

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 21 September 2015.

Present Kathryn Field (Chair), Angharad Davies, Claire Dowling, Michael Ensor, Roy Galley, Stephen Shing, Alan Shuttleworth and Kim Forward.

Dr Ann Holt, Church of England representative
Councillor Johanna Howell (District and Borough Council Representative)
Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative

Lead Members: Councillor Sylvia Tidy (Lead Member Children & Families / designated statutory Lead Member for Children's Services).

Councillor Nick Bennett (Lead Member for Learning & School Effectiveness) and Councillor David Elkin (Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Resources)

Also present Becky Shaw, Chief Executive
Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services; Alison Jeffery, Assistant Director (Early Help and Commissioning); Liz Rugg, Assistant Director (Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice); Louise Carter, Assistant Director (Communication, Planning and Performance), Louisa Havers, (Head of Performance and Engagement – Adult Social Care), Reg Hooke, Independent Chair LSCB, Douglas Sinclair, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance, Marion Rajan, Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager

Senior Democratic Services Advisor Stuart McKeown

9 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2015

9.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 15 June 2015.

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

10.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Charlton, Simon Parr, Roman Catholic Diocese and Catherine Platten, Parent Governor Representative.

11 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

11.1 Councillor Ensor declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 6 (minute 14) as a member of Bexhill Street Pastors.

11.2 Councillor Shuttleworth declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 6 (minute 14) as Chair of the Safer Communities Partnership in Eastbourne.

11.3 Councillor Claire Dowling declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 6 (minute 14) as Chair of the Safer Communities Partnership in Wealden.

12 URGENT ITEMS

12.1 No urgent matters were notified.

13 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2015/16

13.1 The Lead Member for Resources, Councillor David Elkin, introduced the report by discussing the context of the current RPPR process. It was confirmed that no budget was exempt from investigation for potential savings and that comments were welcome from the Committee on the areas of search. The Chief Executive then updated the Committee on developments relating to the RPPR process. This included reference to the ongoing assessments of both the implications of the Government's July budget statement and the introduction of a National Living Wage.

13.2 The Committee then discussed the areas of search before them. The Committee sought more detailed information about the potential impact of the proposed savings and also made a number of more specific comments which are set out below:

- that the Children's Services Budget be presented (at future RPPR discussions) separately from the Dedicated Support Grant;
- more detailed information about the longer-term impact of disinvestment in preventative activities in respect of children's centres, especially the impact of any proposed centre closures;
- more information about the flexibility of health visiting and the extent to which a much more targeted approach could be adopted when dealing with individual families that require a range of support from different health and social work professionals;
- exploration of the impact of a more general disinvestment in preventative activities and the kinds of problems likely to ensue in the future (e.g. whether this will ultimately cost the local authority more);
- more information about the extent to which the department considers it would be able to continue to provide services at the current standards given the level of savings required; and
- further exploration of opportunities for income generation.

13.3 The Committee also considered that:

- representations should be made to the Department for Education (DfE) arguing that it is no longer sustainable for local authorities to continue to have responsibility for aspects of schools' performance over which they have no direct control;
- in response to anecdotal evidence cited at the meeting that the DfE is actively advising academy sponsors not to purchase services from local authorities, that this matter also be raised with the DfE; and
- if the local authority finds that it is unable to effectively influence schools/academies to improve in areas that we don't control directly, then this would indicate areas to investigate for savings.

13.4 RESOLVED to:

(1) to ask that the information requested in Minute 13.2 is provided to the Committee and that consideration is given to the requests made in Minute 13.3; and

(2) establish a scrutiny review board to meet in December to consider the developing portfolio plans and savings proposals as they emerge.

14 ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFER COMMUNITIES PERFORMANCE

14.1 Louisa Havers, Head of Performance and Engagement (Adult Social Care Department), introduced the report on the current community safety priorities outlined in the East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership Business Plan (appendix 1 of the report). A Children's Services Scrutiny Information Pack was provided in Appendix 2 of the report which provided more detail on those issues which are of particular relevance to the Committee (including Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and Abuse, Preventing Violent Extremism and Youth Offending).

14.2 After significant reductions over the past 8 years, the Committee were informed that the latest crime figures show a 15.7% increase. However, it was clarified that the increase was due in part to changes in recording practices. For example, new guidance issued by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies has resulted in an increase in recorded instances of public place crime. There has also been a drive to increase the reporting of Sexual Offences, Hate Crimes and Domestic Abuse which have also contributed toward the increased figure.

14.3 The new priorities identified in the Business Plan were discussed, with the Committee's attention drawn in particular to the following priorities:

- **Street Communities.** Research indicates that when compared to the national average, East Sussex has a high proportion of homeless women. Given this an action plan is being developed to address the specific needs of this group; and
- **White Ribbon.** Since East Sussex County Council was accredited its White Ribbon status last year, a number of awareness raising initiatives have taken place. These include a raising awareness training event for ambassadors and champions on 1st July. The next steps will include raising awareness activities on an ongoing basis with community groups and local sports clubs and engaging with schools and colleges.

14.4 The Committee welcomed the report. A debate then ensued with the Committee raising a number of issues which are summarized below, together with responses from the relevant officers present:

- **Targets in the Plan.** It was accepted that the report contained very useful information and set out clear priorities which the Committee welcomed. However, the Committee felt that the report lacked clear targets against which progress could be effectively measured. In response Louisa Havers explained that the Business Plan is a strategic document and that work is being undertaken to produce a more detailed action plan. This action plan will be a working document which will set out clear targets and deadlines.
- **Community Policing in relation to children and young people.** The Committee discussed community policing and the positive impact this has had in helping prevent some young people from becoming involved in criminal activity. There was a general view that savings within the police budget might negatively impact on the gains made in this area. Given this view, a request was made to invite a representative of Sussex Police to attend a future meeting of the Committee. This would enable the Committee

to ask questions about those aspects of Sussex Police's plans for community policing which impact more directly on young people. In response the Committee were informed that the police are engaging with lead community safety officers and seeking feedback from local councils on their proposals.

- **Domestic Abuse and its impact on Children.** The Committee asked for clarification about how the emotional trauma children experience as a result of domestic abuse is dealt with. In particular, the Committee were concerned that if children do not have access to counselling they may go on to perpetuate a cycle of domestic abuse later in life. In response Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, stated that the Department is very aware of the impact of domestic abuse on children. For example, staff within the Department are closely involved in discussions with colleagues from other agencies when Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) are required – ensuring that the needs of the child are kept central. There is also a training programme for the Department's staff and for partners from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Work is also being done in schools about what is an appropriate and safe relationship. The purpose of this being to both help children understand what may be going on in their own lives and reduce the likelihood that they perpetuate abusive relationships when they reach adulthood.
- **Engagement with the Voluntary Sector.** The Committee discussed the role of the voluntary sector and whether volunteer organisations could be engaged with more systematically to help reduce, for example, instances of anti-social behaviour. Involving the voluntary sector more widely might also have the additional benefit of lessening the financial burden on the local authority at a time of reduced resources. In response Louisa Havers welcomed involving the voluntary sector more closely and noted that one of the recommendations coming to the Safer Communities Board will relate to broadening community engagement. As a result, finding ways of including businesses and the voluntary sector will feed directly into priority setting and the action plan moving forward.
- **Road Safety.** The Committee highlighted the importance of road safety as a concern for them and were assured by Louisa Havers that this is an area which is being looked at closely by Local Community Safety Partnerships.

14.5 Councillor Sylvia Tidy, Lead Member for Children and Families informed the Committee that she will be attending future meetings of the Community Safety Board. Cllr Tidy endorsed the comments made earlier in the meeting relating to the importance of noticing the impact of domestic abuse on children and that schools understand this impact.

14.6 RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the performance in 2014/15 and the priorities and issues identified for 2015/16.
- (2) note the relevant components of the agenda specific to Children's Services.
- (3) invite a representative of Sussex Police to attend a future meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee to give evidence in relation to future plans for community policing, with reference to its impact on children and young people.

15 EAST SUSSEX LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD (LSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15 AND BUSINESS PLAN 2015-2018

15.1 The East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) annual report 2014/15 and Business Plan 2015-2018 was introduced by Reg Hooke, the Independent Chair of the LSCB. Mr Hooke provided the Committee with an overview of the key issues covered in the report. This included reference to an independent safeguarding schools group which the LSCB have brought together with the independent sector and which has proved to be both popular and

effective. Mr Hooke also explained that together with the Director of Children's Services, the schools audit programme has been pushed forward and that safeguarding in education will be a specific priority for the next three years. The Committee were also informed that the number of child protection plans has dropped from over 600 to around 450 and that this has been achieved via a mixture of effective leadership from within the Children's Services Department and improved supervision. It was also noted this improvement has occurred in the context of the THRIVE programme and that early help and intervention work is ongoing. Other positive trends in terms of the management of demand on services include reductions in both referrals and reductions in numbers of children in care.

15.2 The Committee were also informed about the process of setting the five new priorities for the next three years up to 2018. In particular, Mr Hooke commented on how helpful the input of the Children in Care Council and the Youth Cabinet were in determining what mattered most in East Sussex. The LSCB's focus over the next three year period mean it will measure the impact it is having in making improvements for children in East Sussex, and particularly for those children within its priority areas.

15.3 The LSCB are very mindful of the ongoing issue of financial savings and the impact this might have on safeguarding. Mr Hooke assured the Committee that the LSCB will be looking to ensure that where changes are being made, the risks to safeguarding children are being identified and efforts are being made to mitigate those risks as far as can be done. Mr Hooke concluded his remarks with his evaluation that the LSCB is in a strong position and that it is growing well. A particular strength of the Board is its willingness to learn and the rigour with which learning reviews are conducted. Mr Hooke also praised the work of his vice chair, Dr Tracey Ward and the eight sub-groups, all of whom he has now visited and all of whom are working in a very committed and effective manner. Finally, Mr Hooke noted the LSCB's training programme was highly rated by attendees with 97% of them considering the course to be either good or excellent.

15.4 The Committee thanked the Board for its work and made a number of comments which are summarized below, together responses from relevant officers:

- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).** Clarification was sought about the number of UASC coming into the county who are taken on as Looked After Children (LAC). The specific concern here being that East Sussex County Council are finding, for example, foster placements and school places for these children and then significant numbers are absconding. The Committee wanted to know what could be done to reduce the numbers absconding. In response the Director of Children's Services explained that the number of UASC is small in East Sussex. However there will always be potential for UASCs to enter the county. For example, Newhaven has served recently as an entry point for UASCs. It is clear responsibility for these children falls on East Sussex County Council - once it is established via an age assessment process that the individuals are indeed children. With regard to the issue of absconding, this is a challenge for all local authorities as children cannot be detained unless there are legal grounds to place them in a secure unit.
- **Monitoring Training.** The Committee asked for clarification as to how the LSCB monitor the safeguarding training provided in other agencies that have a key role in this area. This question was prompted by the recent Care Quality Commission's (CQC) finding that there has been inadequate safeguarding training within the East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust. In response Reg Hooke confirmed that the multi-agency training the LSCB provides is available to all professionals and that it is recognised by the Board that promoting the availability of this training is key. Furthermore the Board has the goal of not only delivering training to a large number of individuals, but also establishing what percentage of people within each organisation or specialism are receiving appropriate training. In summary the LSCB are seeking to ensure it has a clear understanding of training needs and the safeguarding shortfalls across all of the agencies. Liz Rugg also

confirmed that as part of the Section 11 audit which partner agencies complete on a regular basis for the LSCB, there is a question about whether sufficient safeguarding training is provided. The audit requires agencies to rate themselves. However, there is a challenge process which was implemented last year within East Sussex whereby Section 11 audits were presented to a sub-group of the LSCB for challenge. Marion Rajan (Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager) also informed the Committee that consideration will be given to strengthening the training questions that go into the Section 11 audit which is a pan-Sussex document. The Committee were also informed that at the next meeting of the LSCB, a senior health manager will be presenting a report that considers the safeguarding implications of the recent CQC findings.

- **Online Safety.** The Committee asked for clarification about the nature of the training provided regarding online safety. The Committee were informed that one of the reasons why online training has been established as a priority over the next three years is that whilst the quality of training is good, it is not delivered consistently. The goal for the LSCB is to ensure that all children and professionals within schools get the appropriate level of training. In response to a question about what would success look like in terms of online safety, the Committee were informed that success would include adults feeling more confident dealing with online safety issues and all children feeling able to come forward and talk about their concerns.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).** In response to a query about the extent of FGM in East Sussex, the Committee were informed that there have been no reported incidents in the county to date. However, East Sussex County Council has a responsibility to both help raise awareness of this problem and to help foster confidence amongst the local community that if individuals were to report a concern regarding FGM, they would be provided with an appropriate response. It is a subject therefore which will need ongoing monitoring.
- **Priorities for 2015/16.** The Committee expressed concerns about those schools which had not completed Section 175 and 157 audits. In response the Committee were informed that Reg Hooke and Stuart Gallimore wrote a letter to those schools which hadn't responded last year making it clear that it is their duty and an expectation that they complete the audit. With regard to those schools which had responded, the Board are also following up on these to ensure it is satisfied with the responses given and that their assessments have been performed properly. Mr Gallimore also added that he had written to Ofsted on this matter and suggested that when conducting a survey they ask schools for a copy of their 175 audit. In response to a query regarding the mental health priority, Mr Hooke confirmed that this is an area the Board are just starting to develop. A more detailed overview therefore was not possible in the meeting, although the Board are aware of the capacity issues within CAMHS and are planning a half day board meeting to consider the issues within this priority.

15.5 RESOLVED: - It was resolved to receive the Annual Report of the East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board. The Committee also commended the Board for its clear and well-presented report.

16 THRIVE PROGRAMME REVIEW

16.1 The report provided an opportunity for the Committee to review the outcomes of the Thrive programme. The Director of Children's Services commended the report to the Committee and highlighted the fact that the programme had been awarded the Local Government Chronicle's 'Children's Services of the Year' and 'Business Transformation' awards for 2015.

16.2 The Committee welcomed the report. A debate then ensued with the Committee raising a number of issues which are summarized below, together with responses from the relevant officers present:

- **Activities covered by the Thrive Programme.** The Committee asked for reassurance that the positive data included in the report did not hide activities which the department were no longer performing. In response to these questions, Liz Rugg agreed that the Department needs to be careful that top line indicators don't mask activities that are no longer being engaged in. However, the Committee's attention was drawn to the target 'more children receiving targeted support from early help'. A key goal of the THRIVE programme was to ensure that children and families were responded to as promptly as possible by the right people. The Thrive programme therefore involved 'recalibrating the system' so that the right people were able confidently to deal with queries or to ensure they were passed on to appropriate colleagues to respond to. A range of measures have been put in place to assist with this. For example, the Department have established with partners a multi agency screening hub, including the Police, which deal with high level cases where there is a safeguarding concern. Alison Jeffery, Assistant Director also added that at the start of the Thrive Programme the Department undertook an analysis of where its resources were being directed. The analysis revealed resources could be more effectively re-directed to families at Level 3 on the Continuum of Need (which ranges from Level 1 where children's needs are met by universal services to Level 4 where children have acute needs and families need a possible multi agency response and specialist intervention). Resources were therefore accordingly re-allocated. Given this and a range of other measures undertaken as part of Thrive, the Department is confident it is doing all it can in the current financial circumstances to focus resources where they are most needed.
- **Sustainability of the Thrive Legacy.** The Committee also questioned whether the proposed level of savings required in the coming years would have a negative impact on the legacy of the Thrive programme and whether without further funding, the benefits of the programme would be lost or at least reduced. In response to this question the Committee were informed that given the reduced resources available to ESCC, a key aim of the Thrive programme was to develop a sustainable framework for coping with future demand. The Department felt Thrive had embedded within its teams a whole range of new ways of working which were efficient, effective and targeted.
- **Initial Contact and Referrals.** The Committee noted that Table 1 of the Finance and Performance Review document indicated a negative impact for initial contacts and therefore asked whether this is something the Department was concerned about. In response the Committee were informed that the impact of change column was shown as negative as rates have gone up, although the Department did not necessarily view this as a problem. The key factor for the Department here being to ensure that the work coming in is dealt with at the right level. So, for example, the Department are working to build up the early help hub because contacts are still being received at a level higher than they should be.
- **Clarification on cost.** The Committee asked why agency fostering costs in East Sussex County Council are higher than average. In response it was explained that the figures for agency foster costs were based on a benchmark that pools data from 71 authorities. Included with this pool is data taken from authorities in parts of the country where costs are on average lower. If compared to near neighbours East Sussex County Council costs are lower.
- **Partnership working.** In response to a query about the extent of liaising with partner organisations, Stuart Gallimore assured the Committee the Department is working together with relevant organisation to ensure the impact of savings on children and young people is minimized.

16.3 Councillor Tidy, Lead Member for Children and Families, commended the Thrive programme to the Committee and said that the Department are now in a much stronger position to deal with the challenges ahead and that it is her desire to help ensure the positive benefits of the programme are maintained.

16.4 RESOLVED: - It was resolved to note the report.

17 CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE (CAMHS) POSITION STATEMENT

17.1 The Coalition Government announced in March 2015 additional funding for CAMHS services. Following on from this announcement, NHS England produced guidance for Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) requesting they produce and submit transformation plans by 16 October 2015. As there is a long history of East Sussex County Council working closely with its local NHS partners over mental health, it was agreed a single East Sussex Plan should be drawn up by the Children's Services Department and then submitted to the CCGs for consideration. This draft Plan, which was attached to the report for the Committee's attention, details the ways in which the additional money could be spent by the CCGs. The Committee were also informed that work is being undertaken to develop a performance management framework to help ensure that the additional funding is spent effectively.

17.2 The Committee welcomed the report and asked for clarification on the items listed below.

- **Increase in Perinatal Mental Health Services.** It was clarified to the Committee that the increase in perinatal mental health services refers to the support offered to women who suffer from post-natal depression. As things stand resources for this support are stretched. The Hastings and Rother CCG are therefore providing some additional funding as part of their inequalities programme. This will then be reviewed with the intention that the learnings from this programme will help inform a whole county approach. It was confirmed that although the funding for post-natal depression is ostensibly for supporting the mother, such support directly benefits the child. This is because post-natal depression may negatively affect a mother's ability to form an attachment with their child, which in turn may impact negatively on the child's development and well-being.
- **Transition arrangements.** The Committee asked for more detail about the measures in place to assist children in their transition to adulthood with regard to mental health services. In response the Department acknowledged that this is an area where more work is required. As a result it is hoped a drop-in centre in Hastings for 14 to 25 year olds will be helpful in terms of piloting different approaches for supporting young people. Another piece of work being undertaken in this area relates to developing a possible social impact bond. The bond would be used to invest in young people who experience trauma in childhood.

17.3 RESOLVED: - To note the report.

18 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

18.1 The Committee discussed the work programme and the potential areas for future reports and scrutiny reviews.

18.2 It was agreed to establish a Review Board to sit for a single meeting to consider the following two proposals:

- Proposed changes to discretionary SEND transport provision from the 2016/17 academic year; and
- Proposed changes to discretionary Low Income Families (LIF) and Further Education Link transport provision from the 2016/17 academic year.

18.3 The above proposals are being determined by the Lead Member for Learning and Schools Effectiveness on 12 November 2015. The Review Board's comments will be included in the reports being put before the Lead Member for his consideration.

18.4 It was agreed that a review of Educational Attainment for Key Stage 1 would be the subject of the next Children's Services Scrutiny Committee review. Accordingly it was agreed that members of the Committee would be contacted after the meeting with a view to convening the Review Board.

18.5 The Committee were also informed that the final report of the Raising the Participation Age Scrutiny Review Board would be presented at its next meeting on 23 November 2015.

18.6 The Committee asked that a Scrutiny Review of Educational Attainment for Key Stage 4 also be added to the Forward Plan. It is proposed this review will commence after the conclusion of the current Key Stage 1 Scrutiny Review.

18.7 In response to a query from the Committee, Stuart Gallimore provided an update on his understanding regarding Ofsted's plans for inspections in East Sussex. The update included reference to an anticipated re-inspection of school effectiveness services.

18.8 RESOLVED: It was resolved that the work programme will be amended in line with paragraphs 14.6 (3), 18.2, 18.4 18.5 and 18.6.

19 FORWARD PLAN

19.1 The Committee noted the Forward Plan for the period 1 September 2015 to 31 December 2015.

20 ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

20.1 None received.

The meeting ended at 12.37 pm

The date of the next meeting is Monday 23 November 2015.

COUNCILLOR KATHRYN FIELD
Chair