

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

**Tuesday, 21 July 2015**

**7.00pm to 9.55pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Avey, Cooper, Fearn, Franklin, Hall, Johnson, Opara, Price, Potter, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Tranter, Wicks (Vice-Chairman) and Williams

**Co-opted Members with voting rights on educational issues only:**

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative)

**Added members without voting rights:**

James Peck, George Perfect and Karen White (Substitute - Headteacher representative)

**In Attendance:**

Gerry Flanagan, Interim Programme Lead  
Dick Frak, Mental Health Social Care Commissioning Manager  
Jan Guylar, Head of Legal Services/Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning  
Pauline Maddison, Assistant Director (Interim), Schools Effectiveness and Inclusion  
Carrie McKenzie, Head of HR and Organisational Change  
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Phil Watson, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care  
Sandy Weaver, Team Leader - Customer Relations

**125 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 25 March 2015 and the record of the joint meeting of all committees held on 27 May 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

**126 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Adrian Cole (Governor representative), Lauraine McManus (Teacher representative), Alan Street (Healthwatch Medway CIC representative), Alex Tear (Church of England representative) and Priti Joshi (Healthwatch Medway CIC substitute).

**127 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**128 Declarations of interests and whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

**129 Update on re-commissioning of short breaks provision for children with disabilities and the local offer**

**Discussion:**

Members received an overview of the work undertaken regarding the re-commissioning of short breaks for children with a disability and their parents and carers which included the consultation and engagement exercises and a timetable for completion of work

Members then raised a number of points and questions including:

- **The practicalities of direct payments** – Officers explained that by utilising direct payments it enabled families to have choice and empowered them to achieve bespoke packages of support that were necessary for families with children that have profound and complex needs, for example, providing respite support in the family home. In addition, the Council would be looking to offer to commission services on behalf of families who did not want direct payments.
- **Support for providers** – In response to a question about how providers would be supported with the changes to contractual arrangements under a new framework, officers explained that market events had been and would be held, as well as 1:1 meetings with prospective providers. Work was also taking place with colleagues in Category Management to ensure the process is robust and transparent whilst simplifying the process as much as practicably possible. In response to a question about why businesses may have to change their business models, it was explained that within children's services, the providers had been used to block purchasing which would not be used in the new framework and therefore there would be some adaptations needed.
- **Timetable** – In response to a question about officers' confidence in relation to achieving the proposed timetable, officers explained that the Council had increased capacity on the project and believed there to be an interested

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015

market ready to engage and therefore considered the proposed timetable to be realistic.

- **Current use of provision** – Concern was raised that, according to a survey undertaken by the Medway Parent and Carer Forum, 77% of people reported that their child rarely or never accessed mainstream provision, even with support. Officers explained that one issue raised by young people was that they wanted to access facilities with their peers and that services should be more inclusive and accessible.
- **Finance** – In relation to a question about financing and resourcing the new framework, officers explained that officers were having ongoing dialogue with the market to discuss creative ideas as budgets were a challenge and to ensure that provision would be provided in a more cost effective way whilst improving flexibility for families.
- **Improved user access to services** – In response to a question relating to the results from the Medway Parent and Carer Forum survey, detailed at paragraph 3.3 of the report, officers explained that the new framework would aim to improve flexibility and options for families and it was therefore envisaged that access by users to services would improve within the next 12 months. In addition, officers were looking to maintain family engagement by involving them in performance management and monitoring of the operation of short breaks services.
- **Reporting back** – an update report on this issue was welcomed by the Committee for 12 months time.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

### **130 Ofsted inspection of the Local Authority's arrangements for school improvement**

#### **Discussion:**

Members received an overview of the findings by Ofsted in its recent inspection of the local authority's arrangements for school improvement, including the letter from Ofsted setting out its findings, which was published on 17 June 2015 and was attached at Appendix A to the report.

It was reported that the number of schools judged good or outstanding in Medway had improved since the inspection had taken place in March, with a further school being judged outstanding a few days before the meeting. Officers highlighted the key areas for improvement and explained that Ofsted would be regularly monitoring the authority's performance and improvement.

Members then raised a number of points and questions including:

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015

- **Impact of children that are unable to reach the floor targets** – Officers explained that nationally other local authorities had the same challenges in relation to children that are unable to reach the floor targets and therefore Medway needed to ensure that provision was enabling all children to achieve the best they could and added that attainment of children with special educational needs in Medway was generally good.
- **Relationship with academies** – In response to a question relating to the relationship between the local authority and academies, it was explained that strong relationships were key, as well as the ability to contact the sponsor of an academy to raise concerns.
- **Revised School Improvement Strategy** – Upon a request that the revised strategy be reported to this committee officers confirmed that this would be done.
- **Learning aspirations** – In response to the statement in the Ofsted letter, “although learning is at the heart of the council’s plans for the future, until recently this vision has not been embraced by all schools”, officers were asked how they ensure all schools embrace this. Officers confirmed that they were making this aspiration clear as much as possible. It was on the agenda of all meetings and discussions with schools related to identifying and sharing best practice.
- **16-19 Strategy** – Concern was raised about the impact on 16 and 17 year olds if resource focus was diverted to 18 year olds where currently, rates of children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), were much higher. Officers explained that one of the reasons for numbers of NEETs rising at age 18 was because the tracking of young people aged 18 was not as effective. Additionally it was confirmed that direct support for young people was envisaged to remain unchanged but the development work that had been done with 16 and 17 year olds would be directed to include 18 year olds too. Other local authorities that had made this small shift in targeted work had been successful and a risk assessment had been carried out to mitigate against dips in performance.
- **Effective use of data** – In response to a comment regarding the local authority’s ability to build capacity to ensure the effective use of data, officers confirmed that Ofsted were not critical of data used within schools but how the local authority used data in a strategic manner. Officers were exploring the possibility of a partnership arrangement in developing data awareness and also confirmed that a vacancy relating to a key post on data analysis had been filled on an interim basis with a full review of performance and intelligence in this area being undertaken.
- **Outcome of Ofsted inspections in schools since March** – In response to a question officers confirmed that approximately 14 inspections of schools had been undertaken and all had improved or retained their judgement outcome with the exception of one school where the Ofsted

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015

inspection rating had fallen. Two of the schools that maintained their Ofsted judgement were required to improve.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the OFSTED letter on the inspection of Medway's school improvement arrangements, and the response to the areas for improvement.

### **131 Update on progress in relation to the Children's Safeguarding Improvement Notice**

#### **Discussion:**

Members received an overview of progress made on the implementation of Medway's Improvement Plan in relation to children's safeguarding following the Improvement Notice issued to the authority by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2013. Indications from extensive review and scrutiny were that sustained and good progress was being made.

In response to a comment made about Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) officers confirmed that the role of the CPB and its strength to challenge and support, along with that of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was key and the Looked After Children Action Plan provided the detail the CPB needed for its functions.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the progress made and the continued implementation of the Improvement Plan.

### **132 Recruitment, retention and workforce development in Children's Social Care**

#### **Discussion:**

Members received an update on the effectiveness of the Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Development Strategy for Children's Social Care, including; advertisement techniques, setting of a specific framework of terms for agency staff, development of an assisted and supported year in employment (ASYE) programme, establishment of a Social Work Academy and quarterly staff surveys.

Members then raised a number of points and questions including: -

- **Overseas recruitment** – In response to a question officers confirmed that owing to a national shortage of social workers there had been targeted campaigns overseas which had enabled recruitments from India, Republic of Ireland and South Africa. Work was also being done with universities and schools in Medway to promote social work as a career choice.

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015

- **Benchmarking** – Officers confirmed that extensive benchmarking took place against other local authorities and included salary, annual leave allowances, flexi-time schemes and other benefits, for example, a car salary sacrifice scheme which Medway was part of.
- **Impact of recent changes announced to tax allowances** - Owing to national changes being announced recently which would impact agency staff in terms of the amount of tax they would have to pay, a Member asked if this had been factored in. Officers confirmed it had not in terms of forecasting the number of agency staff that may choose to become permanent but it was being used in terms of encouraging people to apply for permanent positions.
- **Levels of Health Visitors** – it was confirmed that there was an insufficient number of health visitors in Medway but that work was ongoing to address this issue, along with deficits in other public sector jobs such as teaching staff, GPs and hospital staff.
- **Recruitment of Team Managers** – In response to a question regarding the particular difficulty in recruiting to Team Manager positions, it was explained that this was a particularly difficult role and therefore targeted advertisement, demonstrating the positive culture at Medway, with good support mechanisms, validated by peer reviews was being done to encourage applicants.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the impact of the workforce development strategy and the continuing priorities of the strategy.

### 133 Update on the Medway Children's and Young People Emotional Wellbeing Strategy

#### Discussion:

Members received an update on the consultation and development of a Medway Children's and Young People Emotional Wellbeing Strategy. It was reported that engagement in consultation events had been very good with a wide range of stakeholders taking part and key messages were detailed in section 4 of the report. The draft Strategy was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

Members then raised a number of points and questions including: -

- **Additional funding** – In response to a question relating to the additional funding that had been secured from Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in relation to mental health and parity of esteem, officers confirmed that there would be an increase to staff numbers in the Tier 2 services of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), which, it is proposed, will sit alongside the children social care area at Broadside and

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015

an increase in capacity within the CAMHS services for looked after children.

- **School training** – Officers also confirmed that a bid was being made for some Department for Education funding which would provide further training for schools in relation to emotional health and wellbeing and this would be delivered as a ‘whole school’ approach.
- **Self-harming** – Officers also explained that this was an area that was of particular focus by the Government in relation to eating disorders and an additional £30m was being distributed to CCGs for targeted support on this issue.
- **Consultation methods** – In response to a question about how representative consultation methods were, officers explained that some young people were involved in more general consultation whilst others were targeted specific groups with particular experiences. Equally, officers would be undertaking further consultation and every effort was being made to continue to make it representative for all.
- **Emotional Wellbeing Task Force** – In relation to the task force, which was detailed in the report, it was asked who would be added to the group when it is reconvened. In response officers explained that this was currently being reviewed but confirmed that it would include young people.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the update on the development of Medway Children’s and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing Strategy.

## 134 Complaints and compliments annual report - April 2014-March 2015

### Discussion:

Members received the annual report which provided information such as the number and type of complaints and compliments received relating to children’s social care during the period April 2014 to March 2015. The report also provided detail of the improvements made in response to complaints received. Officers also circulated leaflets about the complaints and compliments process, which had been recently re-designed by young people.

Members then raised a number of points and questions including: -

- **Response times for Stage 1 complaints** – following a query from a Member, officers confirmed that the table at paragraph 10.3 of the report only referred to the response times to Stage 1 complaints, which therefore demonstrated that a number of the responses were sent beyond the 20 working day deadline. Officers explained that this had related to staff reorganisations at the time but that, since this had concluded. the response

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015

times had greatly improved and this would be reflected in the next annual report.

- **Accessibility of the leaflets** – In response to a question about how easily accessible the leaflets were for people, officers confirmed that all teams within children’s social care had been provided copies to distribute and it was also available on the website. Where old enough, all children and young people were told about how they could complain and officers worked with the Children in Care Council to agree the best way to do this.
- **Feedback** – In response to a question about how the local authority could improve the level of feedback it received about the complaints process, which had been very poor, officers confirmed that young people were given the option of texting but this had never been used by any young person. Focus group work had proved to be very useful in obtaining feedback and therefore this would be carried out again in the future.
- **Improving the complaints process** – One Member offered to share their expertise in handling complaints as he had concerns from this report in the way the organisation was handling and also learning from complaints. This offer was welcomed by officers who undertook to meet with the Member to discuss this issue further.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

## **135 Council Plan Year End 2014/15 - Performance monitoring report**

### **Discussion:**

Members received an update on the performance summary for Quarter 4 Year End 2014/15 against the Council priority, “children and young people have the best start in life in Medway”.

Members acknowledged that they had discussed a larger number of the underperforming indicators previously in the meeting. Officers were congratulated for the second phase of Medway Action for Families programme and welcomed a further update when appropriate. The Director of Children and Adult Services suggested this could be presented to the next meeting of the Committee, in September.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

## **136 Work programme**

### **Discussion:**



## **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015**

Members received an update on the Committee's work programme, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and Members were invited to notify the Democratic Services Officer of suggestions for in-depth scrutiny topics before the next pre-agenda meeting which was scheduled for 9 September 2015.

A Member raised concern about the lag in data relating to the test and examination results as it was proposed that these would be reported in March 2016, which would be some nine months after the examinations took place. Officers explained that following the Ofsted inspection, it became clear that the Committee should only be scrutinising validated results as these could change quite dramatically from the provisional data, which had previously been reported in December. Most local authorities were providing an annual report to overview and scrutiny which includes details on validated test and examination results as well as attendance, exclusion and other relevant data and it was proposed that this was done in Medway and brought to the Committee's March meeting each year. This was accepted but it was requested that this remain under review.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee agreed the work programme, as set out at Appendix 1, subject to the additions made at paragraph 3.3 of the report.
- b) The Committee agreed to receive a briefing note in October relating to the sufficiency of secondary school places.
- c) The Committee agreed that its members submit ideas and suggestions for an in-depth scrutiny topic to the Democratic Services Officer ahead of the agenda planning meeting (scheduled for 9 September 2015) for discussion at the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 22 September 2015.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

**Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer**

Telephone: 01634 332104

Email: [democratic.services@medway.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@medway.gov.uk)

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