

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday, 29th October, 2019

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

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Hague and Marriott.

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

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

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER, 2019

Resolved:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 17 September, 2019, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

Matters arising:

The Governance Advisor updated Members that the meeting to discuss Persistent Absence (Item 25) would take place on Tuesday November 12th, 2019 and that email notification had been sent to members of the Commission.

Cllr Clark made reference to the Harms of Hate event (referred to in Item 27) which had been held earlier in the month and informed the Commission that she would be providing feedback to the Assistant Chief Executive.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

35. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

37. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items for communication.

38. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20 - UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Improving Lives Work Programme. An update was given in respect of work undertaken, progress in relation to recommendations and future work.

It was noted that a sub-group had been established to scrutinise measures to address persistent absence and work would commence shortly to review "Holiday Hunger".

Resolved:- (1) That the contents of the report and the Work Programme detail be noted.

(2) That updates be provided to each meeting of this Commission on the progress of the work programme and further prioritisation as required.

39. ROTHERHAM'S EARLY HELP OFFER

The Chair welcomed Cllr Watson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children's Services & Neighbourhood Working and the Assistant Director for Early Help and Family Engagement, along with service users and members of staff from the Early Help & Family Engagement Service.

The Char invited service users to give an account of their experiences of early help services and youth offending services respectively. They outlined the support and advice received from staff and the positive impact the interventions had had on them. This included support for new parents, assistance with benefit and financial advice, employment support and transition into adult services. The service users also highlighted how different agencies were co-ordinated in delivering tailored provision which reflected their assessed needs.

Officers from the Early Help Service gave case studies (which were provided with the consent of service users) which illustrated how the voice of service users were captured and gave an indication of the breadth and complexity of the case work under consideration. Details were also given of the "Signs of Safety" methodology used to ensure consistency of practice, and how positive outcomes for children and young people were measured.

Members thanked the service users for their personal testimonies and the assurance that they gave about quality of service.

The following issues were raised and clarified:

- The service user highlighted that there was a lack of education and

employment opportunities for young offenders. Members requested that the Deputy Leader explore if further measures could be taken to identify Council apprenticeship opportunities for young people involved in the youth justice system and engage the wider business community in similar initiatives. It was further explained that work was being undertaken with schools to minimise school exclusions and promote attendance as this was recognised as an important factor in diverting young people from offending behaviours.

- Work was undertaken with young offenders under 18, to ensure that if they were transitioning into adult services, that this was done as smoothly as possible.
- Examples were given of peer support schemes set up to engage young offenders or those at risk of offending and offer diversionary activities. The service user had participated in such schemes. An application for funding with neighbouring authorities had been successful to support such initiatives.
- Further details were provided of the early help offer to new parents; for newer parents this may involve intensive one-to-one parenting support, however as parents grew in confidence, play groups and other outreach support could be accessed on an 'as-and-when' basis.

The Deputy Leader introduced the briefing paper, outlined the key themes covered and plans moving forward. This included the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) which set out requirements for Early Help Services to provide a continuum of support to respond to the different levels of need of individual children and families; details of the Early Help Strategy 2016-2019, which had been previously considered by Improving Lives Select Commission; and the 2018 Ofsted re-inspection of Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers report which noted effective early help work with children and families.

The paper outlined that all phases of the Early Help Strategy had been completed on time, with all associated savings delivered. An overview of performance was given which included:

- Improvement in the number of families were contacted and engaged within three working days.
- Children Centre registration and engagement within Rotherham's most deprived areas.
- The year-to-date attendance rate was good and in-line with national averages.
- The three national YOT Youth Justice Board Performance indicators showed Rotherham YOT outperforming regional and national trends.

Following previous lines of enquiry from Members, information was provided on early help assessments (EHA) completed by partners and how the voice of children and young people were captured.

Steps taken to improve partner completions of EHA included:

- Hosting regular Multi-Agency Practice Development Group to share good practice
- Undertaking checks of EHAs as they are submitted by partners to ensure Local Authority oversight of quality
- Provision of information and advice to partners
- Supporting Lead Professionals with 'stuck' cases and support with Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings where appropriate

In relation to capturing the voice of the child or young people, details of consultation and engagement events were given. Practice learning days also highlighted how workers considered the voice of the child and young people. Exit Surveys and case closures had been adapted to ensure that specific questions had been asked.

Key risks for the Early Help Service were highlighted which included:

- Increased demand and complexity of work,
- Poverty and Deprivation,
- Education performance,
- Budget,
- Rotherham's Universal Offer.

The Assistant Director cited research commissioned by the Local Government Association (March 2019) which involved eight Local Authorities. The research identified the key enablers of an effective early help services as follows: setting the direction, developing capacity, working with families and evaluating impact and quality.

Further details were given of the strategic change programme taking place across within Children's Services which included;

- Market Management
- Demand Management
- Early Help and Social Care Pathway

Specifically, the Early Help and Social Care Pathway sought to develop better systems and processes that provided the right level of care and support at the right time, in the right setting which led to better outcomes for children, young people and families and fewer children and young people coming into care.

The objectives for the Early Help and Social Care Pathway included an increased focus on prevention and early intervention which supported children, young people and families to stay at home and in their

community settings and avoided unnecessary and costly statutory intervention.

The following points were raised in respect of the briefing paper:

Had an analysis of early help services in Rotherham been undertaken using the ISOS framework of services against comparative councils (including Children's Trust)? It was indicated the service would be willing to undertake the analysis as it was felt the service would reflect positively against the framework. It was stressed that no two early help offers were the same so direct comparisons with other early help services were difficult.

Clarification was sought on the current budget and future sustainability of the service. It was highlighted that 40% of early help service was funded from external sources. Future Troubled Families funding was uncertain, as were other streams. There was limited research on cost avoidance for partners arising from early help interventions, however, higher level data showed that early help services were making a positive impact.

The Chair requested that a further piece of work be undertaken on early help offer, to include the ISOS framework and that a sub-group be established to scope the specific elements which require assurance.

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

(2) That a sub-group be established to undertake further scrutiny of the early help offer.

40. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

The Service Manager (Evidence Based Hub & YOT) gave a presentation which outlined the role of the Youth Offending Team. The YOT worked alongside statutory partners including Police, South Yorkshire Probation Trust and the NHS, together with a wide range of contracted Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to achieve the national youth justice strategic objectives which were to:

- Prevent Offending
- Reduce Re-Offending
- Increase Victim and Public Confidence
- Ensure the Safe and Effective use of Custody

Rotherham YOT was located in CYPS within the Early Help Service and was governed by the YOT Management Board and Safer Rotherham Partnership. The paper referred to the Rotherham Youth Justice Plan 2019-21, which was approved by the Chair of the YOT Management Board and Chair of the Safer Rotherham Partnership and signed off by

the Youth Justice Board (YJB) on 3rd September 2019.

The following areas were highlighted as working well:

- The rate of First Time Entrants (FTEs) for Rotherham continued to fall significantly. It was suggested that the lower rate in Rotherham was due to the work undertaken to triage and assess young people at an early stage prior to their entry into the Criminal Justice System.
- Rotherham continued to have Custody rates below national and regional figures.
- The voice of young people was strong within the YOT and young people attended and presented at the YOT Board when available.
- The YOT Board Chair was proactive and sought innovative ways to share good practice.
- There were good relationships with the YJB Regional leads who provided essential peer support and challenge.
- There were Child Criminal Exploitation pathways in place across the sub-region with outreach, intelligence sharing and partnership working.

The paper referred to the YJB Peer review in January 2017 which noted that the Rotherham YOT was performing well in relation to reducing reoffending and the use of custody. The review team were impressed with the focus that partners in Rotherham had placed on the service and the local youth justice system.

In respect of areas for improvement, the Looked After Children status of the offending cohort continued to increase as a percentage from 20% in Q4 18/19 to 25% in Q1 2019/20. It was noted that this was a small cohort and therefore, any increase would be reflected as a large percentage change. Reoffending rates also continued to be of concerns, and it was acknowledged that this cohort of young people had entrenched behaviours and complex needs with a propensity to reoffend more often. However, programmes had been developed to address Barriers to Learning to reduce the number of NEET young people and increase access to counselling. YOT staff were encouraged to support families to attend the range of parenting programmes available through the Evidence Based Hub.

Reference was made to the detailed Action Plan that addressed key priorities of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Safer Rotherham Partnership and the YOT Board. Progress was measured and reported to the board at quarterly intervals.

Further work was also underway to better identify the needs of the cohort, particularly in relation to Special Education Need (SEN) or unmet needs.

The following points were raised and clarified:

Examples were given of how different agencies worked together to disrupt

anti-social behaviour to prevent escalation and possible entry into the youth justice system. This partnership working included housing officers, the police and police community service officers and fire officers along with early help workers.

Further clarification was sought in respect of lower rate of entrants in Rotherham and the evidence which supported the assertion that Rotherham was performing better than other South Yorkshire authorities. Details were given of the assessment and triage process, which contributed to lower levels of entrants into the system.

Details were given as to how risks around child criminal exploitation and peer radicalisation were assessed for first time entrants and re-offenders? Assurance was given that there was good oversight of the Prevent and criminal exploitation agenda. Examples were given of the assessment process, restorative justice in relation to hate crime and work undertaken with young people in schools.

Reference was made to whether the findings of 2017 Peer Review were still pertinent and the timeliness of data reported. It was highlighted that work was underway to track data in a more timely way. The Youth Justice Board had not yet considered commissioning another peer review to affirm that practice and processes remained robust, however assurances were given that the service was 'inspection ready'.

Thanks were given to the officer who had attended the meeting whilst on annual leave.

In summing up, the Chair referred to the earlier input from a service user and the points raised during that discussion.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Deputy Leader explores if further measures can be taken to identify Council apprenticeship opportunities for young people involved in the youth justice system and engage the wider business community in similar initiatives such as job fayres.
- 2) That the involvement of service users in offering awareness raising in schools and/or peer support to other young offenders or those at risk of offending, be explored.

41. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.

42. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Tuesday, 3rd December, 2019 at 5.30 p.m