

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	ITEM No.
REPORT OF: Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group	
CONTACT OFFICER: Leigh Webb - Democratic Services Manager	
TITLE: PROGRESS REPORT – March 2016	

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work of the Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group over the last Municipal year.

2.0 BACKGROUND

As part of its work programme for 2014/15 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that an Overview Project Group be established to review and consider the issue of Children's Safeguarding.

The Membership of the Group comprised of Councillor Susan Southworth (Chair), Councillors R Caserta, I Gartside, D Jones, S Kerrison, N Parnell and M Whitby.

An interim report was presented to the Committee in March 2015 setting out the findings and recommendations of the Group, one of which was for the Group to remain and continue its work as an ongoing Sub Committee.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The Group has met on the following occasions:-

23 September 2015
1 December 2015
10 February 2016

A further meeting is scheduled for 7 April 2016.

During its first meeting of the year the Group agreed that the focus of the Project Group for 2015/16 should include the following:

Looked After Children(LAC) – Exclusions/Managed Moves –
Marie Holmes, Virtual Head, to report on the issue.

Staff Interviews - Arrange for Group to speak to experienced staff in the workplace.

Phoenix Team – Receive briefing on the work of the team across Greater Manchester with focus on the awareness raising work undertaken.

Performance Monitoring - Continue to monitor performance in relation to safeguarding children – Quarter 2 reports to next meeting.

Domestic Violence – Examination of the Audit into the “Toxic Trio” which includes Domestic Violence/Substance Misuse/Mental Health.

4.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE GROUP

4.1 Exclusions Managed Moves

Marie Holmes, Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care, provided information to the Group setting out the position in relation to school exclusions for Bury's children and young people in care. Bury compares favourably both nationally and regionally in relation to the percentage of Looked after Children, in care for at least 12 months, who have received fixed term exclusions. It was reported that there had been no permanent exclusions of children or young people in care.

Following considerations last year, the Group noted that there had been zero permanent exclusions but highlighted the issue of “managed moves”. The report from Marie Holmes set out examples of managed moves being employed which highlighted the beneficial features of it as an alternative strategy to exclusion.

The Group highlighted the issue of managed moves and stated that the numbers relating to looked after children should be reported on and monitored (possibly through the Annual Report).

4.2 Domestic Violence: Issues in the identification and prevention of harm

Michael Nugent gave a presentation to the Group summarising an audit of cases, examining issues in the identification and prevention of harm. A summary is set out below:

- 3412 assessments authorised in 2014-2015
- 2781 contained a set of assessment factors
- 'Concerns about the child's parent/carer being the subject of domestic violence' - occurred in third of assessments
- Alcohol, domestic violence and mental health problems, referenced in 148 assessments on 140 children

The Group recognises the critical nature of monitoring the quality judgements of these audits to identify the underlying issues in order to tackle and prevent harm to children.

4.3 Performance Monitoring - Key Performance Indicators

A large part of the work of the Group has continued to be around monitoring and examining performance data. Regular updates have been received in respect of key performance indicators for children's safeguarding. The Group have had the opportunity to monitor and examine performance data relating to the following areas:

- Referral/Conversion rate
- Contacts and Conversion to Referrals
- Contact Outcomes Breakdown
- Conversion rate of Referral to Assessments
- Re-referrals
- Assessment Timescales
- Section 47 Enquiries
- Child Protection Plans Data
- Numbers of Looked after Children

Quarterly updates will continue to be received at meetings of the Group.

4.4 Phoenix Team

The Phoenix team is currently working with approximately 50 service users. There is not a high prevalence of CSE cases in Bury. There is a minimum number of prosecutions despite the high profile of CSE cases.

Discussions are underway as part of the devolution agenda to review the model for the delivery of specialist services across Greater Manchester this will include the provision of CSE services. It is envisaged that the area will be divided into specialist central hubs with smaller but fewer services across the Boroughs.

Arrangements have been made for the Manager of the Phoenix Team to attend the next meeting of the Safeguarding Overview Project Group.

It has also been agreed that the outcome of the Phoenix Team Peer Review will be reported at the next meeting.

4.5 Elective Home Education

Councillor Southworth shared with Members of the Group a report entitled Elective Home Education. The report highlighted a rise in the number of parents that were choosing to educate their children at home. There has been a 100% increase within the Borough of Bury, 44 children are now educated at home. The School Attendance Team Manager has been invited to attend the next meeting of the Group.

5.0 FURTHER AREAS OF WORK

With regard to the future work of the Group, interviews of experienced and newly qualified Social Workers remains outstanding from this year's work programme. In terms of additional areas to consider, the Chair, Councillor Southworth, has highlighted the issue of gang culture as an area of exploration.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Looking forward, it is hoped that the work to date can be built upon during the forthcoming Municipal Year. At an early stage Members of the Group recognised the complex multi agency approach to safeguarding meant that to treat the review as a time bound self contained piece of work would not do justice to the critical nature of the subject matter.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the work of the Overview Project Group be carried over into the new Municipal Year 2016/17.
2. That, in order to retain the expertise and knowledge developed throughout the review, where possible the existing membership be retained.
3. That regular updates be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Group.

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