

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 15 September 2020.

- PRESENT** Councillors Charles Clark, Angharad Davies (Chair), Michael Ensor, Kathryn Field, Roy Galley, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, John Ungar (Vice Chair), Trevor Webb, Francis Whetstone, Mr Simon Parr and Cristin.
- Trevor Cristin, Diocese of Chichester Representative
Simon Parr, Catholic Diocese Representative
- LEAD MEMBERS** Councillor Carl Maynard, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Bob Standley, Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability
Councillor Sylvia Tidy, Lead Member for Children and Families.
- ALSO PRESENT** Philip Baker, Assistant Chief Executive
Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services
Tom Hook, Assistant Director for Planning, Performance and Engagement Division
Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Mark Whiffin, Head of Finance
George Kouridis, Head of Service, Adult Safeguarding
Douglas Sinclair, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance
Reg Hooke, Independent Chair, East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership
Graham Bartlett, Independent Chair, East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board
Stuart McKeown, Senior Democratic Services Advisor
Aaron Sams, Democratic Services Officer

66 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 12 MARCH 2020

66.1 RESOLVED to agree the minutes as a correct record.

67 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

67.1 Apologies for absence were received from Matthew Jones, Parent Governor Representative.

68 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

68.1 There were none.

69 URGENT ITEMS

69.1 There were none.

70 EAST SUSSEX SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (ESSCP) - SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

70.1 Reg Hooke, Chair of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) introduced the item by providing an overview of a Serious Case Review (SCR) undertaken during 2019/20. The review concerned the provision of services to a young man referred to as Child T and identified significant neglect in his care and in how agencies worked together to safeguard his welfare. The areas of concern identified in the report included: a lack of follow-up when appointments were not kept; a lack of clarity by agencies around the understanding of child protection procedures for children approaching adulthood; concerns around information sharing and joint working between health and education services; that there was a general lack of awareness amongst non-health professionals of the risk to life posed by diabetes and other long-term conditions and that overall, the chronic health condition of the child was not fully seen as a safeguarding issue. Mr Hooke also discussed the recommendations and actions taken as a result of the SCR.

70.2 The Committee then discussed the report, with a summary of the key issues set out below:

- In response to queries about communication gaps between education and health services and issues relating to the transition from childhood to adulthood, Mr Hooke agreed that these are areas where there continue to be challenges. It is for that reason that the recommendations in the SCR report seek to address these challenges and whilst he believes progress is being made, Mr Hooke also confirmed that the ESSCP will continue to review and seek to make improvements in these areas.
- Members discussed the impact of Child T's missed appointments and the lack of home visits. In response Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, informed the committee that one key learning is the need for all colleagues to be curious and to think carefully about the impact of treatments not being delivered and visits not taking place; and to be mindful of the need to potentially refer a case on so that it could be reviewed from a safeguarding perspective. Mr Gallimore also confirmed that a further key area of learning was the need for colleagues to have a clear understanding of the 'child's lived experience' and to not make assumptions about the individual's level of engagement in decisions about their welfare and their capacity to understand what is appropriate.
- The Committee sought reassurance that the recommendations and actions contained within the report would be carefully examined and monitored. In particular Members asked for further detail about the recommendation that requires 'any child with a serious health condition has a written down multi-agency plan'. In response, Mr Hooke confirmed that there is government guidance already in place regarding the need for such a plan. As a result, the focus of the report with regard to this area was directed at re-enforcing the need for joined up working between local health and education agencies. In terms of training, Mr Hooke confirmed that significant levels of training both within individual agencies and also by safeguarding partnerships had been delivered. Furthermore, Mr Hooke also confirmed that after approximately three years each serious case review report has been published, a further review is undertaken to measure the impact of its recommendations. This longer-term

process aims to ensure the whole review process is effective and that learnings are embedded.

70.3 In conclusion the committee welcomed the actions being taken forward in response to the recommendations contained within the Serious Case Review report.

70.4 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

71 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2021/22

71.1 Philip Baker, Assistant Chief Executive, introduced the report by providing an overview of the challenging context within which the RPPR process for 2021/22 is taking place. This included highlighting the financial uncertainty created by the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the continued uncertainty around future levels of Government funding. As a result, it had not yet been possible to articulate a revised Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Although the committee were also informed that an update on the Council's financial position would be considered by Cabinet on 2 October and that Members would be kept up to date with the evolving financial position.

71.2 The committee then discussed the financial and business planning information it had been supplied with in support of its contribution to the RPPR process. A summary of the key discussion points is set out below.

71.3 With regard to the 'Performance Measures and Targets' section of the Portfolio Plans, it was noted that some targets for 2020/21 and beyond were set at a level lower than the outturn figures for 2019/20. Members therefore asked for further detail about how targets are set and why some of them 'are not more ambitious'. In response, Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, informed Members that departments are ambitious but that targets must be realistic and take account of the impact of changes to budgets and other factors. Furthermore, and because of the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, past performance is currently 'no longer necessarily the best predictor of the future'. For example, there has been a 20% increase in the number of children being placed on child protection plans during the first quarter of 2020. This increase coincides with the national lockdown. Previous experience would not have led the Department to predict this significant increase. With that in mind, achieving targets will therefore be particularly challenging at the current time. Nonetheless the Department remain ambitious, and performance is regularly reviewed and reported on.

71.4 Clarification was sought about progress with regard to implementing the 'No Wrong Door' initiative. The Children's Services Department believe this relatively new initiative will help deliver a number of significant benefits in support of its work with adolescents aged 12-25 and who are dealing with complex challenges. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that whilst the impact of Covid-19 had led to a necessary pause in development work, the Department regard the programme as important as it will help deliver more effective support to Looked after Children in the county. It is anticipated therefore that with the release of monies as part of the settlement for 2020/21, work will re-commence in April 2021. As the Department are keen to make rapid progress though, a more recent development includes the placement of an advert for a project manager for the programme.

71.5 The Committee welcomed that a 'Support to Care Homes and Covid-19 Impact on Black Asian Minority Ethnic Groups' report was set to be considered by the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board on 17 September 2020. However, given the public interest in this topic and the likelihood of a second wave of the pandemic, the committee agreed it would be appropriate for it to have its own discussion of the related issues. As a result, it was agreed to request that a report based on the Health and Wellbeing Board item be brought to the November 2020 meeting of the committee.

71.6 In response to a query about the Council's ability to maintain its safeguarding performance in the light of further potential reductions in funding, the committee were informed that it had been agreed last year to postpone savings relating to safeguarding. Going forward, and as part of the RPPR process this year, the deliverability of those savings would again be reviewed.

71.7 With regard to the impact of previously agreed savings on Early Help services, the Director of Children's Services said that the scale of savings required meant that it had been necessary for the Department to develop a strategy that would focus services on those in greatest need. Although due to a range of factors outside of the control of the Children's Services Department, it had subsequently become necessary to re-profile savings with regard to the closure of some of the Children's Centres identified in the Early Help strategy.

71.8 With regard to preventing the spread of the coronavirus, the committee asked for clarification about the monitoring and training of agencies who provide services to residents. In response Tom Hook, Assistant Director for Planning, Performance and Engagement, confirmed that extensive support around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided to the wider care sector. This includes a standing and enhanced training offer around the use of PPE. Furthermore, at the height of the crisis the Department issued daily email bulletins which provided updates on the evolving national guidance. The Department also issued over two million items of PPE via the Sussex Local Resilience Forum to local care facilities and to the Department's staff.

71.9 The Committee RESOLVED to establish a RPPR Scrutiny Review Board to meet on Thursday 17 December 2020 to consider the developing Portfolio Plans, the Medium Term Financial Plan and savings proposals as they emerge and to submit Scrutiny's final comments on them to Cabinet in January 2021.

72 PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

72.1 The Committee discussed its Work Programme which is comprised of a number of ongoing scrutiny reviews, reference groups and planned reports. Set out below is an overview of the key items discussed.

Current Scrutiny Reviews

School Exclusions

72.2 The Committee agreed at its meeting in June 2019 to appoint an Initial Scoping Board to explore issues relating to the high rate of school exclusions in East Sussex. Having discussed the Board's findings, the committee subsequently agreed at its meeting in March 2020 to proceed with a formal scrutiny review. However, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the availability of schools to contribute to the

review, the committee agreed to continue to pause activity with the intention to recommence it at a suitable future date, with the committee set to review the situation at its meeting in November 2020.

Initial Scoping Reviews

Loneliness and resilience.

The Committee agreed to undertake scoping work for a potential scrutiny review of issues relating to loneliness and resilience within East Sussex. The subject matter of the scoping exercise had been identified by the People Scrutiny Committee in 2018 as one of four potential scrutiny reviews which form part of an overarching scrutiny review of the 'Changing Care Market'. However, in light of the impact of COVID-19 on the Public Health Team's ability to support the review, the committee agreed to defer meeting until January 2021.

Suggested Topics

72.3 The Committee discussed its ongoing interest in developments relating to the coronavirus national emergency and the challenges facing the Adult Social Care and Children's Services departments. The committee therefore agreed to update the work programme to include a further option to explore the impact of Covid-19 on departments and the services they provide.

Scrutiny Reference Groups

Educational Attainment and Performance Scrutiny Reference Group

72.4 As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the disruption it has caused to both school exams and attendance, the Committee were informed that relevant educational performance data would not be available in January 2021. With that in mind, the Committee welcomed the Director of Children's Services offer of a briefing session on the work being undertaken by the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) to support schools with their preparations for the exams anticipated to take place in summer 2021.

Health and Social Care Integration Programme Reference Group

72.5 Councillor Davies informed the Committee that the Director of Adult Social Care and Health had undertaken to provide an update briefing to the reference group on progress with the integration programme in October 2020.

Strategic Commissioning Review of Early Help - Scrutiny Reference Group

72.6 The Director updated the committee regarding the implementation of the proposals agreed by the Lead Member for Children and Families on 7 October 2019. The committee agreed to review progress with the implementation of the revised Early Help strategy in spring 2021, but also noted that as some changes were postponed, this might be subject to review.

72.7 The Committee RESOLVED to update the work programme in line with the items agreed in paragraphs 72.2, 72.3, 72.4, 72.5 and 72.6 above.

73.1 Graham Bartlett, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) introduced the Annual Report. The SAB is a multi-agency Board configured under the Care Act 2014. Its primary duty is to assure that local safeguarding arrangements comply with the Care Act 2014 and related statutory guidance. This is done via a range of mechanisms including working collaboratively with agencies, gathering data, delivering training, auditing and conducting safeguarding adult reviews.

73.2 Mr Bartlett's introductory comments focused on a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) which considered the circumstances relating to the death of Adult B, a 94-year-old woman. The review was led by an Independent Reviewer. The resultant report identified themes relating to the way agencies communicate and work together and how individuals sometimes displayed a lack of professional curiosity. One key outcome of the review has been the development of an 'unexplained adult death protocol' which East Sussex SAB has led on and which it is believed will go on to have an impact at the national level. The protocol commits agencies to come together quickly where an adult has died and there is suspicion of abuse or neglect.

73.2 The Committee then discussed a range of issues which included the following items:

- **Independent care sector:** In response to a query, it was confirmed that independent care providers do 'have a duty of care' to report safeguarding concerns to the Adult Social Care and Health Department. It is also a CQC requirement that regulated providers have systems in place for this, which are regulated through the inspection regime. Mr Bartlett also confirmed that the private care sector is represented on the SAB and that the Board works closely with the sector.
- **GP's (General Practitioners) role in safeguarding:** Clarification was sought about the role of General Practitioners (GPs) with regard to safeguarding referrals and whether there is a particular issue with the rate of such referrals in East Sussex. In response Members were informed that the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has been working with Primary Care around building up GP knowledge and awareness around safeguarding. With regard to the case of Adult B the key issue was a lack of effective engagement with the GP about potential safeguarding concerns.
- **Communication between agencies:** The Committee sought assurance that the issue of effective communication and information sharing between agencies is being addressed, given these areas are often cited as themes in SAR reports. In response, the committee heard that the PAN Sussex Information Protocol seeks to help improve the effectiveness of the interactions between agencies by providing clarity to professionals about, for example, when information can be shared and whether authority should be sought first. The committee were assured that the impact of the protocol will be carefully monitored. Members also asked for more detail about multi-agency audits and their usefulness 'as a teaching tool'. In response the committee were informed that such audits provide 'a tried and tested' process for bringing agencies together to delve into specific issues. This can help

reveal, for example, whether there are any significant communication gaps between agencies and provide a mechanism for discussing potential solutions for closing them.

73.3 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting ended at 12:37pm.

Councillor Angharad Davies
Chair