

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
3rd February, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Hamilton (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor M. Clark), Councillors Ahmed, Astbury, Beaumont, Cutts, Elliot, Hague, Jepson, Pitchley, Rose, Taylor and M. Vines.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hoddinott, Jones, Reeder and Smith.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

40. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

41. COMMUNICATIONS

Caroline Webb, Senior Adviser Scrutiny and Member Development, reported on the following:-

(a) LSCB Audits

Initial discussions had taken place with the Chair and Councillors Hoddinott and Ahmed following concerns raised at the Select Commission previously in relation to CSE and LSCB audit process. The work programme in terms of the audits would be shared and factored into the Select Commission work programme to ensure that there was appropriate Member involvement in the process. Consideration would be given as to how those pieces of work could inform the 2016/17 work programme to inform Members' wider understanding of Safeguarding processes.

(b) Work Programme

The next meeting of the Select Commission, scheduled for 23rd March, was the last in the 2015/16 Municipal Year. At the November meeting, it was agreed that the March meeting focus on CSE. It was suggested that a small group of Members meet to discuss the scope of the meeting, attendees, particular areas of concern etc.

Resolved:- That Councillors Ahmed, Astbury, Pitchley, Rose and M. Vines meet to plan the format of the 23rd March Select Commission meeting.

42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16TH DECEMBER, 2015

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 16th December, 2015, were considered.

Resolved:- That the minutes from the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission be agreed as an accurate record.

43. ROTHERHAM LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

The Chair introduced Christine Cassell, Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Jason Harwin, South Yorkshire Police (Vice-Chair).

Councillor Jepson expressed his concern regarding the format of the report. This was endorsed by other Members of the Commission.

Christine apologised for the formatting of the report which had been due to an IT issue. She undertook to provide Members with a correct version of the document and took on board the comments with regard to the general layout of the report.

The report had been produced by the previous Independent Chair, Steve Ashley, and was the annual report for 2014/15. It was very late in being submitted to the Select Commission but future reports would be submitted in a more timely fashion.

Christine highlighted the following:-

Purpose and function of the Board

- To co-ordinate what was done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area
- To ensure the effectiveness of what was done by each such person or body for those purposes
- It was neither a delivering or commissioning Board; other Boards carried out those functions

2015/16 Report will comment on areas of improvement that were identified as priorities for the coming year i.e.

- Effectiveness and Early Help
- The effectiveness of the response to neglect and domestic abuse
- Experience of Looked After Children
- Effectiveness of multi-agency response to CSE
- How the LSCB influences improvement across agencies and effectively challenges performance
- Co-ordination and strategic commissioning activity
- Hearing and acting upon the experience of others, particularly children and young people
- Ensuring all the issues informed learning and development across the agencies

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Priorities the Board would be working on included:-

- Strengthening the understanding of performance
- Quality of safeguarding services
- Engaging with young people
- Ensuring that was alignment with the priorities being identified and commissioning decisions
- Communicating more effectively the work that the Board undertakes

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues highlighted/clarified:-

- The LSCB and the Children's Improvement Board had been working to improve the quality of data and performance information available. This would enable better challenge and scrutiny of services provided by agencies across the board.. Forthcoming annual reports would contain much improved information
- Within the document the section outlining the LSCB Statutory Framework required more explanation as to the role and function of the Board in an easy to read format
- There has been a lot of work done around Looked after Children (LAC) but there was still improvements to be made. The Improvement Board examined individual plans with particular focus on LAC to ensure that outcomes were no worse.. In line with the rest of the country, LAC outcomes were still poor although work was taking place to make improvements.
- Over the last 18 months, the LSCB has had a greater emphasis on scrutinising how services take account of the voice of the child. had. The data has been captured and fed back to services. Future reports will detail how this information is being used to change services.
- Both individual and joint services have to have plans that contained the voice of the child. This was part of the inspection framework of OFSTED; HMIC and also joint inspections. It was part of the Safeguarding Board's responsibility to make sure that services were taking account of the voice of the child and scrutinise what was done with the feedback received
- Need for clear and succinct information on the work of the Board and its six sub-groups
- Early Help was still very much work in progress so the position with Rotherham's Early Help offer was still under developed but significant strides had been made in the last six months. From the aspect of Social Care, it was now much easier for Social Workers to step down cases into Early Help. This prevented escalation into Social Care, with families who still required help being provided with ongoing

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support and help in the community at the lower end of the threshold. It was better developed in some of the localities than in others but there was an enormous amount of work taking place to ensure a consistent response

- The LSCB would be asking questions about the effectiveness of Early Help around how Early Help Services knew they were making a difference to children and families; what evidence they had of the quality of support that was given; were children and families better off as a result of that as well as the impact it was having on the number of cases that went through to Children's Social Care; and was it preventing a need for more intensive support to families.
- There had been 40 registered Family Common Assessment Frameworks from primary schools
- The funding for the Board had been increased last year. Chief Officers had agreed to additional funding and there was currently a national review ongoing which would report at the end of March, 2016, which may make some comments about the resourcing of Boards many of which were time in kind. The LSCB would reflect on its developments in context of that plan
- All the initial actions in terms of the development of the Board had been met but many were now out of date. The Board was in the process of revising its business plan both in the context of the improvement actions that it had for the Improvement Board and for its own Board planning processes. The speed of progress for the Board needed to accelerate and the Board had a plan to ensure it could be more rigorous in the work it was undertaking;
- One of the issues for the Board was that individual services had their own training/learning/development plans. From the Board's perspective, it wanted to develop multi-agency training which added value particular in areas where it added value to safeguarding children and young people
- The Board had just launched an audit process with all schools across the Borough to which it had had a good response. Through that process the Board would be able to ascertain that improvements happened in Safeguarding practice
- A standardised approach to training was a challenge as services were working to different authorised practices. The Board was trying, where it could, to achieve commonality around the Common Assessment Framework and the Strengthening Families approach, and that was what was being signed up to
- With resources, including money, decreasing there was opportunity for added value from multi-agency training. There were real

opportunities for joint learning and development across Adults and Children's Safeguarding maximising the time with staff and externally with partners to get the best benefit for the public of Rotherham

The Chair thanked Christine and Jason for their attendance.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That David McWilliams be invited to a future meeting to discuss the Early Help provision.

44. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PERFORMANCE 2015/16 3RD QUARTER REPORT (DECEMBER 2015)

Jean Imray, Interim Deputy Strategic Director, Children and Young People Services, presented the third quarter (December, 2015) performance report for the key areas of Safeguarding Children and Families Services. Appendix A of the report took into account direction of travel on the previous month, comparison against national benchmarking data and, where applicable, analysis against locally set targets.

This was the first specific performance indicator monitoring report presented to the Commission regarding Children's Social Care since the outcome of the 2014 Ofsted inspections. Since the inspection, performance management arrangements within the Service had undergone significant improvements and would continue to develop over time.

A number of performance improvements had been achieved in the last twelve months including:-

- A more robust and responsive multi-agency front door service (MASH) with the proportion of referrals with timely decision making consistently in the high 90%^s – 98.6% in December against a low of 36.7% at the end of 2014
- A reduction in the number of children on a Child Protection Plan for excessive periods of time – at the end of December only one child was subject to a CPP for over two years compared to eighteen in April
- Almost all Rotherham's vulnerable children now had up-to-date intervention plans in place and recorded. With 100% children subject to a Child Protection Plan, 96.9% of Looked after Children (LAC) and 90.3% of Children in Need with up-to-date plans compared to performance at the end of 2014 of 80%, 82% and 32% respectively
- Children were now being seen by their Social Workers more regularly – 96.2% of Looked after Children were receiving statutory visits on time with national standards and 95.0% of children with a Child Protection Plan had been visited in the last two weeks (local standard)

- Caseloads for Social Workers had been reduced and averages across all teams were now consistently within agreed limits of eighteen-twenty-two cases

The report also set out current key improvement areas.

Discussion ensued on the report with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Due to the number of CSE operations and the possible children involved, there had been an increase in Section 47 investigations. However, a number, when investigated, had found the concerns to be unwarranted.
- All adoption agencies had their pool of adopters so not only would the Authority “buy” adopters (pay a fee to an adoption agency) but Rotherham’s adopters were adopting by way of other authorities/agencies. Currently there was a shortage of adopters so the Authority was having to place more children with out of authority adopters and having to pay a placement fee. A recruitment campaign was to be launched in the same way as there had been for foster carers. This was a national problem. There was work that could be done to improve the situation and the Authority was doing what it could.
- Anybody who was an approved adopter would have been through a very rigorous adoption assessment whether it was by a local authority or private adoption agency. The Authority would always look at the details of an approved adopter to ensure the right child was being matched to the right adopter. Once placed, the Authority would continue to visit until the Adoption Order was made; at that point the child ceased to be a LAC and that family became that child’s legal family so there would be no visits. However, for older children there was a comprehensive support package around the adoption placement to ensure the placement had the best chance of success.
- All authorities were under an obligation to notify the authority they were placing their child into. Rotherham had a system in place to ensure the notifications were sent out and a robust checking system was also carried out.
- This also applied to private independent places. Normally, if an authority placed a child outside its own area then it would be with an independent fostering agency or an independent residential home; if young people were placed in Rotherham they would not be with Rotherham foster carers, but with independent foster agencies.
- The number of LAC had increased to 423 in December, 2015. It was too early to say whether this was a trend but there had been fewer discharges for which there could be a variety of reasons e.g. young

people turning 18 and a tendency not to do any reunifications and returns just before Christmas. There was a gradual upward trend because the Service was better at identifying children who should be at home and more robust action taken for those who were still subject to a Child Protection Plan and not really improving. The Authority was suffering from a lack of an Adolescent Crisis Response at the moment and part of the sufficiency strategy was to try and develop that service if possible. There were two areas where the increase was most notable - in the under 5's and over 15's – with a much higher number of young people not actually going into care until the age of 15-17 quite often due to the lack of appropriate response to teenage homelessness and family crisis. There should be better work with young people as it was not good to go into care at that age except in exceptional circumstances. There had also been a slight increase in that age group due to some of the CSE work that had been carried out.

- The participation rates for the 4-11 and 12-17 years should be treated with caution. The “participation” could have been the filling in of the consultation form at the LAC's review. The Authority had not been good at capturing the voice of the child and then translating it into meaningful changes that informed the development of service and delivery. Generally local authorities captured this but it needed to be more meaningful such as LAC chairing their own reviews.
- The Service was developing a scorecard to be used for LAC which contained a much more detailed set of data which was only about LAC and foster carer recruitment. There would be an opportunity to include health and report thereon.
- The Care Leaving Indicator should be viewed with caution. All the 96.6% showed was that the care leavers were not in prison or B&B but nothing with regard to the suitability of the accommodation. From a Corporate Parenting perspective, there should be detailed information as to where exactly the care leavers were, whether the accommodation met the young person's needs etc. It was known that there was a problem with some of the current accommodation for care leavers and that there was insufficient variety to meet the needs in that group.
- It had been exceptionally busy in December, 2015, with regard to Social Workers' caseloads. This was probably due to a variety of reasons i.e. annual leave being taken and not having had the opportunity to close down cases or a Social Worker having a student working with them who could not be allocated cases. Newly qualified Social Workers had protected caseloads for the first year of practice – under ten cases. Sometimes Workers had high numbers of cases but consisted of large families.
- Rotherham still had a lot of agency staff which, in part, was due to the

Authority agreeing post-Ofsted to an additional thirty front line practitioner posts, however, recruitment of experienced Social Workers was a problem for all authorities. The Authority was up to its capacity now and would not take on any more newly qualified Social Workers due to their lack of experience so it was now the challenge to attract and recruit experienced Workers in Rotherham particularly given its reputation. Nevertheless, the Authority was making definite inroads and the information was being passed on regarding how it was managing to keep low caseloads particularly the caseloads for LAC.

- The fully functioning MASH required a secure environment particularly because of the sharing of very confidential information. There were problems in terms of the capacity of the accommodation currently occupied in Riverside House. The CSE Team was due to move into the Eric Manns Building which would then give the MASH more room and ability to bring more people in. A retired Head Teacher occupied the Senior Education role within the MASH but with more space, Education Welfare Officers could be added to strengthen the MASH response to children at risk because they were not in education/missing from education.
- There was a very robust approach being applied by the Virtual Head with regard to Personal Education Plans of LAC. The Service was now much more confident that the majority of the children had PEPs but would not be satisfied until it was 100% - currently 92.3%. The issue of quality was something that was under review all the time. The Virtual Head and Team constantly reviewed individual PEP's to ensure they were quality assured. The new electronic PEP would be a much better way of being able to review; its format lent itself to draw out important elements as to what progress the child had made from the last school term to present.
- There were a number of issues for secondary schools when a child came into the care system late and likely to bring with them a number of educational challenges that they had before they went into care i.e. fixed term exclusions. There was some work to be done in order to make sure teachers in secondary schools/designated teachers for LAC were absolutely signed up to sharing the same ambitions and aspirations that the Service had for its LAC.
- Reconfiguration of the Social Work Service had just been completed. Previously Social Workers in localities were holding cases that were complex children in need, children with Child Protection Plans, LAC in Care Proceedings and some LAC that were placed out of authority. Although the Service had managed to reduce the numbers, the complexity of having to work in these different specialisms had not helped to improve the quality of the work and quite often it was the LAC that got a less good response. Accordingly, the work had been reconfigured and the Team now organised into North, South and

Central teams with better alignment to the Early Help Teams/schools and the learning communities. The work would include a stronger networking with the agencies that were in their patch to and the moving of the LAC work, including Court procedures, into the LAC Teams so that the service area was able to specialise and focus only on LAC. Also there were two or three additional Team Manager posts so that no Team Manager was managing more than six or seven practitioners, and would be able to supervise better the work of the Social Workers.

- Improvement journeys were 3-5 years – there was no short term or quick fixes. However, improved practice would be more financially affordable in the longer term.
- The report was submitted to the Improvement Board, Directorate Leadership Team, Local Safeguarding Board (Performing Sub-Group, and Deputy Leader on a monthly basis.

The Chair thanked Jean for her presentation.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That any issue of concern be reported to the Select Commission.

(3) That the performance report on be submitted to the Select Commission on a quarterly basis starting in the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

(4) That a report be submitted on Children Missing from Education, and that this report details how many of these are Looked After Children.

45. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 23RD MARCH, 2016 AT 1.30 P.M.

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2016, to start at 1.30 p.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.