

Annex 4:

Aston Hall J& I School
Church Lane
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Tel: 0114 2879811

27th March 2017

Councillor Maggi Clark

Dear Councillor Clark,

Many thanks for the opportunity afforded to me to share my views regarding the future direction of children's services in Rotherham. As a serving head teacher with the Local Authority for the past fifteen years I have been witness to many changes, both inside and outside education, and supported many of the most vulnerable children and families through particularly challenging and potentially life-changing circumstances. School leaders are also familiar with the improvement cycle of peer review, partner feedback, Ofsted Inspections and action planning to address priority development areas. As part of the CYPS Strategic Improvement Board I have seen at first hand the journey Rotherham has been on from the inception of the Board until now.

It would be accurate to say that Rotherham is a very different town to the one it was two years ago. The depth and breadth of improved practise within Rotherham is demonstrable in many areas such as improved workforce capacity, improved response times to referrals, updated and more responsive systems such as multi-agency safeguarding hub, locality teams and Early Help. It is heartening to see partners from Health, Social Care, Police, Education and the Borough sit around a table and talk knowledgeably about what is making a real difference to the lives of children and families in the town and also recognise what more can be done.

The changes and systems now in place are starting to make things better for our most vulnerable residents and stabilise lives that were once out of control. It would be fair to reflect that whilst some exemplary practice is evident and improved outcomes are being reported daily, there are still some pockets of weakness and areas to be further developed but all partners are well-sighted on these and have robust plans in place to swiftly address them.

It would seem sensible therefore to endorse therefore the preferred option of continuing to work with the current model of peer practice partnership, which provides the opportunity to put up that reflective lens to all development areas. This methodology also provides opportunities for Rotherham to continue to learn from good and outstanding partners and adopt and amend and improve their systems and practices whilst creating some of our own. The change to an alternative delivery model would not be without risk and may actually undo some of the improvements now in place. I am reassured that external peer review, partnership feedback, monitoring visits and commitment high quality partnership working is the correct model and that we will continue to see impact and further improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Donna Humphries
Executive Headteacher

From: ROBERT ODELL [<mailto:Rob.Odell@southyorks.pnn.police.uk>]
Sent: 28 March 2017 13:15
To: Hatton, Lesley
Subject: RE: Letter from the Chief Executive

Lesley

Thank you for the letter

For the sake of completeness and having discussed it this end we concur that the current arrangements are the best option going forward....

Regards

Rob

From: Pepe Di'Iasio [<mailto:pd@waleshigh.com>]

Sent: 03 April 2017 17:42

To: Hatton, Lesley

Subject: Re: FAO Chief Executive, RMBC

Good afternoon Sharon,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

I have been both proud and privileged to work alongside such dedicated professionals over the last two years as part of the 'Improvement Board' and feel I can take some (small) credit from the considerable steps that we have seen taken to improve the quality of provision and service to the young people and families of Rotherham.

I would certainly want to see a continuation in the existing arrangements whereby the LA is supported through a variety of peer to peer reviews and external challenge from identified providers of outstanding practice from across the country. I believe that it is fair to say that this has demonstrated high quality impact and is starting to 'bare real fruit'. I would be seriously concerned to see this progress jeopardised from a potential change in momentum or direction at this stage.

I remain convinced that young people, schools and families from across Rotherham remain best served by their local communities and through a local model within the Local Authority and would wish to see this remain

Pepe Di'Iasio
Headteacher
Wales High School

From: Janet Wheatley [mailto:Janet.Wheatley@varotherham.org.uk]
Sent: 27 April 2017 12:11
To: Webb, Caroline
Cc: Hatton, Lesley
Subject: RE: Request for assistance: Scrutiny review of Alternative Management Arrangement for Children's Services

Hi Caroline

Thank you for offering VAR the opportunity to express our views about the management arrangements for Children's Services going forward. The views below represent our views and input from the Children Young People and Families VCS Consortia

Our view is that with the current refreshed leadership and the changes instigated, Children's Services needs a period of stability. There also needs to be on the part of stakeholders, a realistic timeframe to embed the change management and the associated culture and relationships that have and are continuing to develop

Our experience has been the Children's Services have worked positively in partnership with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and continues to do so. Some of the examples of this are:

- 1) VCS Input and direct involvement in the Peer Challenge review meetings / process
- 2) VCS direct input, consultation, representation and involvement in a number of both strategic and operational boards, to ensure best outcomes for CYP. Some examples of these boards / groups includes:
 - i) The Children & Young People's Partnership
 - ii) The Local Children Safeguarding Board
 - iii) Performance & Quality Assurance
 - iv) Learning and Improvement sub group
 - v) CSE & Missing sub group
 - vi) Child Centred Borough and YP Voice & Influence
 - vii) Sexual Health Strategy Group
 - viii) Youth Offending Board

3) VCS direct input, consultation and involvement in the development of various pieces of work and initiatives, for e.g:

strategy

- i) Development of the Children's Plan
- ii) Development of the Early Help
- iii) Development of the SEND offer

4) Partnership and voluntary community sector (VCS) input into the recruitment and selection of key personnel in Children Services, for e.g:

- i) Deputy Director Children Services
- ii) Assistant Directors
- iii) Senior commissioning roles
- iv) Heads of Localities & Early Help

5) Recognition of the value of the VCS, by direct support of the VCS infrastructure that supports the development and contribution / co-ordination of VCS into and alongside the CYP agenda and service areas; by part funding the Children, Young People & Families Consortium, without which there would not be the level of VCS engagement with CYP Services.

Rotherham Borough Council, along with a number of other statutory partners have supported the refresh of the local COMPACT with voluntary and community organisations and the reviewed version has now been adopted in Rotherham. The agreed COMPACT will provide all partners with a framework to continue to work even better together for the benefit of Rotherham communities.

We cannot say we have any experience or expertise re the merits and disadvantages of particular / alternative management arrangements for Children's Services and nor have we assessed any evidence of alternative arrangements working better elsewhere. The VCS does constructively challenge and raise issues as required and our view is that we are actively talking with Children's Services about co-production of services and there is a greater than ever recognition of the importance of prevention and early intervention; and the particular role of the VCS.

In light of all the above we agree with the preferred option of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's Improving Lives Select Commission scrutiny review to continue with the preferred option of continuing with the current model of peer practice partner approach. We also believe that this will secure the most rapid and sustainable improvements for children and young people's services in the short term. I would be grateful if you could pass our views onto Cllr Maggi Clark

If you have any queries or need anything further please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Wishes

Janet

Janet Wheatley
Chief Executive

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