

APPENDIX 1

Children Sub Committee Workshop

Monday 7th November

Committee Room 3, Wallasey Town Hall

Notes and Actions

In attendance:

Councillors - Moira McLaughlin, Wendy Clements, Alan Brighthouse, Angela Davies, Chris Meaden, Cherry Povall

Co-optees – Mark Harrison, Gill Peters

Officers: Julia Hassall, Gladys Rhodes White, Deborah Gornik, Nancy Clarkson, Mike Callon, Alan Veitch

Apologies: Cllr Walter Smith

1. Draft Improvement Plan

Julia Hassall provided a presentation to highlight the priorities of the Children's Improvement Plan and the progress made to date.

Key questions raised by Ofsted which are relevant to scrutiny:

- Are the 'building blocks' evident?
- What difference will it make to children and young people?
- How does the plan ensure you embed and sustain the necessary front line cultural changes and improvements?
- How are children and young people participating in the improvement process?
- Are you consistently putting the child at the centre of practice and management?
- What evidence of impact will you use to demonstrate that change has occurred and is being sustained?

It was confirmed that the final Improvement Plan would be agreed by the end of December.

2. Feedback from Safeguarding Children training session (provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny)

Cllr Wendy Clements had recently attending a training event hosted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. A note from the session, which had been led by a former social worker, has been distributed separately. Key learning points which were highlighted include:

- One Local Authority only included two main items, linked to Ofsted recommendations, on their meeting agenda. In the week prior to the meeting members undertook a relevant site visit to speak with front-line staff and managers. This was used to inform discussions at the formal Committee meeting.
- Some other local Authorities aim to build more sustainable links with the LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Board).
- In one Local Authority, the scrutiny committee picked a theme from the LSCB annual report as the topic for an evidence day.
- Scrutiny could facilitate a Takeover Day and let young people come and ask questions as part of committee.
- The voice of the child should be considered in every review.
- Consideration should be given to how the needs of vulnerable groups affect service design.

APPENDIX 1

- Scrutiny should not try to engage in operational audits of frontline services; but should be ensuring that managers are auditing the service effectively.
- Scrutiny should be holding portfolio holders to account; not just senior officers.
- Scrutiny must hold itself to account to ensure that it has an effective impact.

It was noted that a member development process relating to the Ofsted improvement Plan was being developed. Provision of member training sessions was to be explored as soon as possible.

It was suggested that the Lead Member for Children Services should be notified of all forthcoming meetings of the Children Sub Committee and invited to attend those meetings. It was clarified that the Lead Member for Children services should attend those meetings not as a committee member but in order to answer questions and assist committee members in their scrutiny role.

3. Proposals regarding ways of working for the Children Sub Committee

Key proposals include:

- Children Sub Committee to be the main scrutiny body for the Ofsted Improvement Plan, holding the portfolio holder and senior management to account.
- Meetings of the Children Sub Committee will be aligned with those of the Improvement Board to enable key messages to be given to both bodies.
- Children Sub Committee will review the delivery of the key milestones in the Improvement Plan and the performance tracker.
- In addition, specific areas will be identified for more detailed scrutiny in a task & finish format once the improvement plan has been approved.
- A process to provide regular feedback to the Improvement Board will be developed.
- Ensuring the voices of service users are heard in the improvement process.

It was suggested that the Chair of the Children Sub Committee should meet with the newly appointed Chair of the Improvement Board at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss an appropriate working relationship.

Members commented that it was very important for scrutiny to include the views of young people, capturing experiences of both children just into the care system as well as the views of care leavers. If the views of children cannot be captured direct, their indirect input should be available from, for example, IROs (Independent Reviewing Officers).

4. Developing the work programme and meeting schedule

It will be necessary to develop an effective work programme for the Sub Committee. The Chair suggested that, given appropriate resource, it should be possible to run two task & finish groups simultaneously.

It was proposed that standing items for meetings could include:

- Monitoring the key milestones of the Improvement Plan
- Reviewing the performance data tracker

APPENDIX 1

Topics for consideration for task & finish work include:

- Early intervention / prevention, including the application of thresholds, partnership arrangements and the operation of MASH
- The management of care plans and related performance; leaving care and IROs
- Competent skilled workforce and the quality of social work practice
- Scrutiny's place in long-term governance arrangements
- Follow-up to the original Looked after children scrutiny review (August 2013)
- Follow-up to the previous Safeguarding scrutiny review (December 2015)

A member commented that it was important to show how the future scrutiny process will track improvement and identify shortcomings if the required service standards in Children's Social Care are not being met.

It was important that independent technical advice was available to scrutiny, for example, from the Department of Education advisor, the independent Chair of the Improvement Board and from Gladys Rhodes-White.

Subsequent to the workshop, the following **meeting dates** have been agreed:

- Wed 14th Dec 2016
- Wed 8th Feb 2017
- Wed 8th March 2017
- Wed 5th April 2017

All meetings will commence at 6.00pm

It was agreed that agenda-setting for Sub-Committee meetings will involve the Chair and the Director of Children's Services and Interim Head of Children's Social Care.

ACTIONS:

Nancy Clarkson to ensure that the member requirements for training sessions be considered as soon as possible.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin to contact the Lead member for Children Services, inviting him to attend future meetings of the Children Sub Committee.

Cllr Moira McLaughlin to meet with the newly appointed independent Chair of the Improvement Board at the earliest opportunity.

Alan Veitch to arrange for the dates of proposed meeting dates to be distributed.