

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

26 November 2014 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mrs Arculus	Mrs Duncton	Mr Oppler
Mr Barling	Mr High	Mr Parsons
Mrs Bennett	Dr Holt	Mr Smith
Mr Cloake	Mrs Mullins	Mr Wickremaratchi

In attendance by invitation: Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life) and Ms Kennard and Mrs Millson, Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Blunden, Mrs Le Rossignol and Mrs Ryan.

Declaration of Interests

77. No interests were declared.

Minutes

78. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2014 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013-14

79. The Committee considered the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013-14 (copy appended to the signed minutes). Jimmy Doyle, Independent Chair of the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board (WSSCB), introduced the report and highlighted the following:-

- The main role of the Board was to coordinate safeguarding across the range of responsible partners in West Sussex. The Board also managed any investigations that were necessary as a result of allegations and undertook Serious Case Reviews.
- It was a requirement that the Board produce an annual report; the 2013-14 report detailed the Board's activity over the previous year up to the end of March 2014.

80. The following points were raised in discussion; Members:-

- Welcomed the informative content and improved format of the report.
- Queried whether there were ways the County Council could improve its safeguarding practices. *Mr Doyle indicated that it was clear the authority had a strong commitment to safeguarding, championed by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member. Recent organisational change that had led to staff moving on and a resulting loss of some local knowledge was disruptive. However the work done to improve and strengthen frontline services had proved effective and it was important not to lose focus in this*

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area, despite the fact that work was now underway to address policy on the larger issues, such as Child Sexual Exploitation.

- Were concerned that the report indicated the County Council was only aware of 10 privately fostered children when the numbers were expected to be much higher and wondered whether there were ways to improve knowledge of these private arrangements. *Kevin Peers, Director of Children and Families, explained that the County Council would generally only be made aware a child was being privately fostered if the parent or carer actively chose to tell Children's Services. In the majority of cases it was likely that those private placements the County Council weren't aware of were suitable; however partners such as schools and the Police were encouraged to alert the service if they had knowledge of children in this type of arrangement who may be a cause for concern.*
- Felt that the proposals for all early help referrals to be dealt with by the Children's Access Point (CAP) needed close monitoring to assess the impact, particularly to ascertain if it improved the referral process to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. The Committee agreed that this issue be referred to the Business Planning Group to consider the possibility of scheduling an item on this topic at a future meeting of the Select Committee.
- Raised concern about the number of children that were being electively home educated, and were especially worried that parents were doing this to avoid prosecution or the child being excluded from school. Members also felt the number of cases being referred to the Children Missing in Education team because the child's education was deemed unsuitable was a cause for concern. The Committee suggested that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills be asked to provide a briefing note indicating what proactive steps the County Council was taking to address these issues and track the missing children.
- Suggested that the findings of the Serious Case Review detailed on the WSSCB website be analysed by the Business Planning Group (BPG) and if the BPG discovered any issues of concern these should be referred to the Select Committee for further consideration.
- Queried what safeguarding responsibility the County Council had for both West Sussex children placed outside of the county and children placed in West Sussex by other authorities. *Sam Bushby, Head of Safeguarding, indicated that the responsibility remained with the placing authority. However, this has been changing more recently and there is an increased expectation of responsibility on the host authority. This is a particular challenge in West Sussex due to the large number of children who are Looked After by other Authorities, but placed within the county. The information received from other areas is inconsistent and this is not always received in a timely way. Mr Peers stressed that there was only a very limited number of West Sussex children placed outside of the county; a signed agreement from him, as Director of Children and Families, and discussion with the host authority was required before any external placement could occur.*
- Wondered how e-safety was being actively promoted. *Mr Doyle advised that there was a requirement that all partners involved with the WSSCB must identify their approach to e-safety; work was also on-going between the WSSCB and schools to develop their own guidance. Shona McMinn, Board Manager, highlighted that there was guidance on e-safety on the WSSCB website, a link to the site would be sent to Members who were encouraged to look at this and promote it widely in the course of their work.*

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- Queried whether links had developed between the WSSCB and the Diocese of Chichester safeguarding board. *Mr Doyle indicated that good links had been established; Mrs Bushby highlighted that she and the Police both attended the board meetings thereby developing better connections between the organisations.*
- Highlighted the cultural differences that existed in communities across the county and wondered if the Board had developed guidance on how to protect against female genital mutilation (FGM) or radicalisation. *Mr Doyle indicated that the Board had plans to address the issue of FGM within the current year but that an approach to radicalisation had not been considered as yet.*

81. Resolved that the Committee: -

- (1) Notes the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013-14;
- (2) Requests that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills provides Members with a briefing to address their concerns about children being electively home educated and the reasons for this as detailed in bullet point 5 of minute 80;
- (3) Requests that the Business Planning Group analyses the findings of the Serious Case Review and reports any issues of concern to the Committee;
- (4) Requests that the Business Planning Group considers the possibility of scheduling an item on how the CAP deal with early help referrals at a future Select Committee meeting.

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry - Methodology

82. The Committee considered a report by the Independent Chair of the WSSCB (copy appended to the signed minutes).

83. Mr Doyle introduced the report and stressed that, to ensure a robust approach to the inquiry, it was important not only to consider the findings of the Rotherham Inquiry but also the Ofsted report "The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it?", which could be used as a comprehensive checklist, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner report "If only someone had listened" which introduced the "See me Hear me" framework for protecting young people.

84. Mrs Bushby explained that: -

- The County Council would be completely honest in the assessment of its own procedures and processes to ensure the inquiry was as effective as possible. In this respect what the County Council is doing well, where development is needed and where there are gaps in procedures should be clearly identified.
- The County Council would need to engage with businesses such as hotels, pubs and clubs, private landlords and taxi companies to encourage them to come forward and report any concerns regarding young people they saw in the course of their work.
- It was likely that, as the County Council and its partners heightened awareness amongst the public of the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), the number of reported incidents would increase. However this would enable

perpetrators to be identified thereby leading to enforcement measures being taken and incidents reducing in future.

85. The Committee made comments and asked questions, including those that follow. Members:

- Requested that they be kept updated with regards to how well the County Council met the Ofsted recommendations.
- Queried whether the situation that occurred at Rotherham could occur in West Sussex. *The Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life stressed that he hoped that it didn't but could not be certain at this point.*
- Asked whether Sussex Police were proactive or reactive in their approach to CSE. *Mr Doyle indicated that all the evidence, such as the development of Operation Kite and the close working relationship they'd developed with the CAP, indicated that they were very proactive. Mrs Bushby confirmed that this was also demonstrated by the additional resource the Police had committed in this area. The Cabinet Member highlighted that he had been reassured, in writing, by the Chief Constable that the Police were focussing on this issue.*
- Raised concern that Social Workers did not attend the Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation meetings. *Mrs Bushby explained that currently a staff member from Social Services did attend but changes were planned in order to develop and improve practice. The need is to ensure that those who know the child and have the relevant information about them, including the social worker, are completing the assessment of risk and setting the action plan.*
- Queried what work had been done with schools to improve the understanding of CSE. *Ms McMinn explained that, as part of Operation Kite, the Police were going in to schools to talk to pupils on this subject. Mr Peers highlighted that the County Council was currently developing a school awareness programme that would cover a range of key topics including CSE. Once this was finalised it would be rolled out across the schools. Members asked whether the Youth Cabinet had any involvement as pupils may be more receptive to messages delivered by other young people. Ms McMinn confirmed that the WSSCB had a subgroup which included representatives of the Youth Cabinet and Children in Care Council, so the Board could take account of the views of young people in its work.*
- Cautioned that although it was important to involve schools in raising awareness of CSE this should not be made too onerous or divert the teachers from their primary function of providing education. Social workers were based in some schools around the county; as this appeared to work well consideration should be given to expanding this service to other schools.

86. Resolved – That the Committee supports the proposed approach of the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board to the review.

Report from the Business Planning Group

87. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Business Planning Group (copy appended to the signed minutes). The Chairman introduced the report and highlighted that the Project Day scheduled for 4 February 2015 would be used for a formal meeting of the Select Committee.

88. One Member raised concern that all the items scheduled on the Committee's current work plan were previews of Cabinet Member decisions and that there was

no scrutiny of other matters. *The Chairman indicated that if Members had suggestions for items for scrutiny by the Committee they were encouraged to make the BPG aware so that these could be considered for scheduling at future meetings.*

89. Resolved: that the Committee supports the proposed approach to the agenda items for forthcoming meetings and the updates to the work programme as recommended by the Business Planning Group at its meeting on 23 October 2014.

Forward Plan

90. The Committee considered the Forward Plan, December 2014 – March 2015 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

91. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Date of next meeting

92. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 15 January 2015 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 1.25pm.

Chairman