

Medway Council
Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
Thursday, 6 June 2019
7.05pm to 8.45pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Kemp (Chairman), Opara (Vice-Chairman), Ahmed, Aldous, Barrett, Cooper, Sylvia Griffin, Hackwell, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Steve Iles, Johnson, Mahil, Purdy, Thorne and Mrs Elizabeth Turpin

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

Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church representative) and Fay Cordingley (Church of England Representative)

Added members without voting rights:

Thomas Baldock (Medway Youth Council), Anna McGovern (Medway Youth Council), Geoffrey Matthews (Teacher Representative) and Margaret Cane (Healthwatch Medway CIC Representative)

Substitutes: Councillors:
Michelle Dewar (substitute for Keith Clear – Medway Parent and Carer Forum)

In Attendance: Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Ian Sutherland, Director of People - Children and Adults Services
Ann Domeney, Deputy Director, Children and Adults Services
Sameera Khan, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Andrew Willetts, Head of Service – Early Help and Targeted Services
John Drew, Independent Chair of Medway Safeguarding Children Board

38 Apologies for absence

An apology of absence was received from David Lane (Parent Governor representative).

39 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 7 March 2019 and the record of the Joint Meeting of Committees held on 22 May 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

40 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

41 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

42 Tackling Racism in Medway

Discussion:

The Head of Early Help and Targeted Services introduced the report which provided an update in relation to the work being done to tackle racism against young people in Medway. He highlighted some of the key areas of focus from the report, progress made and next steps for further improvement, as set out at sections 3 and 4 of the report.

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

- **Calls to victim support** – in response to a question about the number of calls to this service by children and young people, officers undertook to source that information and circulate it to the committee.
- **Take up of support pack for schools** – in response to concerns raised about the low take up by schools of the support pack offered to them in relation to work they could do to tackle racism, officers explained that the pack had been sent to all schools but there had been limited capacity to follow this up with schools individually and therefore feedback had not been as hoped. It was anticipated this could be promoted further through the Youth Police Action Group who were building relationships with schools. Officers also undertook to circulate the numbers of schools that had taken up the resource to the Committee.

- **Youth Police Advisory Group (YPAG)** – Members asked for more detail about the YPAG. In response officers explained that it consisted of a group of young people who worked closely with the police and other groups such as Medway Youth Council and the Medway Children and Young People Council. It was well attended by senior Police staff and had a structured approach in identifying areas of focus. It was suggested that the Chair of the YPAG be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.
- **Strengthening guidelines in schools** – officers confirmed that YPAG planned to work with schools to understand what policies they had in place, how aware students were of their school's policy and how effective and well used the policies were. Officers therefore recommended that the Committee invite officers and representatives from YPAG to attend in 12-18 months in order for them to be able to report back on the progress made on this action.
- **Feedback from young people** – in response to a request for more detail about the positive feedback there had been from children and young people about racism in Medway officers explained that young people's feedback at the most recent Medway Youth Council Conference had shown an improving picture in relation to them feeling safer in relation to racism, although it was acknowledged that other issues were causing concerns, such as gang culture.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and requested officers to provide figures relating to the number of calls by children and young people to the victim support service.

43 Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Update Report

Discussion:

The Independent Chair of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) introduced the report which updated the Committee on the work of the Board during 2018-19 and on the Board's Business Plan 2017-20. He highlighted the key areas of progress and reminded the Committee that the Board would cease to exist in September 2019, when it is replaced by the new safeguarding partnership arrangements.

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

- **The role of fathers in assessments** – A Member commented on the role of fathers being addressed in assessments and asked for more information. The Independent Chair explained that the important role of the father needed to be focused on more in cases where the father was playing some part in the child or young person's life. This was therefore an area of focussed learning across children's services and agencies.

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- **Domestic Abuse and seasonal increases** – A Member asked if there were ways to mitigate seasonal increases in cases of domestic abuse. The Independent Chair explained that work was ongoing in improving sensitivity to indicative signs of possible domestic abuse and this was being done across partnership agencies..
- **Out of area placements** – A Member asked for numbers of children and young people placed out of area and how the Council could assure itself of the quality of placements. Officers undertook to provide data on out of area placements and explained that every child in care was allocated a social worker who would visit the child and assured Members that no child was placed in any provision that was not regulated. It was added that care leavers may be placed into supported accommodation which was not regulated but only provision that was on the Council's framework was used for this purpose and the Council had in place a Quality Assurance Officer who made checks on the provision to ensure quality.
- **Commercial Provider issues** – A Member referred to the Serious Case Review relating to the Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) and asked if there was a tension in relation to commercial providers managing such provision. The Independent Chair explained that the previous contract held by the commercial provider at the time of the issues at Medway STC was a dated contract which focused on processes as opposed to outcomes and was a contributing factor to some of the issues. Lessons had been learned and the Government had only accepted tenders for the new contract from not-for-profit organisations and had made it clear that as long as provision was delivered within the budget stated as part of the tender, price would not feature on any evaluation of bids. In relation to the STC it was added that the Governor at the establishment had been proactive in establishing a designated social worker which mirrored statutory arrangements in place at the Young Offenders Institute, which the STC was not required to do but was very welcomed by the Council.
- **Relaunch of Young Persons Domestic Abuse Campaign** – A Member asked how this relaunch with schools would be managed, particularly as it was taking place during summer holidays and as school interaction had been reportedly low under the previous item on the agenda (Tackling Racism in Medway). In response the Independent Chair reported that there was a member of staff who had particular responsibility for outreach to schools and this post had recently been recruited to. Particular focus would be made to access the two main forums for primary and secondary head teachers and he added that independent schools were the most difficult to access and engage with but this was an area of focus.
- **Completion of early help referrals** – in response to a comment made about the difficulty sometimes experienced in completing paperwork for referrals, the Independent Chair acknowledged that some people found the early help forms difficult but explained the importance in gleaning the information collated by the forms and added that the service regularly

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reviewed paperwork and was always open to dialogue on how referrals and paperwork could be improved.

- **Improving communication** – in response to an action of the MSCB to develop professional communications to raise awareness the Medway Youth Council Chair undertook to send the MYC marketing report to the Board to share its lessons learned on this issue. He also suggested that MYC could retweet MSCB posts to help raise awareness.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and requested that the figure of children and young people placed in out of area provision be circulated to the Committee.

44 Medway Youth Council - Annual report

Discussion:

The Medway Youth Council (MYC) Chair introduced the report which provided the Committee with detail of the work of the MYC across 2018-19, highlighting the key points which were set out in section 3 of the report.

The Early Help and Targeted Services Manager then expressed his thanks for the work of the outgoing Chair and MYC as a whole and reiterated the excellent achievements made by MYC during 2018-19.

Members of the Committee then also expressed their thanks to the outgoing Chair for his work with MYC and his contributions on the Committee during 2018-19. They also welcomed the incoming Chair to the Committee and congratulated her on her appointment as Chair of MYC for 2019-20.

In response to a question about how MYC could be fully inclusive and encourage diversity of its membership, the Chair explained that the incoming Cabinet was predominantly made up of females, as opposed to males and added that during the last year, barriers to becoming an MYC member had been broken down by making signing up to the group much easier and thereby providing access to the MYC platform, enabling young people to get involved without requiring members to attend meetings. He also explained that members were supported where they had additional need and provided some examples of this. It was added that the Medway Parent and Carer Forum (MPCF) would be linking up to ensure some of the children with disabilities represented by the MPCF could be included and involved in MYC.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the outgoing MYC Chair for his work with MYC and his contributions to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

45 Work programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which advised Members on the current work programme for the Committee.

A Member then referred to an item on the Forward Plan list, detailed at 4.2 of the agenda, relating to changes to St Nicholas Church of England Infant School. He asked why this information did not include the Gordon School which was referenced in the consultation document, and asked why it hadn't been report to the Committee, as the consultation document suggested it would be. Officers explained that the text was lifted directly from the Forward Plan and undertook to respond to the Member once they had opportunity to investigate the issue,

Members then made a number of suggestions for the work programme, which included:

- Council Response to LGO Complaint re Mainstream Home to School Transport Decision and Policy (for July meeting)
- Grammar School Places – a report to scrutinise the issues around the impact of out of area students gaining places at Medway Grammar Schools and the implications around out of area children applying to sit the Medway Test,
- Update on the Children's Services contract with Medway Community Healthcare
- Update on the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service contract with NELFT
- Consultation on the proposals by Leigh Academies Trust to amalgamate Stoke Primary Academy and Allhallows Primary Academy on the Allhallows site.
- Demonstration of the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app
- 2019 Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22
- Medway Looked After Children and what is being done by the Virtual Head Teacher to break down the barriers to educational attainment

The Committee also took the opportunity, as it was national volunteers week, to acknowledge thanks for all the volunteers that help and support Medway children and young people.

Decision:

The committee agreed the work programme, as attached at Appendix 1, subject to the following being added:

- Draft Children and Young People's Plan – outcome of consultation (25 July 2019 meeting)
- Council Response to LGO Complaint re Mainstream Home to School Transport Decision and Policy (25 July 2019 meeting)

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- Grammar School Places – a report to scrutinise the issues around the impact of out of area students gaining places at Medway Grammar Schools and the implications around out of area children applying to sit the Medway Test (date to be advised),
- Update on the Children’s Services contract with Medway Community Healthcare (date to be advised)
- Update on the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service contract with NELFT (date to be advised)
- Consultation on the proposals by Leigh Academies Trust to amalgamate Stoke Primary Academy and Allhallows Primary Academy on the Allhallows site.(25 July 2019 meeting)
- Demonstration of the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app (date to be advised)
- 2019 Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22 (date to be advised)
- Medway Looked After Children and what is being done by the Virtual Head Teacher to break down the barriers to educational attainment (date to be advised).

Chairman

Date:

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