

Minutes of: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW PROJECT GROUP**

Date of Meeting: 15th September 2016

Present: Councillor Susan Southworth (in the Chair); Councillor Caserta; Councillor Hankey, Councillor Kerrison; Councillor Parnell, Councillor Jones and Councillor Whitby.

Also in attendance: Claire Rufo, Assistant Director Learning and Culture
Martyn Burrell, Strategic Lead, Safeguarding
Debra Wood, School Attendance Team Manager
Susan Morris, Home Education Officer
Social Workers:
Claire Galvin; Michelle Lonsdale; Suzanne Grundy;
Sophia Ali- Sadiq
Julie Gallagher – Democratic Services

Apologies for absence: Jackie Gower (Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Social Care)

The Chair began by welcoming everyone to the meeting. Members of the Group agreed that the item 'Social Worker Recruitment Process – Follow up' would be considered first.

CS.06 SOCIAL WORKER RECRUITMENT PROCESS – FOLLOW UP

Martyn Burrell, Strategic Lead, Safeguarding introduced four social workers to the meeting. This is the second time social workers have been invited to attend a meeting of the overview project group. The Strategic Lead, Safeguarding reported that fourteen social workers were recruited in November 2014 all but one, still work in the Department.

In attendance were newly qualified and experienced social workers from the Children's advice and assessment team and the safeguarding team. The social workers were given the opportunity to explain their roles within the team, their previous experience, the support and mentoring available and highlight any areas of concern.

Members of the Group were given the opportunity to ask questions of the social workers and the following points were raised:

- The newly qualified social workers are supported in the role by mentors. The support provided is good, accessible and helpful.
- The caseload has increased since their initial appointment, the level is still manageable and there is a wide range of support available.
- The majority of care proceeding cases are being dealt with within the recently introduced 26 week timeline.
- There is a good open relationship between social workers and middle/senior management.
- Social workers highlighted duplication and high levels of paperwork as pressure points/area of concern.

- Relationships with other partner agencies has improved, social workers feel respected, there is however sometimes problems with information sharing with partners from the NHS.
- The social workers reported that they felt the recent Ofsted report accurately reflected the work being undertaken across the Department.

It was agreed:

The Social workers be thanked for their attendance and this Overview Project Group places on record it thanks and appreciation for all their hard work.

CS.07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

CS.08 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 23rd May 2016 be approved as a correct record.

CS.09 HOME EDUCATION – SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

Debra Wood, School Attendance Manager and Susan Morris, Home Education Officer attended the meeting to provide members of the group with an update in respect of the support and services provided to those who choose to educate their children at home.

There are currently 111 students in Bury that are home educated. There is no legal duty to inform the Local Authority if a child is to be home educated.

The School Attendance Manager reported that there is a mixed age range of children currently being home educated, the majority are of primary school age. There is number of different reasons as to why parents choose to educate from home; problems with bullying, breakdown of the relationship between school and parents, poor communication or dissatisfaction with the support given to SEN pupils.

The School Attendance Manager reported that a great deal of work had been undertaken to engage with parents. The introductory packs and accompanying letter, issued to parents have been updated; they are now more welcoming and less legalistic. A member of the home education team will conduct regular visit to parents to offer support and guidance.

With regards to concerns raised in respect of the Council's powers, the School Attendance Manager reported that the Council has the power to issue a School Attendance Order if it is believed the child is not receiving an appropriate level of education.

Members of the Group expressed concern that issues within schools are quickly exacerbated and too easily escalated, parents then feel they are left with no other option but to home educate. Better pastoral support and more inclusive attitude within schools would help to alleviate some of these problems.

In respect of pupils on a child protection plan, these children can still be educated at home. The information and concerns contained within the plan would be shared with the elective home education team to ensure that the child's wellbeing is still safeguarded.

In response to a Member's question, the School Attendance Manager reported that the Ofsted inspection had identified a few minor areas for improvement. The improvements include the "rag-rating" of the data held by the department as well as further information in respect of pupil's destinations post 16.

It was agreed:

The rag-rated performance information will be considered at a future meeting of the Safeguarding Overview Project Group.

CS.10 EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AT KS2 AND KS4

Claire Rufo, Assistant Director, Learning and Culture attended the meeting to provide a verbal update on the educational achievement at KS2 and KS4.

The Assistant Director reported that there had been changes to the system for reporting measure at Key Stage 4, Progress 8, the new system will take effect from 2016. Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. Pupils' results are compared to the progress of other pupils with the same starting point. The new performance measures are designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum measure the distant a child have travelled not the final attainment goal they achieved. The issue is that the progress 8 curriculum is far more prescriptive and has a significant focus on academic, more traditional qualifications at key stage 4.

The Assistant Director reported that the new system for assessing education achievement will in her opinion place greater emphasis on academic achievements and will be less inclusive. The new system will make the vulnerable more vulnerable.

In respect of the data, which is still to be validated, the Assistant Director reported that the KS2 data has also changed this year and we will no longer be reporting in National Curriculum levels, this makes comparing this years with last year's data impossible. We can however compare ourselves against local and National data and Bury KS2 results is just 1% above National. In respect of the phonics screening test Bury has moved from being one of the worst performing areas in Greater Manchester to one of the best. The Assistant Director reported that there is still a lack of clarity in respect of the reporting measures for KS2. With regards to KS4, GCSE attainment, the percentage of those pupils gaining 5 A-C grades has increased.

The Assistant Director reported that in respect of the most vulnerable pupils there is no "closing the gap" group established within Bury. Such a group would be able to share good practice within the Borough and undertake more forensic analysis of the issues and concerns affecting those most vulnerable.

It was agreed:

That Councillor Susan Southworth as Chair of the Safeguarding Overview Project Group would contact elected members asking them to highlight through their roles as school governors, the following;
Ask/remind schools to inform the Local Authority if a child is to be home educated especially if there is a safeguarding concern.

Governing bodies to be mindful of the educational achievement and all encompassing support, social and emotional, available to the most vulnerable pupils.

CS.11 NEXT MEETING

Councillor Southworth reported the following actions:

- Councillor Southworth would contact elected members in respect of concerns raised above.
- Democratic Services would liaise with Nicola Freschini, Children's Services Team Manager in respect of a visit of the Safeguarding Overview Project Group to the Victoria Family Centre, Radcliffe
- That the next meeting of this Group will consider:
Ofsted report – Action Plan
Quarterly Performance Reports

COUNCILLOR S SOUTHWORTH

Chair

(Note: the meeting started at 5.00pm and ended at 6.50pm)