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MINUTES OF RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING - THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present:

Councillor Stansfield (in the Chair)

Councillors

Collett
Hutton

Mitchell
O'Hara

Owen
D Scott

Mrs Scott

Co-opted Member: Ms Frances McErlane

In Attendance:

Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services
Mr Tony Morrissey, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker
Ms Suzy Robertson, Service Manager, Families in Need Service
Ms Louise Storey, Head of Children's Social Care
Ms Pauline Wigglesworth, Programme Lead, HeadStart
Chief Inspector Lee Wilson, Lancashire Constabulary
Mrs Ruth Henshaw, Engagement and Intelligence Officer
Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

Councillor Graham Cain, Cabinet Secretary, Resilient Communities

Danielle, Craig and Hannah, representing HeadStart

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2018

The minutes of the last meeting held on 7 June 2018 were agreed as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications from members of the public to speak at the meeting.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, September 2018 – January 2019 and requested that further information be provided on decision reference 23/2018 'The £1 million contribution from the Dedicated School Grant Blackpool which contributes to Blackpool School Based Children's Centres in unwinding' as it was unclear what the matter for decision was.

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In response, Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services advised that the decision was now unlikely to be taken in September 2018 as the proposed changes would not happen as quickly as originally expected. She advised that the decision referred to a change to the level of Dedicated Schools Grant funding received and therefore the impact less funding would have upon how Children's Centres were being delivered. Mrs Booth advised that she would provide more detail to the Committee on the proposals being made at the next meeting.

5 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee noted its Workplan for 2018/2019.

6 YOUTH RELATED ACTIVITIES AND YOUTH JUSTICE

Ms Suzy Robertson, Service Manager, Families in Need Service introduced the report and highlighted the recent work undertaken to realign youth services through the Journey of the Child work. She added that there were a number of additional developments that would be put in place over the next year.

The Committee referred to concerns raised by members of the public regarding the level of anti-social behaviour, criminal activity and a small number of serious assaults carried out by young people and sought assurance that there were plans in place to tackle the behaviour and ensure it was dealt with appropriately. In response, Chief Inspector Lee Wilson, Lancashire Constabulary advised that increased collaboration between the Police and Local Authority was required and an emphasis placed on parenting and parental awareness. He added that it was unclear why there were higher levels of concerning youth activity in Blackpool when there were many more interventions in place in Blackpool than in other areas.

Chief Inspector Wilson added that changes were being made to Neighbourhood Policing and that there would be a reduction in the number of Community Beat Managers. There would, however, be more Police Community Support Officers based in the community hubs around the town which would increase visibility and ability to investigate, although they could not make arrests. He also highlighted that the Police would soon be located in the Town Centre which would assist in the prevention of some activity such as 'card tricks'.

The balance between preventing anti-social and criminal activity, keeping young people out of the criminal justice system and also ensuring young people were criminalised at the right stage i.e. before it was too late and criminal activity was habitual was considered in detail. Chief Inspector Wilson advised that young people were given a certain number of chances (dependent on the crime) before being prosecuted. However, it was then for the Court to determine the sentence.

As an example of intervention being successful, it was reported that there had been a number of issues relating to anti-social behaviour around a Children's Centre. Ms Robertson advised that in response the doors to the Children's Centre had been opened and the provision of services to young people increased. In return, the behaviour in the vicinity of the Centre had improved considerably. It was reported that the earlier

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interventions could be put in place the more successful they would be, which had been demonstrated by research. The role of BetterStart in carrying out such interventions was also noted.

Members referred to the fact that the number of young people going through the custody system for charge or summons was double that of the next nearest neighbour in respect of numbers and queried why the number was so high. In response, Mrs Booth advised that the service provision for young people had not been good enough and was being addressed through the recovery plan. She added that she was confident that the number would reduce in the next six to eight months.

Upon, further questioning, Mrs Booth highlighted that there had been a change in service delivery leadership and that expert support had been put in place. She added that partnership working was being increased and she was confident that young people would be tracked through the system with preventative work put in place earlier. Chief Inspector Wilson confirmed that he was also confident the recovery plan would effect the change required and that a reduction in number of young people in custody would be achieved.

It was noted that the education system was one part of the problem and that children and young people excluded from school immediately lost the support and distraction the school environment provided. Mrs Booth reported that how education was provided to those excluded from mainstream education was being considered and that there were Early Help and Social Worker leads in each school helping to role model good behaviour to prevent exclusions. The Resilience Committees and other projects provided by HeadStart were also supporting the work.

The Committee discussed in detail the work they needed to do to ensure that the new system met the needs of young people and to ensure the right people were being held to account and challenged for the support provided. Mrs Booth advised that a dashboard could be provided that set out key numbers, allowing the Committee to identify early on if something was not working. She also suggested that the Committee continue to seek the perspective of partners, but it was noted that there was some reliance on Mrs Booth being honest.

The Committee went on to consider young people that ran away from home and the serious risks and threats to young people in Blackpool. Chief Inspector Wilson highlighted that data was collected on people living in the town that were considered to be dangerous to young people. He also advised that on average seven people were reported missing from home each day in Blackpool and therefore resources had to be targeted to those considered most at risk based on data, policy and procedure.

In conclusion, Members considered that partnership working was key to achieving the safety of young people in Blackpool and requested that Mrs Booth alert them to any concerns that a partner was not engaging appropriately in order that the Committee could challenge their performance.

The Committee agreed:

1. To create a dashboard of data to use as a tool to identify areas of concern requiring additional scrutiny.

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2. That a future piece of work be carried out on the dangers present in Blackpool to children and young people.
3. That Mrs Booth be requested to report on partners that were not appropriately engaged.

7 HEADSTART UPDATE

Mrs Pauline Wigglesworth, Programme Leader, HeadStart presented the HeadStart Annual Report to the Committee and highlighted that the programme had been running for two years, with a further three to go. She advised that the report presented covered the last 12 months of activity, noting that the data provided was simplistic but that it was supported by qualitative feedback from young people in the programme. It was noted that the next stage of the project would involve more detailed evaluation of service provision.

Mrs Wigglesworth introduced three young people to the Committee who were in attendance to discuss their differing experiences of HeadStart with Members.

Danielle reported that she had been supported by a Resilience Coach provided by HeadStart. It was noted that 363 young people and their families had received support from coaches and that one of the key successes had been the Back on Track Project. The project had ensured that 14 young people remained in mainstream education saving the school up to £8,000 per child in charges for permanent exclusion and the Council £15,000 per year per child for a place at the Pupil Referral Unit. Danielle advised that her Resilience Coach had improved her confidence and helped her to understand her feelings and that she was now Head of the Student Council at her school. In response to a question, Danielle advised that she had already been known to HeadStart before requesting further support and being provided with a Coach.

Hannah was a member of the Pupil Resilience Committee at her school. It was noted that all schools were now engaged in the HeadStart programme, action plans had been developed by 17 schools and Pupil Resilience Committees were in place in 18 schools. She reported that the Committee in her school had introduced an anti-bullying hub where students could go to resolve concerns by speaking to either a teacher or older pupil. She also reported on the significant positive impact the Committee had had on the school. In response to a question, Hannah advised that if a pupil needed support they could join a 'buddying system' or speak to a student or teacher ambassador.

Craig advised that he was one half of the first HeadStart 'Friend for Life' scheme. It was noted that the scheme had taken time to put in place as it was imperative to ensure the right people were involved and the right pairings were made. There were currently four friendships in place. Craig advised that he had had a 'friend' for eight months and that before forming the friendship he had felt lonely and without anyone to speak to that was not a professional support worker. He spoke of a situation a number of months ago when he had not wanted to return home. His friend had come to speak to him and they had resolved the issues together, he had felt that someone was on his side and had subsequently given his home another chance.

Members queried whether the approaches with positive outcomes were being rolled out

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across other Council departments and replicated where possible. In response, Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services advised that it was important to share the learning and noted that HeadStart was a research project. She reported that an in depth evaluation of the programme would be commencing imminently and that learning would be shared wherever possible.

In response to a further question, Mrs Wigglesworth advised that a national evaluation of all the resilience programmes awarded Big Lottery Funding would take place, however, each area was taking a different approach to the programme. She added that there were some national themes and that it might be possible to compare some Blackpool data directly with other areas in 12 months' time.

The Committee agreed to receive a further update on HeadStart in twelve months to consider the initial evaluation undertaken.

8 CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW REPORT

Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services presented the report as read and highlighted that additional information would be provided on Placement Sufficiency to the next meeting of the Committee.

In response to questions, Mr Tony Morrissey, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker, Children's Social Care reported that the number of referrals to Children's Social Care had reduced. There had been a slow decline, however, numbers did fluctuate regularly for a number of reasons including national interest. He added that referrals were analysed to consider where they came from and if they were appropriate. The majority of referrals were received from the Police.

Members referred to the report, noting that 86.5% of statutory visits had been undertaken. Mr Morrissey advised that team monthly performance meetings were held and social workers were required to explain every visit that had not been carried out. The majority of delays were small and often due to delays in updating systems. He added that if there were difficulties in accessing a child to undertake a statutory visit, escalation procedures would be followed. Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services added that a back-up audit whereby young people were contacted directly to ensure visits had been undertaken was used and that Members could be confident that all required visits were being undertaken.

Mrs Booth highlighted the changes being made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and advised that communication of the change was key. She added that the new model could be presented to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

The Committee discussed the exit strategy for Care Leavers and noted that the number of children exiting care had slowed and queried the reasons for the reduction. Mrs Booth advised that there were not enough senior social workers to carry out the work. She added that additional funding had been agreed to provide additional social workers to undertake the work, however, the required appointments had not been made. The majority of applicants were inexperienced and there were a number of roles an inexperienced social worker could not undertake including the discharge of children from

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care. In response to questions, she advised that existing staff were being retained, however, more were required. It was noted that details regarding staffing could be included in the dashboard agreed in Item 6 'Youth Related Activities and Youth Justice'.

Mrs Louise Storey, Head of Children's Social Care added that the service was being creative in recruitment and had realised the aim of creating a good culture in the service, which had encouraged members of staff to stay. She highlighted that there was good team support with a 'no blame' culture but at the same time a culture of accountability. It was noted that news of the positive culture at the Council was travelling by word of mouth and was encouraging more senior workers to consider Blackpool as an option.

The Committee discussed support for staff in detail and considered that a piece of scrutiny work should be carried out on how employees were supported, how involved front line teams were in determining support and the workforce strategy and that they would like to talk to frontline members of staff to discuss the impact of changes made to date and what more could be done. The work could also consider how the learning outcomes being achieved by HeadStart with regards to resilience were being used in the service.

Members considered the total number of children in care and noted the significant increase in June caused by large sibling groups. It was suggested by Mrs Booth that, previously, too many risks had been taken with not enough babies brought into care and in comparison, too little risk had been taken with too many teenagers brought into care. This had had a significant impact on the profile of children and young people in care in Blackpool as babies would likely be adopted more quickly and therefore leave care sooner, whilst an older child or teenager would likely spend a large number of years in the care system. It was highlighted that procedures had been put in place to ensure the right children were coming into care at the right time.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive information regarding the changes to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub at the next meeting of the Committee.
2. To include data on staffing in the dashboard agreed within Item 6.
3. To undertake a piece of work on the support provided to members of staff within Children's Social Care.

9 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE - REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2018/2019

The Committee considered the proposals for reporting performance against the suite of headline key performance indicators (KPI) for Priority 2 for 2018/2019. It was noted that rather than receiving an additional report of key performance indicators, the reports from the individual services would include the KPI data.

Members considered that the two Priority 2 indicators relating to 'Safe and Secure Communities' linked more closely to the work of the Tourism, Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and should therefore be included in the annual performance report for the Blackpool Community Safety Partnership.

The Committee agreed:

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1. To agree the new approach for performance reporting.
2. To not monitor the two KPIs relating to 'Safe and Secure Communities'.

10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday, 15 November 2018 commencing at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.23 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager
Tel: 01253 477213
E-mail: sharon.davis@blackpool.gov.uk

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