

CHILDREN SUB-COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30 March 2016

Present Councillors A Brighouse P Hayes
W Clements M McLaughlin
A Davies W Smith
Harrison

In attendance: M Harrison, Parent
Governor Rep

Apologies Councillors T Norbury

17 MINUTES

The minutes of the Children's Sub Committee held 16 December 2015 were considered by Members.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved

18 MEMBER'S CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members of the Sub – Committee were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any relevant interest in connection with any items on the agenda and if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made

19 CHILDREN'S CENTRES - PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Head of Targeted Services addressed the Sub-Committee and informed Members of progress against Performance Indicators in respect of Children's Centres in Wirral.

Members heard how progress had been hindered by the delayed implementation of the Family Intervention Service. They were then informed how a re-organisation of the Family Support and intensive Family Intervention Programme teams into a single service area through formal consultation with staff, HR and Trade Unions had delayed the launch of the new programme by approximately 3 months. Members were advised that Children's Centre Staff were no longer at risk of redundancy.

Performance Indicators were identified to Members as follows:

- **The take up of 2 year old offer by eligible families** - This had not been utilised as effectively as it could be. In response, it was explained that the process for contacting eligible families has been revised which would enable increased take up of the offer with more targeted outreach to those families that had not accessed funding.
- **Increased take-up of Children's Centre services for Children Looked After, Children in Need and Children subject to a Child Protection Plan** – There has been an increased take up in this area, however, there is still work to be undertaken with Foster Carers.
- **Family intervention service engagement with families**- The start of the formal consultation and review of Family Intervention was delayed for several months. This means that Family Intervention Teams will not be established until September 2015.
- **Family Intervention Service positive outcomes with families** – Due to the nature of the Payment by Results terms the majority of outcomes cannot be claimed until 12 months post identification.
- **% of families with an under 5 living in the most 0-20% most deprived SOA's that are registered with a Children's Centre** - Work is being undertaken by Registrars to ensure that parents are registering children at a local Children's Centre.
- **% of families with an under 5 living in the 0 – 20% most deprived SOA's who have sustained contact with a Children's Centre** – The level of sustained contact has dropped slightly across the quarter (28% in April) due to data cleansing exercise.

In addition to Performance Indicators a detailed action plan was provided to members, in conjunction with the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision and was summarised as follows:

Priority one: Children in Wirral will start life well

Theme Lead: Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group

Action points are to:

- 1) Increase the uptake of maternity services delivered by integrated teams in locality – based settings;
- 2) Improve young children's health outcomes: raise breastfeeding rates so performance is equally good across the borough; targeted reduction in obesity at age 4 – 5.

Priority two: Children receive sensitive and responsive care from their main caregivers in the first years of life

Theme Lead: Wirral Council – Early Childhood Delivery Group

- 3) Provide training and mentoring for child-minders, nurseries and childcare settings which focuses on the attachment needs of babies and infants.
- 4) Review both evidence – based parenting programmes and peer-led and community based activities to ensure all parents can access support for effective parenting.

Priority Three: Increase of the % of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage.

Theme Lead: Wirral Council – Early Childhood Delivery Group

- 5) Close the gap in readiness for school for disadvantaged children.
- 6) Percentage of schools and childcare settings rated good or outstanding increases.
- 7) Improve the take up of 2, 3 and 4 year old nursery places for vulnerable children by sharing responsibility as a partnership.

During a discussion regarding Childcare provision, Councillor W Clements declared a personal interest by virtue of her being employed in an Early Setting.

A Member expressed concern regarding a lack of a statistical evidence having been provided to Members in advance of the meeting and requested that in the future such reports are included with the main agenda

Resolved – That Members note the contents of the presentation.

20 **SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS**

A report by the Group Manager for Adoption and Fostering provided Members with an update on the progress being made in implementing recommendation 9 of the Scrutiny Review of Safeguarding Children in Wirral, December 2015. Members heard how the two main areas that the Scrutiny Report Recommendations being addressed in relation to Special Guardianship were:

- i) Assessment of potential Special Guardians in line with regulations and procedures; and
- ii) Post Special Guardianship support offered throughout childhood.

It was explained that the assessment criteria for assessing a Special Guardian differs from a Fostering Assessment in that a Special Guardianship Assessment is based on the specific, individual needs and circumstances of the particular child/ children. Members were then informed how it is essential, when assessing a potential carer as a Special Guardian, that they can

evidence their ability to evaluate potential risks in the future in order to protect the child/children.

Members were informed that new regulations had been published in line with the Special Guardianship (amendment) regulations 2016 setting out the requirement for a stronger evidence base for the assessment. Members then heard how, in light of the new regulations and supporting court reports, Children's Services are updating procedures for Special Guardianship and associated practice guidance for Social Workers, which is due to be completed by April 2016.

Members were advised that in order to support the transition towards Special Guardianship for a child/children, Children's Services may recommend to the Court that a Supervision Order is issued in addition to the Special Guardianship Order, to strengthen the authority's responsibilities and duties to support the placement.

Members heard how the Group Manager for Adoption and Fostering had met with a group of Grandparents who were also Special Guardians to discuss support. In addition, focus groups would be held during May 2016 with Special Guardians to consider the breadth of their support needs, so that they are well supported to enable children to reach their full potential.

In response to a question from a Member it was explained that a potential Special Guardian could be assessed as suitable to care for a child, even if they had not met the threshold to be considered as a suitable foster carer. Members expressed concern regarding this and it was explained that when a case comes to Permanence Panel, the focus is to get the best order for the child and this is assessed very carefully around associated risks.

It was then explained, following a question raised, that at present the only access Social Services have to Special Guardian's, is if concerns are raised.

The Director of Children's Services informed Members that an exercise would be conducted to benchmark local framework against other authorities.

Resolved – That Members note the contents of the report.

21 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT OFSTED INSPECTIONS - OVERVIEW**

The Strategic Service Manager, Early Years & Primary Education, Learning & Achievement Branch reported upon the feedback from recent Ofsted inspections.

Members heard how the current position from September 2016 up to 21 March 2016 is as follows:

- 0 Schools are in an Ofsted category
- 7 secondary schools require improvement (3 academies, 4 maintained)
- 13 primary schools requiring improvement
- 87% of primary schools are currently good or better
- 67% of secondary schools are currently good or better
- 100% of special schools are good or better

Members were then advised that there had been 10 inspections from 1 September 2015 to 21 March 2016. Outcomes from these inspections have been: 0 schools had been downgraded 6 schools had stayed the same and 4 schools had been upgraded.

Members were informed that a meeting would be held with the Regional School's Coordinator to discuss school improvement. A meeting would also be held with a Civil Servant from the Department for Education.

The Strategic Service Manager, Early Years & Primary Education, Learning & Achievement Branch emphasised to Members that the main focus is upon the young people of Wirral, despite any challenges that the Authority may face in coming years.

The Director for Children's Services explained to Members that Wirral had been involved in a peer challenge alongside other Local Authorities and that a positive challenge had been identified

The Chair commented that the outcomes had proved to be positive

In response to a question by a Member, it was explained that relationships between the Local Authority and Academies remain to be good

Resolved – That the contents of the presentation be noted

22 **WORK PROGRAMME**

A report by the Scrutiny Support Officer updated Members on progress towards delivering the work programme for the Children Sub Committee as agreed for the remainder of the 2015/16 municipal year.

The Chair requested that a follow up report regarding Special Guardianship be brought back to a future meeting of the Children's Sub Committee.

Resolved – That Members note the contents of the work programme for the Children's Sub Committee for the remainder of the 2015/16 municipal year.