

ITEM 4

Time commenced - 18:00
Time finished - 20:50

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION 12 JULY 2011

Present: Councillor Bolton (Chair)
Councillors Bailey, Campbell, F Khan, Leeming, Whitby, F Winter, co-optees; Nasreen Iqbal, Maurice Lawrence and Ian Jennison

In attendance: Councillor Williams

01/11 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Radford and co-optees; Alison Brown, David Wilkinson and Kirit Mistry.

02/11 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

The Chair introduced the Fostering Annual Report as a late item.

03/11 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Campbell declared a personal interest in minute 06/11 as he was a member of NASUWT.

04/11 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2011

The minutes of the meeting on 15 March 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the correction of Nasreen Iqbal's name.

05/11 Call-in

There were no items. The Call-in process was attached for information.

Items for Discussion

06/11 Structure of the Children and Young People Directorate

The new Strategic Director for Children and Young People (CYP), Andrew Bunyan, introduced himself to the commission and gave a brief summary of the new structure of the directorate. The CYP service directors for Commissioning (Rita Silvester), Learning and Inclusion (Lynda Poole), Specialist Services (Katie Harris) and Early

Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding (Jacqui Jensen) each then gave presentations about their remit and the future pressures they face.

Ian Jennison asked if the Council would force any schools to become academies and would they still be able to buy the authority's services if they became an academy. The Director of Learning and Inclusion stated that no schools were being forced to become academies and some were already considering such a move. Any school that became an academy would still have the same access to the Council's services and many that have made the switch are still in partnership with the authority.

Councillor Whitby asked the Strategic Director of CYP to clarify the Council's position on the four primary schools mentioned in the Derby Telegraph who were allegedly being forced to become academies by the Government. The Strategic Director of CYP stated that there had been a number of possibilities on this with either the lowest performing 200 or 500 primary schools being made to convert to academies. Discussions with the Government were ongoing but nothing had been confirmed. He suggested that the reporting of this item in the press had been exaggerated and any proposals to pursue this by the Department for Education (DfE) would come to him first. Both the Strategic Director and the Cabinet Member for CYP would be writing to DfE for clarification. The Director of Learning and Inclusion added that the four primary schools mentioned in the article had voluntarily approached the directorate to become academies.

Councillor Bolton asked the Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding what progress had been made with social worker vacancy rates. The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that vacancy rates had fallen from 45% down to 10%.

Councillor Whitby asked what was the impact of the restructure on the Connexions service. The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that the service had been brought 'in house' which had resulted in a saving of £600,000 with no loss to front line staff. The service was still advising 2,000 young people a month.

Councillor Bolton asked what the impact was following the closure of the youth centres. The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that the closure had little effect because most young people do not have the same reliance on a fixed location. Mobile centres now proved more effective.

Mr Lawrence asked how the directorate dealt with exclusions of children from African, Caribbean and Romany backgrounds as they were most affected. The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that weekly meetings were held across a number of topic areas of which exclusions from these ethnic backgrounds were considered. The service's early intervention processes aim to work with these children so that they were not excluded in the first place.

Councillor Bolton asked if Voices in Action had been allocated funding to continue. The Cabinet Member for CYP, Councillor Williams, stated that Voices in Action had funding until the end of the financial year. After that it would be considered as part of the usual budgetary process. Councillor Bolton asked to be informed in writing that

the service was still operational for this financial year. The Strategic Director of CYP said that he would write to the councillor.

Councillor Leeming asked what measures were in place to prevent sexual exploitation from reoccurring. The Cabinet Member for CYP stated that as a result of Operation Retriever a new strategy and officer were in place specifically to focus on this issue. She could not guarantee that such an event would never happen again but officers were doing all they could to make sure it was prevented.

Resolved to note the presentation.

07/11 Ofsted Report

The Commission considered the Ofsted report detailing their findings following an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services.

Councillor Bolton stated that this report did not make for happy reading. There were numerous actions arising from the inspection that needed to be completed in certain timeframes. She requested that the Commission be provided with progress reports at each of these deadlines. The Strategic Director of CYP said that he would use the in-depth review as a basis to improve the service. He added that since the Haringey Council incident the Ofsted inspections were far more stringent. Their quality controls were becoming increasingly tough and this then impacted on their judgements. A number of action plans had already been created to react to the Ofsted report. He added that some action plans were in place to improve when the inspectors visited, however they were unable to count these as there was no evidence to support them.

The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that she was very disappointed with the inspection. Staff would not be satisfied with an adequate rating. The inspectors have identified areas for improvement and the service would work immediately to resolve these issues. In some instances it was just a gap in the services processes that needed closing. These improvements could be immediately actioned. Others would take a little longer to implement.

Mr Lawrence asked why the inspectors had picked up on a lack of ethnic awareness within the service when this was basic custom and practice. The Director of Specialist Services stated that they had struggled to demonstrate how they had used the evidence gathered about the child's background and needs to take preventative steps or offer additional assistance.

Councillor Leeming asked where adequate sat on a scale of 1 to 10. The Strategic Director of CYP stated that 6-7 would be considered adequate, 8-9 was good and 10 was outstanding.

Councillor Bailey asked if the changes in staffing had an impact on the inspection rating. The Strategic Director of CYP agreed that there had been some upheaval. He said that it would come as no surprise that those councils who had not changed their senior management had the most stability and in turn the best inspection results.

Councillor Bolton raised concern with councillors who had not had their CRB checks. The Strategic Director of CYP said that the amalgamation of several departments had meant that some records had been lost. This had now been rectified and a new CRB checking process was in place. Councillor Bolton asked how the electronic casework system issue would be solved. The Strategic Director of CYP stated that it was a national problem and this would be taken up through the proper channels.

Mr Lawrence asked if children in Derby were protected considering that there had recently been three serious case reviews. The Cabinet Member for CYP stated that the report had concluded that children in Derby were safe. The new chair of the Safeguarding Board was very capable. She reiterated that although she could not guarantee that there would not be any more serious case reviews but officers could make sure that enough was done to prevent them.

Councillor Bolton asked if there were any more serious case reviews to come. The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that they were awaiting one more serious case review pending the outcome of an inquest in September 2011. Councillor Bolton asked for an explanation on why a number of children were placed under the supervision of under-skilled staff. The Strategic Director of CYP stated that this was a long standing national problem. If you had a shortage of social workers then you could quickly fill the gap by recruiting a large number of low skill level replacements. Ofsted had come to the conclusion that everyone had to be qualified. The number of differently qualified staff was now reducing. Councillor Bolton asked if a more comprehensive audit process of the casework files would be introduced. The Director of Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding stated that the current system of supervision of casework files was inspected and found to be quite poor. Since then 39 audits had been carried out from September to March. She thought that would be enough for a six month period. The inspector's concern lay in one of the files they inspected which was not sufficient.

Resolved to request a progress report on the action plans resulting from the inspection in three and six months

08/11 Fostering Annual Report

The Commission received a report regarding the work of Derby City Council's Fostering Service between January 2010 and December 2010. Members were advised that new regulations, guidance and minimum standards were due to be implemented in April 2011 having been published in March 2011.

Councillor Leeming asked if the service was still experiencing difficulty in recruiting foster carers from ethnic minorities. The Director of Specialist Services stated that the population of the Council's carers reflected the needs of the community. Although they would not delay placements if the ethnic backgrounds of the child and the carer were not an exact match. All the city's carers were able to meet the needs of any child placed in their care.

Councillor Bailey praised the work of the city's fostering carers and asked for the Commission's thanks to filtered back to them.

Mr Lawrence asked why there were peaks in the number of children referred throughout the year. The Director of Specialist Services stated that the overall numbers were not very high and annual events often triggered the spikes seen in the figures such as the school summer holidays. Mr Lawrence then asked if any work had been done to prevent de-registration of carers. The Director of Specialist Services said that de-registration of carers would happen naturally. In some cases there would be a reason behind it such as a shortfall in skills, knowledge or understanding. Mr Lawrence noted that there were a number of carers outside of the city. He asked how they maintained contact with the families. The Director of Specialist Services stated that officers ensure that the same level of service was provided to children whether they were in or out of the city. She added that there was support available for travel costs so that children can maintain contact.

Resolved:

- A. That the Fostering Service continues to provide an annual report for period from January – December 2010 and reviews the Statement of Purpose as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2001;**
- B. That a monthly highlights report be produced to track key indicators of performance;**
- C. To note the work and developments of the Fostering Service as outlined in this report.**

09/11 Corporate Parenting

The Commission considered a proposed terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Forum produced by the Strategic Director of CYP.

Councillor Bolton noted that serious concerns had been raised by the recent Ofsted inspection of Members' involvement in corporate parenting. She asked what was going to be done to solve this. The Director of CYP introduced the protocol as the basis of Members' involvement in corporate parenting and invited Members to comments.

Councillor Bolton stated that there was no mention of scrutiny in the terms of reference. This was something that Ofsted had identified in their report. The Strategic Director stated that a layer of scrutiny could be added. Councillor Bolton added that the Commission, without the consent of Council, could reconstitute the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission now. The Strategic Director of CYP suggested that Members might want to see how the Corporate Parenting Forum performs before any additional steps are taken. Councillor Williams added that perhaps the terms of reference of the old Corporate Parenting Sub Commission could be incorporated into the Corporate Parenting Forum.

Councillor Bailey stated that as a newly elected Member he was not made aware of the extent of his duties as a corporate parent. He added that better training needed to be provided to Members on the requirements of being a corporate parent and their responsibilities. Mr Lawrence asked for co-opted members to also be included in the training.

Resolved:

- A. that the Chair of the Commission meet with the Strategic Director of Children and Young People to attempt to merge the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Forum and the former Corporate Parenting Sub Commission;**
- B. For training to be provided to all councillors and co-opted members on their responsibilities and duties as corporate parents.**

10/11 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items of retrospective scrutiny raised by the Commission.

11/11 Forward Plan

Councillor Bolton informed Members that there were two items on the Forward Plan relating to the CYP Commission.

12/11 Topic Review – What is being done by Derby City Council and its partners to help children looked after with mental health issues and can these services be improved?

Councillor Bolton introduced the topic review, its findings and recommendations to the Commission. She stated that five Members were involved, herself, Councillor F Winter (as previous chair of the Commission) and councillors Whitby, Radford and Tuplin.

Councillor F Winter thanked everybody involved in the topic review. Councillor Whitby said he was especially pleased with recommendation one of the review as it was particularly relevant in light of the Ofsted report.

Resolved to recommend the topic review to the next Council Cabinet.

Minutes End

