

## **CHILDRENS SERVICES SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 6 p.m.**

**Conference Room 2, Council House, Walsall**

### **Committee Members Present**

Councillor M. Statham (Chair)  
Councillor D. Barker  
Councillor H. Bashir  
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul  
Councillor L. Jeavons  
Councillor M. Follows  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Councillor C. Statham  
Councillor S. Wade

### **Portfolio Holders Present**

Councillor T. Wilson - Children's and Health and Well Being

### **Officers Present**

Colleen Male	Assistant Director
Andrea Potts	Assistant Director
Alice Bridgewater	Finance Officer
Isabel Vanderheeren	Transformation Lead
Nikki Gough	Democratic Services Officer

### **19/19 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor T. Jukes.

### **20/19 Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **21/19 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

### **22/19 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to be considered in private session.

## **23/19 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were considered.

### **Resolved**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record subject to the amendment of the resolution on page 9, to read April 2020.**

## **24/19 Portfolio Holder Statement on the care of a young person.**

The Portfolio Holder spoke to the Committee to address significant attention in the media challenging the detention at St Andrew's Healthcare in Northampton from December 2016 to February 2019 of a young person from the Walsall area.

St Andrew's Healthcare and NHS England had publically accepted that the care provided to the young person did not always comply with the Mental Health Act Code of Practice and the NICE Guidelines on managing violence and aggression. This affected the young person's wellbeing and made it harder for this person to return to live in the community.

Walsall Council and NHS Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group had accepted that there were delays in moving the young person from what became an unsuitable placement. St Andrew's Healthcare, Walsall MBC, Walsall CCG and NHS England had apologised to the family.

The Council has taken this issue very seriously and was working with Walsall CCG and NHS England to consider what went wrong and what needed to happen to improve care for people with an autistic spectrum disorder nationally.

## **25/19 Corporate Financial Performance – Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position for 2019/20**

The forecast overspend for Children's Services, after the net use of reserves and prior to any mitigating action, would be an overspend of £0.761m. The directorate had implemented an action plan which reduced the net forecast revenue position to be overspent by £0.351m.

The Assistant Director stated that mitigating actions were detailed and there was an action plan to reduce the overspend. A discussion ensued around social worker recruitment and retention, it was noted that there was a national shortage of social workers however it was hoped that a move to locality working would help to attract individuals to work for the Authority. A collective approach across the West Midlands was also being considered to ensure that good working relationships existed. In response to challenge from a Member, the Assistant Director stated that the family safeguarding model was effective in attracting people to work for the Authority. It was stressed that social workers were embracing this model and events for agency workers had been held to encourage them to apply for permanent jobs at the Authority.

A Member asked for reassurance of the quality of agency workers. The Assistant Director stated that overall quality of agency workers is good, however like all other areas of work there can on occasion be performance issues, which need to be dealt with. However any agency worker would need to fulfil a criteria to work for the Authority and meet the requirements of the job description. . The Committee were advised that there would always be a need for agency staff and also a need to attract permanent staff.

In response to Member questioning, Officers confirmed that work was under way to retain current staff through career progression and a good training offer through a retention strategy which created opportunities for staff. The Assistant Director stated that she had been impressed with the enthusiasm and morale of staff who had a positive attitude during a time of transition. The Assistant Director stressed that the Authority monitored retention rates, held staff events and carried out staff surveys. The Committee were advised that the training offer in Walsall was highly regarded. Members agreed that feedback from staff was essential to ensure that the service ran effectively.

### **Resolved**

**That the Corporate Financial Performance – Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position for 2019/20 was noted.**

### **26/19 Right for Children Transformation programme**

The report provided a further update on progress against the activities as set out in the Walsall Right 4 Children transformation programme launched in September 2018. Collaboration with partners included securing a place on the DfE Strengthening Families Protecting Children programme for the implementation of Family Safeguarding as part of the locality model. Practitioners across Children's Services had facilitated individual conversations with children, young people and parents.

The Transformation Lead discussed the creation of an 'If I was the boss... poster' which highlighted what children and their families would do if they were the boss of children's services. The development of an adolescent support hub named 'Turning Point', which would support young people, aged 10 plus who were at risk of becoming looked after by the Local Authority. Officers suggested that the Committee might wish to consider this at its January meeting.

Funding received for 'family safeguarding' was discussed and it was agreed that further details on this would be taken back to Committee. The Portfolio Holder commended Officers on being the first Local Authority to be awarded funding. A Member asked if the programme would be sustainable in the future, Officers confirmed that this would be a collaboration with partners who were all signed up to the programme. In response to Member discussion, Officers stated that the priority was for children to be safe, happy and learning well.

### **Resolved**

**That the Right for Children Transformation programme report was noted**

## **27/19 Big Conversation**

The Head of Transformation stated that the 'Big Conversation' referred to a programme of consultation, engagement, and collaboration with children, young people and their families. A key principle of the transformation programme was restorative practice. A Member queried if there was a time limit on relationship building and how this worked in practice. Officers confirmed that early help teams formed connections and were skilled at working with families. It was important to enable staff to carry out this function, which would improve the perception of social workers.

In response to discussion, Officers confirmed that Social Workers would be working in localities with 'Early Help' teams and that this would help to build relationships. The Assistant Director stated that it was important that families felt involved in the decision to provide help and services to ensure that they felt supported.

The Committee discussed events that could be held to allow families to meet social worker teams, the challenges and benefits of this were considered. It was suggested that activity days had more success than formal sessions to meet social workers.

Members challenged how the negative stigma of social work could be reduced; The Head of Transformation stated that visibility in the community and development of relationships in those schools which had a higher number of children in need.

## **28/19 Youth Justice Working Group initiation document**

The Youth Justice Working Group initiation document was considered by the Committee.

### **Resolved**

**That the Youth Justice Working Group Initiation document be noted.**

## **29/19 Areas of Focus**

**The areas of focus 2019/20 was noted.**

## **25/19 Forward Plans**

**The forward plans were noted.**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019. There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.30 pm.

Signed: .....

Date: .....