

Minutes of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

22 November 2021

-: Present :-

Councillor Bye (Chairman)

Councillors Barnby, Douglas-Dunbar and Loxton

Co-opted Members

Tatiana Wilson, Church of England Diocesan Representative

Laura Colman, Primary Parent Governor Representative

Non-Voting Co-opted Member

Dave Hammond

28. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Independent Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Loxton instead of Councillor Mills. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mandy Darling and Jo Morrell and Mike Cook (non-voting Co-opted Members).

29. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 1 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. Childcare Sufficiency Report 2021

Emma Kerridge, Senior Early Years Advisor, and Rachael Williams, Divisional Director for Education, Learning and Skills, outlined the submitted Childcare Sufficiency Report, which provided an update in respect of early years need and provision over the past 12 months and the impact of Covid-19 on the sector, and responded to Members' questions in relation to the following:

- Were there any obvious reasons why some early years providers had higher occupancy than others.
- How were family members who provided childcare taken into account within the report.
- What 'developing a vital readiness' meant.
- How research was being used to improve good practice.
- How increase in birth rates would impact on need in future years.
- How could we encourage people to use childminders.

- How wrap around care was promoted.
- What was being done to encourage more providers to go into childcare and wrap around care.
- What effect Covid-19 had on demand and provision.
- The accuracy of the data used and how learning from other authorities was used.
- What action was being taken to help children with speech and language difficulties and those who required support to develop personal, social and emotional connections.
- How the impact of programmes such as the Chat, Play and Read Programme and Network were evaluated.
- If the figures on women smoking during pregnancy and the % of population who smoked included vaping and what the two different figures were for vaping and smoking.
- How we compared nationally for the number of people who smoked during pregnancy and other key statistics.
- The data demonstrated high numbers of people receiving Job Seekers' Allowance and Universal Credit and how this demonstrated lower incomes in Torbay.
- If comparison data for previous years could be provided with an explanation for some of the changes to help understand the changes.
- What options and support were available to non-registered childcare and early years providers and what was being done to encourage registration.
- Query in respect of the accuracy of some of the Ward data in respect of deprivation e.g. Collaton St Mary.
- How was the information on cared for children taken into account within the report.
- What action was being taken to ensure that children who don't have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) also receive the support they need.

The Board welcomed the comprehensive Childcare Sufficiency Report and thanked Emma and her Team. They particularly welcomed the Ward level data which helped to give a good picture of needs and demands within each Ward, particularly the more deprived Wards within Torbay.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. That the Cabinet be recommended to update the Childcare Sufficiency Report to include the following:
 - a. to include in next year's questionnaire how many people are supported by family members for childcare and early years support;
 - b. relevant comparisons with previous years data with reasons behind any changes e.g. number of childcare providers;
 - c. relevant comparisons to national data e.g. around smoking, breastfeeding etc.;

- d. relevant statistics in relation to cared for children; and
 - e. to check the statistics around deprivation particularly Collaton St Mary to ensure that they are accurate.
2. that an update on the recruitment campaign to encourage more people to become childminders be presented to a future meeting of the Board; and
 3. that copies of relevant research documents in respect of early years be provided to the Board.

31. Children's Improvement Plan Quarterly Update

The Director of Children's Services, Nancy Meehan, provided a verbal update in respect of the Children's Improvement Plan and explained the impact of anomalies within the reporting system from the Liquid Logic software and the actions being taken to address this, which included a Local Government Association Peer Review of Liquid Logic to try to understand why the reporting was not as expected.

Nancy provided a verbal update in respect of key performance on the following areas:

- The level of activity for the number of children and families needing support was similar to the last six months and whilst this was higher than pre-Covid-19 levels there had not been an increase in activity within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), with 95% of cases having a decision made within 24 hours.
- Child protection figures were at 138 which was more in line with our statistical neighbours reduced from 238 in February 2021. These cases were being safely reduced with targeted early help and edge of care support to help support changes within families.
- The number of cared for children and young people was 297 which had been safely reduced from 368 through increased permanency and reduction in the number of children coming in and out of care.
- There were 4 unaccompanied asylum seekers who had been placed through the national transfer scheme and two new families were being assessed by the Panel in February who had come forward specifically to support unaccompanied asylum seekers due to their backgrounds.
- There had been no quality assurance or audit which had identified children who should not be living at home and should be in care.
- The stability of placements for children was 12% of children with three placement moves or more which compared to a national average of 11%.
- The number of care experienced young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) had fallen to 51% compared to between 60 to 62% and work was being carried out to see what could be done to support this. Councillor Bye agreed to take this up as part of his role as a Member of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- The number of agency Social Care staff had reduced to 20% compared to 41% in 2019/20. Following a successful recruitment campaign the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff should be down to three vacant posts.

Members asked questions in respect of the following, which were responded to at the meeting:

- When the next written report would be available.
- If Liquid Logic was the right software for the Council.
- The impact of the reports from Liquid Logic not being correct and additional work involved in checking data and resolving the issues.
- The impact of Covid-19 on the number of care experienced children NEETs.
- Concern and impact around the number of cared for children missing in Torbay.

The Board noted the actions being taken in respect of Liquid Logic and was reassured that an update report on the Children's Improvement Plan would be reported to the Board in January.

32. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board Action Tracker

The Board noted the submitted action tracker and the Democratic Services Team Leader agreed to chase up the two outstanding action plans arising from Minutes 22/9/21 and 26/11/21.

Chairman
