

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 15 June 2021

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Cooksey, Aveyard, Barley, Burnett, Browne, Collingham, R. Elliott, Griffin, Hughes, Khan, Monk, Singleton, Thompson and Wilson.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors C Carter and Haleem.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 9 AND 22 MARCH

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meetings of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 9 and 22 March 2021, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved: -

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for during the presentation on the Pause Project on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

6. ROTHERHAM PAUSE PRACTICE - IMPACT REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Strategic Director - Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director – Children's Social Care and the Pause Practice Lead attended the meeting to provide a progress report on the Pause programme and on the second cohort of women who had accessed the programme.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted that in October 2017 a proposal to introduce the Pause Project in Rotherham had been presented to the Improving Lives Select Commission where members had been supportive of the recommendation to set up a Pause Practice in Rotherham. The Cabinet Member advised that the report provided information on the work of the Project since the last progress report to the Improving Lives Select Commission in March 2020 as well as detailing the impact of the pandemic on its operation.

The Cabinet Member noted the independent evaluation, that had included Pause Rotherham, that had been commissioned by the Department for Education and carried out by the University of Sussex, in partnership with Research in Practice and Ipsos Mori had been published in November 2020. This evaluation had found that the Pause Programme was effective in making a positive difference in women's lives, improving their relationships with children, reducing rates of infant care entry in local areas and delivering cost savings for local areas. Pause Rotherham was one of the sites who were included in the evaluation.

The Assistant Director – Children's Social Care noted that Pause worked with women who had experienced, or were at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care, supporting them to make positive choices, helping them to improve their relationships with their children and in helping to prevent further children being taken into care. The Assistant Director noted that a wide range of methods had been used to engage with the women on the Project during the pandemic but noted the challenges of providing a relationship-based programme of support in such difficult circumstances.

The Assistant Director advised since the last report had been presented to the Improving Lives Select Commission that the first cohort of had women successfully transitioned on with many of these women achieving a number of positive changes within their lives. It was also noted that a small number of the women who had accessed the programme towards the end of 2019 had also successfully transitioned on. The Assistant Director advised that the joint funding arrangement that was in place in place between the Council and the CCG would be reviewed during the coming 12 months.

The Assistant Director advised that here were currently eight women who were currently engaged on the programme, who between them had had 20 children removed from their care, and that in addition there were a further eight women who were in the 'Engaging' phase. It was noted that 50% of the women on the programme had previously been in the care system and that in total since 1 April 2020 the practice had had contact with 47 women who had between them had had a total of 150 children removed from their care.

The Assistant Director advised that the Pause Practice Lead had

completed further work to establish which women would be eligible for Pause Rotherham and had been working closely with children's social care to develop the referral pathway. It was noted that it was hoped that the practice would, as a consequence start to see an increase in referrals from children's social workers.

The Assistant Director advised that the Rotherham Pause Practice had been recognised by the national Pause team as delivering good practice and that despite the challenges that have been presented due to Covid-19, the team have continued to support Rotherham women to access this service. It was also noted that the independent evaluation that had been carried out on the Pause Programme had found that the Pause Programme was effective in making a positive difference in women's lives, improving their relationships with children, reducing rates of infant care entry in local areas and in delivering cost savings for local areas.

Members welcomed the continued positive outcomes for the women on the programme and asked what the definition of success was for the programme. The Pause Practice Lead advised that success was measured by the number of women who engaged with the programme and agreed to access contraception. Members asked how women were selected to access the programme. The Pause Practice Lead stated that the selection of women was based on national criteria, but that as potential demand was greater than the capacity of the programme, those women who were in the greatest need of support were viewed as a priority.

The Chair asked whether women could access the programme if they had had only one child taken into care. The Pause Practice Lead advised that for most women that once one child had been taken in care that they would take action themselves in order to ensure that any children that they had in the future would not be taken into the care system. The Pause Practice Lead noted however that younger women, or women who had been in the care system themselves could access the programme once they had had one child removed due to the higher than average risk of subsequent children also being removed from their care.

Members asked about how the alternative ways of working that had been used during the pandemic had worked. The Pause Practice Lead advised that the ways of engaging with the women on the programme during the pandemic had worked well in breaking down barriers, and that engaging online had worked well with women who might have found traditional ways of engaging difficult due to previous negative experiences of accessing services. Members welcomed the new referral pathway that had been created and asked whether any further referral pathways were being developed. The Pause Practice Lead advised that a further pathway had been developed with the First Contact Team.

Members asked for assurances around how the Pause Project worked with and linked in with other council services. The Cabinet Member

assured members that the programme linked into other services provided by the council and other delivery partners in order to provide a wrap-around service. The Strategic Director – Children and Young People’s Services advised that as the service was jointly funded with the CCG, joint working was well integrated into the delivery of the programme.

Members asked about the wider work that was being carried out to ensure that vulnerable young women leaving the care system did not end up in a situation of repeated trauma of having multiple children removed from their care. The Assistant Director advised that all young women leaving the care system would have a pathway plan in place to support them to make positive life choices. The Assistant Director also noted that it was part of the Council’s role of being a good corporate parent in ensuring that children in their care were equipped to make a success of their lives. The Cabinet Member noted that it was essential that young women leaving the care system were ambitious and aspirational for their futures, and that this was the best way to ensure the traumatic cycles of repeatedly having children removed were avoided.

The Chair noted the details in the report regarding the financial impact of the programme and the estimates shown for the amount of costs avoided by preventing serial removals of children into care from the same woman. The Chair asked whether these figures were Rotherham specific or from multiple Pause Programmes across the country. The Assistant Director advised that this would be investigated, and that the information would be circulated to committee members.

The Pause Practice Lead made a presentation that provided case studies of women who had participated in the programme that illustrated how the programme had supported them to make positive changes in their lives. Members asked several specific questions about the case studies included in the presentation.

Members expressed their sincere thanks everyone who was involved in delivering the Pause Programme in Rotherham and who were making such a positive impact on the Pause women’s lives.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, the Strategic Director - Children and Young People’s Services, the Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care and the Pause Practice Lead for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

That the report be noted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2021/22.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the Work Programme be updated as discussed.
- 2) That the Work Programme for 2020/21 be approved.
- 3) That members email suggestions for topics for consideration for addition to the Work Programme to the Chair and the Governance Advisor.

8. 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 members contact the Governance Advisor with expressions of interest in taking part in the sub-group review surrounding the Council's Early Help Offer.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

10. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Tuesday 27 July 2021 at 10am at Rotherham Town Hall.