

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION  
29th June, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Allcock, Beaumont, Bird, Cooksey, Cusworth, Elliot, Jarvis, Khan, Marriott, Fenwick-Green and Short.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hague, Rose, Pitchley and Senior and from Co-opted Member Mrs. J. Jones.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

**2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

There were no members of the public or the press in attendance.

**3. COMMUNICATIONS**

Nothing was raised under this item.

**4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6TH APRIL, 2016**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Panel held on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2016, were considered.

It was requested that the 'Next Steps' section listed within Minute Number 50 (Scrutiny of the 'Prevent' Element of the Child Sexual Exploitation Delivery Plan 2015-2018), be kept at the forefront of the Improving Lives Select Commission's work programme throughout the 2016/2017 Municipal Year.

The 'Next Steps' list contained a number of actions required of Agencies working within Rotherham. It was requested that these Agencies be asked to respond in writing to the Improving Lives Select Commission outlining their work on progressing the actions required.

Resolved: - (1) That the minutes from the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

(2) That the 'Next Steps' section within Minute No. 50 be progressed and Agencies' responses be reported to future meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

**5. APPOINTMENTS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION, 2016/2017**

Resolved: - (1) That the following representatives of the Improving Lives Select Commission be appointed to the Panels/Committees below for the 2016/2017 Municipal Year: -

- **Health, Welfare and Safety Panel: -**

Lead Representative: - Councillor V. Cusworth;  
Substitute Representative: - Councillor C. Beaumont.

- **Young People's Moving On Panel: -**

Representative: - Councillor W. Cooksey.

(2) That the appointment by the Deputy Leader of the following Improving Lives Select Commission Representatives to the Corporate Parenting Panel be noted: -

Councillor M. Clark and Councillor V. Cusworth.

**6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES - THE IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY**

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services Directorate, gave a presentation on Rotherham's Improvement Journey.

Ian's presentation covered the following areas: -

- There were 56,000 young people under the age of 18 in Rotherham;
- The Children and Young People's Services Directorate Senior Leadership Teams structure and functions were shared. There was a permanent Strategic Director, Deputy Strategic Director and four Assistant Director level posts within the Directorate;
- Statistics as of June, 2016, were shared;
- Implementation of a new IT system;
- There was a new, more robust, Quality Assurance Framework;
- Establishment and embedding of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) within the Directorate and childrens' workforce;
- 2014 Ofsted inspection and the improvement journey since;
- At the time of the 2014 inspection the response within 24 hours of referral was at 37%. This was due to lack of performance management, weak governance, leadership and social work capacity. Rotherham had the people, what was needed was that they be freed up to do great work;
- Excellent management information support was continuing to improve with a Head of Service appointment and the appointment of a Critical Friend;

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- Evolve Child Sexual Exploitation Team – multi-agency – was due to launch later in the month;
- CSE practice was consistently rated as Good;
- Operation Clover had demonstrated the strength and power of wrapping support around victims and survivors of CSE;
- There were ongoing and linked cases relating to recent/current and historic CSE;
- Chelsea's Choice – high numbers of children and young people reported being better prepared to deal with potential CSE after viewing the play;
- Intensive work required in CSE cases necessitated low caseloads;
- Any Social Worker with a caseload of over 22 was monitored weekly to ensure that their cases were appropriately allocated;
- Rotherham was ensuring that the working conditions and pay and benefits for Social Workers were as supportive and competitive as possible;
- Quantitative statistics;
- Qualitative feedback was also important – Jessica's quote about working with the Local Authority showed the victims and survivors were viewing the Local Authority as a more supportive presence;
- Workforce development was a continuing priority.

Councillor Clark thanked Ian for his very comprehensive introduction to the areas covered within the improvement journey theme.

Councillor Short asked about numbers of Rotherham's children and young people being sent to out-of-authority provision.

Ian responded that this was around 35%, which was too high. Of this number, 65% were placed within 20 miles. Just over 100 children were placed within 50 miles. 8 children were placed over 100 miles away.

Ian outlined the potential issues with children being placed at a distance from the Borough. These included a potential to lose line of sight of the child and cost implications of the specialist placement and resources required to visit the child as required. The Service's ambition, supported by the Cabinet Member, was to have 100% placed within 20 miles and a developing strategic commissioning strategy would support this.

Councillor Jarvis asked what the reasons for delays in assessment were.

Ian explained that there were no longer any assessment backlogs. This had dropped from 315 to zero cases awaiting assessment. Quality of assessment was now the focus for the Service and all stakeholders.

Councillor J. Elliot asked how the children classed as 'Children in Need' were safe. Were these children in addition to the numbers of Looked After Children?

Ian explained that the 'Children in Need' cohort was in addition to the Looked After Children figure. Work was underway to ensure that all children subject to any form of Child Protection Plan were appropriately classified and supported.

Councillor Elliot asked about how budget efficiencies could be achieved without jeopardising childrens' safety.

Ian explained that each decision needed to be made in the best interests of the child; some children's best interests were to be placed at a greater distance and this would be documented with a detailed risk assessment.

There could be a perverse incentive to move children to cheaper cost placements purely for financial reasons. However, this was not going to happen in Rotherham. Changes to placements were only made for the child's best interest and not to save money/resources.

Councillor Cusworth asked about expectations surrounding management supervision in Rotherham. She asked what a good quality Service for children and families looked like?

Ian was confident that supervision was done as a matter of routine and was known as an expectation within Rotherham.

Ian explained the role of the Practitioner Board, the input of the Principal Social Worker and Senior Leadership Team 'back to the floor' visits. Committed staff who were all engaged was important. Importantly, staff knew who to go to if their supervision was not being sustained.

Councillor Khan asked about the role of Elected Members in referrals. He also asked about the role of Schools.

Ian encouraged Elected Members to raise their concerns with him. There were limits on what could be shared due to data protection but anything raised would be treated seriously and investigated. A working protocol in relation to this was being produced.

Councillor Short asked what steps were in place to help children stay in stable placements post-16. If care was proving safety and stability it was important to maintain this, to develop parity between LAC and their non-looked after peers.

Ian referred to the responsibility on Local Authorities to some Looked After Children extending up to 25 in some cases. There was a range of Statutory Responsibilities in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Question for all practitioners and stakeholders was 'would this be good enough for my child'? The majority of parents would not kick their own child out at 16, so this should not happen for LAC.

Councillor Clark asked if any trends were identified within Child Protection cases?

Ian explained that the trend in Rotherham matched the national concern: - neglect. There was a clear correlation between poverty and neglect. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse were also factors but not to the same extent. There were varying degrees of severity involved in abuse cases and this governed the Services' response and plans.

Councillor Beaumont asked whether Ian agreed if the ideal for all young people in care was for them to be as independent as possible.

Ian agreed that it was about preparing young people for adulthood. Some young people required extra support to get to the level of independence.

Ian confirmed that the journey had been a real team effort to this stage. There was much more to be done, but this would happen, he was clear about this.

Councillor Clark thought that Ian's comment about freeing up staff to work was significant. It was obvious that the Service was freeing up staff so that they could focus on the front line work.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

## **7. CHILD CENTRED BOROUGH**

Ian Thomas spoke about the creation of a Child-Centred Borough as an important aspiration for Rotherham.

The idea had been inspired by Leeds City Council who had gone one step further and placed children at the heart of their growth strategy in recognition of the future contribution of children to the local economy and prosperity when they were older and started to work.

Central to the idea was Nelson Mandela's assertion that it takes a community to raise a child.

Ian referred to Rotherham's potential and resources. It had the Advanced Manufacturing Park, a world recognised centre for sciences and technology. The Child-Centred Borough looked to harness the resources of communities and community assets and create partnership to empower communities and strengthen the sense of pride in the local area.

Rotherham's ambition had been covered up by the national press. The next steps would involve the establishment of a member-led working group that would cut across all agencies, public and private, and community groups.

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Key to supporting and developing Rotherham's Child Centred Borough would be considering and acting on the 'Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey Report'. Ian was grateful to Schools in helping to capture the voices of 8,000 children on a wide-range of issues impacting on their lives. There had been many good news stories resulting from the Survey outcomes which had not been reported.

Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission asked questions relating to the aspiration: -

Councillor Cusworth asked what was being done to get the message out to children and young people about the resources available to children and young people who had concerns about their mental health (as shown on page 38 of the submitted report)?

Ian outlined the role of awareness raising. Rotherham had a brilliant and proactive Healthy Schools Co-ordinator. This was a priority of the Youth Cabinet, so CYPS shared this priority.

Councillor Elliot was concerned that there were 22% of young people not using any method of contraception. There was a similar outcome in the previous year's survey.

Ian felt that a comparison with adults would be useful; adults do not always model the behaviour they expected young people to! The majority of young people knew where to get contraception from and had received sex education. Ian believed that it was relationship education that was key. This sat within the Public Health Directorate, but was clearly a priority for both CYPS and Public Health. Ian felt that raising aspirations was key for young people choosing to access contraception.

Councillor Jarvis referred to a factor within abusive relationships where pressure was placed on young women not to use contraception as a form of manipulation.

Ian agreed to consider the factors with the Director of Public Health.

Councillor Allcock asked about the support to children providing 8 or more hours of care a day.

Ian referred to the Care Act provisions.

Councillor Cusworth asked about the United Nation's Article 3 and 12 of the Convention. How far did agencies go in listening to children before they had to say that they knew best as adults?

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Ian felt that it was important to see children alone to avoid any influences. Currently this was not done enough, and it was not recorded enough/accurately. Ian explained that the Customer Service Excellence Charter, which Rotherham was pursuing, involved the recording and consideration of customers' 'Voice'.

Councillor Cusworth was concerned about the cases where children make a preference but the Council needed to act differently.

Ian reassured Councillors that the Council will always act in the best interests of children. The consultation that had taken place on Woodview was an example. Parents have to take tough decisions, and these sometimes differed from what the child wanted. As far as possible the Council would accommodate wishes and feelings, but those with the professional experience on what was in children's best interests would make the decision.

Councillor Cusworth asked if children and young people accepted when decisions did not go their way.

Ian felt that, yes, they did. He had met a young person whose wishes and feelings could not be accommodated. He had explained the rationale behind the decision and she understood and accepted this.

Councillor Elliot shared an example of a young carer who had not been adequately supported.

Ian explained that he hoped that a Professional assessing a case of a young carer would liaise with other relevant professionals. He committed to completing an in-depth piece of assessment on this in Rotherham.

Councillor Clark asked for this to be reported back to the Improving Lives Select Commission.

Councillor Clark asked what the 'asset-based strengths approach focus to children', as referred to in the report, was?

Ian explained that the Council did not routinely act on the strengths of families. Professionals working with families often looked at negatives, but this did not inspire families to want to change their situations. The jargonistic term looked to build on family's strengths rather than focus on the negatives. It galvanised families and workers to become solution focused.

Councillor Clark asked for an update on the appointment of Members to the Working Group and how was the rhetoric going to be put into practice?

Ian explained; the Lifestyle Survey would be used as the baseline, and future surveys would be used to track progress about the impact of the Child-Centred Borough.

Councillor Clark suggested that a visit to Leeds City Council could be arranged to see the exemplar and look at how this could be applied in Rotherham.

Ian had visited Leeds and agreed that it would be useful. It could be useful to see how children had been placed at the heart of Growth Strategy, especially considering how they were tomorrow's parents, employees and growth.

All Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission supported this idea.

Resolved: - (1) That the following be recorded as **unanimously supported** by the Improving Lives Select Commission: -

- The ambition to become a Child-Centred Borough;
- The six priority principles of a Child-Centred Borough: -
  1. A focus on the rights and voice of the child;
  2. Keeping children safe and healthy;
  3. Ensuring children reached their potential;
  4. An inclusive Borough;
  5. Harnessing the resources of communities;
  6. A sense of place.
- The establishment of a member-led working group to develop the actions to achieve the priorities for a Child-Centred Borough, including how impact will be measured;
- The Publication of the Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey report, as a benchmark for future years' monitoring of the success of the Child-Centred Borough ambitions in changing the experiences of children and young people in Rotherham.

(2) The a visit to Leeds be arranged for members of the Improving Lives Select Commission to view their exemplar Child-Centred Borough to consider how it could be adapted to work in Rotherham.

## **8. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Ian Thomas introduced the annual version of the Children and Young People's Services Performance report, for the year 2015/2016. Overall it provided a positive picture. This was especially the case in relation to dental checks for the Borough's looked after children, Personal Education



Plans for the Borough's looked after children and 100% performance in relation to visits in response to CSE cases.

Areas for improvement included the re-referral rate to Social Care. This meant that the issues for the original referral had not been dealt with appropriately the first time around as they had re-surfaced.

The Service knew what was working well and what needed to be improved: -

- LAC Reviews had dipped and Ian was concerned;
- Placement stability - to have less LAC moving;
- Educational progress of children in care was poor. Nationally performance was poor, but Rotherham was below this and needed to improve. The success on PEPs was a step in the right direction.

Resolved: - That the report on Children and Young People's Services Performance during 2015/2016 be received.

## **9. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME**

Caroline Webb, Senior Adviser (Scrutiny And Member Development), provided a verbal update on the work programme of scrutiny.

**Pre-scrutiny process** – this was a process through which the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) would formally scrutinise the Cabinet agenda prior to decisions being taken. OSMB comments and recommendations would be submitted to Cabinet at its decision making meeting.

**Forward Plan of Key Decisions** – The revised forward plan of decisions would also be considered by OSMB and each of the Select Commissions. This would also allow scrutiny to consider proposals at an earlier stage in their development prior to a decision being made. The Forward Plan would be reported on a regular basis to inform - the Commission's work programme, so that Members could select their priorities.

The following topics were suggested as being important areas to include on the Improving Lives Select Commission's work programme in the 2016/2017 Municipal Year: -

- Missing from Home – focus on vulnerability;
- Focus on prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation;
- Performance information – key indicator on whether assurances were correct;
- Apprenticeships for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities;
- Education – performance at Key Stages (incorporate into Outturn report);

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- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse – Progress post Jay and Casey Reports;
- Outcomes for children in care;
- Children missing from School – autism and transformation around SEND;
- Forced Marriage.

At the next meeting in July, 2016, it was expected that an update on CSE would be provided. It was hoped that the Improving Lives Select Commissioner would add-value to Services in their improvement journey.

Councillor Jarvis asked that the impact of domestic abuse/violence on children be prioritised. Particularly impact of role modelling on boys.

Resolved: - That the information shared be noted.

### **10. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Councillor Clark explained that consideration was being given to alternating meeting times to have some later afternoon/early evening meetings to support Elected Members who worked during the day. Discussion/consultation would take place with members of the Improving Lives Select Commission in the near future.