

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

**Tuesday, 5 June 2018**

**6.30pm to 9.10pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Aldous, Cooper, Fearn, Gilry, Johnson, Joy, Kemp, Paterson, Purdy, Royle (Chairman) and Wicks (Vice-Chairman)

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

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative)

**Added members without voting rights:**

Keith Clear (Medway Parents and Carers Forum), David Laming (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative) and George Peck (Medway Youth Council).

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Griffin (Substitute for Opara)  
Williams (Substitute for Saroy)

**In Attendance:** Paul Clarke, Programme Lead - School Organisation and Capital Services  
Ann Domeney, Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services  
John Drew, Independent Chair of Medway Safeguarding Children Board  
Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health Programmes  
Dominic Herrington, Regional Schools Commissioner  
Rachael Horner, Partnership Commissioning Programme Lead for Looked After Children  
Sameera Khan, Assistant Head of Legal Services  
Fiona McCaul, Interim Assistant Director - Commissioning Business Intelligence  
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer  
Jen Sarsby, The Head of Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adult and Children, Medway CCG  
Kevin Smart, School Challenge and Improvement Lead  
Rebecca Smith, School Challenge and Improvement Lead  
James Williams, Director of Public Health

**20 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Franklin, Opara and Saroy, Fay Cordingley (teacher), Akinola Edun (Parent Governor representative) and George Perfect (Medway Youth Council).

**21 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 8 March 2018 and the record of the Joint meeting of Committees held on 16 May 2018 were both agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

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

There were none.

**23 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

Councillor Wicks declared an OSI in item 6 (Annual Report on School Performance 2017) and item 12 (work programme) by virtue of his position as governor at Medway University technical College (UTC) and would leave the room should there be any specific discussion on the Medway UTC.

Councillor Cooper declared an OSI in item 6 (Annual Report on School Performance 2017) by virtue of her position as governor at Rivermead School and would leave the room should there be any specific discussion on Rivermead School.

Other interests

There were none.

**24 Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Update Report**

**Discussion:**

The Independent Chair of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the MSCB Strategic Plan 2017-20. The Independent Chair made particular reference to the following detail in the report:

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5 June 2018

- Child Sexual Exploitation – he explained that figures were as to be expected for Medway’s size and type of area and explained that partnership working across agencies was strong.
- Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) – he explained that there were five in the system, two of which had been completed and he highlighted the learning from those two. One of the outstanding SCRs related to the abuse of children at Medway Secure Training Centre and it was hoped this would be published in September 2018.
- Recent multi-agency audits, which had related to children on Child in Need Plans – he explained that while the needs of children were generally well met, the audit did find incidents which identified areas of improvement and in response the Council had employed an additional auditor in this field.
- Numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan – he explained that although the figure was above the national average he felt the figure was in a range that indicated purposeful activity.

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

- **Learning from SCR Ellie** – A Member asked if there were issues relevant to this case that could be relevant for other families who were in similar situations with no recourse to public funds and placed out of area with risk of social isolation. In response the Independent Chair of the MSCB explained that there were very particular circumstances with regard to the SCR although there was some learning for the Immigration and Asylum Support Services being better at informing relevant agencies of the family’s needs.
- **Missing children** – A Member raised concern relating to children that go missing. The Independent Chair shared this concern, explaining that one of the biggest challenges was children being placed in Medway, out of their local area, and not settling.
- **Support for children placed out of area in Medway** – concern was raised about the support children receive from their own local authority when placed in Medway. The Independent Chair explained that some local authorities were supporting their children and young people very well but there were some children who were not being supported sufficiently. To address this he explained the importance of local authorities working together and reminding each other of their statutory obligations to out of area placements. In addition the Deputy Director, Children and Adults explained that the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance monitored children placed into Medway and Medway Children placed out of area and periodically every local authority in the country was contacted to check whether they had any children placed in Medway.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Independent Chair for his attendance.

## 25 Annual Report on School Performance 2017

### Discussion:

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) gave his apologies for being unable to attend the previous meeting, where this item had initially been considered. The Chairman then asked him to comment on two particular issues relating to coasting schools and exclusion rates.

In response the RSC explained that the Secretary of State had announced a new standard of performance which would replace the current two standards of coasting and schools not reaching the minimum floor target. This would make it easier for schools, local authorities and other agencies to understand issues of performance and when support is needed.

In relation to exclusions, the RSC explained there was close working between his office, Medway Council and School Leaders to reduce exclusion rates. Some schools were doing well in terms of being inclusive and the partnership working was enabling that best practice to be shared. Furthermore, the Council had been successful in bidding for funding to support professional development amongst school leaders and staff which was being targeted around inclusion. These developments were beginning to show an improvement in exclusion rates.

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

- **Liaisons with Governing Bodies** – in response to a question about whether the RSC liaised with Governing Bodies he confirmed that he did and that the topic of exclusions was always raised to keep it as an issue of focus.
- **Free School Meals** – in response to a comment around how to ensure children eligible for free school meals and additional resource are claiming it, the RSC explained that schools were generally very resourceful in encouraging parents and making them aware of the eligibility and the pupil premium funding it attracted. The School Challenge and Improvement Leads confirmed that the Performance and Intelligence Team were currently carrying out some in-depth work in the issue and would report back in more detail when available.
- **Exclusions** – in response to a question about more detail regarding exclusions and the work being undertaken with schools, the RSC explained that the work was to support staff in being more confident and better equipped to manage inclusion.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Regional Schools Commissioner for his attendance.

## 26 Annual Update on Children's Services

### Discussion:

The Deputy Director, Children and Adult Services introduced the report which updated Members on progress and developments within Children's Services. She explained that the service was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2015, when it was found to be 'requiring improvement'. Many actions that were identified had been undertaken and those that remained outstanding and/or challenging were addressed, along with further actions, within the 'Promoting Practice' Plan for 2018. She then identified some of the key developments of the service, including: -

- reorganisation into four children and family hubs which were made of multi-agency teams creating a tangible early help offer;
- the launch of the First Response Service which comprised of co-located 'Single Point of Access, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and social work assessment teams, which had been successful;
- The creation of two Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator roles working across the four hubs and the First Response Service;
- The reduction in the average timescale of care proceedings;
- The introduction of the Mind of My Own app (MOMO) which affords young people the opportunity to share their views. Medway was confirmed as one of the top users of the app nationally and plans were in place to fund a version of the app for younger children and children with communication difficulties;
- An increase in the percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation;
- Workforce recruitment and retention continued to be a priority and Medway was now offering a competitive offer for social workers which was showing improvements in workforce sustainability.

The Deputy Director, Children and Adults also commented on the local area inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) which had taken place in December 2017 and had identified some areas of significant weakness. She confirmed that the written statement of action had been developed and was awaiting sign off but showed strong signs of partnership working to address the issues raised. Furthermore, she commented on missing children and explained that of the 351 children with missing episodes in 2017-18, 63% had accepted the offer of help and confirmed this was an area of focus to improve.

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

- **Predicted performance at next Ofsted** – in response to a question about the predicted outcome of the next Ofsted inspection, the Deputy

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5 June 2018

Director, Children and Adults explained that the service was working towards the framework to achieve a good rating, although explained that the inspection framework was changing. The new type of inspection, 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)', consisted of a shorter inspection period that looked more heavily at case work.

- **Accommodation for skilled staff** – in response to a Member's concern about staff recruitment and retention and accommodation availability, the Deputy Director, Children and Adults, confirmed that accommodation had not been raised as an issue of recruitment or retention of staff.
- **Road map of services at children and family hubs** – Following a question about services provided by the hubs that have replaced the children's centres, the Deputy Director undertook to provide Members with a road map of services and contact details across the hubs so Members are able to signpost constituents to the relevant services.
- **Demo of the MOMO App** – A Member asked that this be brought to Committee, recognising it was already listed on the Committee's work programme as date to be determined.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

## 27 Medway School Place Planning Strategy 2018-2022

### Discussion:

The Programme Lead – School Organisation and Capital Services, introduced the report which presented Members with the draft School Place Planning Strategy 2018-2022, which replaced the outdated School organisation Plan 2011-16. He explained that the new strategy, which was no longer a statutory requirement, was a strategic plan to enable the Council to establish a framework for school organisation decisions and took an overarching view of school place planning which would be complemented by annual reviews to ensure sufficient supply of good quality school places is maintained.

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

- **Sufficient secondary school places** – in response to a Member's concerns about the time frame available in getting the proposed free schools built and ready for when the additional secondary school places were needed, the Programme Lead - School Organisation and Capital Services explained that discussions were underway with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and sites had been identified for further consideration. Officers were time aware of the need for the additional capacity. It was hoped that at least one of the two new free schools would be open for 2021 admissions which would then allow

enough capacity within the system across Medway until the other school opened.

- **Site for the proposed free school at Rainham** – A Member asked what the criteria was for identifying sites, explaining that some Councillors shared concern over the proposed site which was on the edge of the Medway boundary, where traffic congestion was already an issue and asked why other sites had not been proposed. In response the Programme Lead - School Organisation and Capital Services explained that five sites in the Rainham area had been considered. Advice from Planning Services had been considered and the sites put forward to the ESFA for feasibility studies. This process had resulted in one of the five sites being proposed for further investigation. Following a request from the Member, he undertook to provide a briefing note detailing the factors considered in determining a proposed site for the free school in Rainham.
- **Capacity of school places for children with Special Education Needs (SEN)** – in response to a question about how capacity for SEN school places was being addressed, the Programme Lead - School Organisation and Capital Services explained that there was a review into this being carried out by the SEN Team which was looking at capacity issues, reducing the number of children placed out of area and whether children were being placed in the right placements and whether some should be placed in mainstream schools, where possible.
- **Rewording** – The Programme Lead - School Organisation and Capital Services undertook to amend the wording at 9.1.2 of the draft strategy to ensure sensitivity.

### **Decision:**

The Committee recommended the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-2022 to the Cabinet for approval and requested a briefing note on the factors considered in determining a proposed site for the free school in Rainham.

## **28 Update on Supported Accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers**

### **Discussion:**

The Programme Lead for Looked After Children introduced the report which updated the Committee on the future provision of supported accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers. The report included information on the work being done around securing supported accommodation for older children in care and Care Leavers following the additional obligation on the Council as part of the Children and Social Care Act 2017 and provided detail on how the Council was working with partner agencies to address the placement needs and improve the outcomes of current and future Children in Care and Care Leavers.



## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5 June 2018

Members then raised the following comments and questions: -

- **Community relations** – A Member raised the importance of community relations in supporting young people to settle into communities and be well supported, referencing the role of Ward Members in this where appropriate. The Programme Lead for Looked After Children responded that once the list of providers was finalised on the new framework, this could be shared with Councillors.
- **Sector regulation** – A Member suggested representations be made to the Government to recommend regulating supported accommodation providers, given the risks for such vulnerable young people to ensure supported accommodation is of a quality standard. In response, the Programme Lead for Looked After Children confirmed that the system was unregulated. She explained that quality and suitability was paramount as part of the tender process for a new framework and that liaison with neighbouring local authorities was strong to keep staff aware of when young people were placed in Medway from those authorities.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the report and expressed concern about the lack of regulation amongst supported accommodation.

## 29 Female Genital Mutilation

### Discussion:

The Head of Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adult and Children from NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) introduced the report which provided Members with an overview and an analysis of how services in Medway respond to the practice and identification of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). She highlighted to Members the duties for statutory agencies to safeguard children and families at risk or who have had FGM, the prevalence in Medway and the nature of identification and reporting FGM locally.

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

- **Role of border control in safeguarding and reporting** – A Member asked whether there was provision at airports for recognising people at risk of travelling to a country for FGM procedures or travelling back following FGM. In response, the Head of Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adult and Children explained that recent legislation enabled some actions to be imposed where people were at risk, for example, withholding a child's passport, informing border control forces and imposing a travel ban. She added that awareness was increasing but agencies were still heavily reliant on local communities and family members reporting issues.



## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5 June 2018

- **Locality of hospital treatment** – in response to a question about whether treatment could be provided more locally, with treatment currently being provided in London, the Head of Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adult and Children explained that because numbers were relatively small and treatment required was usually very specialist, London was the most appropriate location for services.
- **Awareness amongst young people** – A Member referred to an awareness video about FGM which had been created by the Medway Youth Council (then Medway Youth Parliament) and suggested this be used to raise awareness amongst young people. The Head of Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adult and Children explained that it was part of a wider action plan and confirmed FGM awareness was embedded in safeguarding arrangements.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

## **30 Member's Item: Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

### **Discussion:**

Councillor Purdy introduced the report, explaining her reasons for requesting the item. She had been concerned about the prevalence of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and had been keen to raise awareness of the issue. She welcomed the actions being taken, as detailed in the report.

The Director of Public Health and the Head of Public Health Programmes explained that FASD was difficult to diagnose due to being a spectrum disorder which was often misinterpreted, making it difficult to estimate prevalence. She referred to recommendations made by the British Medical Association regarding FASD and explained how Medway was taking action with regard to those recommendations, as set out in the report and highlighted the suggested next steps which included; creative use of social media, auditing information collected from pregnant woman regarding alcohol consumption, targeting support for woman who are dependent drinkers and providing specialist training for foster carers, adopters and social workers so they are better equipped to support families affected.

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

- **Supporting woman who are alcohol dependent before pregnancy** – in response to a comment on the importance of supporting woman who are dependent on alcohol before they become pregnant, the Head of Public Health Programmes explained that this was a clear strand in prevention of FASD and explained that there needed to be a range of treatment available for people who do not necessarily want to access traditional addiction and dependency services, for example, providing online support.

- **Publicity** – in response to a question about increasing publicity about the risks of drinking during pregnancy, officers confirmed that a range of tools needed to be used to raise awareness, social marketing, YouTube, press coverage and targeted support. Utilising the opportunities that arise from integrated services at schools, for example school nursing and health visitors was also important.
- **Recognising FASD** – in response to a question about how FASD is recognised, officers confirmed that there were a range of physical characteristics that could indicate FASD but these did not always present themselves making identification and diagnosis difficult.
- **Training for Adoption Panel members** – following a request the Deputy Director, Children and Adults, undertook to investigate the possibility of training the Appeal Panel members in FASD.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

## **31 Work programme**

### **Discussion:**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which updated the Committee on its work programme. She added that the relevant Portfolio Holders had been consulted with regard to their annual attendance to the Committee to be held to account and suggested scheduling them into the work programme as follows:

- Portfolio Holder for Adult Services (in relation to the Independent Reviewing Service only) – 10 January 2019;
- Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member) – 7 March 2019
- Portfolio Holder for Educational Attainment and Improvement – 7 March 2019

A Member then asked if the Committee could receive a briefing note on the resilience of schools in Medway in relation to bad weather, following the recent flooding that had been experienced locally.

A request was also made to address the number of items on the work programme that were listed as 'to be determined'. It was suggested that the Medway Test Procedure Review could be dealt with as a briefing note. The Democratic Services Officer undertook to liaise with officers to produce a plan for the remaining items which would be presented at the next agenda planning meeting for discussion with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson before putting forward recommendations in the next work programme report.

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 5 June 2018

### Decision:

- (1) The Committee agreed the work programme, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to: -
  - Adding Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments Annual report to the work programme for 31 July 2018.
  - Adding attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services to the work programme for 10 January 2019
  - Adding the attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member) to the work programme for 7 March 2019
  - Adding the attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement and Attainment to the work programme for 7 March 2019
  - Removing Medway Test Procedure Review from the work programme and instead officers providing a briefing note on this.
- (2) The Committee requested a briefing note on the resilience of schools in Medway in relation to bad weather, following the recent flooding that had been experienced locally.
- (3) The Committee requested the Democratic Services Officer to liaise with colleagues about the scheduling of items listed on the work programme as 'to be determined' and bring forward a suggested plan for scheduling these items.
- (4) The Committee noted the update relating to the Headteacher position on the Committee, as detailed in section 5 of the report.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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