

Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee

19 November 2018

Present: Councillor M Thirlaway (Chair)
Councillors L Bell, S Brockbank, J Cassidy, C Davis,
J Kirwin, M Madden, P Oliver,
J O'Shea and S Phillips.

Rev. M Vine Church Representative

CES18/11/18 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Brooks, K Clark and Mrs M Ord, Parent Governor Representative.

CES19/11/18 Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution the appointment of the following substitute member was reported:

Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor P Brooks.

CES20/11/18 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.

CES21/11/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CES22/11/18 North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017/18

The sub-committee received the North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board's (NTSCB) Annual Report 2017/18 from the Independent Chair, Richard Burrows.

The NTSCB was required to publish an annual report to show how the partnership can be sure:

- a) children and young people in North Tyneside are protected and kept as safe as possible;
- b) that all organisations, their leaders and their practitioners are working effectively together to safeguard children and young people; and

- c) that people are open to learning, transparent about what they do and are focused on improving outcomes for children and young people.

The report provided an account of what the Board and its members had achieved during the year, including an assessment of the impact of these efforts, and the overall position of joint working arrangements to safeguard children and young people in North Tyneside and how effective the joint working relationships were.

Mr Burrows stated that the Board had moved away from the report being a box ticking exercise and acknowledged that a simple understanding of safeguarding was not a solution; their work needed to make the most difference to the most children. The Board had developed, was acting on learning and had worked well as a partnership over the past year. The website was well used and had received positive national feedback and there had been strong involvement of lay members with the recruitment of a further two to ensure the Board had an independent voice and considered things from all points of view.

For the review of 2017/18 the Annual report included sections on the local context; progress against the NTSCB's four priority areas; the significant steps taken in the year to set the balance between the whole system and front line practice; and the coming year and statutory new arrangements to replace local safeguarding children's boards.

The Our North Tyneside Plan was used by the NTSCB as an effective mechanism for joining up the steps being taken by partners to improve the life chances and circumstances of families in the borough and also helped raise the corporate parent role and evidence where that fitted into the whole picture.

Although North Tyneside was one of the least deprived boroughs in the region and generally there was an improving picture of health and wellbeing, the situation remained that vulnerable groups and communities in some areas continued to face significant challenges.

The improved response rate in the Section 11 Audit was a significant step forward with all schools, except 3, completing and returning the information on time. Progress had been made with all key partners' engagement with acting on lessons learnt from serious case reviews; the provision of training continued to be well received and the development of 'professional conversations' where a person could 'challenge' a response to a concern they had raised if they considered that it was not in the best interest of the child was a good development. The Board had supported the implementation of Signs of Safety and were actively engaged in discussions over the future safeguarding arrangements and would continue to work as a Board until the change in April 2019.

In conclusion, the Board was strong and continued to exhibit positive qualities with a strong partnership where people felt able to challenge and criticise each other; it was considered that they looked at the right things at the right time but were also wary of being complacent. The links between the partnership representatives and the people who worked on the front line were recognised as important and bold steps had been taken, for example changes to how support to early help was delivered was quite innovative; in the future schools were going to work in a way that they did not five years ago.

In response to questions regarding the Signs of Safety Model Mr Burrows stated that from what he had observed the Authority was delivering the practice model well and it should be remembered that they were only two years into a minimum of a five year process. Mr

Burrows also shared the sub-committee's concerns regarding the limited access the Authority could have to children educated at home but considered that all steps to minimise the risk to these children were taken and that until the Government changed its position that was all that they could do.

A Member sought clarification that none of the three schools who had failed to respond to the Section 11 Audits were Church of England schools; Mr Burrows stated that he did not believe they were but agreed to confirm that in writing.

The importance of ensuring that young people's voices other than those engaged with the Youth Council, the Children in Care Council or Young Parliament were heard was expressed by the Chair and accepted by Mr Burrows and it was something which needed to be addressed by the partnership; they had been requested to identify ways they could listen to and involve all children.

The Chair thanked Mr Burrows for his attendance and for the work undertaken by the NTSCB on behalf of the children in the borough.

It was agreed to note the North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017/18.

CES23/11/18 Child Sexual Exploitation Update

The sub-committee was provided with its regular update on the work being undertaken to tackle child sexual exploitation (CSE) in North Tyneside. The report provided information relating to what work was being undertaken across the Authority and with partners since its last update in July 2018.

North Tyneside continued to second a social worker to the Sanctuary project whose core role was development and engagement. Since July the social worker had delivered a presentation of the work undertaken by the Sanctuary Project team at the Regional Children's Social Work Conference; supported Bright Futures in accessing schools to complete work with groups of young people; and commenced work with schools on completing return interviews with young people that went missing from education.

On 3 October 2018 a development day had been organised by Northumbria Police for the six local authorities to review the Missing, Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Panel (MSET) and its terms of reference with a view to agreeing and developing one consistent approach across all six local authorities. The day had been productive and subject to further consultation and senior management approval it was expected that the new risk assessment tool, which would incorporate modern slavery and criminal exploitation (County Lines), would be implemented in the New Year. Once a universal risk assessment tool was in place across the six authorities focus would turn to training, development and a communication strategy to raise the public's awareness of the issues and identifying behaviours.

Since July 2018, 44 people had completed the sexual exploitation training and 57 taxi drivers had completed their required training; refresher training for taxi drivers had been reviewed and a refresher test was required to be undertaken by all drivers when they applied to renew their licence which would only be renewed if they passed the test.

In response to questions it was confirmed that data collection was now being undertaken as part of the new case management system, Liquid Logic, which would eventually lead to performance data being available. In addition, live case management was now possible and was used by the MSET meetings to be able to monitor the individuals referred to the meetings.

Agreed to note the updated information on the work being undertaken to raise awareness of, and protect children from, sexual exploitation and the implementation of the recommendations from the sub-committee's Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group.

CES24/11/18 Domestic Abuse

In January 2018 Ofsted had introduced 'ILACS' (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) to replace the 'SIF' (Single Inspection Framework) inspection process by which services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers would be inspected. As part of the framework Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) would continue initially focusing on two key areas, CSE and Domestic Abuse, followed by a focus on familial sexual abuse. In light of this the sub-committee had requested information on the subject of domestic abuse and the support available in the Borough for children, young people and their families.

The sub-committee was informed that raising awareness of domestic abuse was a large part of the work of the service and that prevention was also a key part of that. The North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership refreshed its needs assessment in 2018 and created a North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership Plan which set out the agreed priorities for the coming year. The key areas for action included: preventative work in schools; awareness raising and training; Operation Encompass; increased frequency of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs); and the delivery of the Perpetrator Programmes to address offending behaviour.

The integrated domestic abuse service provision in North Tyneside was delivered by Harbour which included refuge based accommodation (14 units, including crèche facilities and office space), 3 dispersed properties, and a range of support services such as outreach and an Independent Domestic Violence Advisory Service (IDVA) to support those victims who were assessed as high risk. There was also a specialist therapeutic service (Acorns) for children and young people (aged 14-18) who had witnessed domestic abuse. This commissioning arrangement would end in March 2019.

In addition, North Tyneside was one of seven pilot local authorities chosen to work with SafeLives, a national charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, to develop and improve the response to victims and perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and Violence. As part of the pilot a SafeLives Senior Knowledge Hub advisor has been working with the Authority since November 2017 and would be on site with follow up off site support for up to 2 years.

The importance of a whole family approach for all workers was reiterated and the importance of sharing information to ensure there were no missed opportunities to help and prevent lives being put unnecessarily at risk. When officers worked together and built a picture of each family that reflected how they actually lived their lives, the family could be helped earlier and more effectively. The North Tyneside pilot had and would further explore:

- a) integrated referral pathway, combining the process for child safeguarding with responses to domestic abuse;
- b) collaborative multi-agency working, simultaneously assessing risk and need for all individuals in a family; and
- c) timely and effective information sharing across agencies for all individuals in a family at the earliest opportunity.

This included the testing of a new approach in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) of a daily multi-agency triage meeting which had been launched on 18 September 2018 and allowed the MARAC to be more responsive.

Until recently, the children and adult safeguarding boards offered separate courses on Domestic Abuse but a new course had now been developed, 'Impact of Domestic Abuse', and addressed issues for the whole family including the impact on children and adults at risk. There was also a proposed Domestic Abuse Practitioner Standard (DAPS) for Northumbria, funded through the Home Office Violence against Women and Girls Transformation Fund, to standardise, accredit and expand the DVA training available in each of the six local authority areas within Northumbria.

The impact of adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA) also formed part of the strategy and a steering group has been set up to consider APVA, including a pathway for referral and training strategy. Six practitioners from North Tyneside had been trained in the Respect Young People's Programme (RYPP), a structured programme of work directed at working with families in relation to APVA. These workers would be expected to work with two families each up until April 2019, the end of the initial funding period. A training strategy has been developed with Northumberland Council to provide training from awareness raising to working directly with families where this was an issue.

The sub-committee was informed that the workforce development team were currently focussed on working with colleagues in Facilities and Fair Access (catering staff) to provide training and to identify Domestic Abuse champions for their service area of approximately 400 staff.

Members sought clarification on what financial support was available for people leaving a home due to domestic abuse; the impact of universal credit; and what support was available for pregnant women. An explanation of what initial assessments were undertaken and what options were available was provided. Members were reassured that finance was never a barrier to safety and that any concerns about an unborn child due to a vulnerable mother would be taken up by children's services.

It was **Agreed** to note the information on the work being undertaken to prevent domestic abuse and the support available to families.

CES25/11/18 Regional Adoption Agency – Adopt North East

The sub-committee received a report detailing the progress of the implementation of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt North East, as a hosted service within North Tyneside Children's Services.

The development of Regional Adoption Agencies were part of the national adoption agenda set out in the Department for Education (DfE) paper 'Regionalising Adoption' in June 2015 which was further developed by Government in 'Adoption: A Vision for Change' in March 2016 which signalled a clear intention that by 2020 all local authorities would be part of regional agencies. The move towards the proposed Regional Adoption Agency did not remove the statutory responsibilities placed on local authorities but would have a material impact on how those functions were organised and managed.

Newcastle City Council had received funding from the DfE to develop a regional Adoption Agency on behalf of the Constituent Councils (namely Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council, Gateshead MBC, South Tyneside Council and Newcastle City Council) and four voluntary adoption agencies (After Adoption, Barnardos, ARC NE and Durham Family Welfare (DFW)). While all the Constituent Councils provided high performing adoption services, the Government anticipated that Regional Adoption Agencies would be better able to target the recruitment of prospective adopters, speed up the matching and placement of children, improve adoption support services and might create efficiency savings.

Adopt North East was funded by contributions from each Local Authority based on their net spend average over the preceding three years. The on-going budget would be agreed prior to budget setting within each Local Authority in order to ensure the service was sufficiently resourced to meet the statutory requirements and provide the highest quality of service.

Work was continuing with partner authorities to ensure that they had sufficient influence over the service to meet their requirements to Ofsted and their respective children requiring adoption. It was anticipated that this would be in the form of a steering group that would meet monthly for the first 12 months and quarterly thereafter. This group would monitor performance and budget and provide challenge and support developments within the service. On an annual basis this group would invite the lead members from children's services across the five participating authorities to attend a meeting. The purpose of this was to ensure transparency of reporting and monitoring, including of the budget.

Adopt North East would be formed from the staff groups currently working across the local authority adoption services. Staff would TUPE into North Tyneside and work to develop the service to meet the needs of the children across the area who required permanence by adoption. It was anticipated that Adopt North East would be formed from a staff group of approximately 50 people; including social workers who worked directly with prospective adopters, staff who engaged in recruitment of people interested in adoption and social work and other staff who provided post adoption support to children and families.

It was anticipated that Adopt North East would become a service from the 1 December 2018 and steps were being taken to ensure the continuation of service however it was acknowledged that, as with any service development, there would continue to be adjustment and learning as it matured. An interim manager of the service for the first six months had been appointed and the process for the permanent manager was already underway.

The sub-committee was assured that there was nothing about the individual adoption services which had required the creation of a regional adoption agency, it was based on a very clear direction of travel from Government. That North Tyneside had been chosen as the host authority illustrated how well regarded the service was in the region.

Agreed to (1) note the report and wish the entire service good luck for the launch of Adopt North East on 1 December 2018; and
(2) that a report on its first year be submitted to the Children, Young People and Learning Sub-committee in a year's time.

CES26/11/18 Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Councillor P Earley, as Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills had accepted an invitation from the Chair to address the sub-committee on the administration's plans for the year ahead.

Councillor Earley began his presentation by reminding the sub-committee that the Children, Young People and Learning teams covered a wide spectrum of responsibilities but all worked to the following three pledges:

Pledge 1: We intervene early with evidence based, family focussed services

Pledge 2: We work in partnership to keep children in school

Pledge 3: We keep children and young people safe at home and connected to their local communities

As the new Cabinet Member for the service, Councillor Earley began by stating how impressed he was with how proactive the service was by always looking to innovate where it could and its high level of achievement in a time of increasing demand. The award of Partners in Practice; that the Authority was to be the host authority for the Regional Adoption Agency; and the North of Tyne Collaboration all demonstrated how well thought of the service was outside the Borough.

The introduction of the Signs of Safety Practice Model had been a significant undertaking and work was now being done to embed the practice across the service and with the Authority's partners. The Authority had also signed up for the MOMO (mind of my own) App which allowed young people to self-advocate by giving them access to their social worker at a time and in a manner more suited to them; efforts were also being made to improve the offer to special educational needs and disabled (SEND) children and a peer review had been undertaken.

The retention and recruitment of staff to the service had improved and not by increasing the salary on offer to post holders. The support and training provided to newly qualified social workers and the variety of work had helped the service appear more attractive and its flexible approach and open mind to new ideas all helped with recruitment. The next challenge was to retain the staff recruited.

The quality of the education provided to the children of the borough was still to be envied across the North East with results in key stages one and two and in English and maths in Key Stage 4 above the national average; the best ever A-level results; 88% of children in the borough attending a good or outstanding school; and 93% of parents getting their first choice of school. However, there were financial challenges facing schools and the Authority was working with those with budget deficits to support them moving forward. In some areas children were not ready for school and needed intense service support for their first year but the early years help offer was a major achievement of the service. The

Authority also had a low exclusion rate and this was to be welcomed and maintained as children needed to be kept in school.

The North of Tyne devolution deal and the Combined Authority's ambitions for education reflected the Authority's priorities of ready for school; narrowing the gap; and recruitment and retention. The Employment and Skills Strategy was being refreshed and would be presented to the sub-committee in March with adult learning courses focussed on the priority groups of the long-term unemployed and those with learning needs to ensure they had all the necessary basic skills for employment. There would also be a re-focus on increasing the number of apprenticeships recruited by employers across the Borough. A three year programme partnership with the NHS for people with SEND aged between 16-25 had begun. The purpose of this programme was to provide life skills, a vocational study programme and then an internal traineeship to hopefully lead to an apprenticeship, further education or employment for the young person. Last year 12 young people had participated in the scheme and 11 were now in employment, for next year they were looking to work with 26 learners.

Councillor Earley concluded by stating that he personally wanted to raise the profile of the work of children's services. It was a minority of the Borough's children who interacted with the service and so a lot of the public were unaware of the good work undertaken by the service; increasing its profile would help the public understand why it was an expensive service but one which needed to be protected and developed. He also wanted to raise the profile of corporate parenting, a responsibility of all Authority officers and Members, and would welcome suggestions on how this might be done. Something he wanted to examine was reconstituting the Corporate Parenting Committee by looking at its membership and refreshing its terms of reference to ensure it was focusing on what it needed to do and was effective. Volunteers to serve on the Committee would be welcomed.

Members sought clarification on the changes to the adult learning courses which attracted funding for people with special educational needs, with an example of the cancellation of a horticultural course. Councillor Earley asked for the specific details to be provided to him outside of the meeting but did acknowledge that over 100 courses had been cut in the last academic year with a focus on providing courses which enabled people to access the job market. The impact the removal of these courses would have had on those who enjoyed them was acknowledged.

The Chair of the meeting thanked Councillor Earley for his attendance at the meeting and his presentation.