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MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2022

Present:

Councillor Burdess (in the Chair)

Councillors

Critchley	M Mitchell	R Scott
B Mitchell	D Owen	A Stansfield

Ms Jo Snape, Diocesan Co-opted member

In Attendance:

Councillor Maxine Callow, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

Councillor Jim Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years)

Mr Tim Littlemore, Head of Strengthening and Supporting Families

Mr Andy Walker, Young Adder Partnership Manager (items 1-4 only)

Ms Rachael Webb, Lived Experience Lead (items 1-4 only)

Hayley, from Young Adder (items 1-4 only)

Mrs Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stansfield declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 4 'Young Adder' due to his previous employment at Streetlife.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2022

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 27 January 2022 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

4 YOUNG ADDER

The Committee received a presentation on the work of Young Adder from Mr Andy Walker, Young Adder Partnership Manager and Ms Rachael Webb, Lived Experience Lead. They were joined by Hayley, a young person who had experience of accessing the Young Adder service.

Mr Walker explained that the Adder pilot had been funded by the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and would initially run for just over two years, starting in November 2020 and ending in March 2023. Blackpool had been chosen

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as one of five pilot areas due to the high rate of drug related deaths and drug related crime and was the only pilot area to introduce Young Adder.

He outlined the overarching aims for Young Adder as being a reduction in the rate of drug deaths, the prevalence of drug use and drug related offending in each project location within three years. These targets would be worked towards by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of Streetlife, Blackpool Football Club Trust, the NHS, Adolescent Service and Effective Pedagogy Solutions (EPS) via the provision of a coordinated approach to working with young people with high levels of drug use and those involved with drug related offending.

The Committee was informed that Young Adder worked on a 'trauma informed model,' with the wider multi-disciplinary team providing expertise in a range of areas, such as specialist substance misuse support, sexual health, lived experience, meaningful activities, individual employment support, police and probation services. Mr Walker explained that the aim was to take the service to the young person and put them at the centre, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions. Young Adder worked intensively with young people without the need for multiple appointments and in what they considered to be a safe environment. He highlighted that the intention of Young Adder was to build a relationship of trust and that if a young person stopped attending activities or withdrew for a time, their case would not be closed. Once they had been enrolled onto Young Adder and had engaged appropriately, they would remain on roll for the life of the project.

The Committee questioned whether schools could access the Young Adder service and whether contact had been made with schools to raise awareness of the services available to young people. Mr Walker reported that the anticipated launch events had been cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions and that although there was no official lower age limit for Young Adder, he had been advised not to open the activities to those aged 16 years and under as the majority occurred during school hours. On receipt of any such referrals from school aged pupils, Mr Walker advised that they were re-referred into the most appropriate alternative service for the individual.

The Committee sought clarification over future plans for the service once funding ceased in March 2023. Mr Walker reported that Public Health were looking into future funding opportunities and the possibility of other partner agencies contributing financially was also being explored.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the perception of young people being rewarded for anti-social behaviour, Mr Walker noted that the Young Adder team was mindful of the need to carefully balance the delivery of the service against avoiding offering rewards in response to undesirable behaviours and that a large part of the service was focused on highlighting to young people that there was an alternative route to the one they were currently on.

The Committee heard from Hayley as she described her experience of accessing Young Adder and the sense of achievement and increased self confidence she felt from trying new experiences and removing herself from her previous situation. Ms Webb explained that each young person was treated as an individual who worked towards their own

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specific targets using a personalised approach, enabled by the maintenance of small case numbers.

The Committee extended its thanks to Mr Walker, Ms Webb and Hayley for attending the meeting and providing a valuable insight into the work of Young Adder.

[Mr Walker, Ms Webb and Hayley left the meeting on conclusion of this item.]

5 CHILDREN'S SERVICES MONITORING VISIT FEEDBACK

Mr Tim Littlemore, Head of Strengthening and Supporting Families presented feedback from a monitoring visit of Children's Services which had taken place on 11 and 12 January 2022. The Committee gave consideration to the feedback letter which detailed the areas covered by the visit, the headline findings and an evaluation of progress.

With regard to the areas identified for further improvement, the Committee questioned what changes were needed in relation to re-referrals, noting that the visit had identified this as an area requiring greater scrutiny, including the need to fully understand the reasons for an increase in the re-referral rate and the impact on children. Mr Littlemore accepted that in some cases less experienced social workers may have been overly optimistic in their assessments, leading to cases having been closed too early, but that a balance was needed between empowering families whilst understanding individuals' capacity to change. He noted that the Blackpool Families Rock model was a relationship-based approach which relied upon lower case numbers to ensure that case workers had the capacity to build relationships with families and to therefore be better informed on when a step down of a case was appropriate.

The Committee discussed the need to continue to recruit and retain social care staff, with Mr Littlemore highlighting the increasing recognition of Blackpool as a supportive place to work in social care and the high quality support programme in place for newly qualified social workers.

The quality and specificity of care plans had been highlighted as requiring improvement and the Committee questioned how this would be approached. Mr Littlemore reported that improved staff training had been implemented, with an academy for managers to enable them to identify what a good plan should look like so that they could support their social workers to produce high quality plans. Additional training and closer monitoring of the assessment framework was to be implemented in response to the feedback that the quality of assessments was inconsistent and sometimes lacked a clear analysis and consideration of ethnicity and cultural factors. Mr Littlemore identified this as a national issue and acknowledged that social workers could sometimes struggle to understand others' identities sufficiently but that this was now being reviewed and addressed.

Mr Littlemore advised that whilst the service had been pleased with the positive feedback received, there was a determination to continue to improve ahead of the next anticipated visit in summer and full inspection in autumn. The Committee requested that Mr Littlemore pass on its congratulation to Ms Vicky Gent, Director of Children's Services and the wider team for the positive progress made and encouraging monitoring visit feedback.

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6 PUPIL LITERACY AND READING PERFORMANCE DATA

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years) reported on the results of the latest GL Assessment pupil performance data. Despite previous concerns over a decline in pupil performance following the transition from Key Stage Two to Key Stage Three, Mr Turner reported that the data indicated that the cohort was performing at national average and that this was sustained from Year 6 into Year 7. Mr Turner summarised the Pupil Attitude to School and Self (PASS) data to advise that pupils in Year 7 had reported a good attitude to school, which was indicative of a high satisfaction level with school and self across Blackpool schools as a whole.

The Committee was informed that Blackpool schools had largely remained open during the pandemic wherever possible and as a result pupils had performed well throughout. The Committee sought further clarification over the identified performance gender gap, with Mr Turner advising that contrary to national trends, boys had been identified as overachieving compared to girls but he highlighted that learning support would be offered to any learner identified as needing help regardless of gender.

With regard to future funding of the testing programme, Mr Turner confirmed that Blackpool had committed to continue with GL pupil testing until at least 2030 in order to gather a useable bank of data.

7 SEND STRATEGY UPDATE

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, SEND and Early Years) advised that the revised Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy was now available as a draft document and would be open for comments and consultation until the end of May 2022. He reported that the Strategy and the accompanying 'Reasonable Expectations' document would be brought back to the June 2022 meeting of the Committee once the consultation period had concluded.

Following the cancellation of the anticipated March 2022 working group meeting to review the draft Strategy, the Committee requested that a replacement meeting be scheduled to allow Councillor input into the document. Mr Turner advised that the meeting would be rescheduled promptly and that Ms Venessa Beckett, Delivery Development Officer would contact Committee Members to arrange a suitable date.

The Committee sought additional information around the support being offered to pupils from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), with Mr Turner informing the Committee that schools would be following the Thrive model and that the next step would be the introduction of mental health workers in schools from September 2022 with training currently ongoing. He advised that further details of the Thrive model could be obtained from Ms Elaine Walker, Integrated Emotional Health and Wellbeing Manager, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and suggested that she be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

With regard to the SEND facilities to be made available at the Oracle building, Mr Turner informed the Committee that the facilities would be available for use from September

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2022 and agreed to undertake a site visit with Committee Members prior to its opening date.

The Committee agreed:

1. To attend a working group to further consider the draft SEND Strategy, with Ms Venessa Becket to contact Committee Members to arrange a suitable date;
2. That the Committee would review the final version of the SEND Strategy at its meeting in June 2022;
3. That a site visit be undertaken to the Oracle building ahead of its opening in September 2022;
4. That Ms Elaine Walker be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide information on the Thrive model.

8 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Committee approved its draft workplan for 2022/2023 and noted that a Workplanning Workshop would be scheduled to take place following Annual Council. This would provide the opportunity to further consider the Committee's workload for the following municipal year and to prioritise areas for scrutiny review. Consideration was given to the value of inviting SEND partners to contribute to the Committee's review of the SEND Strategy in order to receive feedback from other agencies involved in its delivery.

The Committee agreed: The draft workplan for 2022/2023.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The provisional date of the next meeting of the Committee was noted as Thursday 30 June 2022 commencing at 6pm, subject to confirmation at Annual Council.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.45pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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