

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 17 September 2024

Present:- Councillor Knight (in the Chair); Councillors Blackham, Bower, Brent, Elliott, Fisher, Foster, Harper, Hughes, Monk, Reynolds and Sutton.

Apologies for Absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Baggaley, Garnett and Pitchley.

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

23. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 30 July, 2024 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

27. CORPORATE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP BOARD UPDATE

This item provided an update on the recent meeting of Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and the following was noted:

- The Chair of the Board welcomed and introduced three newly elected Councillors who were now members of the Board. It was agreed that each Councillor would champion and lead on a specific corporate priority.
- The Assistant Director for Childrens and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) presented a proposed draft Terms of Reference to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board. The Board agreed on the terms, purpose, and responsibilities listed within the Terms of Reference.
- The Performance and Business Intelligence Manager presented a high-level overview of the Performance Scorecard Report to the Board, which included a summary of performance for key indicators across the Looked After Children Services for Quarter One 2024/2025.

- The Assistant Director for CYPS delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the Local Government Association Care Leavers Peer Review recommendations, which included the plan and progress made to date for Rotherham's Care Leavers. It was noted that following Peer Review in March 2024, there had been a new Leaving Care Strategy, an updated Rotherham Sufficiency Strategy and the implementation of a Strategic 16 Plus Sufficiency Working Group.
- The Children in Care Council (CICC) and the Leaving Care Forum were welcomed to the Board, the two groups represented the voices of children in care and those transitioning out of care. Both groups delivered a presentation to the Board which included their lived experience, their development as a group, and how they were participating in discussions on various aspects of corporate working.
- The Head of Provider Services delivered a presentation on the recent changes to sixteen plus supported accommodation, this was an available placement option for children who were sixteen plus and had support needs and was based on a comprehensive assessment of needs. The Head of Service shared details of the new regulations that applied to this type of provision and how sufficiency was a key priority for the service, further details were shared about internal governance and how this was being monitored.
- The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board would take place on 10 December 2024 and a further update would be provided to members at the subsequent Improving Lives Select Commission meeting.

28. OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT OUTCOME

This item provided an overview on the outcomes from the Ofsted Focused Visit to Rotherham Children's and Young People's Services (CYPS) on the 14-15 May 2024.

The Chair invited Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children's and Young Peoples Services to introduce the report and the following was noted:

- Since 2015 the Councils Childrens and Young People Services had progressed significantly, from an Ofsted judgment of adequate to obtaining and maintaining a good judgment.
- There were still areas of challenge, however this visit had recognised all the progress and hard work the local authority had done.
- The Ofsted Focused Visit Outcome letter stated that "the response to children who are subject to child in need and child protection planning is very effective. A stable senior leadership team is unstinting in its determination to make children in Rotherham safer

and improve their outcomes”.

- There had been a delay in publishing the letter, this was due to the local and national elections and the periods of purdah before each election.
- The Cabinet Member thanked the elected members present for their leadership and cross-party political will, which had helped drive forward the improvements, ensuring a whole Council approach to children’s safety and well-being.

The Chair invited the Assistant Director for CYPS to lead on the presentation and the following was noted:

Background-

- Following an inspection in July 2022 Ofsted judged Rotherham Children’s Services to be Good.
- The report provided to the Commission outlined the findings from the Ofsted Focused Visit to Rotherham Children’s and Young Peoples Services on 14 and 15 May 2024.
- The process took two weeks in total, and Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the following:
 - Performance management
 - Management oversight
 - Supervision for frontline practitioners
 - Quality assurance
 - Continuous professional development of the workforce.

Key Messages-

- The headline findings recorded that the response to children who were subject to child-in-need and child protection planning was very effective. Strong corporate support ensured a whole-council approach to understanding children’s vulnerability and responding to risk and need.
- It was recognised that senior leaders and council members were ambitious and aspirational for children subjected to children in need and child protection planning. There was a ‘whole council’ response to making vulnerable children a priority.
- It was recognised that the local authority had a strong Children in Need and Child Protection Service, that appropriately and effectively assessed children and applied the right thresholds to ensure that children were protected, and needs were met.
- There was clear extensive targeted support and early help that underpinned services. Partnership services were good and multi-agency staff were an important part at all stages of intervention. When immediate action was required to safeguard children, this took place swiftly.
- Action planning following Ofsted inspections was overseen by senior leaders during the Change Management Board, with a clear focus on impact monitored via performance management and quality assurance.

Action Planning-

- To support further improvement Ofsted identified that children's unique needs and individual characteristics could better inform their plans. Senior leaders were already aware that this was an area requiring further development, following activity to improve the identification of children's identity needs when planning for their future. This was corroborated in the report and recognised by the service within the submitted self-assessment.
- Ofsted felt that senior leaders knew themselves well, they had a solid understanding and a good line of sight to frontline practice. They knew the strengths and areas for improvement in this practice area. This was reflected in the service's self-assessment. Inspectors did not find any area for improvement in this practice area that senior leaders were not already sighted on.

Next Steps-

- The headline findings from the focused visit in May stated that the services response to children was "*resulting in sustained improvement to the lives of many children and their families.*"
- The Ofsted Inspection for Local Authorities Childrens Services (ILACS) evaluation criteria and grade descriptors stated, "*The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to be judged outstanding if the response to children and families is consistently good or better and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families.*"

Good to Great-

- Ofsted concluded that "*the response to children who are subject to child-in-need and child protection planning is very effective. Strong corporate support ensures a whole-council approach to understanding children's vulnerability and responding to risk and need.*" It was noted that this put the local authority in a very strong position for an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) judgement.
- Children's Services was due a judgement ILACS visit at some point in 2025. More information would become available at the next Annual Engagement Meeting in February 2025.
- The service continued to work on their aspirational "Good to Great" plans in each individual service area.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- In relation to promoting the good outcome of the focused visit, the service had published a press release. The Cabinet Member for CYPS worked with the Local Government Association to mentor other Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chair's, this spread the message of good work to other local authorities. The Department

for Education had written to the local authority as a result of the focused visit outcome letter, and expressed an interest in the Engage Service, who were recognised as a point of good practice. The Engage Service worked with children and their wider family at an early stage, to support them at home, with the aim of avoiding them entering the care system. It was advised that the Council's work relating to child sexual exploitation was recognised as Gold Standard.

- Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) reported to Scrutiny on a regular basis. Trauma awareness sessions were held with elected members the previous year. Early intervention with family support reduced the need for access to mental health services. The Corporate Parenting Partnership Board would be holding a discussion at a future meeting relating to CAMHS, to ensure that looked after children would be prioritised on the waiting lists for services.
- The service was aware that there were unmet needs nationally, relating to children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. Due to increased demand, there was waiting lists for children who had an assessed mental health need. There was a therapeutic team within the Children in Care Service called the Support for Change Team. The team engaged with other services to provide wrap-around support to meet therapeutic needs.
- There had been positive outcomes from Family Group Conferences and Family Group Meetings, which resulted in some children being supported by their extended family, rather than becoming children in care and some instances where children in care were returned to their birth families.
- It was requested that the service developed a document which would be shared with members of the Commission. The Document would include detail of the support services available to constituents in Children's and Young People's Services, such as the Engage Programme. The document would also include positive outcomes that would highlight good practice.
- The Cabinet Member received anonymised case studies from the Service on a regular basis, this identified the real impact of the service.
- Ofsted last inspected the Council's Children's and Young Peoples Services in June 2022. Ofsted inspections took place every three years. The Ofsted Focused Visit would take place between the full inspection dates.
- The full ILAC Inspection framework included reviewing the services self-assessment, reviewing all data the Council held in relation to children, demographics, the number of looked after children, children on child protection plans and children in need. It also included audit activity on site, meetings with young people and key partners. After the inspection a full report would be provided to the local authority.
- Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had advised the local authority that they would complete a Special Educational

Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection between the 30 September and 4 October 2024. The framework would be intensive, the inspectors would be on site for a full week, having conversations with the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum, the Chief Executive and relevant Cabinet Members. Audit activity would be completed alongside reviews of individual children and consultations would take place with children and the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum, to assess how the Council gathered views of children and families across the board.

- The Local Area SEND Inspection last took place in July 2021. The inspection was a joint inspection with a focus on partners such as health and education partners.
- Ofsted advised the service that further focus was required on child plans to ensure they were more accessible and understandable to children and families. The child plans were re-designed and made simpler, the new plans were in place.
- The Joint Assistant Director for Commissioning's position was jointly funded between the local authority and health services. The role was seen by Ofsted as good practise. The Joint Assistant Director for Commissioning's team was responsible for monitoring the waiting lists for CAMHS.
- The Cabinet Member was assured that for urgent crisis points and acute situations, the waiting lists were a lot shorter than the waiting lists for neuro-diverse assessments.
- The neuro-diverse assessment waiting lists had reduced over recent years from an average of three years to two years, the introduction of the screening tool Helios contributed to the reduction of waiting lists. It was noted that the waiting lists still required further reductions and there was a requirement for schools to be inclusive to meet the needs of the child whilst they were awaiting a diagnosis.
- A graduated response was required to children's mental health, it was a broad spectrum, and it was noted that not all children required CAHMS support to have their needs met. It was important for the service to raise awareness and be trauma informed.

Resolved:- That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Note the information within the report and the progress made to date.
- 2) Request that the Assistant Director for Childrens and Young Peoples Services provides an A4 summary of the services available in CYPS (such as Engage), that elected members can share with constituents.

29. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme, and the following was

noted:

- The Work Programme had been updated and included additional items following the Chair and Vice-Chair Work Programme meeting in August.
- Children's and Young People's Services would be holding a consultation session relating to the development of the SEND Strategy with members of the Commission. This would take place on 21 October between 11.00- 12.30pm and invites had been issued to members.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme for 2024/2025 be approved.

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

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity and the following was noted:

- The Preparation for Adulthood Spotlight Review Recommendations Report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet were approved.
- Following discussions, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board recommended that the Improving Lives Select Commission consider completing further work the high number of SEND figures within Rotherham's and the impact this would have on budgets relating to transition to adulthood.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

31. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.