level of complaints and queried whether the issue was how the complaints were dealt with. *The Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding & Communities informed Members that in terms of the issues around delayed or failed service if issues arose where social workers had not complied they were addressed in supervision. In terms of timescales and statutory timescales these were monitored in performance meetings.*
- Members also noted that the percentage of complaints upheld was high. How much of this was about the decision that was taken or about how the complaint had been handled. *The Customer Service Manager stated that the upheld rate was similar to upheld rates across the council. The complaints system was a forum to raise concerns and even if the decision made was right there may have been an issue with communication of the decision. It was expected that complaints would be upheld as they were generally raised around areas of substance. The complaints process was a statutory process but if the client was not happy with the outcome at the end of stage one the client was offered a conciliation meeting. This had been successful in that it had prevented a number of complaints escalating to stage two which indicated that the complaints process is working.*
- Members referred to page 89, section 5.5 which stated that “*there had been a reduction in the number of complaints responded to within 20 working days*”. It was noted that a workshop had been held in May 2014 to discuss what causes complaint responses to be delayed. Members wanted to know what the outcome of the workshop was. *The Customer Service Manager stated that it could be an issue of the number of complaints having increased. It may also be an issue of complexity of the case which could increase the response time. The Customer Service Manager had not hosted the workshop but would find out the outcomes and inform the Committee.*
- Members referred to page 90, table 5.7 and noted that one of the figures was incorrect. Complaints Not Upheld for 2013/14 was listed as 6 with a percentage of (37%) and it should have read 36 complaints not upheld instead of 6. *The Customer Service Manager stated that this was a misprint and apologised.*
- Members stated they were concerned that most complaints were around a failed or delayed service. *The Customer Service Manager responded that this may not always refer to statutory timescales and may refer to individuals feeling dissatisfied with the service. This could include the amount of time it had taken the council to answer the phone which would be categorised as a failed or delayed service.*
- Members were also concerned at the increase in the number of complaints received for staff attitude/conduct. *Members were advised that this had been looked into to see if this was attributed to specific individuals and could therefore be highlighted to a particular department. It was concluded however that this was a departmental issue and complaints partially came with the nature of the service and could not be attributed to particular individuals. The Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding & Communities added that often the messages being communicated were messages that families did not always want to hear and it was being reviewed to see how these messages could be communicated more effectively and in a respectful way.*
- Members asked how managers monitored workloads and how staff were looked after. *The Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding & Communities stated that there were frequent monthly supervision meetings and monitoring in order to ensure staff were cared for at work. Team Managers were also encouraged to be supportive of staff and to be with staff when delivering difficult messages.*
- Members stated that the report did not address the causes and therefore posed more questions than answers. Members asked for a more detailed report which would include an analysis of the causes of complaints.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested that the Customer Service Manager report back to the Committee with the following information:

1. A root cause analysis which provides more detail around Complaint causes, common issues and what the service plans to do to address the issues and improve.
2. A report on the outcomes from the workshop held in May 2014 to discuss what causes complaint responses to be delayed.

7. Portfolio Progress Report from Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University

The Cabinet Member introduced the report which provided the Committee with a summary of the key successes and deliverables of the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University over the past 12 months including the unvalidated examination results for 2014. The Assistant Director Education and Resources went through the key areas covered in the report which were:

- Unvalidated examination results
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Year 1, Key Stage 1 (KS1), Key Stage 2 (KS2) Test Results 2014, Key Stage 4 (KS4) Results 2014
- Ofsted Inspection Outcomes
- Attendance
- Ofsted Inspection of 16-19 Education Provision
- City College
- Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)
- Raising the Participation Age
- New Qualified Teachers / Teaching Training
- National Literacy Trust
- In Year Applications
- School Place Planning
- School to School Support
- Peterborough Skills Service / The Skills Service

The Chair congratulated the Assistant Director Education and Resources and the Head of School Improvement for all the work that had been done against a challenging backdrop to improve the rating of Peterborough within the schools league tables. Peterborough had improved to 95th in the league table nationally out of 152 authorities which was up from 147th.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members noted that the report had highlighted the issue of attendance and asked if it had been considered to put in an incentive scheme in place for students who had poor attendance. *The Head of School Improvement responded that incentives were in place in most schools but that these needed to be considered and proportionate. There was no corporate scheme in place but the LA promoted the use of such schemes through their "Promoting Good Attendance" guidance. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources added that the LA took a very robust line with regard to attendance and there had been more resources and capacity put into measures which made a difference such as campaigns aimed at parents. Group measures were more effective than individual measures and it was hoped to reach the national average within the next year*
- Members commented that attendance was of great public interest. There was a lack of clarity around the issue and inconsistency between authorities e.g. if a grandfather dies some LA's allow the child to have a day off school to attend the funeral and other LA's would not.
- What is being done with the fines that were being received from parents who take their children on holiday during term time? *The Head of School Improvement stated that there were two forms of income, one being from penalty notices and one from fines. The fines arose when the penalty notices were not paid. The fines did not come into the School*

Improvement Team they remained with Legal. Income from penalty notices was reinvested in the Attendance Service team to ensure that every school had a named link attendance officer. Regarding holidays the law states that holidays are only allowed in exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher may not authorise leave of absence for a holiday. The definition of 'exceptional' may vary between children and what was exceptional for one child may not be for another. In the case where a Head Teacher issues a penalty notice this would be reviewed by the Head of School Improvement and in some cases penalty notices had been revoked. There had however been instances of parents attempting to abuse the 'exceptional' circumstances requirement and submitting dishonest information.

- *Members asked what would happen in the instance where parents factor in the cost of penalty notices and still pay the fine regardless. The Head of School Improvement responded that there was an allowance of two penalty notices and if there was a further occasion this would be escalated towards prosecution.*
- *Members added that nonetheless the penalty notices could represent a saving for parents with regard to fluctuating ticket prices in school holidays. The Head of School Improvement stated that this was a problem but this was an issue out of the hands of the local authority and was a national issue but that prosecution was still an option in cases where non-attendance was too frequent.*
- *Members asked for a summary of the Key Stage 5 data as there had been some positive headlines that were not within the report. The Head of School Improvement stated that what had been seen so far was an increase in the higher grades A* and A and in average entry levels per student but these were not validated. More detail would be provided when the validated data was released.*
- *Members sought clarification on the criteria for how schools were identified for expansion. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources stated that it varied from school to school. Peterborough was significantly urbanised which meant that in certain areas there was not the land to expand. The quality of the school was also taken into consideration. If the school was in special measures then they would not be considered for expansion. The priority was to try for local places for local children it was however a challenging and difficult process.*
- *Members referred to page 109, paragraph 5.56 which stated that "significant work is being undertaken to create additional secondary provision to support the ongoing increases in numbers in primary schools that will be transitioning in future years". Members commented that school places had in the past fluctuated and then decreased and that careful consideration should be given to this for future school place planning. Consideration should be given to not demolishing schools if they were closed in the future. The Cabinet Member stated that this was a very important issue and nobody could have foreseen the influx into the city since 2008. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources stated that some schools had been mothballed. The paragraph referred to was about the growth of the city. The three secondary schools which were intended to be built were in the periphery developments of Hampton, Great Haddon and Norwood. School place planning was difficult to predict as things changed rapidly in a short space of time. The Cabinet Member stated that planning was difficult due to the influx of immigrants into the city which could not be planned for.*
- *The Youth Council Representative asked if Curriculum for Life could be implemented more throughout the curriculum e.g. how to manage your money. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources responded that those life skills were essential and more primary schools were delivering those types of lessons which looked at things like what a bank is and how to look after your money. The curriculum at secondary school did not have those types of elements in it but one of the requirements that secondary schools had now was to prepare young people in readiness to leave school. The Head of School Improvement stated that there was a growth in areas such as young enterprise. Life skills were crucial and he advised Members that he would take this suggestion forward to the next Head Teachers forum.*
- *Members asked for clarification that pupil premium funds would be used for pupils for which they were intended to help and would not be used in a broader context where*

schools were expanding into looking after other centres. *The Head of School Improvement responded that pupil premium was funded per child per school. It was for the Head Teacher and the Governing Body to determine how that money was spent on each child to aid their education and to improve the quality of their learning. The School Improvement Team could monitor the impact of that funding.*

- Members asked if there was any evidence that the provision of free school meals had lowered the number of pupils who would attract pupil premium funds. *The Assistant Director for Education and Resources responded that it was too early to say. The Head of School Improvement stated that it had been communicated to parents that free school meals could attract more funding to the school for their child.*
- The Youth Council Representative referred to the raising of participation age and expressed concern that young people who were not necessarily academic may be pressured into staying on at school when it may be better for them to go into a more practical option. Was there anything happening in Peterborough to show all the options available to young people. *The Assistant Director for Education and Resources responded that there was an issue around this and it was essential to find the right course for individuals to go on. This matter was being discussed and looked at very closely as it was absolutely essential that the right courses were found for each individual. A recent Ofsted Inspection advised that information and guidance for 16 to 19 year olds needed to be improved. There will therefore be a focus on this over the next eighteen months. The Cabinet Member stated that the focus was to establish a diverse menu across the city and there were organisations which were arranging practical courses and these needed to be arranged and communicated to pupils so they were aware of options.*
- Members referred to the National Literacy Trust and the Peterborough Literacy Hub. What was the timeframe for the delivery of this work? *The Assistant Director for Education and Resources stated that this was an ongoing project but an action plan had been put in place with possible implementation in the autumn.*
- The Youth Council Representative asked Officers for their views on the Government move to stop early entry examinations. *The Assistant Director for Education and Resources advised that there was huge disappointment when the Government changed the process for dealing with exams. The challenge would now be that Government League tables will be based on first entry exams. This may place a significant amount of pressure on young people. Representations had been made to Government in this regard. The Head of School Improvement informed Members that this new system would however allow parents to compare school with school with some consistency.*

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommend that the Cabinet Member for Education Skills and University discuss with secondary school Headteachers/Principals how best they can include “Skills for Life”, including managing money, within their curriculum.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee also requested further information on:

1. The Peterborough Literacy Hub
2. Sixth Form Action Plan
3. Pupil Premium

8. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Reforms

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director Education and Resources and provided the Committee with an overview of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms and Peterborough’s approach to preparing for their implementation. The Assistant Director for Communities and Targeted Services and Louise Ravenscroft from Family Voice were also in attendance. Louise Ravenscroft informed Members that this had been one of

the biggest changes in 30 years and the focus was now on participation and Peterborough was moving in the right direction to implement the changes.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked how the Local Authority engaged with young people directly. *The representative for Family Voice Peterborough responded that direct involvement was sought from parents and young people. There had been a clear move towards engaging with young people and there were ongoing discussions around moving further towards young health ambassadors and personal engagement.*
- Members commented that it was difficult to find information about the Local Offer on the website. *The Assistant Director for Communities and Targeted Services acknowledged that this was currently an issue however if a google search was done and Local Offer, Peterborough was put in the search bar it could be found straight away. There was an opportunity now to create something truly fit for purpose and work was currently being undertaken to improve this some of which was potentially quite ground breaking. The website was currently one-way and it was hoped that it could be more dynamic and interactive in the future.*
- Members noted that the Peterborough Local Offer would only be available via the website and asked how the Local Offer would be accessed if the current consultation regarding libraries were to recommend closure of library outlets. *The Assistant Director for Communities and Targeted Services stated that the national guidance stated that the local offer should be web-based. A significant amount of people in Peterborough did not have web access at home. However, the reason for the national guidance was because the information could be kept up-to-date on a day-to-day basis. It was important that the Local Offer could be accessed in places where parents, carers and young people want to access it. There would be outlets in various places including libraries and community centres and possibly post offices, GP surgeries and schools. There will also be an enhanced service through the customer service centre. The representative for Family Voice Peterborough added that there were also other authorities who operated a phone service and drop-in centres where someone could access the Local Offer on an individual's behalf.*

The Chair thanked Louise Ravenscroft for her valuable contribution to the work being done around the SEND reforms.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested a further report in six months to update the committee on the developments that were taking place to implement the SEND reforms.

Councillor Sandford left the meeting at this point.

9. Directors Report for Social Care Practice and Performance

The Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding & Communities introduced the report on behalf of The Executive Director, Children's Services. The report provided the Committee with an update on the progress of performance and practice in Children's Social Care. The following highlights from July 2014 data were covered:

- There had been an increase in the number of CAFs delivered to families.
- Fewer contacts had come into social care.
- The single assessment had been launched.
- There had been an audit of threshold decisions done by an external consultant which had been very positive.

- MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) had gone live on 1st September. There were no significant changes expected in terms of service delivery out of Bayard Place.
- Raising quality of practice and getting to good.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members sought clarification with regard to paragraph 5.5 on page 156 which stated that *“21 initial assessments were completed in the month; higher than the 230 in April.”* Members were advised that this was likely a typing error and would be corrected.
- Members asked if there had been any negative feedback received at exit interviews. *Members were advised that most of the churn was amongst the interim staff and not the permanent staff and this was because other local authorities were offering better rates and trying to compete against each other. Some individuals were leaving because their family lived away from the area. Some individuals had partners in the forces which had forced them to relocate. There were often family reasons which were out of the control of the authority.*
- Members commented that workforce retention was a hot topic and the statistics showed that the permanent workforce was leaving and other authorities were offering better deals. What was being done about this and were any incentives being offered to encourage people to stay. *Members were advised that the issue of retaining staff was being looked at.*

The Youth Council representatives left the meeting at this point.

- Members asked if there were check points over the 35 days to ensure single assessments were on track and could these be put into the report. *Members were informed that within the single assessment process there were a number of check points. The first check point was at 5 days which was part of the performance reporting and scrutinised twice a month. The second check point was at 10 days where the manager would sit down with the social worker and check how the assessment was going and there were other check points built in further on. This information could be made available with the report.*
- Members were concerned at the reduction in the number of social workers and wanted to know what could be done to increase the numbers of social workers. *Members were advised that there was a national shortage of skilled social workers, managers and heads of services. There had been an increase of newly-qualified social workers which would have an impact on the experienced social workers in the team. The challenge would be to balance and maintain the support for both the newly qualified social workers and the permanent qualified social workers.*
- Members wanted to know how Peterborough compared to other local authorities regarding recruitment and retention of social workers. *Members were informed that Bedford had a cohort of 50% agency staff and Norfolk and Northampton were in similar positions where their interim staff were at high levels. There was a very small pool of social workers in the region with lots of local authorities fishing in the same pond. The best way forward would be to start to grow our own social workers and Peterborough was considering having a Social Worker Academy. Other local authorities had done this and research was being carried out to see how effective these have been.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and requested the following information be included in the next report:

1. A list of new social workers and how the positions had changed as well as information about the recruitment process.
2. An update on the possibility of having a social worker academy in Peterborough.

3. Information to be included in the report regarding the 10 day check point within the single assessment process.

10. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of 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 Forward Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

11. Work Programme 2014/2015

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

Members requested a briefing note update on Clare Lodge.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2014/15 and the Senior Governance Officer to include any additional items as requested during the meeting.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.30pm

CHAIRMAN