

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

19 February 2024

-: Present :-

Councillor Law (Chairwoman)

Councillors Fellows, Nicolaou, Tolchard and Twelves (Vice-Chair)

Co-opted Members

Jo Hunter, Church of England Diocesan

Non-voting Co-opted Members

Mike Cook, Voluntary and Community Sector and Alternative Provider (Education)
Ian Stevens, Devon and Cornwall Police

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye and David Thomas)

22. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Hayley Costar (Non-voting Co-opted Member who was represented by Ian Stevens).

The Chairwoman welcomed Jo Hunter to the Sub-Board as the new Church of England Diocesan Co-opted Member.

23. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Sub-Board held on 7 and 18 December 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

24. Virtual School Annual Report 2022/2023

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye and the Divisional Director Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Rachael Williams outlined the submitted Virtual School Annual Report for 2022/2023, which also included information on new extended duties in respect of Children in Need (CiN) and responded to the following:

- how much focus was given to social and emotional need rather than academic focus at Key Stage 1;
- was there capacity for the Dr Val Brooks speech and language training to be rolled out to all leads within schools and early years settings;

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- one of the case studies referred to them having 10 social workers and more than 13 placements, what assurance could be given that this had improved;
- what action was being taken to address multiple long term suspensions;
- where was the voice of the child in the Annual Report;
- how had the CiN (Children in Need) money been used and would future reports include data relating to the extended duties;
- would the data for CiN separate out the data for cared for children;
- does the Council have sufficient capacity to increase the number of children they would have overview of under the new extended duties;
- a large number of cared for children were educated outside of Torbay, where were they being educated and what was the reason for this; and
- what was the current time taken to move a child into care and how was this process managed.

Members acknowledged the great progress the Virtual School had made since its introduction and thanked those involved for their hard work.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to arrange an all Member briefing on the extended duties for the Virtual School to enable them to understand the implications as part of their role as Corporate Parents; and
2. that the Director of Children's Services be recommended to ensure the voice of the child is included in future Virtual School Annual Reports as well as an update on the pathways for the extended duties for the Virtual School.

25. School Mental Health Programme

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye outlined the submitted report which provided an update on the school mental health programme and responded to the following:

- how long was the funding guarantee to support the programme and what measures were place if the funding was withdrawn;
- not all schools were able to join the programme, what was the reason for this and how were schools selected;
- interventions were crucial to prevent children needing to be referred to formal Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), what circumstances would a child not be accepted and what happens to those children (a written response would be provided to the Sub-Board);
- were one to ones held in school outside of core time;
- would it be possible for all schools to be covered by the programme and what timescale could this be achieved;
- was there data from participants to measure if the programme was working;
- what was the overall school population and how did the programme ensure it was supporting the most children;
- what was the difference between settings and schools;

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- were the workshops held within schools and were other schools able to access these workshops; and
- were other approaches used in addition to cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT).

Members acknowledged the positive work being supported through the school mental health programme and welcomed the impact this was having such as children talking about becoming mental health ambassadors in schools to help their peers and providing resources and videos that could be used across all schools.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the outcomes framework for the mental health in schools programme be presented to a future meeting of the Sub-Board with the Torbay Lead for the Mental Health Team being invited to attend (2024/2025); and
2. that the Cabinet be recommended to request the Director of Children's Services to promote the work in schools around mental health programmes and support to families and carers.

26. Family Hub Sustainability and Holiday Activity and Food Programme

Members formally noted the submitted report on the Family Hub Sustainability and Holiday Activity and Food Programme which had been presented to the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 18 December 2023 but had not been able to be formally considered as the meeting was not quorate.

Members suggested the merit of the Sub-Board and other Councillors visiting the Family Hubs so that they can understand how they work.

Resolved (unanimously):

That a visit be arranged to the Torquay Family Hub for all Councillors and Members of the Children and Young People's Sub-Board.

27. Progress Report on the Implementation of the Children's Service Continuous Improvement Plan 2022/25

Members formally noted the submitted report on the progress of the implementation of the Children's Continuous Improvement Plan 2022/2025 which had been presented to the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 18 December 2023 but had not been able to be formally considered as the meeting was not quorate.

28. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

The Sub-Board noted the contents of the submitted action tracker. An update on the actions arising from the Spotlight Review on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would be published on the website after the meeting.

Tanny Stobart, Play Torbay provided a verbal update on the work being undertaken in the community to address concerns around anti-social behaviour in and around Kings Ash. Members noted the success of bringing together the community and key stakeholders to create a new Youth Hub and a shack to provide food to families in need.

29. Exclusion of press and public

Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 30 the press and public were formally excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

30. Children's Services Self-Assessment

Members considered the submitted exempt report which set out the draft Self-Assessment on an annual position of the performance of Children's Services and had been prepared in advance of the annual engagement meeting with Ofsted. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services – Councillor Bye and the Divisional Director of Safeguarding Torbay Children's Services – Becky Thompson responded to the following:

- were the Police seeing an improvement and benefits of joint working;
- what support and supervision were given to staff;
- the report referred to housing, how many families were being housed using funding from Children's Services rather than through Adults Temporary Accommodation Budgets;
- when would the work start at the Acorn Centre;
- what action was being taken to reduce the number of children on plan for a second time;
- what action was being taken to address the numbers of children with disabilities having supervision within timescale;
- what was the reason for the figures relating to initial health assessments and what action was being taken to address this;
- what sort of action was being taken to promote work experience for care experienced young people and to encourage more businesses to offer work experience;
- what was the reason for the low figures for return home interviews and what action was being taken to address this; and
- what was the reason for the increase in youth justice service numbers and what action was being taken to address this.

Members acknowledged the recognition and importance of the lived experience of the children and their families across the whole of Children's Services and the restorative practice in operation.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Director of Finance be requested to include the statistics on families in temporary accommodation within future quarterly Budget Monitoring

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Reports to show the numbers and how much is being funded from the Adults Temporary Accommodation Budget and how much is being funded from the Children's Services Budget to make this more transparent; and

2. that an update on the Youth Improvement Fund be presented to a future meeting of the Sub-Board.

Chairwoman
