

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Wednesday, 6th November, 2013

Present:- Councillor G. A. Russell (in the Chair); Councillors Buckley, Clark, Dodson, J. Hamilton, Kaye, License and Read and Co-opted Member Mr. Mark Smith.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ali, Burton and Donaldson, and from Co-opted Members Mrs. A. Clough and Ms. J. Jones.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Councillor B. Kaye made a Personal Declaration of Interest due to his role as Chair of the Kimberworth Park Partnership in relation to item 32 (Families for Change).

29. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

There were no members of the public or the press in attendance.

30. COMMUNICATIONS.

The Senior Scrutiny Adviser (Scrutiny Services, Legal and Democratic Services, Resources Directorate) advised that the report of the Scrutiny Review into Domestic Abuse had been presented to the Cabinet. The Cabinet would respond to the Scrutiny Review's Recommendations within two-months.

31. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH SEPTEMBER, 2013.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 18th September, 2013, were considered.

In relation to Minute No. 22 (Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report, 2012/2013), an amendment was requested in relation to the section dealing with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's main areas of concern. The second bullet point stated that levels of neglect in the Borough were an 'emerging issue'. It was requested that this be amended to the levels of neglect were being addressed as a priority following identification in the Ofsted inspection of 2011.

The Chairperson of the Improving Lives Select Commission thanked the Clerk for the format and content of the minutes from the previous meeting, as they were comprehensive and outlined all of the information considered.

Resolved: - That, with the amendment as shown above, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission be agreed as an accurate record for signature by the Chairperson.

32. FAMILIES FOR CHANGE.

Councillor G. A. Russell welcomed the Families for Change Co-ordinator, the Workforce, Strategy, Planning and Development Manager and the Director of Safeguarding Children and Families (all of the Safeguarding Children and Families, Children and Young People's Services Directorate) to the meeting. The Officers had been invited to attend the meeting to update the Improving Lives Select Commission on Rotherham's Families for Change initiative.

Minute No. C23 (Troubled Families Initiative) of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th June, 2012, provided authorisation for Rotherham to undertake the Central Government's Troubled Families Initiative.

The Troubled Families Co-ordinator explained how Rotherham had re-branded the Central Government's 'Trouble Families' initiative to 'Families for Change' in order to emphasise the positive aspirations of the programme in Rotherham. A similar approach had been taken by other local authorities. No parts of Rotherham's workstream were delivered under the name 'Troubled Families', as the intentions of partnership and co-operation were guiding principles, and all provision was done 'with' families, rather than 'to' them. The Troubled Families' Co-ordinator had retained the job title to ensure clarity and accountability to the funding stream.

Rotherham has been asked to work with 730 families during the three year programme (April 2012 – April 2015); at this stage of the programme 415 families were working with Families for Change, including both the adults and children within the family.

Families were identified as being eligible to work with the programme through a number of criterion: -

- Education – children in the family being classed as 'persistently absent' with attendance figures of less than 85%, or who had been temporarily excluded three or more times in a year, or permanently excluded;
- Crime and Anti-social behaviour as factors in the family;
- Adult/s in the family claiming unemployed Benefits.

If a family displayed evidence of all three factors, then Families for Change would engage them through family support. In accordance with the Troubled Families Financial Framework, Rotherham had also elected to apply a local filter to concentrate efforts in the eleven most deprived neighbourhoods, and to identify families affected by factors including poor mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and domestic abuse.

Children and Young People's Services Continuum of Need, shows the services and provision available from the 'Universal' to 'Acute' stages was

referred to. The majority of the families that were involved in Families for Change were in the middle 'Vulnerable' and 'Complex' stages.

A map of the Borough highlighted the incidence of contacts with the Families for Change and how there was a high correlation to the eleven most deprived neighbourhoods.

Key aspects of the provision through Families for Change were the Family Intervention Factors, including: -

- A dedicated worker, dedicated to a family to 'grip their problems';
- Practical 'hands on' support;
- A persistent, assertive and challenging approach;
- Considering the family as a whole – gathering the intelligence;
- Common purpose and agreed action: All professionals working with a family were aware of the other agencies involved;
- The Family Common Assessment Framework in place for the family: -
 - Recognised a family's strengths and needs;
 - Appointed a Lead Worker, who was the co-ordinator of all provision and professionals;
 - Delivered a process for a managed 'step-down' of cases from social care into support from the programme.
 - There were close links with Deprived Neighbourhood Lead Workers, and links through secondment to the Job Centre Plus.
- The Family Recovery Programme contract was delivered under the Families for Change project, to provide intensive family support;
- A contract awarded to the YWCA provides a dedicated lead worker for the Family Common Assessment Framework as well as the family intervention factors.

The financial structure of the Families for Change programme was considered, including the differing loading on each of the three years for the attachment fee and the payment by results percentage.

Payment by results had to be determined on a reversal of the identification criterion: -

- Improved school attendance sustained over three terms;
- A reduction in crime;
- Adults in employment or on a pathway to employment.

The time-limited nature of the Troubled Families funding was noted. There had been no announcement about what funding would be available after 2016.

Discussion ensued on the issues within the presentation and submitted

report. The following issues were considered: -

- **Wasn't this just a Whitehall idea? How well is it working in practice; are families engaging and how long do they want to remain engaged?** – Working fantastically well for many families - the case studies included in the submitted report demonstrate this. Some families are much more difficult to engage but Services can often find a way to engage with them, sometimes statutorily. The first case study submitted demonstrated multi-agency working to help employment and school attendance. Engagement times could last between eight-weeks to twelve months'. The Families for Change initiative represented a sustainable way for professionals to work with families;
- **What other information is there to support whether the scheme is a success?** – Payment by results and audit and analysis of case files, including case studies. Wider evaluation will be led by Central Government. Long-term outcomes, sustained beyond payment by results, will be looked at relating to school attendance and attainment, presentation at Accident and Emergency and so on. Local work with the Safer Rotherham Partnership, will seek to evidence the impact of the work on anti-Social Behaviour within neighbourhoods.
- **Are we engaging with newly arrived families? Case studies? European Funding?** – Yes, if they met the criteria for Families for Change. After the first twelve months a Families for Change, a Co-ordinator with language skills was recruited. European Union funding- joining up all of the funding available, this is a continuing piece of work at the City Region. The financial Framework was already optimising European Structural Funding provision through Wiseability. There would be not ability to match fund or duplicate.
- **There are families that are too hard to deal with? Do we only work with families that attract funding?** - Absolutely not the case in Rotherham. Family Recovery Programme worked with 80 families per year. Rotherham was not only directing this intervention to families that would be classed as 'easy win;' but also working with families with complex and multiple needs.
- **City Region – how does Rotherham compare to other areas across the region? Alcohol audit – how do you do this accurately? Sustain over three-terms – what happens at 4th term?** Along with other local authorities a strong group of regional networks had been established to share good practice. Rotherham came 7th in Yorkshire and the Humber, who, overall, had the highest number of outcomes across the country. Rotherham was organised to counter its own challenges; challenges were different in larger cities. Public Health used an agreed tool that did not just look units of alcohol consumed but asked more detailed questions that relied on the skill of the professional completing the audit. It was key that a skilled professional delivered the questionnaire. Attendance across three terms, the Programme was not exiting from families just because payment by results objectives had been

met but was supporting families until they could sustain themselves through accessing universal services.

- **Difference between now and previous schemes? Families living in poverty – this will get worse, how will poverty be minimised given Welfare Reforms. Many jobs now available were temporary contracts on zero hours. Working families also need help.** Families for Change Co-ordinators will ensure that work-based initiatives were appropriate. This would include the individual being part of a process, engaging with professional support and learning the pathways to work. Case study demonstrated work, accessing skills and training.
- **Working together – different areas of the Authority can conflict with one another, e.g. fines to families may not be supportive in this context** – Families for Change were using a model that supported multi-agency working and information sharing protocols.
- **At three-year point there will be the skills and knowledge but no money for the initiative – how does the Local Authority retain the workers' skills and knowledge** – By alignment with other work and ensuring that succession planning was in place to sustain provision. A very good evidence base for this type of approach was being built up.
- **Pupil Premium** – welcome new funding stream direct to schools, the Local Authority was working in partnership with schools to deploy the funding. Analysis was being undertaken to look at the educational outcomes relating to the Families for Change initiative.

Councillor Russell thanked the Officers for their informative presentation and contribution to the discussion.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and its content relating to the Rotherham's Families for Change programme and referral routes, be noted.

(2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission monitor the outcomes and benefits of the Families for Change programme in one year's time.

33. PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT RESTRUCTURE.

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Strategic Lead, Educated Other Than At School (School Effectiveness Services, Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People's Services Directorate).

The report outlined the existing provision and the imperatives on the Local Authority and its partners to re-shape provision to better meet the needs of the children on the periphery and outside of mainstream education. The Charlie Taylor report on improving alternative provision and the School Funding Reforms (2013-14) were taken into account in the proposals.

The Cabinet had agreed on 16th October, 2013, that the proposed structure of streamlining the Local Authority's existing five registered Pupil Referral Units to two should be supported (Minute No. C93, Proposed Restructure of RMBC Pupil Referral Units).

The submitted report outlined the proposed structure for Alternative Provision across the Borough. The report outlined the proposed re-structured Pupil Referral Units: -

- GCSE courses would be available at both Units, along with appropriate vocational courses;
- Links to Further Education providers would be in place to help with planning for young peoples' future pathways;
- Fully qualified teachers would work in both of the proposed Units;
- The Management Committees of the Pupil Referral Units would ensure appropriate representation from all partners and 'host' school headteachers, with the aim of increasing accountability;
- Strong partnerships would be in place between the Local Authority, Schools, Barnardo's and CAMHS and so on;
- Primary provision was still under review;
- Premises strategy;
- From 1st April, 2013, the Department for Education's School Funding Regulations stated that Pupil Referral Units should have a Delegated Budget allocated from the Dedicated Schools' Grant;
- It was proposed that a commissioning structure would exist whereby school's would be able to commission places within the Pupil Referral Units, with appropriate funding being accessed from the High Needs Block and Pupil Premium funding as necessary, on a pro-rata'd basis between the home school and pupil referral unit if appropriate;
- A review of the existing placements would also be undertaken to ensure that they were appropriate and meeting the needs of the individual.

Discussion ensued and the following points were raised and clarified: -

- **The length of time that children were accessing alternative provision;**
- **The premises strategy;**
- **Working with qualified teachers and setting up a protocol between Schools and Units to agree transition back to mainstream schools;**
- **What were the risks of schools not buying-back?** This could lead to reduced income, as could an increase in the numbers of permanent exclusions from Schools. Protocols for working with academy schools and their governing bodies. PRUs had never been intended to work as permanent units for young people. The Local Authority was inspected on safeguarding, Children Missing Education and part-time timetables of its most vulnerable pupils;

- **Mitigation of risks and uncertainties;**
- **Consultation with all Councillors and the impact on Councillors' Wards: they need to understand what is being proposed.**
- **Financial sustainability of the proposed model;**
- **Moral responsibility of all schools towards all of Rotherham's young people;**
- **Improving all stakeholders' opinions of Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Units.**

Councillor Russell thanked the Strategic Lead for Educated Other Than At School for her informative presentation and contribution to the discussion.

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

(2) That the decision of the Cabinet to support the proposed structure (Minute No. C93 of 16th October, 2013) be noted.

(3) That a further report be presented to the Improving Lives Select Commission in twelve-months' time relating to the progress of the review and whether the changes were functioning effectively. This report should link in to this Select Commission's continuing work programme item on Children Missing Education.

34. AMENDED HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY.

The Principal Education Transport Officer (Transport Unit, Streetpride, Environment and Development Services) introduced a report that outlined proposed changes to the Local Authority's Home to School Transport Policy, whereby the Local Authority's duty to provide free transport to and from school for eligible children was set out.

The Principal Officer explained that the policy was updated annually and presented the proposed revised policy from September 2013. He also explained the procedural issues that had led to a delay in the 2013 policy being circulated; the Department for Transport had issued the revised guidance in March, 2013, but this had been subject to legal challenges and withdrawn causing the delay.

There was no change to eligibility criteria in the 2013 policy. The draft 2013 policy marked in red where there were proposed changes which mainly related to clarification, and included a new section relating to the raised participation age.

Discussion ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified: -

- **Changing logistical and social factors** – new housing developments, shortage of school places in particular areas of the borough creating the need for families to travel to schools at a further distance to their home, reduced household incomes;

- **Section 2.6 (V)** - problems with mileage and safety of routes in a number of specific cases across the Borough;
- Shortest route sometime had issues relating to the narrowness and condition of the causeway, alternative routes being unacceptable and passing other schools along the route;
- Assessment of safe walking routes.

Due to the number of specific issues raised, the Chairperson asked that they be raised with the Principal Education Transport Officer directly outside of the meeting.

Resolved: - (1) That the proposed amendments to the draft Home to School Transport Policy (September 2013) be noted.

(2) That the draft policy be referred to the Cabinet Member for final approval as appropriate.

35. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Wednesday 18th December, 2013, to start at 2.00 p.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.