

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 21 September 2021

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Cooksey, The Mayor (Councillor Jenny Andrews), Aveyard, Barley, Browne, C Carter, Collingham, R. Elliott, Haleem, Hughes, Khan, Monk, Singleton, Thompson and Wilson.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Burnett and Griffin.

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

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 27 JULY 2021

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 27 July 2021 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

23. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the public or press.

24. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

25. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

26. YOT HMIP INSPECTION ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support and the Service Manager - Youth Offending Team and Evidence Based Hub attended the meeting to provide a progress report on the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Inspection Action Plan that had been put into place following the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection of the Rotherham Youth Offending Team that had taken place in September 2020.

The report stated that due to the impact of the pandemic that the inspection had been carried out remotely. The inspection had looked at YOT activity over the three domains of Organisational Delivery, Court

Disposals and Out of Court Disposals. The Inspection report had been published on 17 December 2020 with the Overall judgement being "Requires Improvement". The inspection report had made five recommendations that were:

The Chair of the YOT Management Board should:

1. Make sure that Board members understand the specific needs of children known to the YOT and advocate on their behalf in their own agencies.

The YOT Management Board should:

2. Ensure the partnership understands the reasons for the significant number of Looked After Children known to the YOT and reviews the policies and practices of all agencies to minimise the possibility of children entering the criminal justice system unnecessarily.
3. Undertake a comprehensive health needs analysis of YOT children to better understand the health provision being delivered and what needs to be developed.
4. Review the quality and accessibility of education, training and employment provision for post-16-year-old children known to the service.

The YOT Service Manager should:

5. Review the quality of risk of harm work and improve the effectiveness of management oversight in all cases.

In response to the outcome of the inspection report an action plan had been put into place to address the areas of concern. It was noted that of the 46 identified actions contained in the plan that 43 had been completed. The full action plan was attached as an appendix to the officer's report.

In introducing the report, the Service Manager - Youth Offending Team and Evidence Based Hub noted the significant progress that had been made against the objectives contained in the plan to address the five recommendations that had been made in the inspection report including the development of the role of the YOT Board and its members, and the training that had been provided for YOT Board members and YOT staff. It was noted that this development work would be continued and developed moving forwards.

The Service Manager provided information around the activity that had been carried out to develop and improve management oversight and risk management processes in the YOT. The Service Manager advised that the recording processes used by the YOT had been overhauled so as to

enable information and data related to cases to be recorded in such a way that all actions could be clearly seen, and assurance could be given on the work that was being carried out with each individual. The Service Manager emphasised that the concerns of the inspectors was that the activity being carried out across the YOT service was not being adequately recorded, and not that quality of activity that the service was providing was inadequate itself.

Members noted that while the inspection report had highlighted areas for improvement across the three areas that had been inspected, the improvement action plan only appeared to address issues related to Domain Three (Out of Court Disposals). The Service Manager advised that the inspection that had been carried out had only examined 10 cases across the YOT cohort and that the main concern of the inspectors had been around the recording of activity being carried out with young people, and not in regard to actual activity being out. The Service Manager advised that she was confident that if the service were to be reinspected that the changes to processes that had been made would mean that the service would be able to clearly evidence the work that was being carried out by the YOT across the cohort.

Members noted the high proportion of Looked After Children (LAC) in the current YOT cohort and asked for further information on the work that was being carried out to reduce the numbers of LAC entering the criminal justice system.

The Service Manager advised that significant work had been carried out by the YOT in order to gain an increased understanding of the experiences and needs of LAC in the YOT cohort. The Service Manager noted that in many cases that the offending behaviour carried out by young people who entered the criminal justice system was directly related to the trauma surrounding their entry into the care system, and that in other cases a young person had entered the care system due to issues surrounding their offending behaviour. The Service Manager assured members that work was continuing with the YOT Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel in order to ensure that the needs of LAC were adequately addressed and that the numbers of LAC across the YOT cohort were reduced. The Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support assured members that of the current YOT cohort of 177 only 17 were LAC. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted that this issue was an area of focus and was on the work programme of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Members sought assurance that the activities surrounding information sharing with the YOT Board, as detailed in the action plan, were ongoing activities. The Service Manager advised that presentations that detailed case studies, cohort information and learning opportunities were, and would continue to be shared with the YOT Board via a quarterly performance report.

Members asked how the analysis of health needs across the cohort and the development of the service pathway had improved outcomes across the cohort. The Service Manager detailed an example where a young person had entered the criminal justice system as a result of behaviour linked to their difficulties in expressing themselves and how the initial highlighting of these needs through a thorough screening process had enabled the delivery of speech and language support. The Service Manager advised that with the right questions being asked at the outset that this had ensured that the correct services and interventions that were needed to support the young person had been able to be delivered in a timely manner.

Members asked if there was an agreement in place with foster carers in the Borough that they would not involve the police with regard to certain minor incidents involving LAC. The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care, who was in attendance at the meeting advised that discussions took place with foster carers and residential homes regarding the circumstances where it may not provide the best outcome for a child or young person if the police were involved in a relatively minor incident. The Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care noted however than as incidents could happen outside of the residential setting that the involvement of the police could not always be avoided. Members were assured that work was carried out with the police in order to ensure that incidents regarding LAC were always dealt with in an appropriate and proportionate manner. The Service Manager noted the National Protocol and the 10 Point Plan that was in place to reduce offending behaviour by LAC.

Members welcomed the improvements that had been put into place across the YOT as a result of the outcome of the inspection and asked how the improvements in performance would be maintained. The Service Manager detailed the numerous methods of performance monitoring and management that were used including reporting to the YOT Board, the CYPS Performance Monitoring Scorecard and the regular performance meetings held with the Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support and the Strategic Director – Children and Young People’s Services. The Service Manager noted however that the broader outcomes from YOT work, where the service had prevented offending or made a positive difference to a young person’s life were harder to measure and record.

The Assistant Director noted the 43 completed actions out of the 46 actions that were contained in the action plan and assured members that the YOT Board were rigorous in their role of ensuring that all actions were completed to the required high standard. The Cabinet Member noted previous activity conducted by the Improving Lives Select Commission that had involved members getting beneath the figures in order to hear first-hand how the YOT had delivered services and made a positive impact on young people’s lives.

Members sought further information on the early intervention and preventative work that was carried out by the YOT and asked what work was conducted with schools who may identify children who were demonstrating potential behaviours that may put them at risk of entering the criminal justice system. The Cabinet Member noted the significant increase in partnership working and how by working with the Early Help team and South Yorkshire Police that the YOT was able to ensure an effective and coordinated delivery of preventative and early intervention activity.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support and the Service Manager - Youth Offending Team and Evidence Based Hub for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a further report be brought to the March 2022 meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission to provide a progress report on the implementation of the YOT Inspection Action Plan.
- 3) That a briefing for members of the Improving Lives Select Commission be arranged in order to provide an overview of the work of the YOT and to detail how it has positively impacted on the lives of the children and young people that it has worked with.

27. ONE ADOPTION SOUTH YORKSHIRE - IMPACT REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services and the Assistant Director – Children's Social Care attended meeting to provide a report on the impact of the One Adoption South Yorkshire regional adoption agency since its launch on 1 January 2021.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted that the launch of the new regional adoption agency involved a significant amount of planning and development as it had been essential that the new agency continued to deliver the high levels of service for children and adoptive families that had been provided by the Rotherham adoption agency.

The Assistant Director – Children's Social Care advised that One Adoption South Yorkshire was a 'partnership' model Regional Adoption Agency where the majority staff, apart from a small hub of administrative and strategic staff, remained employed by their original local authority. It was noted that this approach both enabled staff to retain their terms and conditions, and for each local authority involved to gain the benefits and efficiencies of pooled resources in order to maximize outcomes for children and adopters. The Assistant Director advised that the Regional

Adoption Agency approach was now widespread across the country.

The Assistant Director noted that a set of targets and performance indicators to measure the performance of the new regional agency over its first year of operation had been agreed. The Assistant Director advised further that as the new agency had only been in operation for eight months, and as a full year of data wasn't available, early analysis of available data had shown that the new agency was on track to meet its performance targets across all of its key performance targets.

It was noted that targets had been set around the following objectives.

- the recruitment of adopters.
- the number of children placed for adoption.
- the reduction of the number of interagency placements.
- the delivery of post-adoption support.

The Assistant Director advised that despite the challenges created by the pandemic, that the key area of activity surrounding the recruitment of adopters had continued throughout the period with indicators showing that the new agency was on track to meet its target of recruiting 92 new adoptive families during the year. The Assistant Director advised that with regard to interagency placements that the trends were looking positive with fewer interagency placements for children from Rotherham than in the comparable period during 2020. The Assistant Director noted that while it was important to reduce the number of costly interagency placements and to keep as many children as possible in the local area, interagency placements would always be needed in order to ensure that each child was placed with the most suitable family for their needs.

The Assistant Director provided information around the provision of, and development of effective post-adoption support, noting that it was essential that potential adopters knew that support was available to them whenever they may require it in the future. The Assistant Director advised that the completion of the legal adoption process was never the end of the adoption process, and as each child would always retain a connection with their birth family it was essential that tailored and effective post-adoption support was in always place in order to ensure that each child's and family's needs were effectively met.

The Assistant Director detailed the key areas of focus for the new agency moving forwards including the recruitment of a diverse range of adoptive families and the further development of post-adoption support for children, adoptive families and birth families.

Members asked for further information on the activity that was being carried out to recruit a more diverse and representative range of adoptive families. The Assistant Director advised that this activity was a work in

progress but noted that activity included having literature available in a range of languages, promotion via social media, radio and bus advertising, as well as utilising the knowledge and connections of agency staff. The Cabinet Member advised that elected members could help with the recruitment of adopters by sharing social media posts with their followers in their local communities.

Members asked how the type of support provided post-adoption compared to the support provided to foster carers. The Assistant Director stated that once the legal adoption process had been completed there would no longer be a social worker involved with the family as the adopter had taken on all legal responsibility for a child, and as such had the same rights and responsibilities as any parent and their birth child. The Assistant Director advised that all adopters were able to access post-adoption support, including access to therapeutic support at any time up until child was aged 18. The Assistant Director noted that post-adoption support was provided for the first three years after adoption by the local authority who had managed the original adoption process, and after three years support was provided by the local authority where the child lived. It was noted that adoptive parents, like all parents could access support via Early Help or Social Care if required.

Members noted that the report had stated that post-adoption support in Rotherham had a smaller resource due to a different approach to delivery than in other local authority areas and asked for further information on how this approach differed. The Assistant Director advised that in Rotherham post-adoption support had been managed by purchasing bespoke services from providers for each child and family, whereas the approach taken in other areas had been to employ staff directly to provide the post-adoption support.

Members noted that the new model of delivery for One Adoption South Yorkshire appeared to be complex and sought assurance that the new regional adoption agency was working effectively. The Assistant Director advised that while the operation of the new agency could appear complex, assured members that in reality it was much simpler than it appeared and was performing and functioning well. The Assistant Director advised that the new regional agency created greater resilience across the service, enabled the sharing of best practice over a wider area and created more opportunities to recruit potential adopters.

Members sought further information regarding how the performance targets for One Adoption South Yorkshire had been arrived at an agreed. The Assistant Director advised that the agreed performance targets had been established by looking at the past performance of the four agencies that made up One Adoption South Yorkshire and by predicting what improvements in performance could be expected by the creation of the new agency. The Assistant Director advised that these targets would be amended for future years to in order to reflect the actual performance of the regional agency. The Assistant Director also noted that it had been

difficult to set targets due to the impact of the pandemic. For example, that while the recruitment of adopters had continued throughout the pandemic, the processes involved had taken longer to complete than would have normally been expected.

The Chair asked if there were particular groups in society where it was more challenging to recruit potential adopters from. The Assistant Director noted that there was a national shortage of adoptive families from BAME backgrounds and that this was also a problem across South Yorkshire. The Assistant Director advised that the recruitment of all types of adopters was constantly challenging and that it was essential that there was a clear message that all types of families and individuals could adopt and could come forward as potential adopters.

Members asked that as One Adoption South Yorkshire was a shared service across Rotherham, Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley, whether there would be any joint scrutiny of the service. The Cabinet Member advised that she would discuss how procedures around the monitoring of work of the new agency was monitored could be facilitated most effectively with her counterparts in the other authorities

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director – Children's Social Care for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a report on the performance of the One Adoption South Yorkshire regional adoption agency be brought to the September 2022 meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission.
- 3) That consideration be given to how all elected members can be involved in promoting the work of One Adoption South Yorkshire in their wards and in encouraging potential adoptive parents to come forward.

28. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME EASTER AND SUMMER 2021 UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support, the Outreach and Engagement Manager and the Outreach and Engagement Senior Practitioner attended the meeting to provide a report on the operation of the activities provided by the Council's Healthy Holidays programme that had been funded by the Government's Holiday Activities Fund Grant over the Easter and Summer holidays. The report stated that the purpose of the grant was for local authorities to make free places at holiday clubs available in the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays in 2021

for children who were eligible for, and received benefits-related free school meals.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services noted the success of the Healthy Holidays programme and how the offer provided by Rotherham that had been funded by the Government's Holiday Activities Fund Grant had been a much more comprehensive offer by than similar schemes offered by other local authorities. The Cabinet Member noted the successful visit from the Department for Education that had taken place during August where officials had been shown the Healthy Holidays programme in Rotherham and who had given excellent feedback on the scheme.

The Cabinet Member noted her thanks to Amy Woodhead the Outreach and Engagement Manager for ensuring the smooth running and successful delivery of the Healthy Holidays programme and to the Catering Service and volunteers from Rotherham Heroes for preparing and delivering the meals that had been an integral part of the successful delivery of the programme.

The Outreach and Engagement Manager and the Outreach and Engagement Senior Practitioner made a presentation to the meeting that provided information on:

- the Holiday Activities and Food Programme grant including eligibility criteria and the minimum requirements of what local authorities needed to provide.
- how delivery partners including Rotherham Heroes, the Early Help team, the school meals service and Voluntary Action Rotherham, amongst others had played an integral part in the delivery of the Healthy Holidays programme.
- how the programme had been delivered over the Easter and Summer holidays.
- the types of activities that had been offered as part of the programme.
- the positive feedback that had been received from both children and parents regarding the programme.
- the planning activity that was taking place in preparation of the delivery of the programme during the Christmas holidays.

The Chair and members welcomed the report noting the positive feedback that they had received regarding the Healthy Holidays programme from residents. Members noted that the scheme had given children a welcome opportunity to spend time away from screen, relax and to make new friends whilst participating in a wide variety of activities.

Members noted that the Council had not been given specific targets regarding the number of children who attended the holiday clubs but asked whether the monitoring of uptake that had been carried out had shown any areas of the Borough where attendance had been lower than had been hoped. The Outreach and Engagement Manager advised that the full analysis of attendance had not yet been completed but assured members that work would be done to increase attendance in areas where attendance had been lower. The Outreach and Engagement Manager advised that once complete the information on attendance and uptake would be circulated to the members of the committee.

Members asked if there had been any confirmation received from the Government regarding the continuation of the funding to deliver holiday activities after the current funding ended with the delivery of a programme over the Christmas holidays. The Outreach and Engagement Manager advised that no decision had yet been made by Government but that the Department for Education had advised that they were hopeful that a decision would be communicated with local authorities by mid-November 2021.

Members asked what procedures were in place regarding a child's attendance on the programme if their entitlement to Free School Meals ended part way through a holiday period. The Outreach and Engagement Manager advised that in such circumstances each case would be examined on a case-by-case basis, noting that it was always better for a child to continue their attendance on the programme if at possible. The Outreach and Engagement Manager advised that if members had any enquiries regarding continued eligibility for a child that they should contact the team directly for advice and guidance.

The Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support noted the importance in the delivery of holiday activity schemes aimed towards a particular group to be delivered as part of a universal offer, with this approach supporting community cohesion and helping to avoid the risk of stigmatisation of those children attending. The Assistant Director noted that ideally the delivery of the activities offered through the Healthy Holidays scheme should be normal activity for local authorities and not be seen as a one-off provision made in exceptional circumstances. The Assistant Director noted his thanks to all of those who had been involved in the successful delivery of the programme.

The Cabinet Member assured members that work was being carried out to see what types of activities could be offered during school holidays in the future, noting that it was never acceptable for any child to go hungry during the school holidays.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, the Assistant Director - Early Help and Business Support the Outreach and Engagement Manager and the Senior Family Support

Worker for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the information collated regarding attendance and uptake around the programme of activities delivered via the Holiday Activities Fund Grant be circulated to the members of the Improving Lives Select Commission as soon as it is available.

29. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme for 2021/22.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme for 2020/21 be approved.

30. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

31. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

32. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Tuesday 5 October 2021 at 5pm at Rotherham Town Hall.