

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

Thursday, 26 May 2016

6.30pm to 10.17pm

Record of the meeting

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

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

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

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative)

Added members without voting rights:

Peter Martin (Governor representative), Dan Hill (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative), MYP Chairman (Medway Youth Parliament Chairman) and MYP Cabinet Member (Medway Youth Parliament)

Healthwatch representative:

To be appointed

Substitutes: Councillors:
Gilry (Substitute for Johnson)
Iles (Substitute for Saroy)

In Attendance: Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning
Graham Clewes, Chief Executive, Medway Youth Trust
Ann Domeney, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care
John Drew, Independent Chair of Medway Safeguarding Children Board
Gerard Flanagan, Interim Programme Lead
Jan Guylor, Head of Legal Services/Deputy Monitoring Officer
Pauline Maddison, Assistant Director (Interim), School Effectiveness and Inclusion
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Willetts, Action for Families Programme Coordinator
Lorraine Foster, Programme Lead - Looked After Children

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Johnson and Saroy and from Alex Tear (Church of England Diocese representative)

15 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 3 March 2016 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

16 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

17 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Director of Children and Adult Services was absent from the meeting and as it was the last meeting of the Committee before she left Medway Council to take up a new post at another local authority, on behalf of the Committee, he recorded thanks for her contribution to the Committee and to Medway.

18 Declarations of interests and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Peter Martin, Medway Governor Association representative, declared an interest in item 8 (16-19 Strategy 2016-20) as he was Chairman of the Medway Youth Trust.

19 Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Update Report

Discussion:

The Independent Chair of the MSCB, John Drew, introduced the report which updated the Committee on the work of the Board during 2015-16 and its Business Plan 2016-17. It also provided Members with an update on the review of the Board undertaken by Ofsted in 2015. He undertook to liaise with officers about the scheduling of future MSCB reports to the Committee in order to ensure they were presented in a more timely manner. He drew the Committee's attention to the four recommendations from Ofsted and confirmed that improvements in these areas had been made and summarised the Board's involvement in the ongoing investigations at Medway Secure Training Centre (STC).

Members then raised a number of questions and comments which included: -

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

- **Medway Improvement Board's final report into Medway STC** – The Board had issued a final report of its advice to the Secretary of State (SoS) for Justice. A review had been commissioned following a television programme which had been broadcast, relating to behaviour of staff to young people at Medway STC. The Committee were advised that they would be circulated the link to the report for information. The key outcome of the report was that the SoS had placed the running of the STC with the National Offender Management Service. A Governor had been appointed and would commence on 1 July 2016 and would take the statutory role on the MSCB. The Independent Chair also undertook to provide a briefing note, around September 2016, on how new arrangements at Medway STC were going.
- **Work with Medway Youth Parliament (MYP)** – In response to a member seeking clarification of the work the Board had done with MYP, the Independent Chair explained that MYP had produced a short film which raised awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which had been shared with Medway secondary schools. A view was expressed that more needed to be done in sharing this information with schools more effectively which the Independent Chair undertook to action. The information and film was also published on the MSCB website and the Independent Chair undertook to circulate information to Members.
- **Missing Children Incidents** – in response to a request for more recent data on this, as in the report data was only provided up to June 2015, the Independent Chair confirmed collaborative efforts were ongoing and undertook to provide the Committee with more up to date information.
- **Possibility of conducting a Serious Case Review (SCR) on the Medway STC issue** – The Independent Chair confirmed that no formal decision had been made with regard to whether or not a SCR would be conducted but assured Members that a review of some kind would be undertaken to ensure lessons learned were identified. A broader review of all STCs across the country was one option that would also be explored. He also informed the Committee that a national review of youth justice was currently being undertaken and this was expected to be reported in the Summer.
- **Prevention of the recruitment of young people into gangs** – The Independent Chair confirmed that Medway Council had commissioned a peer review on gang and youth violence to identify preventative action partners could make.
- **Allegations of abuse** – in response to a question about how allegations of abuse in large organisations are handled, it was confirmed that like every Council, Medway had a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and organisations were familiar with the LADO and knew to refer allegations to the LADO Team. The LADO provided an annual report to the MSCB and information from this would be included in the next MSCB update to the Committee.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

20 Update on Integrated Family Support (and Early Help)

Discussion:

The Head of Integrated Family Support Services introduced the report which updated the Committee on work being undertaken in relation to Early Help. He highlighted particular aspects of the report, including; Early Help Assessments, the area based model of the service and the Outcomes Framework that had been adopted. He also provided the Committee with three case studies to demonstrate to Members the positive impact that the service was having on families.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included: -

- **Clarification of the Troubled Families Programme success** – In response to a question about success rate, officers confirmed that Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme had been 100% successful. It was added that the ‘troubled families’ name had been integrated into early help as the Council was equipping itself to support all families that present a need of some help. Officers undertook to circulate to Members the eligibility criteria for early help.
- **Team meetings and supervision** – in response to a question about the level of team meetings and supervision in place, officers confirmed that there was monthly supervision by line managers which was audited to ensure this did take place. Group supervision also occurred bi-monthly and where necessary staff could access clinical supervision support and discussions with Educational Psychologists.
- **Area based model** – in response to a query about how the four areas were split, officers confirmed that all wards were included and were split in a way to ensure an equal work load across the four areas.
- **Strengthening relationships with Schools and Academies** – in response to a question raised about this priority, officers confirmed that with increased officer resource now available to conduct Early Help Assessments this had already strengthen relationships. The team was also working to help train personnel in establishments to be more equipped to support families directly, for example, training them to deliver parenting support programmes themselves.
- **Timeframe for families to be supported** – in response to a question about how long families were generally assigned to the team, it was confirmed that it differed for each family but on average it would be approximately 4-6 months. Anything above 9-12 months began to cause

some concern in the risk that the family become too reliant on the service.

- **Language and cultural barriers** – in response to a question about how these barriers were overcome officers confirmed that the personnel recruited to the team were diverse to address the needs of all communities within Medway and where necessary the translation service and community groups were used to ensure these barriers were overcome and families could be supported.
- **Relationship with the Police** – in response to a query about working relationships with the Police, officers confirmed that two Police Officers worked with the service to support families working with the Integrated Family Support Service.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

21 Short Breaks Provision for Children with Disabilities and the Local Offer

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning introduced the report which provided the Committee with proposals to be consulted on for how families will access community based Short Breaks Provision, suggested eligibility criteria and proposed use of Direct Payments, although it was confirmed that this would be a phased approach as families, nor the market, were ready to move solely to Direct Payments. Therefore a framework had been put in place to allow the local authority to continue to directly purchase short breaks provision while the direct payment model was developed further. She also provided the Committee with a further update in relation to Aut Even, which would reopen for overnight short breaks from 29 May 2016 and suggested that a report on Aut Even be added to the Committee's work programme as a separate item.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included: -

- **Uptake of Direct Payments** – in response to a question about why uptake remained low officers explained that, unlike in adult social care, where Direct Payments had been available for 10 years, they had only been made available in children's social care following the Children and Families Act 2014. Therefore, the provider market was far less equipped than that within adult services and development of readiness by providers would form part of the consultation exercise.
- **Support for families using Direct Payments** – in response to concerns raised about the difficulties families would have in using Direct Payments and the support that would be needed, officers confirmed that there were two Short Breaks Co-ordinators who would be able to advise on short break options, as well as to help with processes relating to Direct

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

Payments. It was confirmed that Short Breaks Co-ordinators would not be funded from Direct Payments. A Community Brokerage Service was also being considered as for some families, combining their Direct Payments to jointly purchase provision may provide better value for money.

- **Utilising resource in Medway** – in response to a query about ensuring more short breaks provision was offered locally and that local provision, such as Aut Even and Parklands, was used to its best capacity, officers confirmed that they were seeking to extend local provision in a range of ways for example developing a network of local respite care in family homes with foster carers and day care services.
- **Consultation exercise** – The Healthwatch Medway CIC representative offered the organisation's support in promoting the consultation exercise, which was welcomed by officers. Officers confirmed that because the period included term time and school holidays it would enable them to reach various groups. For example, young people often used provision during school holidays which would therefore provide an opportunity in obtaining their feedback. It was also added that the Medway Parent and Carer Forum would be active partners in the consultation exercise. Officers undertook to discuss with the Parents and Carers Forum having an open event with parents as part of the consultation that Members could be invited to.
- **Thresholds between levels** – in response to a question about the detail of the thresholds between the levels of eligibility and support, officers confirmed that this would be part of the consultation and more detail would therefore be included in the report back to this Committee after consultation.
- **Challenging of access to accurate data of usage** – in response to a question about why this had been the case it was explained that it largely related to historic funding arrangements that had been in place which had resulted in some Medway funded places being used by non-Medway families or by young people that were over the age of 18 and collecting data retrospectively was complex.
- **Number of beds available** – in response to a question about how many beds were available in Medway officers confirmed that not all users of short breaks provision needed access to bedded accommodation and that there needed to be a range of short breaks provision available to accommodate all levels of need.
- **Typical provider** – in response to a question about what a typical provider looked like, officers explained that it would be one that can supply flexible provision, provide a choice of activities and provide commissioners with feedback and usage data.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

- **Risks that levels of Direct Payments would be insufficient for some families** – in response to a question about how the Council would mitigate this risk it was explained that when the result of a self assessment equated to a level 3 payment of Direct Payments, a dialogue with the family would take place to determine whether the Short Breaks provision could be purchased using the Direct Payment or whether additional support may be required.
- **Local offer** – in relation to a question about specifics of the local offer, officers confirmed that development of the local offer was ongoing and that families would be updated on information in a variety of ways such as newsletters, annual events to showcase provision and via the Medway Parent and Carer Forum Facebook page. Officers also undertook to include in the report back to the Committee on the outcome of the consultation, an update on the local offer.

Decision:

- 1) The Committee recommended the Cabinet to approve officers to commence consultation on the proposals as outlined in the report, for a period from June to September 2016.
- 2) The Committee recommended that the report back to the Committee on the outcome of consultation include details on the local offer.

22 16-19 Strategy 2016-2020

Discussion:

The Interim Assistant Director, School Effectiveness and Inclusion introduced the report which provided the Committee with the draft 16-19 Strategy for Medway for the period 2016 - 2020. Medway Youth Trust (MYT) had been commissioned to produce the draft strategy and the Chief Executive of MYT explained to the Committee the process of drafting the strategy and outlined its key aspects. He emphasised to Members that the youth labour market was fundamentally different to general labour markets and this needed to be recognised and drew the Committee's attention to the five key messages from the needs analysis which were:

- A strategic and collaborative whole system approach was vital;
- Evidence should be used to target populations based on what works;
- Challenge needed to be grasped, with efforts channelled to young people's character, mindset and resilience;
- Data and information needed to be shared;
- A common language needed to be used in education, recruitment, training and development.

He added that young people needed to be trained and prepared in areas that matched workforce need. The Strategy would run from 2016-2020 and it was explained that although ambitious, 2020 would also ensure rapid change to keep all key players motivated in the Strategy and its outcomes.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

Members then raised a number of points and questions which included: -

- **Ambitious timeframe** – Members raised concern that 2020 was very ambitious. It was reiterated that speed in development was needed to maintain the will and motivation to make changes and improve outcomes for young people.
- **Swanscombe Paramount development** – Concern was also raised that too much reliance was being put on planned developments in relation to potential employment opportunities at the Paramount development at Swanscombe. Officers confirmed that there was much regeneration within Medway and the vicinity, including Swanscombe and young people should be prepared for work in all these areas.
- **National Citizens Service (NCS) and Duke of Edinburgh** – In response to a question about the NCS and funding, officers explained that the scheme had a criteria of the selected young people being a mix of the local demographics and Medway had been very successful in recent years in meeting the requirement. It was added that some schools used pupil premium funding to assist young people in funding them for these schemes and some bursaries were available.
- **Low uptake of apprenticeships under the age of 19** – A Member questioned whether the low uptake by under 19 year olds was due to insufficient information being provided in schools as it was an alternative option to sixth form. In response, the Chief Executive of MYT explained that, nationally, young people reported that they did not feel they received the right information in school relating to apprenticeship opportunities at 16. He also considered that a number of employers were apprehensive about recruiting apprentices at 16 and 17 years old, rather than at 19 plus, when they were likely to be more mature. It was also added that there was a role in giving parents more confidence about apprenticeship choices for their children.
- **Work experience** – In response to a question about the amount and quality of work experience, the Chief Executive of MYT explained that attitudes to work experience needed to change. Even if a young person reported to have not enjoyed their work experience, follow up conversations were key in getting the young person to understand what aspects of the work place they did appreciate and what they learned from the experience. He added how valuable work experience, including volunteering, was in getting young people work ready.
- **Unwillingness to engage** – In response to a question about how services can work with young people that are presenting as unwilling to engage in work and/or training, the Chief Executive of MYT explained that with intensive engagement from support services these young people can change their outlook. Some were not ready for education, employment or training and therefore services had to work with these young people to help equip them to be ready.

- **Promoting Medway as a place of work** – A Member raised an idea that video clips, promoting Medway as a place to live, work and enjoy, should be shown in schools to motivate young people about the area in which they live and to help them understand the opportunities available to succeed. Officers welcomed this idea and also undertook to share these clips with Members.

Decision:

The Committee recommended the Cabinet to approve the 16-19 Strategy for the period 2016–2020.

23 Sufficiency Report 2016-17

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning introduced the report which provided the Committee with the latest Sufficiency Report, setting out how Medway Council would meet the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in such a way as to ensure improved outcomes. She explained that she would liaise with Democratic Services about timetabling future Sufficiency Reports to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in a way that would hopefully reduce the lag of data information. She emphasised that the report demonstrated how the local authority was exercising its sufficiency responsibilities. She added that the number of looked after children (LAC) was reducing and if sustained would be reported in next year's report.

Members then raised a number of points and questions which included: -

- **Information relating to LAC that are not in education, employment of training (NEET)** – A Member expressed the view that it would be helpful to see the number of LAC that were NEET when broken down into age and ethnicity groups. Officers undertook to look to include this detail in future versions of the report.
- **Learning from Care Leaver feedback** – In response to a question about what learning there had been from the feedback received from Care Leavers, officers confirmed that there was now engagement with young people in procurement processes for supported accommodation. In addition, some Care Leavers had met peers in Brighton to discuss with them their experiences of being involved in procurement. It was added that Care Leavers were very confident and able to share their opinions and help inform service development and delivery. Site visits by young people would be undertaken as part of the performance and quality monitoring regime of supported accommodation, starting in Summer 2016 and Members asked that feedback from this be included in future sufficiency reports.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

- **Provision of high quality supported accommodation with intensive support** – in response to concern raised that gaps continued to exist in relation to the availability of this type of supported accommodation, officers explained that during the tender process, from an original 28 providers, only 4 could provide supported accommodation with an enhanced level of specialist support which was not sufficient to meet Medway's need. Discussions were therefore taking place with quality providers elsewhere in conjunction with work to stimulate the market locally. Support was also being provided to enable young people to stay at home where it was safe to do so.
- **Crash Pads** – In response to a question about the provision of a crash pad officers confirmed that this was expensive and difficult to provide and had therefore not been implemented in Medway but other options to provide emergency placements were being explored as well as other ways to provide support to vulnerable young people that may benefit from some time out. It was added that flexible local provision with wrap around support and intensive family work was more likely to result in a young person returning home within six weeks.
- **Recruitment of Foster Carers** – Officers confirmed that Medway was successfully recruiting foster carers but had recently had difficulty retaining them, which it was believed related to instability in the social care work force and the number of cases in proceedings. Work was being undertaken to look at a buddying system for foster carers to provide peer support and analysis of feedback from foster carers was underway to develop ways to support and retain foster carers in house.
- **Options of accommodation** – Officers explained that work was ongoing to develop a range of accommodation options that were flexible and included support. The point was made that a mind shift was needed as a 16/17 year old presenting as homeless would not necessarily be provided social housing and that other options would be explored, including the possibility for that young person to return home or to remain with a Foster Carer.
- **Definition of unsuitable accommodation** – in response to a request for the definition of unsuitable accommodation, officers undertook to provide this to Members.
- **Low rate of adoption of children over the age of 5 years** - in response to a question about why this was the case, officers explained that children put forward for adoption presented challenges but as a child grows older those challenges were at risk of becoming bigger and older children often came as a sibling group which also presented a challenge to match with adoptive parents.

Decision:

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

The Committee recommended the Cabinet to approve the Sufficiency Report 2016-17.

24 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with its current work programme. She highlighted the expression of interest that had been received in relation to the Headteacher position on the Committee, which had been received from Tina Lovey who had observed the meeting. She also informed the Committee that she would again be inviting nominations for Parent Governor representatives and would update the Committee on the outcome at the next meeting.

A Member requested that future briefing notes in relation to updating Members on school status, also include details of academies that transfer academy trusts.

Decision:

The Committee: -

- 1) Agreed the work programme, as attached to Appendix 1, subject to the additions to it made earlier in the meeting;
- 2) Recommended the appointment of Tina Lovey to the non-voting position of Headteacher on this Committee to the Chief Executive to approve, following consultation with the Group Whips, for a two year term;
- 3) Agreed that no commentary be submitted from the Committee on the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust's Quality Report 2015/16
- 4) Agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Legal Officer in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and spokespersons of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Director of Children and Adults, to comment, if appropriate, on quality accounts submitted by provider trusts in future years.

Chairman

Date:

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 May 2016

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