

**MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 12
MAY 2016**

Present:

Councillor Benson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley	Scott	Stansfield
Humphreys	Singleton	L Taylor

Frances McErlane, Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People

Ms Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People (Early Help and Social Care)

Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services)

Mrs Merle Davies, Director, Centre for Early Child Development

Mrs Sharon Mather, Development Manager, Centre for Early Child Development

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary for Resilient Communities

Councillor Amy Cross, Cabinet Member for Health Inequalities and Adult Safeguarding

Councillor Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Third Sector Engagement and Development

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 17 MARCH 2016, 6 APRIL 2016 AND 14 APRIL 2016

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 17 March 2016, 6 April 2016 and 14 April 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications for public speaking on this occasion.

4 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee considered the Executive Decisions taken since the last meeting of the Committee and asked a number of questions regarding PH26/2016 'Adult Social Care – Care at Home Fee Rates 2016/2017'. In response, Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People advised that a full cost of care exercise had been undertaken in order to determine the fee rate proposals. Councillor Cain, Cabinet Secretary added that the ambition was that all

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providers would pay the Joseph Rowntree Living Wage within the next two years, but that currently the Government's new living wage was being implemented, resulting in employees under the age of 25 receiving a lower wage.

Members noted the large increase in the rate for sleep-in shifts from an average amount of £4.50 per hour to £8.00 per hour and requested more information regarding when the sleep-in rate was paid. Ms Smith advised that the rate was paid for sleeping only and that a different rate was applicable when awake, which was in line with case law. In response to a further question, she added that sleeping shifts varied in length and duties were dependent on the nature of the person's needs.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the items contained within the Forward Plan, May 2016 – August 2016 within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary and requested an update on the 'Headstart Round Three Funding Bid Result and Future Action'. Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People advised that the bid was being formally presented in the next few weeks and an outcome was expected by the end of June 2016.

Members discussed the 'School Place Planning Next Steps' and were advised by Mrs Curtis that the Council had a statutory responsibility to ensure there were enough school places for children within Blackpool. She added that there was a predicted shortage in secondary school places and that a free school bid was currently being considered by the Department for Education, which would create the required number of places.

In response to questions, Mrs Curtis reported that child refugees were expected in Blackpool and that the whole school system was being considered in order to work through potential pressures. She also advised that academies set their own admissions criteria, but that all applications for school places, including to academies, were processed by the local authority's Admissions Team.

The Committee agreed to receive a detailed paper on School Place Planning once a decision had been made by the Department for Education on the free school application.

6 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager advised that should the establishment of a Health Scrutiny Committee be approved at Annual Council on 16 May 2016, a review of the Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee Workplan would be undertaken to ensure that the workplan reflected the new terms of reference of the Committee.

The Committee discussed the Implementation of Recommendations table and noted the previous request to receive training on how Adults Social Care Services were regulated by the Care Quality Commission and the Council. The Chairman requested that a briefing paper be provided instead of a training session.

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Members also noted the response received from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust regarding the use of the pharmacist on the Blackpool Victoria Hospital site and requested that the Trust be asked to investigate whether changes could be made to the contract of Lloyds pharmacy, to allow the pharmacy to dispense normal prescriptions in addition to hospital scripts.

The Committee agreed:

1. To review the Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee Workplan following Annual Council.
2. To request a briefing paper rather than a training session on regulation of Adult Social Care Services.
3. To request that Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust investigate whether changes could be made to the contract of Lloyds pharmacy to allow the pharmacy to dispense normal prescriptions.

7 BETTER START

Mrs Merle Davies, Director, Centre for Early Child Development (CECD), gave a presentation to the Committee about the work undertaken by Better Start to date. She advised that Better Start was focussed on three key outcomes: Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Diet and Nutrition and that a large number of initiatives and programmes had been put in place to achieve the three key outcomes. She added that Better Start was also focussed on providing sustainability and continuing beyond the funded pilot stage.

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee and a question was raised regarding the ability of Better Start to measure the outcomes from the first 18 months. In response, Mrs Davies advised that many initiatives were still being established and that work was currently being undertaken to identify the performance indicators to be measured. In response to a further question, Mrs Davies reported that the Big Lottery was undertaking six monthly reviews of Better Start and had reported that good progress was being made. In addition, the Big Lottery attended all Better Start Executive Board meetings.

Members noted that a key piece of work related to volunteers and queried if links had been established to the Volunteer Strategy being developed by the Council. Councillor Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Third Sector Engagement and Development, advised that a joined up approach was being taken.

In response to questioning, Mrs Davies advised that the £1.6 million funding for Parks and Open Spaces was not split evenly between the three parks and that the Park Rangers were working across the whole provision. Furthermore, the improvement and renovations were wheelchair friendly and provision had been made for other disabilities.

The Committee discussed the Head Start initiative, which was also being funded by the Big Lottery and Mrs Davies advised that there were strong links between the two organisations.

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8 ADULT SERVICES OVERVIEW REPORT

Ms Karen Smith, Deputy Director of People (Adult Services), presented the Adult Services Overview Report and the Chairman invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee commended the excellent work of Links Lodge in achieving an 'Outstanding' Care Quality Commission (CQC) judgement and queried if the best practice could be shared across providers in Blackpool. Ms Smith advised that all CQC reports were published online, which providers were encouraged to read. She added that there was a provider forum in Blackpool where best practice was shared.

Members noted that there was one Residential Care and Nursing Home rated as inadequate and queried if the home was making sufficient progress. In response, Ms Smith advised that the Council was working closely with the home and was confident that progress was being made. She added that all homes requiring improvement received enhanced monitoring or were subject to suspension until adequate progress was made.

Members also noted that two small residential homes had had their contracts terminated and queried the reasons behind the decisions. Ms Smith reported that the issues at the homes had ranged from maintaining records accurately to undertaking safety checks and that a contract would only be terminated with a provider if it was clear that sufficient improvement could not be made. Councillor Cross, Cabinet Member for Adult Safeguarding and Health Inequalities added that care homes were offered high levels of support in order to prevent issues occurring and receipt of poor inspection reports.

The Committee asked a number of questions around the recruitment and retention of care home staff and was advised by Ms Smith that 'inadequate staffing levels' were a sector wide regional problem and that Healthier Lancashire was taking the strategic lead in addressing the problem.

In response to a question, Ms Smith advised that she had not received any complaints regarding the availability of respite services and that there appeared to be satisfactory availability.

The Committee commended the 'good' inspection outcome of the Council's Coopers Way Respite Service and noted the good leadership at the facility.

The Committee went on to consider the recent changes to Intermediate Care and requested that a detailed update be provided in approximately six months to report on how the service was working.

The Committee agreed to receive a detailed update in approximately six months on Intermediate Care.

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9 HEALTHWATCH - DOMICILIARY CARE PUBLICATION RESPONSE

Mr Stephen Garner, Manager, Healthwatch presented the Healthwatch report into Domiciliary Care Services in Blackpool. He highlighted that the survey had been undertaken as it had been identified as a priority by Healthwatch in April 2015. Mr Garner reported that 750 surveys had been circulated with 98 returned, which was a response rate of 13%. The survey asked key questions around the choice of time for service users and whether the service had met their needs and had provided a largely favourable response.

Mr Garner added that the main issues identified through the survey were a lack of choice relating to the time when carers arrived, carers often arriving late and not staying the full length of time. He reported that the survey report had been forwarded to the Council for response and would also be presented to the Providers' Forum as many of the recommendations related directly to providers.

The Committee questioned the response rate and whether more could be done to improve the number of responses. Mr Garner advised that the survey had been distributed in an easy read format and had been made as simple as possible to encourage responses. In response to a further question, Ms Smith advised that the response rate of 13% was broadly consistent with response rates to Adult Social Care surveys.

In response to a question, Mr Garner advised that there was no breakdown of the client group available, only the age range and gender/ethnicity of those that had responded. He added that some responses had been submitted by carers on behalf of service users.

The Committee noted that the survey responses had been received from service users who commissioned their own care, in addition to service users whose care was commissioned by the Council. Ms Smith advised that it was unlikely that carers would always arrive on time due to the need for flexibility in their roles but that a service user should receive the full allocation of time whether the carer arrived on time or not.

Members commented that should Healthwatch undertake a similar survey in the future then a question pertaining to being treated with dignity and respect during visits should be asked.

The Committee considered the Council response to the report and noted the proposal to raise the issue of wearing identification badges at contract review meetings and questioned the timescale for undertaking the action. Ms Smith advised that the issue would be raised at the Provider's Forum, however, the Council could only reach providers from whom it commissioned services.

In response to a further question, Ms Smith confirmed that the Council did not commission 15 minute visits and expected to be told by a provider if not enough time had been allocated for any visit in order that it could be reviewed and the amount of allocated time increased where appropriate.

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Members queried if there was a timeline for the implementation of the recommendations and were advised by Mr Garner that one had not been developed, but that Healthwatch would monitor progress against the actions on a regular basis.

The Committee agreed to support the recommendations and the proposed action to be taken by the Council.

10 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT REPORT

Mrs Del Curtis, Director of People, presented the Children's Services Improvement Report and the Chairman invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee discussed the significant increase in work being experienced by Children's Services and queried how staff were coping with the additional pressure and if any reasons or trends for the increase had been identified. In response, Mrs Curtis advised that the number and complexity of cases had been increasing since December 2015. She advised that all data and information was being considered in order to redesign services, where appropriate and to alleviate pressure on services and staff. She also advised that Accident and Emergency Services and the Police were experiencing similar increases in volumes of work in Blackpool, but that the same increases were not being experienced across the whole of the North West region.

Members queried the success of the recent foster carer recruitment drive and were advised by Ms Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People (Early Help and Social Care) that there had been a lot of initial interest but a limited conversions. It was requested that the number and percentage of conversions be included in the next report to Committee. In response to further questions, Ms Hatton advised that Blackpool Council remunerated foster carers in line with the national pay framework, with additional payments made for carers with key skills supporting more complex cases and that a large amount of support was provided to carers, including a good training offer. Councillor Cain added that provision of incentives to foster carers had not been considered to date and that celebration events were held to commend the work of foster carers.

Members went on to discuss the application process to become a foster carer and queried the impact of the process on the number of conversions. Ms Hatton reported that many applicants found the process helpful as it demonstrated the complexities of the role and allowed applicants to consider if it was right for them to become a foster carer.

It was noted that 11 foster carers currently had exemption certificates to allow them to look after more than three children in care. Ms Hatton advised that exemption certificates would only be signed by Senior Managers within Children's Social Care, following consultation with the children already being looked after by the foster carer and if there was a specific need for the exemption, for example a large sibling group.

The Committee requested that further details of the consultation event to be held regarding

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the review of Speech, Language and Communication across Blackpool and the strategic group established to implement the transformational plan for Autism Spectrum Disorder, be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Members commended the recent 'Outstanding' Ofsted inspection result at St Nicholas Church of England Primary School and queried the reason for the significant improvement from the previous rating of 'Requires Improvement'. In response, Mrs Curtis advised that the new leadership at the school had been responsible for the significant improvement and that the good practice was being shared across all primary schools through improvement clusters.

The Committee discussed Pupil Premium uptake by early years settings and requested that the data be drilled down further to demonstrate uptake at settings attached to Children's Centres in comparison to other settings.

Members went on to discuss the Restorative Justice programme whereby a young offender was introduced to their victim in order to apologise and noted that there was no specific cost attached to the scheme. The Committee considered that a large number of improvements had been made to the Youth Offending Team and requested that a thematic discussion be held on Youth Offending and Restorative Justice at a future meeting of the Committee.

In response to a question, Mrs Curtis advised that once a child had been removed from mainstream education in order to home educate it was unlikely that they would be returned to mainstream education at a later date. She advised that the number of children being educated at home was a concern, but that there was a national drive to ensure parents were aware of the choice. She added that the introduction of an online learning platform was being considered in addition to an education pack designed for young people receiving an education at home.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive additional data regarding the convergence of foster carers at the next meeting.
2. To receive further details of the consultation event to be held regarding the review of Speech, Language and Communication across Blackpool and the strategic group established to implement the transformational plan for Autism Spectrum Disorder following the meeting.
3. To receive a comparison of the uptake of Pupil Premium by early years settings attached to Children's Centres and settings unattached.
4. To hold a thematic discussion on Youth Offending including Restorative Justice at a future meeting of the Committee.

11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday 9 June 2016 commencing at 6pm in the Council Chamber, subject to confirmation at Annual Council.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.03 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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