

CHILDRENS SERVICES Scrutiny AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Monday 9th March 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room 2, Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor M. Statham (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor H. Bashir
Councillor K. Sears
Councillor C. Statham

Portfolio Holders Present

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

Officers Present

Colleen Male	Assistant Director
Andrea Potts	Assistant Director
Beverley Barnett-Jones	Team Manager
Jodie Berry	Assistant Manager
Michelle Cummings	C & Y P Champion
Adele Ellis	Head of Service
Maggie Mac	Team Manager
Fiona Wilson	Adolescent Hub Worker
Nikki Gough	Democratic Services Officer

49/19 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors B. Douglas- Maul, L. Jeavons, M. Follows, L. Rattigan and S. Wade.

50/19 Substitutions

Councillor K. Sears substituted on behalf of Councillor L. Rattigan.

51/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

52/19 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

53/19 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th January 2020 were considered. The Chair asked Officers to confirm the accuracy of the first paragraph on page 9 and it was confirmed by Officers that this was accurate.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2020 be approved.

54/19 Adolescent Support Service – Turning point overview

The Adolescent Support Service named 'Turning Point', was developed to support young people aged 10 + who were at risk of coming into the care of the Local Authority. The service was focussed on working with young people and their families to secure improved outcomes and prepare them for adulthood by supporting family strengths and relationships, challenging and disrupting harm to young people in and outside of the family home.

The aim of the service was to:

- Empower young people and families,
- To prevent family breakdown,
- To reduce risk both in and outside of the family home,
- To encourage and build on family strengths and relationships,
- Whole systems working together,
- Working contextually to safeguard young people from harm.

The Team Manager (Turning Point) informed the Committee that this service was developed as part of the transformation programme developed to provide a more effective response to young people, in particular adolescents. Support was provided for as long as needed to reduce the circumstances that lead to children requiring a statutory intervention; this could be keeping children safe within families, getting a child back into full time education or preventing a child from re-offending. In order to design the service Managers had talked to young people to find out what made a difference in their lives.

The Team Manager stated that the redesigned service focused on what children needed to stay safe at home and have fulfilling lives. The service works in a specialist way with a young people's panel meeting every month to input into the service, and was considered national best practice. Young People were engaged in positive activities and gained new friendships with people similar to themselves. Families were encouraged to build on families strengths and work on communication.

The Committee were informed of some of the techniques used to influence families and assist them to understand behaviour. A Member questioned if this was a person

centric approach. Officers confirmed that was correct and that there was no 'one size fits all' approach with each plan being individual and family centred.

The service was a 3-year model of work, which also included generic sessions for the whole community. There were a number of young people involved in the service present at the meeting, they were present at the meeting and addressed the Committee to describe the specialised team as comprised of; -

- Family group conference coordinator.
- Substance misuse lead.
- Two Speech and language therapists.
- Clinical psychologist.
- Two Exploitation and violence reduction workers.
- Six ASH Workers.
- Assistant team manager.
- Team manager.
- Young people's panel.

A young person described the outcomes achieved as including:

- Thirty-nine children from thirty-one families were currently engaging with the service,
- Two young people had returned home after almost four years in care,
- Nine young people had their cases closed successfully and had remained with their family,
- One family did not engage,
- One child went into care.

A young person read a poem that they had written about the impact that staff from the service had had on her life. Members agreed that this was exceptional and asked for a copy to be circulated to all members.

The young people described feedback from families and the positive impact that the service was having. Members questioned why it had not been possible to engage all families. Officers stated that as it was not a statutory service, families needed to be willing to engage, and for this particular family they felt it was too late and the young person continued to disengage. It was noted that the service was still developing and gaining a realistic view of what could be achieved. A Member asked if anything could have been done differently to support the family and assist them to engage. Officers stated that the service was relatively new and had not been available to support the family earlier on.

The Committee were informed that young people were excited to help with the service and would be attending Sheffield University to receive training; they would receive accreditation for this. The Portfolio Holder stated that it was an amazing service and commended the team and the outcomes it was already achieving.

Members were informed that a parent panel was in development, along with links into exploitation, increased development of pathways, a 'time out' short break option, a

crash pad for young people who regularly go missing. The Chair questioned if the service would be sustainable in the future. The Team Manager confirmed that capacity would be increased to deal with adverse parental behaviour, which had not been good enough previously.

The Chair thanked Officers and young people for their attendance and presentations.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

55/19 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The Head of Service stated that she would provide an overview of the findings of the Ofsted focused visit to Walsall Children's Services in respect of the MASH and the Initial Response Service in October 2019 and associated recommendations.

The MASH was described as the entry point into Children's Services for concerns or requests for help with social care. A focused visit was completed by Ofsted to Walsall Children's Services on 29th and 30th October 2019. Inspectors looked at the arrangements for contacts and referrals in to the MASH, thresholds for children in need and child protection, and arrangements for children and families stepping down to Early Help and on to the Initial Response Service for assessment.

There were three recommendations made, as a result of the inspection, this was unusual as there were normally far more recommendations. The timing of the inspection was helpful, as Children's Services had commissioned an independent peer review of the 'front door', which took place at the beginning of September. A number of workshops were completed with managers, social workers and MASH partners in relation to the application of threshold for statutory children's social care in addition to some practice uplift work with frontline staff. Following the completion of this review, a MASH improvement plan was compiled to capture improvements needed and track progress. This had resulted in a number of changes for the MASH, for example, the family safeguarding model, which worked with staff to identify what, should be accepted as referrals. This resulted in a shift in the way work was managed and allowed staff to signpost with confidence; Regular audits of activity were completed to ensure that referrals continued to be safe and consistent.

The Committee were advised that the three recommendations were;

1. The timeliness of early help assessments and interventions

Work was undertaken by the service to ensure that the right early help was offered. This piece of work had been picked up. A Member observed that a common thread was timeliness. The Assistant Director stated that people were not being picked up early enough, potentially due to over screening. It was stressed that it was the expectation that early help was all partners' responsibility and timeliness was important but more support and resources could be provided from Partners to provide early help.

2. The consistency, timeliness and quality of return home interviews and
3. The timely availability of health information in the MASH

A Member asked if Partners had equal responsibility for safeguarding at the MASH. The Head of Service stated that it could be a challenge getting the right health representation at the MASH and there was still work to do to involve health further.

The Assistant Director stated that challenges were discussed with Partners, and it was noted that locally the Council had a good relationship with West Midlands Police. There was currently lots of activity across the CCG and issues would be identified and discussed at a wider level. A Member asked the Assistant Director if she was confident that the right people were involved in MASH. She confirmed that this was the case.

A Member asked if a housing representative was involved in MASH, the Portfolio Holder responded to state that it was difficult to source the correct representation. However, the Authority now had improved contacts with housing colleagues and communication was more effective.

A Member asked if the MASH needed more capacity, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Authority puts Children's Services at the forefront of services to be funded. A further question was raised about delays due to West Midlands Police. The Committee were advised that the Director of Children's Services was progressing issues, which related to the operating principles of West Midlands Police affecting timelessness of data sharing.

The Assistant Directors agreed that Officers were clear on the issues and were working to solve it. In response to a question about the involvement of mental health services in the MASH. Officers confirmed that mental health professionals were not involved in the MASH currently however there was a referral process. Also the Committee were informed that access to GP records was difficult as there were multiple systems which could be complex to navigate.

A Member asked if the service had any evidence that the right cases were investigated and the Head of Service stated that safeguard audits were carried out, along with dip sampling and improved supervision.

The Chair suggested that the Committee invite Partners to a future meeting to challenge them on their response to the Ofsted inspections and recommendations within.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to Committee, the Assistant Director stated that two months into this arrangement and this was now embedding. Teams were being allocated into the right localities. In the future, the volume of work per area would be considered and allocated based on existing data.

Resolved

That the Committee ;

- **Noted the positive progress reported by Ofsted in the MASH.**
- **Partners would be invited to a future meeting to be challenged on their contribution to the MASH.**

56/19 Areas of Focus

The areas of focus 2019/20 was noted.

57/19 Forward Plans

The forward plans were noted.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.30 p.m. The date of the next meeting would be 23rd April 2020.

Signed:

Date: