

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday, 16th June, 2020**

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Beaumont, Buckley, Clark, Elliot, Fenwick-Green, Jarvis, Ireland, Khan, Marles, Marriott, Senior and Simpson.

Apologies for absence:- There were no apologies for absence.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

65. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2020

Resolved: -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 3 March 2020, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jarvis declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9, Response to Domestic Abuse during the pandemic, as she was a board member of RISE.

67. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the public or press.

68. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions.

69. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

70. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - PERFORMANCE REPORTING TO MEMBERS

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Neighbourhood Working, the Interim Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services and the Joint Assistant Director - Inclusion and Support Services attended the meeting to present a report that provided proposals to members on different options for providing them with relevant and accurate performance information regarding key performance indicators in the Children and Young People's Directorate in a way that enabled members to provide effective scrutiny and challenge

to officers.

It was noted that in June 2018, following consultation with a group of members, the Improving Lives Select Commission began to receive a weekly tracker that provided performance information on selected measures of interest. In February 2020 the frequency of the report changed to monthly as it had become apparent that many of the measures did not lend themselves to weekly reporting as the incremental changes were often small meaning that changes and trends in performance were not always easy to identify and monitor.

The change of frequency of the weekly tracker had been discussed at the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission on 3 March 2020 after members of the committee had expressed concern about the change of frequency of the tracker report (Minute No. 58), and it had been resolved that the Chair should discuss the circulation of the report and future methods of performance monitoring with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Neighbourhood Working. The officer's report set out four proposed approaches to performance monitoring for the future for the committee to consider.

The Deputy Leader noted the concerns that members had had regarding the change of frequency of the performance tracker, but advised that the proposed option of members receiving detailed monthly scorecards and then being able to request more detailed information on selected performance indicators was a more effective method of performance monitoring as well as being more sustainable to produce with regard to staff resources. The Joint Assistant Director noted that the production of the weekly tracker did create some duplication of work for staff and that the monitoring of data weekly could potentially lead to a misleading picture of performance being shown, or for developing longer term trends being missed. The Interim Strategic Director advised that the proposed method of performance monitoring provided an opportunity for members to take part in more detailed and in-depth performance monitoring than was currently the case.

The Chair acknowledged the reasons that had led to the frequency of the performance tracker being changed and for changes to the methods of performance monitoring being made, but noted that she would have preferred for the concerns about the frequency of reporting to have been raised with the committee before any changes had been made.

Members noted that the weekly performance tracker had been introduced after observing good practice at other local authorities and in response to Rotherham's history where elected members had been seen as not knowing what was going on with regard to Children and Young People's Services. It was noted that the introduction of the weekly performance tracker had ensured that members had been better informed and that it had also provided an effective tool in informing the development of the commission's work programme. Members also expressed concern that

the weekly performance tracker had only been shared with the membership of the Improving Lives Select Commission and not with all elected members.

Members considered the different options for performance monitoring in the future that had been proposed in the officer's report.

The Interim Strategic Director advised that the option of members receiving detailed monthly scorecards and then requesting more detailed information on selected performance indicators provided a great opportunity members to get involved in thorough and effective performance monitoring and advised that if members wished that any revised procedures could be reviewed after a period of operation. Members noted the importance of effective performance monitoring, especially during the pandemic where demand on services was uncertain.

After consideration, members were in agreement that the performance tracker should continue to be produced on a monthly basis and circulated with the monthly performance scorecards to all elected members, and not just to members of the Improving Lives Select Commission. Members agreed that once in receipt of the performance information that they would raise any issues of concern promptly so that discussions with senior officers could be arranged to address their questions and concerns.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Children and Young People's Services Vision Tracker continues to be circulated on a monthly basis.
- 3) That the Children and Young People's Services Vision Tracker, along with the monthly scorecards be circulated to all members of the Council.
- 4) That after receiving the Children and Young People's Services Vision Tracker and the monthly scorecards, members of the Improving Lives Select Commission should, if required, request a meeting with lead officers to undertake a performance clinic type discussion based on the particular measures or interest or concern.
- 5) That the revised methods of monitoring performance be reviewed at the June 2021 meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

71. RE-REFERRALS AND REPEAT CHILD PROTECTION PLANNING - PROGRESS REPORT

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Neighbourhood Working, the Interim Strategic Director – Children and

Young People's Services and the Assistant Director - Children's Social Care attended the meeting to present a report on re-referrals and repeat child protection planning.

The report stated that referrals to children's social care and second and subsequent periods of child protection planning were both performance indicators that were reported by the Council to the Department for Education and that as the rate of referral was a key indicator of need a high number of re-referrals could be seen an indicator of the right services not being provided at the time of the first intervention.

Members of the committee had previously expressed concern regarding the numbers of re-referrals being made and children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time. The officer's report sought to provide assurance to the members of the committee regarding these concerns.

The Assistant Director advised that in Rotherham the performance indicators that were measured were the re-referral rate, the percentage of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time ever (which was also national performance indicator) as well as measuring the percentage of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time in previous last two years which was a regionally agreed performance measure and as such was not reported to the Department for Education.

The Assistant Director advised that on reviewing Rotherham's performance in relation to referrals and for second and subsequent child protection planning, the data at Rotherham compared favourably against regional and statistical neighbours as well as against national data.

The Assistant Director advised that a re-referral wasn't always a cause for concern or an indication that the initial intervention had been ineffective as there were occasions where the first referral and a period of intervention could lead to a subsequent referral, such as when the circumstances of a family's situation changed. There were however situations where a re-referral was the result of the original intervention being ended when the needs of the children and families had not been fully resolved which resulted in the same concerns being raised in subsequent referrals. The Assistant Director advised that concerns in relation to this type of re-referral had prompted the senior leadership team in social care to undertake a piece of audit work during late 2019 and early 2020 that focussed on re-referrals.

The Assistant Director advised that the audit work undertaken in relation to re-referrals had indicated that there was a need to strengthen procedures around the safety planning work that identified families own support networks prior to the ending of formal social work involvement. It was noted that this approach and effect safety planning would ensure that the changes made by families were sustainable, and that when

challenges arose in the future these support networks could then be accessed for support instead of needing a re-referral and further formal intervention. The Assistant Director provided information on how the audit had been performed.

The Assistant Director noted that while overall the data indicated that Rotherham's performance in relation to referral rates and second/subsequent child protection planning activity was comparable or better than data from other local authorities it still showed that about around 1 in 5 children in Rotherham had been referred to children's social care. The Assistant Director advised that this was too high, and that areas for improvement identified by the audit, especially surrounding safety plans and their production and testing were needed in order to reduce this figure so as to ensure that the lived experience of vulnerable children in the Borough was maximised. It was noted that the key findings from the audit had been collated and would be used to develop learning for social work teams and managers, and that to ensure and monitor improvement, future audit work was planned.

Members asked if the audit had highlighted any key themes that had led to re-referrals. The Assistant Director advised that safety plans not being tested as rigorously as possible before formal intervention ended was a common cause for a family requiring subsequent intervention. The Assistant Director noted that family network meetings should be used in order to develop strong safety plans that identified a family's existing support networks that could be accessed should further support be needed in order to ensure that changes made in a family were sustainable.

The Assistant Director advised that it was important that during an intervention that social workers should always be open and honest with a family regarding their concerns so that the right actions could be implemented at the first opportunity. In ensuring effective support was implemented at the first opportunity the likelihood of a family needing a re-referral, as the original problem had not been identified and addressed would be greatly reduced.

The Chair asked how family network meetings differed from family group conferencing. The Assistant Director advised that they were a much-simplified version but were essential in order to help families identify their own support networks and reduce the need for subsequent social work support.

Members asked if they were ever situations where manager thought a family's case should be closed but where the case social worker disagreed. The Assistant Director advised that caseloads were regularly discussed with managers, and that managers would always look to ensure that interventions moved forward in timely manner, however if there was a significant disagreement, processes for resolving a situation were in place.

Members asked for further information on the authorities which had been used in the officer's report to compare performance at Rotherham against. The Assistant Director advised that the regional comparison had been made against Yorkshire and Humber authorities and that the "statistical neighbours" were drawn from authorities nationwide that had similar characteristics to Rotherham.

The Interim Strategic Director noted that the audit or re-referrals had been a very useful exercise that had highlighted areas for training and development and advised that a further report on the implementation of the lessons learned from the audit, and from future audits could be brought to a future meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Neighbourhood Working, the Interim Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services and the Assistant Director - Children's Social Care for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a progress report on re-referrals and repeat child protection planning be provided at the December 2020 meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission.
- 3) That information on the outputs and development opportunities highlighted by the audit work completed in relation to re-referrals be circulated to members of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

72. RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Councillor Jarvis who had declared an interest in this item left the meeting at this point and did not take part in the subsequent discussion and vote.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety and the Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene attend the meeting to present a report that provided an update in relation to the response by Domestic Abuse services to the current Covid-19 pandemic. The report also provided information in relation to the planning activity that was being carried out that would ensure services would be able to cope with potential increases in demand, or an extended period of operating in a different way, as a result of the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member advised that the report provided the most up information that was available with regard to the Council's response to managing Domestic Abuse services during the pandemic and noted that maintaining the delivery of services to support victims of Domestic Abuse

was a priority for the Council and the Safer Rotherham Partnership.

The Cabinet Member advised that Domestic Abuse services had been maintained throughout the pandemic, but that in common with other the services the way in which services were provided had changed due to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

The report stated that the Domestic Abuse Priority Group, that reported to the Safer Rotherham Partnership had continued to meet during the pandemic and had increased the frequency of its meetings to ensure continued delivery and management of risk. It was noted that the partnership had also continued to monitor Domestic Abuse in relation to demand for Police services as well as for support services.

The Cabinet Member advised while there had been a slight increase of reports of Domestic Abuse incidents during that pandemic that it was a little too early to see whether there had been any significant changes or whether any significant trends in demand could be identified. The Cabinet Member noted that while reports of incidents had not increased significantly there had been a high number of charges issued and arrests made of alleged perpetrators. The officer's report provided information on the number of incidents of Domestic Abuse and for demand for services through the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member provided information on an extra £98,000 of funding that the Council had supported Rotherham Rise to secure that would assist with the increased demand for emergency accommodation during the pandemic. It was also noted that the Safer Rotherham Partnership had provided an additional £12,000 of funding to expand the online and telephone contact offer and to ensure provision was delivered outside of normal office hours and that extra funding of £474,000 being allocated to the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner to support the delivery of Domestic Abuse support services during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member advised that the issue of Domestic Abuse, while always a concern was particularly concerning during the pandemic as when people had been restricted from normal movements, offices that offered support services had been closed and contact with families or friends had been limited, there was less opportunity for victims to report incidents and seek help. It was noted in the report that while reports of Domestic Abuse were currently at normal levels there was a concern that the pandemic and the restrictions imposed could have both reduced the opportunities to report incidents as well as creating additional pressures in the home, and that when current restrictions were lifted there could be a surge in demand for services. In the light of this risk it was noted that the Safer Rotherham Partnership had been working on developing partnership planning around increase demand for services.

Members asked if there was any lobbying activity taking place through the Local Government Association on obtaining extra funding for Domestic

Abuse services. The Cabinet Member advised that activity regarding obtaining extra funding was taking place. The Cabinet Member noted that while extra funding was always welcome, and that Rotherham was very successful in obtaining this funding, it is was frustrating that funding for such a key service had to be obtained in such a piecemeal way that created large amount of uncertainty for those involved in delivering services.

Members asked how Operation Encompass that enabled schools to connect with the Police to support children and young people who had been subject to or had witnessed Domestic Abuse incidents had been functioning during the pandemic. The Assistant Director advised that as schools had been open through the pandemic that this service had been continuing as normal.

Members noted that accessing online support may be difficult for victims of Domestic Abuse and asked for further information of alternative ways that support could be accessed. The Cabinet Member advised that phone support was available, and that work had been carried out to establish alternative physical settings for victims to access support in a safe space. Members asked in regard to incidents and referral to support services whether there had been an increase in male victims during the pandemic. The Assistant Director advised that he would arrange for this information to be circulated to members of the committee.

Members welcomed the high levels of arrests and charges made during the pandemic and asked whether the Police had been proactively encouraging victims to come forward. The Cabinet Member advised that they had not been, but that the issue increasing awareness of services would be raised again with the Police.

The Chair and members thanked the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety and the Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene for attending the meeting and answering their questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That up to date figures on Domestic Abuse Incidents, Domestic Abuse Response (referrals) and Domestic Abuse Commissioned Service Caseloads be circulated to the members of the Improving Lives Select Commission in four weeks' time.
- 3) That information on the number of Domestic Abuse incidents and referrals for support services relating to male victims of Domestic Abuse during the pandemic. be circulated to members of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

73. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2020/21.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the Work Programme be updated as discussed.
- 2) That the Work Programme for 2020/21 be approved.

74. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the outstanding actions on the Monitoring Report.

Resolved: -

That the Governance Advisor makes the required follow up activity as required for the outstanding actions.

75. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That the scope for the review of Early Help be circulated to members of the Improving Lives Select Commission once completed.

76. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

77. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**Resolved: -**

That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Tuesday 28 July 2020 at 5:30pm as a Microsoft Teams meeting.