

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
15th January, 2019

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Clark, Elliot, Jarvis, Khan, Marriott, Price, Senior, Short and Julie Turner.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beaumont, Brookes and Pitchley.

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

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jarvis made the following Personal Declaration of Interest:-
Minute No. 49 – Domestic Abuse Update – a member of the Board of Trustees of Rotherham Rise.

Councillor Senior made the following Personal Declaration of Interest:-
Minute No. 50 – Rotherham Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey 2018 – manager of a charity that participated in the survey although not personally involved.

46. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

A member of the public raised issues regarding safeguarding and the involvement of Police, Social Services and Mental Health colleagues.

As it did not directly relate to any of the items on the agenda for discussion, it was agreed that an officer would contact the member of the public directly and discuss his issues of concern.

47. COMMUNICATIONS

It was noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel Sub-Group convened to look at the LADO process and the impact thereof on foster carers had been cancelled due to illness. It was now to meet on 5th February.

48. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 4TH DECEMBER 2018

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 4th December, 2018, and matters arising from those minutes.

Resolved:-That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 4th December, 2018, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

Further to Minute No. 43(2) (inclusion of Children Missing from Education to the weekly tracker), a meeting would be arranged to discuss its feasibility.

49. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning, presented an update in relation to audit work conducted in support of the Council's work to tackle Domestic Abuse. The report also provided an overview of Service user engaged, the current Domestic Abuse review, a general update in relation to progress against the Domestic Abuse Strategy as well as an update in relation to Stalking and Harassment.

Attention was drawn to:-

- Partnership Audits – Housing
Officers had engaged in a supportive review of Housing Domestic Abuse practice with a specific focus on tenancy issues linked to Domestic Abuse. Increasingly there was a desire to support victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse and their families to stay in their own home, properly protected and supported, particularly where there were mothers and children. There would always remain a place and need for supporting victims/survivors to flee and the Council and its partners would continue to support this where necessary.
- Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)
Work was undertaken during July and August to review previous and current DHRs with a particular focus on any identified inconsistencies. 5 DHRs had been conducted since the legislation was introduced in 2004. A review had also been undertaken of the completion of actions across all previous DHRs and would seek to ensure lessons were embedded within Service delivery. Across all 5 DHRs there were 26 recommendations including those arising from the current active review. Of the 26, 20 were complete, one remained ongoing and a further 5 required validation but were expected to be completed.
- Domestic Abuse Service Review
The first phase of the whole system review was nearing completion. The process had involved significant efforts to engage Service users through focus groups and online surveys. Full analysis of the survey would be available shortly and used to further inform the final report which would be considered by the Safer Rotherham Partnership Board at its meeting in February. The Council would seek to form proposals in relation to how the Service could be adapted.

– Strategy Update

The Strategy was attached at Appendix B of the report submitted. The Council and its partners had been the subject of an indepth peer review by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and its partners between January and March, 2018. The review had examined Domestic Abuse Services within Rotherham against 53 assessment areas with the final date of inspection taking place on 25th January 2018. 14 interviews and focus groups had taken place involving approximately 60 multi-agency staff and Service users as part of the challenge day.

A Perpetrator Programme had been launched in March 2018, a consistent training offer developed and remained on offer and accessible to all agencies free of charge, audit/review work on cases and processes within Housing, a programme of work led by the South Yorkshire Police District Commander to increase arrest rates and review of the Domestic Abuse Review.

– Stalking and Harassment

Initial governance had been established and performance on outcome rates was now reported to the SRP Board, however, the data was currently unaudited so could not be publicly released. Work was ongoing to address this issue, however, levels were broadly stable during the first 2 quarters of monitoring in 2018/19. As a result of changes to Home Office counting rules, demand numbers were likely to increase as it required Police Forces to record an additional offence of stalking, harassment or coercive control (as appropriate) to a reported crime of criminal damage for example where it was associated.

Stalking and harassment was not always domestic related; in cases where it was not domestic related support was likely to be more limited. Work was underway to map the victim journey following initial report.

Following establishment of a referral pathway and available support, partnership training would be arranged in the 2019/20 financial year.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Concern regarding the lack of progress being made with regard to stalking and harassment
- Acknowledgement that there were significant gaps in Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) and how it effectively supported victims of stalking and harassment. DASH was being looked at currently and there was a commitment to open up the MARAC process to stalking and harassment

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- Currently the figures did not distinguish in terms of stalking and harassment data and whether or not it was linked to domestic abuse or stranger stalking and harassment. At present there were figures that suggested how big the problem was around stalking and harassment but no understanding of how much of the problem was directly related to the domestic abuse situation or stranger stalking. Not only did the data need to be strengthened to enable a better understanding but also the processes regardless as to whether it was domestic abuse or stranger related. This would then have a positive impact
- The Rotherham Perpetrator Programmes were in the pre-criminal justice space. It was not known if there were any post-conviction Perpetrator Programme around stalking and harassment but attempts would be made to ascertain the information
- Continued support was provided for the victims in their own homes. Target hardening was part of the support which could include the installation of equipment that may well make the victim feel safer e.g. window alarms, security lights on the property, alarms etc. There was also the use of Violence Protection Notices and Orders to control the behaviour of the perpetrators and additional 1:1 support through both the commissioned service and Housing Officers
- Support was very much victim-led. If a victim felt uncomfortable remaining in their own home they would be supported to seek refuge elsewhere. That would be dealt with at the outset so the victim's wants and needs were understood
- Self-referrals could be made into the South Yorkshire-wide Perpetrator Programme that had been commissioned, however, few self-referrals had been made
- Information from Area Housing Panels was fed into the Domestic Abuse Priority Group. Within the action plan there were performance measures that were monitored on a monthly basis
- Work had taken place to make sure the voice of the child was captured particularly at the high risk end. This had included a change of guidance for MARAC Chairs to ensure they asked what the voice of the child was in those circumstances and work with the Police to make sure that, when they responded to a domestic abuse incident and a child was present in the household, that they did their utmost to have a conversation with the child to seek their views. It was not perfect and there were still examples seen where the voice of the child was not accurately captured and scrutinised but it had improved
- Work was still being delivered to develop the private sector and their responsibility with regard to domestic abuse. The first step was to encourage the private sector that it was their problem and that they

could do something. A good reception had been received from dentists across the Borough. The training offer remained open to all private businesses around domestic abuse and would remain so

- An increase in referrals would be expected after target training and awareness raising. There had been significant effort this year into communications around domestic abuse
- The Council's own HR policies made reference to domestic abuse and gave guidance to managers as well as an inhouse IDVA team. There was information on the website as well as an acknowledgement that it was not as good as it could be both the internal and public facing information
- The Domestic Abuse Charter had 10 standards of what was expected of partners as well as a specific requirement that companies have a HR policy that made reference to domestic abuse and ensure the right support was offered
- Stalking and harassment had not been drawn out of any of Rotherham's Domestic Homicide Reviews but was a prolific feature nationally
- Conviction rates were recorded nationally
- There was a clear service structure around domestic abuse in its own right and a full service commissioned, however, that service did not exist when it related to stalking and harassment. If it was stranger stalking and harassment the service was not available currently. There was support through Victim Support (through South Yorkshire Police)

The Chair commented on the progress made over the previous 18 months and thanked the Officer and his team for their work.

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

(2) That a further report be submitted in respect of the principles for the Domestic Abuse Service prior to submission to Cabinet.

(3) That a further report be submitted to a sub-group of the Select Commission with regard to the gap in service related to stalking and harassment.

50. ROTHERHAM VOICE OF THE CHILD LIFESTYLE SURVEY 2018

Sue Wilson, Head of Service, Performance and Planning, gave the following powerpoint presentation on the Rotherham Lifestyle Survey:-

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What is Lifestyle Survey

- An annual survey which captured the voice of children and young people on subjects important to them
- The questions in the survey had been shaped by our young people
- A unique opportunity for a large group of young people in Rotherham to share their views on matters that impacted on their lives

Why do we do it

- To provide young people with the opportunity to voice their opinion which was used by partners, schools and services to help shape future services
- Provided a rich source of data which provided the ability to compare with neighbouring local authorities and national surveys to identify trends and key areas for development

What do we aim to achieve

- Services shaped and improvements made which took into account or were a direct result of the views expressed by the young people
- Results that evidenced a positive impact on the lives of children and young people living and educated in Rotherham

Participation 2018

- 16 mainstream schools offered the opportunity to participate in the survey. 12 participated (4 schools choosing not to participate provided an explanation)
- 3 special schools chose to participate
- 3 Pupil Referral Units participated
- 3,499 pupils participated (52% of relevant population)

What is Working Well

Young people's voices are being listened to and the information collected is being used effectively

- Feedback from the Lifestyle Survey was utilised to support the commissioning of a new support service for drug and alcohol services for young people
- Schools utilised the feedback provided in respect of high sugar energy drinks to improve the displays/information available to children on the effects of the drinks and in some schools ban the sale of the drinks entirely. Leading to a reduction their consumption in school and an increase in the number of young people drinking the recommended amount of water per day
- One school was using its results to shape their PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) curriculum; working with Y8 pupils to co-produce the curriculum
- Safer Rotherham Partnership had used their results to help shape their priorities

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- Young Carers Service identified from the results the need to raise awareness of the services they offered within schools. As a result, 10% more young people now say they have heard of the support available

What Areas are We Worried About

Results would be highlighted to schools and partners

- Regular feedback required from partners on the actions they were taking to address the findings and improve change services
- Increase promotion of the benefits of health eating – in 2018 less pupils said they were eating the recommended 5 per day and more pupils said they were worried about their weight
- Promote the activities available for young people in libraries and youth centres – in 2018 less pupils said they use these
- Address the increase in the number of young people who said they smoked on a regular basis
- Promote the new drug and alcohol support available to address the increase in the number of young people who said they had tried drugs regularly

Actions

What actions take place to share the results and highlight the impact of the survey

- Each school receives their own individual data with comparison to the previous year's results highlighting:
What's working well
What are we worried about
- Partners received highlight reports with set timescales in which to provide feedback on the actions taken and the impact of and planned actions for the future
- Results were shared with young people to help them identify and develop new ideas and to communicate positive messages to them
- Stakeholders were supported to review the results and develop action plans to address these
- Work undertaken with schools to highlight to young people opportunities and forums where they could get involved and have their voice heard i.e. School Council, Youth Cabinet, Young Inspector

Young People's Voice

- The Rotherham Lifestyle Survey had run for 12 years and in the time over 30,000 young people had had their voice heard
- In the past 5 years, 17,410 had participated. Schools welcomed and valued the survey with 12 schools already signed up to participate again in 2019
- This high volume of young people's voices needed to be recognised and become integral to shaping and developing the services we offered
- We need to act upon what they say to show they were listened to and taken seriously

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The Select Commission discussed the following salient issues about this Survey:-

- The 4 schools that had declined to participate were the same schools who had not taken part for the last 3/4 years and were part of the same Multi-Academy Trust who ran their own survey. The fourth school was a Catholic school who had had concerns 2 years ago with regard to some of the questions for Y10 students around sexual health. This year they had not felt they could fit it into their curriculum timetable. Every opportunity was taken to encourage participation to increase the overall perception rate
- The data collected was linked as much as it could to national data/Public Health data. Work took place with colleagues in Public Health for them to use the data and share it with their commissioned services and strategy group and looked at national trends
- There was acknowledgement that there would be an element of bravado when the young people were completing the survey and whether this was taken into consideration when analysing the response
- Due to the difference in the size of schools a percentage of the cohort was taken to enable a direct comparison
- Schools were asked every year to review the questions and add any specific questions. It was asked if schools commented on questions to be taken out of the survey
- The 3 schools that did their own survey did not share their results with the Authority despite being requested to do so
- There was no opportunity for the young people to write free text. The survey had been designed to enable ease of analysis
- Young people had input into the questions

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the partners receiving a copy of the report be supported.

(3) That consideration be given to streamlining of the survey for the future and that further consideration be given to the inclusion of information relating to demographics and equalities monitoring.

51. SOUTH YORKSHIRE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, and Jon Stonehouse, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Service, presented an update on the development of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency.

Following a further meeting between the respective Directors of Children's Services and the Department for Education (DfE), an additional sum of money had been allocated to Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) to underwrite the further project development costs. This would enable the employment of a project manager lead to re-write the Business Case.

If there was no functioning Regional Adoption Agency within South Yorkshire by 2020, the Government had retained the right, within the Legislation, to impose a model on the region. As a result, there was a risk that the model imposed would not best meet the needs of the Council, its children and families or its employees.

The Council would remain fully engaged in the process and development of the model in order to ensure it was best placed to shape and influence so that it would best meet the essential criteria. It was anticipated that the revised business case would be completed by April 2019 and then would be submitted accordingly for ratification.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- As host authority, both the funding and the post would sit with Doncaster Children's Services Trust, but would not incur any additional cost to the four local authorities. The reworked business case was due at the end of the month
- Barnsley, Sheffield and Rotherham had made it very clear they would not be contributing any funding into the RAA over and above what they currently spent. Performance of the 4 local authorities was strong in terms of adoption which was a big factor in reassuring that the new RAA would have the level of expertise and experience in adoption that would allow performance to be maintained
- Rotherham would still be accountable for adoption in Rotherham so the need to ensure the business case gave strong reassurance that rigorous democratic oversight would be provided by Lead Member, Scrutiny and Cabinet. Once the refreshed business case was received it would be an area to work through with the other three local authorities
- A clearer timeline would be known after the meeting on 1st February. It was included within the Forward Plan for February Cabinet or later dependent upon the business case

- Previous experience had been that an annual report was submitted to each of the local authorities on the work of the RAA

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

52. OFSTED RECOMMENDATIONS - UPDATE

Sue Wilson, Head of Service Performance and Planning, presented the following powerpoint presentation on the status of the 34 actions identified for completed against each of the 8 Ofsted recommendations for improvement identified during the November 2017 re-inspection:-

Current Position

- 8 recommendations made up of 34 actions (11 actions complete)
- 2 recommendations fully complete (subject to approval at the evidence panel) made up of 6 actions
- 6 other recommendations were partially complete (18 actions outstanding) and work on these continued

Recommendation 1

Ensure that managers provide challenging, reflective and directive supervision and, with support from Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Conference Chairs, address the quality of practice and planning for all children effectively

- A revised supervision template was now live in Liquid Logic
- The IRO Service had been developed and were providing a 'high support, high challenge' approach around planning for children
- The Rotherham Family Approach (Signs of Safety, Restorative Practice and Social Pedagogy) continued to be rolled out as part of mandatory training for workers across the whole of the Children's workforce
- Work was continuing to:-
Implement phase 2 of the Right Child Right Care programme of work (March 2020)
Further implement and embed the Rotherham Family Approach including across the broader partnership (April 2020)

Recommendation 2

Ensure that all assessments are: meaningful to children and their families; reflect the changing needs of children and effectively evaluate cumulative risks and their impact

- Case mapping exercises take place with staff to improving the quality of assessments
- The Social Care and Early Help Quality Assurance Framework looks at practice through a thematic lens to better recognise the understanding of cumulative risk of harm and to test out the quality of Assessments and Plans (particularly in relation to looked after children)
- Work is continuing to:-

Fully implement Liquid Logic to enable case recording to reflect the Rotherham Family Approach particularly in relation to the format of the recording of assessments

Recommendation 3

Ensure that all plans: are clear about how children's and young people's holistic needs are to be met; have clear timescales; can be understood by families and are always well informed by risk assessment

- Case mapping exercises take place with staff in relation to improving the quality safety plans
- The Social Care and Early Help Quality Assurance Framework looks at practice through a thematic lens to better recognise the understanding of cumulative risk of harm and to test out the quality of Assessments and Plans (particularly in relation to looked after children)
- Work is continuing to:-
Fully implement Liquid Logic to enable case recording to reflect the Rotherham Family Approach particularly in relation to the format of the recording of plans and risk

Recommendation 4

Ensure that early permanence planning is timely and considers the full range of placement options for all children when they are unable to return to their birth families

- The increased focus of the IROs is making a difference in relation to permanence planning
- Right Child Right Care (RCRC) is having a significant impact on permanence planning with more children being discharged from care since February 2018, as a result of the wider improvement in practice
- Work is continuing to:
Focus on foster care recruitment (based on the feedback from the recent Peer View and our own self-assessment)
Revise the Marketing and Placement Sufficiency Strategies in order to boost in-house foster carer recruitment by a net gain of 15 foster placements each year for the next 3 years

Recommendation 5

Improve the timeliness of the early help response to children particularly those who have a disability

- The standard response time for children with disabilities is now managed as part of the fortnightly performance meetings; regular meetings take place between the Early Help Disability Manager and an experienced Early Help and Family Engagement Service Manager
- Signs of Safety training has been rolled out in the team and is being embedded
- Performance data shows that timeliness has improved with an upward trend predicted to continue
- This is now complete

Recommendation 6

Work with schools to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions and persistent absentees from education among children looked after

- The attendance and exclusions of looked after children are discussed at Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings
- Creative mentoring and attachment friendly schools are starting to show impact
- The Virtual School has seen a reduction in exclusions and attendance has improved from September 2017 to September 2018
- Work is continuing to:
 - Implement the creative mentoring scheme (January 2019)
 - Complete Phase 2 of the attachment friendly schools (September 2020)

Recommendation 7

Ensure that children benefit from a timely good quality Lifestory work and clearly written later life letters to enable children to understand their experiences, life history and reason for separation from their birth families

- Life Story Work (LSW) continues to be a priority and a new model has been implemented with additional support and training being provided by the Therapeutic
- Information about therapeutic stories and telling about difficult experiences or traumas has been shared with staff. The Advanced Practitioners and the Practice Consultants are leading on LSW within each team
- Court & Permanency Team have recently recruited a worker whose focus was specifically on LSW and with her lead and the support from the TT the quality of LSW has improved
- Work was continuing to:
 - Improve the quality of later life letters (January 2019)
 - Utilise Liquid Logic better to track the presence of lifestory and later life letters (February 2019)

Recommendation 8

Ensure that birth parents of children who are adopted fully understand what support is available and are helped to access this

- Additional support has been put in place for birth parents whose children have been adopted
- RMBC continues to commission this support PAC UK and the Adoption Team website has now been updated to include PAC UK and link to this service
- This is now complete

Liquid Logic

- Signs of Safety (SOS) within Liquid Logic is having an impact upon the development of key documents within the system impacting on completion of some actions
- In order to minimise this potential barrier we have commenced work around developing key documents to be used in the existing Liquid

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Logic pathway

- This should then reflect our improving practice in the case record more effectively

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

- As part of the independent health check (6th-8th February 2019) commissioners would come in and test out the Ofsted recommendations. There was a series of meetings organised with case tracking taking place
- Lincolnshire Council was selecting 10 cases they would audit and look for evidence in current practice that they could now see a difference. The same as an Ofsted inspection, the Service ran “Annex A” - 11 lists of every child that the Service had been working with over the last 6 months. That document had been submitted together with a document called “chat”, a single page document listing the key concerns and risks about some of the cases. Lincolnshire would use it to select the 10 cases
- There was confidence that the Services rated by Ofsted in January 2018 as either being Good or Outstanding, were still of the same calibre. Rotherham was able, on an ongoing basis, to assess the effectiveness of its services. It was an ongoing effort which required time, energy and investment to ascertain an accurate view of how it was performing. A raft of information was submitted to the monthly multi-agency Performance Board where Assistant Directors and Heads of Services attended and presented narrative reports supported by data and performance information. There was also a very robust monthly schedule of case file audits which were evaluated and moderated, put together in an audit report and sent to managers, the learning from which was then fed into a training and development programme
- Practice learning days were also held where managers across the Service went out to observe practice with an action plan compiled following the visit. The Strategic Director and Deputy Leader would then visit and assess whether the services had performed against their action plan
- The new inspection arrangements included an Annual Conversation. Prior to the meeting, the Service had to develop and submit 2 weeks in advance, a self-evaluation assessment that covered all the requirements of the Ofsted inspection regime. Ofsted then interrogated representatives on the self-assessment. Following the Annual Conversation last year, a positive letter had been received

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- There were a number of products that different local authorities used for their case management recording of their children's Social Care work and for some Early Help work; Rotherham used Liquid Logic for both. However, when Rotherham implemented Liquid Logic Signs of Safety was not being used and nor was the Rotherham Family Approach developed. As with any product, Liquid Logic had an "off the peg" product with the ability for each local authority to develop its own local nuances and add to the processes that existed. All Social Workers and managers had been trained around Restorative Practice and Signs of Safety. Liquid Logic had now developed a licensed Signs of Safety product which would sit alongside the existing products. Work was now required to ascertain if it was the right product for the Service or develop/alter the existing version that took into account Restorative Practice and Social Pedagogy. The Social Workers who were most confident in the use of the new methodologies were finding ways to record within current forms but some of the current development structure did not include making it intuitive. Some of the forms were not the most helpful to the Social Workers but if it could be improved it would help embed Signs of Safety
- Representatives of Liquid Logic would be visiting Rotherham soon to present demonstration work to establish whether it was best to improve the system or if there was an alternative way
- Of the 8 recommendations/actions that not yet been completed it was felt that the biggest challenges were:-

No. 6 (work with schools to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions and persistent absentees from education among children looked after) was challenging because it relied upon a complicated partnership response. Fixed term exclusions was a national issue; the providers all wanted to help the Authority but it did rely on very effective partnership arrangements and something that was a real challenge in the country at the moment

Both No. 2 (ensure that all assessments are: meaningful to children and their families; reflect the changing needs of children and effectively evaluate cumulative risks and their impact) and No. 3 (ensure that all plans: are clear about how children's and young people's holistic needs are to be met; have clear timescales; can be understood by families; and are always well informed by risk assessment) which started with "ensure that all" were incredibly challenging for any Assistant Director or Strategic Director to say that every single assessment/plan was developed and achieved what was set out. However, The Service needed to be in a position where it could provide assurance that it was achieving the aim in more cases than it was not

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

(2) That the Ofsted outcome letter from the Annual Conversation be forwarded to the Select Commission for information.

(3) That the outcome of the Peer Review for Looked After Children be submitted to this Select Commission as well as Corporate Parenting Panel.

53. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 5th March, 2019 commencing at 5.30 p.m.