

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
12th April, 2012**

Present:- Councillor G. A. Russell (in the Chair); Councillors Ali, Buckley, Fenoughty, Kaye, Pitchley and Sharman and Mark Smith (Safe@Last).

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Dodson, License, Read and Clough, Anne Clough, Jayne Fitzgerald and Joan Blanche-Nicholson.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

47. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC.

There were no members of the press and public were present at the meeting.

48. COMMUNICATIONS.

It was noted that the first draft of the School Governors Review would be considered at the meeting to be held on 25th April, 2012.

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 1ST FEBRUARY AND 14TH MARCH, 2012

Consideration was given to the minutes of previous meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 1st February and 14th March, 2012.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meetings be agreed as a true record for signature by the Chairman.

50. DFE CONSULTATION - CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE DATA SET

Sue Wilson, Performance and Quality Manager, and Chris Seekings, Service Improvement Officer, reported that the Department for Education had published a consultation document on proposed national and local safeguarding performance indicators for local authorities. The draft data set had been informed by the final report of Professor Munro's review of child protection along with other work carried out last Autumn.

The consultation looked at 3 specific areas – the detail of the national data items, how data was published and how the locally held information was used.

The consultation concluded on 16th April, 2012. It was anticipated that a response would be received late May/early June.

The document had been shared with operational officers within CYPS; their views would form part of the response.

The Commission considered the questions, having listened to the officers' responses, and made the following additional comments:-

Question 1

In general will the suggested national items, alongside the local information items, provide the key information required by local areas to understand changes in concentrations of children's need and trends over time, inform service planning and development and inform service improvements?

Why was Health and Education not included?

At local level partners were working well together but nationally there needed to be a more coherent approach

Question 2

In general will the suggested national items enable the Department to monitor the national impact of system changes and policy development, fulfil international obligations, support the effective administration of funding, and support the evaluation of economic, social and environmental trends? This is to inform future policy development and to support accountability and transparency

There was no measurement of a child's journey through their life

Nationally, the items covered the bare minimum and there was a distinct gap in how Early Help was integrated and prevented a child being subject to more significant harm

Absence of the child's views

Question 3

Is there anything missing from the dataset?

Reluctance of the Police to release certain information e.g. prosecutions, police involvement, number of prosecutions investigated/upheld, sexual offences – need for closer working relationship

No mention of the voluntary sector. Quite often families chose to engage with the voluntary sector rather than the local authority and all had different systems capturing that information

Clarification required on Indicators 25 and 29

Question 4

Are any of the information items superfluous?

Nothing to add to the officers' comments.

Question 5

Do any of the national information items, taken alongside the local items, provide perverse incentives to staff?

Nothing to add to the officers' comments.

Question 6

Is the suggested data source for each item e.g. Children in Need census, National Minimum Data Set for Social Care, the best way to collect the information item(s)?

Suggest should continue to be measured

Voluntary sector not mentioned

Question 7

Do you have any concerns about collecting any of the new information items?

Work of the front line practitioners will increase

Question 8

Is it helpful for Government to link related data items when presenting the national dataset?

Agree

Need to include Common Assessment Framework, Early Help etc. and look at different thresholds across local authorities.

Question 9

Is it helpful for Government to include a data definition and commentary giving guidance and interpretation to individual data items?

Needed to be more prescriptive and defined

Formula for areas of need?

Question 10

How could local areas make use of the local performance information?

Nothing to add to the officers' comments

Question 11

How can information be shared between local authorities to support sector-led improvement?

Involvement of Elected Members

Question 12

How can information be shared between partners and agencies to support sector-led improvement?

Support the strategic partnership and governance arrangements - Safeguarding Board integral

Resolved:- (1) That the consultation response incorporate the above comments and submitted in accordance with the Department for Education 16th April deadline.

(2) That the full response be shared with the Select Commission following the close of the consultation.

51. CONSULTATION ON THE RAISING THE PARTICIPATION AGE (RPA) REGULATIONS

Anthony Evans, NEETS-MOG Co-ordinator, reported on the above consultation.

As from Summer 2013, all young people would be required to participate in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turned 17 and from Summer 2015, onwards until their 18th birthday.

The consultation sought views on elements of how Raising the Participation Age (RPA) would work in practice by consulting on the policies that would form the secondary legislation.

Young people would be able to participate through 3 options:-

- Full-time education – whether at a school, college or otherwise
- Apprenticeship
- Working full-time (for 20 hours or over per week and for at least 8 weeks) and undertaking part-time study alongside (for the equivalent of a day a week)

The DfE was consulting as to how best to define what was meant by full-time education in all its relevant settings:-

Question 2a

Which of the options do you prefer?

Option 1 – a blanket rate of minimum full-time hours for all education types (suggested 534 hours annually)

Option 2 – a more differentiated approach for the different types of education provision

Option 2 preferred

Needed to be bespoke and tailored if someone was participating in learning and not defined number of hours

Accredited learning package, outcomes, job opportunities

Question 3b

Do you agree with DfE suggestion of 534 hours as the minimum requirement for full-time education for colleges under Option 2?

Distorted learning programmes to meet minimum hours or maximising funding by delivering multiple qualifications

Question 4a

Should the 3 options i.e. working not for reward, holding an office and self-employment be counted as valid means of participation when combined with part-time study?

Should be included in the definition.

Volunteering hours should be included

Question 4b

Are there any additional ways of working that you would consider relevant?

Consideration given to the definition of participation to be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of young parents caring for their own child. A teenage mother in education had to return within 2 weeks of giving birth

Question 5

What would be most useful to set out in guidance here?

Protocols for cross boundary work

How would you monitor it?

Question 6

Does the level of fines of 4 weeks and 8 weeks salary seem appropriate? If not, what could the level of fines be set at?

Nothing additional to add to the officers' comments

Question 7

Should the amount of fine be set at a maximum or as a guide level?

Nothing additional to add to the officers' comments

Question 8

Do you agree that it is right to exempt employers of fewer than 10 people from fines?

Nothing additional to add to the officers' comments

Question 9

In addition to information on how to check enrolment and guidance to local authorities on the informal resolution of disputes, is there any other further information that could usefully be provided here?

Nothing additional to add

Question 10

Does setting out that a local authority can use any money raised from a fine here to cover their costs and contribute towards a tracking system – with any surplus returned to DfE – seem like a reasonable proposition?

Nothing additional to add to the officers' comments

Question 11

Do you have any other comments?

Unclear about some of the questions

Resolved:- (1) That the consultation response incorporate the above comments and submitted in accordance with the deadline.

(2) That the full response be shared with the Select Commission following the close of the consultation.

52. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Wednesday 25th April, 2012, to start at 1.30 pm in the Rotherham Town Hall.