

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

13 January 2021

-: Present :-

Councillor Howgate (Chairman)

Councillors Atiya-Alla, Barrand, Brown, Bye (Vice-Chair), Mandy Darling, Foster, Kennedy and Loxton

(Also in attendance: Councillors Barnby, Brooks, Carter, Steve Darling, Douglas-Dunbar, Law, Barbara Lewis, Chris Lewis, Mills, Stockman, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

26. Update on County Lines and Child Exploitation in Torbay

The Board received multi-agency presentations on how partners were managing issues in connection with county lines and child and vulnerable person's exploitation as outlined in the submitted documentation from the following:

- a) Devon and Cornwall Police - Nikki Leaper, Borough Commander South Devon and Brent Davison, Superintendent;
- b) Children's Services - Nancy Meehan, Director Children's Services and Brian Mason, Team Manager Exploitation;
- c) Adult Safeguarding - Jonathan Anthony, Safeguarding Adults and Mental Capacity / DOLS operational Lead Torbay and Laura Teodorescu, Social Worker, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust; and
- d) Safer Communities Torbay - Tara Harris, Assistant Director of Community and Customer Services.

The presenters also responded to questions in relation to:

- utilisation and importance of the role of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Police Cadets as eyes and ears on the ground;
- use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras and cars;
- role and profile of Councillor Advocates;
- information and intelligence sharing and gathering;
- importance of listening and engaging with communities to give them the confidence to pick up the signs of exploitation and know where and how to get support;

- risks around vulnerable children and young people moving into Torbay and moving out of Torbay and ensuring that intelligence was shared with the appropriate partners to enable continued support for them and their families;
- how online exploitation was being managed and the importance of families discussing online activity with their children to develop an open understanding of their use and contacts;
- the role of schools and work being undertaken with partners;
- missing children and excluded children and the support in place;
- lessons learned from our serious case reviews and from other authorities and how this was used to improve services to protect vulnerable people;
- issues in connection with housing;
- impact of Covid-19;
- numbers of online exploitations – it was agreed that this information would be shared after the meeting with Councillors; and
- what the Councillors and Council could do to make a difference.

The Board thanked the presenters for their informative presentations and responses to their questions and welcomed the shared partnership approach to tackling this important issue.

Resolved:

- (i) that the Director of Children's Services be requested to provide information to all Councillors on signs to look for in respect of exploitation or vulnerability and where to report this and to encourage Councillors to report areas of concern to ensure a partnership response to enable children to feel safe and be supported;
- (ii) that the Council and Councillors share information and intelligence across the partnership to ensure a partnership response to issues of concern;
- (iii) that the Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement be recommended to support communication strategies to enable key messages to be shared with our communities in order to help them understand signs of exploitation and how and where to report any concerns;
- (iv) that the profile of Councillor Advocates – Councillor Barrant for Torquay and Councillor Kennedy for Paignton and Brixham be raised through communication to all Councillors and to encourage greater information sharing by Councillors to help address relevant concerns in their wards;
- (v) that the Democratic Services Team Leader be requested to write to Devon Home Choice to ask them for a written response on how they respond to concerns over exploitation in relation to housing provided to residents of Torbay and to share the response with all Councillors; and
- (vi) that, subject to approval of item 5 on the agenda, the new Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board be recommended to review

the current situation regarding safeguarding children who are home schooled and excluded from school.

27. Establishment of a Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Interim Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond, outlined the submitted report on a proposal to establish a new Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board as a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. This was part of a review of the Council's governance and approach for the management and oversight of the delivery of Children's Services. This would ensure dedicated and focused political oversight and challenge of all issues relating to children and young people to help improve the delivery of these key services. The proposal was supported by the Department for Education Commissioner, who was working with the Council on its improvement journey.

Resolved:

- (i) that a Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board be established, as a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, to be chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services, with Terms of Reference and Membership as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;
- (ii) that Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board considers appointing additional non-voting co-opted members who will help provide expert advice and support to the Board; and
- (iii) that the Overview and Scrutiny Board reviews the effectiveness of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board in six months time (unanimous).

Chairman/woman