



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 23 November 2015

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Caroline Needham (Chair), Alan De'Ath, Elaine Chumnerly and Donald Johnson

Co-opted members: Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Dennis Charman (Teacher Representative), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative) and Philippa O'Driscoll (Westminster Diocesan Education Service Representative)

Other Councillors: Sue Fennimore and Sue Macmillan

Officers: Anna Carpenter (Safeguarding Service Manager), Andrew Christie (Executive Director of Children's Services), Jean Daintith (LSCB Independent Chair), Rebecca Harvey (Principal Social Worker), Iain Keeting (Metropolitan Police Service), Steve Miley (Director of Family Services), Liz Royale (Head of Safeguarding, Central London Community Health Trust)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee held on 21 September 2015 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 8, Paragraph 13

Add "The committee agreed that it could be helpful if the School Improvement Service positively promoted schools setting up working parties to address workload and work-life balance" to the end of paragraph 13.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Caroline Ffiske and Nadia Taylor.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ian Ross, representing Outside Chance, explained that the organisation ran workshops aimed at preventing young people from engaging in gang related behaviour. These sessions were available to schools in Hammersmith and Fulham at no cost, and there were sessions designed for both primary and secondary school pupils. The workshops covered topics such as making the right friends, young people and the law, the dangers of drugs and catching criminals. Councillor De'Ath said that Mr Ross had run a session at St Thomas More Catholic School which had been very good. Andrew Christie explained that he was happy to publicise the workshops through newsletters, but noted the importance of word of mouth between schools. Councillors also noted that as most schools were now academies the local authority had limited influence over them. Denis Charman suggested that Mr Ross engage with governors directly, for example by running a workshop at a borough-wide governors meeting.

ACTION – Officers to continue to work with Outside Chance to promote their workshops to schools (IAN HEGGS).

5. CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING IN HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM - PRESENTATION AND Q&A

A presentation on Child Protection and Safeguarding was given by Anna Carpenter, Iain Keeting, Liz Royale and Rebecca Harvey.

Key points from the presentation were:

Introduction (Anna Carpenter)

- Safeguarding was a responsibility shared by everyone, although some agencies had specific responsibilities.
- Abuse was both inflicting and failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse was divided into four categories, these being physical, emotional and sexual abuse with the fourth being neglect.
- There were four thresholds of need in children's services ranging from universal to acute.
- Children's Services were not able to remove children from their parents. Only the police and the courts could do that, and even then only in limited circumstances.

Police (Iain Keeting)

- Every police officer in London had been trained on safeguarding, regardless of their role.
- If officers were concerned about a safeguarding issue, they would create a MERLIN alert, which would be passed to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This would then be considered and referred as appropriate.
- There were two teams which dealt with criminal safeguarding investigations; these were the child abuse investigation team, which had very strong links to children's services, and the community safety and domestic violence team which sometimes dealt with investigations in which the children's safeguarding enquiries were part of a wider investigation. Referrals might also be made to the police anti-terrorism or anti-gang units.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was tackled through regular multi agency CSE meetings at both borough-wide level and across the three boroughs. Police worked not only to prosecute for CSE, but also, where more serious charges could not reasonably be brought, to prosecute for lower level offences in order to remove perpetrators from victims lives.

Health (Liz Royale)

- Health professionals were in a good position to identify safeguarding issues as they had close contact with children, often with multiple visits from families.
- Health services were now provided by a wide range of different organisations, and so contacts might not be clear.
- Commissioning organisations had Designated Doctors and Nurses who dealt with safeguarding strategically. Delivering organisations had Named Doctors and Nurses who were responsible for delivery. Central London Community Healthcare also had a Head of Safeguarding and a Safeguarding Lead on the Executive Board.
- Health organisations had safeguarding responsibilities under both Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 and the Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance published in 2015. There were also new duties from other acts relating to the reporting of Female Genital Mutilation and Counter-Terrorism.

Children's Services Social Work in Action (Rebecca Harvey)

- There were currently three different routes into social work: a traditional degree, the Step-Up to Social Work programme, or the Frontline programme.
- Social workers workloads were protected in Hammersmith and Fulham, with a cap of about ten cases, which helped to improve outcomes. The borough was considered to be a good place to be a social worker; there were also good opportunities for progression.
- A case study of a family was used, setting out the process a social work case followed. Initially a case was assessed using the assessment triangle which included the child's developmental needs, parenting capacity and family and environmental factors, centred around the child. In this case the assessment had identified problems

such as serious neglect, emotionally unavailable care, parentified teenagers and a lack of access to medical care and education. Initially the children were removed from their mother, parenting and psychological assessments carried out and then support provided. Support included CAMHS for the children, therapy for the mother and practical parenting support. Social workers had built a good relationship with the mother and children, and regular access had been maintained. This was thought to be key to a successful outcome having been achieved, with all of the children now doing well and being cared for by their mother, who was enjoying parenting for the first time. This had been achieved in 15 months, and having the children back with the mother was expected not only to improve their lives but also to save over £250,000 per year from the care budget.

A Service User's Experience

- A video showing the experience of an ex-care leaver was shown during which he explained the importance of social workers building relationships with people, and the very positive impact interventions could have on lives. Through workshops and discussions with his social worker he had gone from a person who would regularly take drugs and get into fights to someone who held down a job and had his own flat, whilst his problems with anger had been resolved.

In response to questions from members officers explained that:

- The council was committed to protecting front line services from the impact of budget cuts; the protection of children was a priority.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) was a local authority role responsible for managing and overseeing concerns, allegations or offences relating to staff and volunteers who work or have regular contact with children in any organisation across the local authority area. There were three potential elements to investigations: employment, children's services, and criminal. **ACTION – A presentation by the LADO, Jane Foster, was to be added to the committee's work programme. (DAVID ABBOTT)**
- **ACTION – A journey map for social work including key social work and safeguarding contacts was to be sent to members of the committee. (STEVE MILEY)**
- Safeguarding training was delivered for the voluntary sector, and take up was monitored. **ACTION – Figures on safeguarding training delivered for the third sector to be sent to the Chair. (ANNA CARPENTER)**
- Around 400 MERLIN alerts from LBHF were passed through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) per month. These were then assessed using a Red, Amber, Green scale, and then shared with other agencies. Feedback was not always given to those who had submitted a MERLIN alert, but all issues were dealt with.
- There was more often involvement from social workers when children with Special Educational Needs were in a family, as the demands placed upon parents were greater. The council had to focus on the needs of the child rather than the parents feelings, although officers recognised that there was a fine balance to be struck, and were happy

to speak to parents groups regarding the issue if there were practical improvements which they felt could be made.

- Voluntary groups were considered to be an important option for social workers, as they could often build very good relationships with people which officers were, because of their position, unable to do. The council's community development worker trained many organisations on safeguarding issues, and raised its profile. Support was also offered in writing or updating safeguarding policies.
- If a safeguarding issue were to be raised, the person being told ought to explain to the person raising the concern that they would have to discuss it with others. They ought also to make notes of what they were told in case these were needed as part of any investigation.
- **ACTION – Officers to discuss with Nandini Ganesh whether a protocol for information sharing with voluntary organisations was needed, and how one could be developed (STEVE MILEY).**

6. LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD - 2014-15 ANNUAL REPORT

Jean Daintith, Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), explained that the board was required to produce an annual report. The report was being brought to the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee to give members the opportunity to scrutinise the board's work.

Councillor Chumnerly asked whether the LSCB considered the effectiveness of the council's scrutiny arrangements when writing the report. Jean Daintith explained that she met with the chief executive, the head of children's services and with cabinet members to discuss the performance of the organisation, and relied on these meetings to identify problems, rather than directly scrutinising the scrutiny arrangements of the council.

Councillor Johnson noted the list of the LSCB's achievements, and asked what else the LSCB hoped to achieve. He also asked how good the council was at learning from its mistakes. Jean Daintith explained that the LSCB needed to improve its communication, which was an ongoing project. She was pleased however that the council learned from mistakes, including those made in Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster. The shared LSCB was of particular benefit in this regard as there was a greater amount of casework available to learn from compared to smaller authorities. Areas which needed to improve in Hammersmith and Fulham included relationships with absent partners, timeliness of actions, police and mental health service attendance at incidents and the way Chelsea and Westminster hospitals dealt with Female Genital Mutilation.

Councillor Chumnerly asked whether learning from the LSCB was passed to frontline officers. Jean Daintith explained that a quarterly newsletter was produced and circulated. The effectiveness of the cascading arrangements were currently being tested. The LSCB had also launched a website which they were hoping to build further to contain more useful information for officers.

Councillor Chumnerly also asked how the voluntary sector were involved in the work of the LSCB. Jean Daintith explained that the LSCB included a representative of the voluntary sector, and that there were more voluntary sector members on the borough based local partnership groups. Anna Carpenter explained that the last local partnership group had included a lengthy item on the voluntary sector; there was a strong link between the LSCB and voluntary organisations.

Dennis Charman said that it was important that safeguarding messages were communicated in different ways to ensure that they engaged professionals who had been trained before. He also asked whether those professionals who were investigated because of safeguarding concerns were given sufficient support, considering the long period of time investigations sometimes lasted. Andrew Christie noted that safeguarding investigations were complex and difficult for those who had been accused of wrongdoing, and said that the LADO ought to make it as easy as possible whilst still ensuring that a thorough investigation took place. He was happy to discuss any specific concerns Mr Charman had.

Councillor Needham asked whether there was scope for further work on E-Safety. Jean Daintith explained that the issue had been looked at by an LSCB Short Life Working Group, and new protocols had been developed. The best information was available nationally, and the main role for the local authority was to disseminate new guidance and information to schools.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Andrew Christie explained that the Metropolitan Police had been very proactive in supporting Operation Makesafe and commended the work of the officers involved.

Councillor Chumnerly noted that the Angelou Partnership had recently been launched to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and asked that this be included in the next Executive Director's update. **ACTION – VAWG to be included in the next Executive Director's next update report to the committee (ANDREW CHRISTIE).**

Councillor Needham noted that youth takeover day had taken place recently and that it had been very successful. More children had participated than ever before, and some of the work they had done had been of a very high standard. The success of the event was to be publicised to secondary school headteachers. **ACTION – Brenda Whinnett to be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee to update members on Youth Takeover Day (DAVID ABBOTT/BRENDA WHINNETT).**

8. CABINET MEMBERS UPDATE

Councillor Macmillan explained that an 8am-6pm childcare offer was currently being discussed with headteachers. Since the last meeting she had visited a

number of primary and secondary schools and the council's family assist team.

Councillor Chumnerly asked that the impact of the 8am-6pm childcare proposal on child-minders be remembered. She also asked what work the family assist team did. Steve Miley explained that the family assist team carried out short term intensive work with families. It was intended to build this team up as it was effective at keeping families together and improving outcomes, as well as reducing the cost to the council. Referrals came from police, other professionals or where someone was assessed as needing their support when first seen by the council. Details of the work of each team would be included in the journey map for social work which officers had agreed to circulate to members.

Dennis Charman said that he felt that the local authority would need to take a leading role in opposing the changes to the school funding formula proposed by the government which would take a significant amount of funding away from Hammersmith and Fulham. Councillor Macmillan said that headteachers had already raised the issue with her, despite the formal announcement not being due until later in the week. It was noted that any reductions in funding would be dampened so as they took effect gradually.

Nandini Ganesh asked whether proposed new eligibility for school transport for pupils above the age of 19 had been drafted yet. Councillor Macmillan explained that these would be discussed with parents representatives at an upcoming meeting.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The following changes to the work programme were agreed:

18th January 2016

Add:

- Youth Takeover Day to the Youth Council Update

Remove:

- Childcare Task Group Update

29th February 2016

Add:

- Childcare Task Group Update
- Local Authority Designated Officer
- CAMHS Working Group Update

Future Items

Add:

- The role of School Governors and Governors Training.

Councillor Chumnerly asked whether statistics on Anti-Social Behaviour perpetrated by children and young people could be included on a future agenda. Andrew Christie explained that Anti-Social Behaviour would be considered by the Community Safety, Environment and Residents Services

Policy and Accountability Committee. **ACTION – Councillor Chumney to be provided with relevant reports (AINSLEY GILBERT).**

Councillor Needham noted that the committee had a long standing vacancy for a Parent Governor. Andrew Christie agreed to speak to Governors Support about the issue, and specifically whether a governor from an academy could fill the vacancy. **ACTION – Attempts to be made to fill the vacancy for a parent governor (ANDREW CHRISTIE).**

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 18th January 2016.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.45 pm

Chair

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