

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and**  
**Scrutiny Committee**

**Thursday, 26 September 2013**

**6.30pm to 8.55pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

**Present:** Councillors: Baker, Cooper, Gilry, Griffin, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Price, Purdy, Rodberg, Royle (Chairman), Smith, Turpin and Watson

**Added members without voting rights:**

Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative) and Sam Tutt (Medway Youth Parliament representative)

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Adrian Gulvin (Substitute for Hewett)  
Pat Gulvin (Substitute for Irvine)  
Shaw (Substitute for Craven)  
Perdita Blinkhorn (Substitute for Doyin Yahyi - Medway Youth Parliament representative)

**In Attendance:** Jane Marriott, Psychology and Inclusion Service Manager  
Sally Mortimore, Medway Safeguarding Children Board Manager  
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adult Services  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Jenny Robinson, Legal Advisor  
Juliet Sevier, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement  
Hannah Simpson, Legal advisor  
Supt Tim Smith, Vice-Chairman, Medway Safeguarding Children Board  
Phil Watson, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care

**396 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 16 July 2013 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**397 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Craven, Hewett and Irvine and from Adrian Cole (Medway Governors Association representative), Jim Grogan (Church representative), Rosie Rowe (Healthwatch Medway CIC

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representative), Alex Tear (Church representative) and Doyin Yahyi (Medway Youth Parliament representative).

### 398 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

### 399 Declarations of interests and whipping

There were none.

### 400 Medway Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2012 and Business Plan 2013/14

#### Discussion:

The Vice-Chairman of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) introduced the report which updated the committee on the work of the MSCB in 2012/13 and its priorities for 2013/14. He highlighted to the committee that an independent review of the board had taken place and there had been a number of recommendations, which the board had accepted and work was ongoing to implement these. He also drew the committee's attention to the improvements that had been made over the year, as detailed in the report.

The committee then raised a number of points and questions, including: -

- **Safeguarding against online exploitation** – the Vice-Chairman confirmed that a lot of work was underway in relation to this, in particular, within the Police.
- **Learning from serious case reviews (SCRs)** – in response to a question the Vice-Chairman explained that every SCR was scrutinised accordingly to learn how agencies could work together to safeguard further children and learn what went wrong to develop necessary preventative interventions.
- **Measuring improvement** – the Vice-Chairman confirmed that outcomes was the core business focus of the MSCB and that within the board's business plan there were a number of outcomes, each with their own objectives and measures of success. Each partner agency brought qualitative and quantitative data and were held to account on this which provided a better focus on outcomes and was a significant change since the local authority's Ofsted inspection on safeguarding arrangements in January 2013.
- **New quoracy rules for Child Protection Conferences (CPCs)** – The Vice-Chairman agreed these could be circulated to the committee and explained that they now considered who the relevant agencies were for each case to ensure the relevant partners were present, rather than certain agencies being required to attend all CPCs when it was not always relevant for

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particular agencies, such as the Police, depending on the circumstances of the case.

### **Decision:**

The committee noted the report.

### **401 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority arrangements for the protection of children - update report**

#### **Discussion:**

The Director of Children and Adult Services introduced the report which provided the committee with an update of the actions that had taken place since the Ofsted inspection of the local authority arrangements for the protection of children in Medway, which had taken place between 7 and 16 January 2013.

She explained the changes that had taken place over the last 18 months in relation to the frameworks used for Ofsted inspections and notified the committee that the new inspection single framework had been issued the previous day. The Director offered to provide the committee with a report about the new framework and how it will work at a future meeting.

She explained that there were several actions from the January Inspection that came under the following three broad areas: -

- Staffing – to stabilise permanent staff, including at senior management level and reduce the use of agencies;
- Social workers and managers needed to rebuild their confidence, their professional curiosity and management oversight;
- Improvements to the multi-agency network – which had largely been covered during discussion of the previous item.

In terms of staffing she confirmed that the posts of Assistant Director, Children Social Care and Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning had now been filled and there was an active marketing campaign ongoing to recruit both newly qualified and experienced social workers. The children's social care team was also undergoing a reorganisation to provide a tighter and clearer level of accountability, which had been supported by the staff. Furthermore, the Children's Trust was being replaced with the Medway Children Action Network (MCAN) (subject to approval by the Cabinet on 31 October 2013), which would enable a re-focus of multi-agency working and how services can be brought together to improve the early help offer for children and their families.

The Chairman suggested that this item be taken along side the following item, the Ofsted inspection of looked after children (LAC) services. The committee then raised comments and questions, which included: -

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- **Common themes from staff exit interviews** – in response to a question the Director confirmed that the common themes featuring as reasons for staff leaving the local authority children's social care team were: -
  - Natural turnover, for example, relocating;
  - Salary – some felt they could earn better income from working as agency staff;
  - Workloads – some felt workloads were too high.In relation to workloads the Director confirmed that levels had been too high but were decreasing and the reorganisation of the service would look to rebalance workloads and avoid any future build up. In relation to working for an agency, the Director stated that the Council needed to get better about emphasising the benefits of being employees of Medway Council, for example, pension, sick pay and annual leave. She also confirmed that a policy was now in place that if staff left to work for an agency they would not be able to work back at Medway Council as agency staff.
- **Capacity issues due to inducting new staff** – concern was raised regarding the impact of the high turnover of staff in terms of inductions into procedures and practices. The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care explained that Medway had a very strong workforce development offer to support new staff in training. Additionally, there was a minimum required standard for agency staff to enable smooth transition and resilience in the service.
- **Timescales for newly qualified social workers to become fully qualified** – Officers confirmed that newly qualified social workers had to work for 12 months with managed supervision before they then gained their licence to practice with a full case load.
- **Accommodation offer for social workers** – in response to a question about providing suitable accommodation for key workers the officers confirmed this was an area they were currently working on with Human Resources to see what could be provided locally.
- **Not all LAC knew about the Children in Care Council (CiCC) or how to complain** – The Director confirmed that approximately 17 LAC had responded to the Ofsted inspectors' questionnaire and not all had responded positively to knowing about the CiCC or how to complain. Work was being done to improve this and some of this was being done by the CiCC through the big difference website (*insert link here*).
- **Concerns highlighted in the inspection relating to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care confirmed that this was an area of concern and he would be working with the Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning to ensure contracts were being commissioned effectively and would provide the best outcome for Medway's children and young people. In addition, a Member confirmed that there was a Mental Health Task Group running and CAMHS was an aspect of that review which was being looked at.

**Decision:**

The committee noted the reports.

**402 Ofsted Inspection of Looked After Children services**

The committee dealt with this item under the previous report, Ofsted inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children – update report.

**403 Management action relating to the forecast overspend within the Children's Social Care Division**

**Discussion:**

The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care introduced the report which provided a context and explanation for the current projected overspend in Children's Social Care and the management action being taken to reduce it. He explained that £1.2m overspend related to looked after children (LAC) placement costs, as 11 more LAC than budgeted for were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and an additional three children than budgeted for had been placed in specialist residential provision. Furthermore, an additional £1m overspend related to increased staffing costs through additional agency staff which had been covered in the discussion of the previous two reports.

The Assistant Director was then asked about the projected overspend for the remainder of the year. In response he confirmed the service were committed to not increasing the overspend and were looking to reduce it at each quarter, particularly as more permanent staff are recruited although this would need to be done in a sensible way to maintain a safe level of service.

**Decision:**

The committee noted the report.

**404 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Pathfinder Programme**

**Discussion:**

The committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement and the Psychology and Inclusion Service Manager on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) pathfinder. They explained that key changes to SEND legislation, which was expected through a new Code of Practice that was due to be published in mid October 2013. They explained that Education, Health and Care Plans were now being provided to families instead of statements which were more helpful for all agencies to be joined up around the child and had been positively received by families and professionals.

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The committee then raised comments and asked questions, which included: -

- **Families will only have to attend one meeting** – the Service Manager explained that this was the aspiration although would not always be possible but multiple meetings would be minimised as much as possible.
- **Accessing data through 'Frameworki'** – Concern was raised that SEN staff could not access the records kept on 'Frameworki' which was the system used by the social care team. The Service Manager explained that until the new Code of Practice was published officers would not know what database they would need going forward but work was being done to improve access by the SEN team to the data held by social care and the teams were working closely together.
- **The 'local offer'** – Concern was raised that this would be confusing for parents as this did not necessarily mean services being offered locally. Officers confirmed that information about services outside of Medway would also need to be provided and as personal budgets are encouraged the local offer would be about supporting families in the options available to them and in using the personal budgets effectively
- **Sustainability** – officers confirmed that the pathfinder had enabled the service to work differently but would not require any additional expenditure in terms of staffing.
- **Circulation of the new code of practice to the committee** – the Service Manager explained that there was currently an indicative code available to view on the Department for Education website and that the new code of practice was due to be published in October.

### Decision:

The committee noted the report and requested that an item be added to a forthcoming meeting of the committee, and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committees, relating to the local authority's approach to personal budgets and direct payments.

## 405 2013/14 Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring

### Discussion:

The Director of Children and Adult Services introduced the report which provided the committee with a summary of the performance of the Council's Key Measures of Success for quarter 1 of 2013/14 (April – June 2013) as set out within the Council Plan 2013-15. She also confirmed to Members that the Council had now received validated data for the Key Stage 2 results and confirmed that 70% of children gained a level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics in the summer of 2013 at Key Stage 2. The national average was 75% and Medway had improved by 2% from the previous year and was now

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one of 12 local authorities who were placed seventh from bottom in the league tables of all local authorities.

Members congratulated the School Challenge and Improvement Team, along with schools and pupils on this improvement. The committee then raised the following comments and questions: -

- **Governor training** – comment was made that for Councillors who were also school governors, training by the local authority was often held in the evening and often clashed with other committee commitments. Officers were also asked to ensure other available training was advertised widely, such as the online training packages available on the Department for Education website.
- **Phonics** – officers confirmed that validated data relating the performance on phonics would be received shortly.
- **Floorwalkers** – the Director confirmed that these were people who were very familiar with the new system being used in children's social care, Frameworki, brought in to be available where staff are working to help them familiarise themselves with the new system and to enable smooth transition.

### Decision:

The committee noted the report.

## 406 Work programme

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and confirmed that the committee had also added the following items to the work programme during the course of the meeting: -

- The Local Authority's approach to personal budgets and direct payments;
- The new Ofsted single framework for inspecting local authority services for vulnerable children.

It was requested that the item on personal budgets and direct payments be added to the work programme as a priority report for consideration.

### Decision:

- (1) The committee agreed the work programme as agreed at Appendix 1, subject to the additions above;
- (2) That a briefing on children's health issues in Medway be held immediately before the committee's meeting on 10 December 2013.

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2013**

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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