

**Minutes of:**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -  
CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING SUB COMMITTEE**

**Date of Meeting:** Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Present:** Councillor Susan Southworth (in the Chair); Councillor Grimshaw, Councillor Hankey, Councillor N Jones, Councillor J Walker and Councillor Whitby.

**Also in attendance:**

Tony Decrop – Interim Assistant Director (Social Care & Safeguarding)  
Janice Barr - Interim Practice Improvement Manager  
Bart Popelier, Strategic Lead Safeguarding and Quality Assurance  
Sue Harris - Strategic Lead for Placement Services  
Julie Gallagher – Democratic Services

**Apologies for absence:** Councillor R Caserta

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**CS.01 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**CS.02 MINUTES**

The Chair, Councillor Susan Southworth, provided members with an update following her meeting with the Executive Director, Children and Young People.

Items discussed at the meeting included; social worker retention and sickness rates, agency cover and the use of technology.

**It was agreed:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018, be approved as a correct record.

The Executive Director Children and Young People would be invited to the next meeting of the Children's Safeguarding Sub Committee to provide a further update in respect of the items discussed above.

**CS.03 CARE LEVER SERVICES**

Sue Harris, Strategic Lead, Placement Services attended the meeting to provide an update in relation to the services and support provided to care leavers. The Strategic Lead reported that the Bury Through Care Team provide services to Care Leavers and ensure they assist with developing life skills for independence and provide ongoing support to young adults once they have left care. There are 135 Care Leavers open to the Through Care Team.

An accompanying presentation provided information in relation to:

- Performance data

- services offered to care leavers
- unsuitable accommodation
- Plans for the integrated team to be based at New Kershaw Centre
- Local Offer for Care Leavers which sets out the services for care leavers available in the Borough.

Those present were invited to ask questions and the following issues were raised:

Responding to a Member's question with regards to the high levels of children not in education, employment and training the Strategic Lead for Placement Services reported that the "breakthrough" programme helps to support and engage young people. The Strategic Lead acknowledged that this is an area of weakness for the service, with only 48.9% of 18+ in EET.

The Strategic Lead reported that in respect of care plans, the school would be involved in the decision the choice of school, including the decision to remain in the same school would be dependent on what was in the child's best interest.

With regards to holiday accommodation for young people at university, the Strategic Lead reported that in some instances the Council would pay for foster carers to provide accommodation, in others circumstances other alternative accommodation would be provided.

Members discussed the 17 young people deemed to be living in unsuitable accommodation. Of these, 8 are in custody, 7 Other young people are living in unstable living arrangements such as between friends, or in temporary accommodation provided by housing which cannot be assessed as suitable. The Strategic Lead reported that this may be due to a variety of reasons. In all instances there is evidence of ongoing work with the personal advisor to provide appropriate advice around accommodation options or advocacy.

Responding to a question with regards to supported lodgings, the Strategic Lead reported that there are only three premises providing supported lodgings currently, a recruitment drive to encourage greater participation will be launched in the new year.

With regards to the development of the care leavers offer, to understand "the voice of the child", the personal advisors would seek views routinely. The Interim Assistant Director acknowledged that there are difficulties involved in capturing the views of those hard to reach groups. This issue has been highlighted with the organisation, Children's Rights to ensure that information and views are gathered from as a wider representation as possible. The Strategic Lead reported that regular meetings have been held with officers, partner agencies, corporate parents and young people to develop the offer.

### **It was agreed:**

Sue Harris, Strategic Lead Placement Services be thanked for her attendance.

## **CS.04 LGA PEER REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE & QUESTIONS TO THE INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SOCIAL CARE AND SAFEGUARDING**

Bart Popelier Strategic Lead for Safeguarding gave a presentation setting out details of the recently undertaken peer review. The Peer Review Team focused on front line practice relating children in need, those subject to a child protection plan and protection of disabled children including:

- Effectiveness of management and supervision
- Public Law Outline
- A validation exercise of internal audit methodology

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding reported that the peer review team spent 5 days onsite at Bury Council (plus 2 days in advance file auditing), spoke to more than 90 people and attended more than 35 meetings, focus groups and site visits.

The team reviewed 30 case files plus 9 audited cases, interviewed 13 allocated social workers/managers and observed 3 child protection case conferences

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding reported that the review highlighted

- The Local Authority has good insight and understands its strengths and weaknesses.
- There has been a gradual improvement in performance and practice following a decline which has been aided by a robust Quality Assurance & Performance Management Framework.
- Plans were not always consistently SMART or sufficiently outcome focused.
- Partnership working on the whole was found to be strong and effective both operationally and strategically.
- Staff consistently fed back that Bury is a nice place to work with good team working and a management culture that is open and supportive, morale was high.
- No cases reviewed resulted in escalations because all children reviewed were deemed to be safe and secure.

Responding to a member's question with regards to concerns raised in respect of SMART plans, the Strategic Lead reported that this can be attributed, in part, to the current computer software. The Interim Assistant Director reported that work is undertaken with social workers as part of their professional development, to ensure plans are succinct and outcome focused. A new SMART easier to understand template is being rolled out which details clearly how a plan is progressing.

The Strategic Lead reported that there is a robust quality assurance process in place to identify inconsistencies in care plans, regular examples of good practice will be shared amongst the social workers.

Members of the Group discussed concerns in respect of access to adequate IT to enable social workers to effectively carry out their duties. Members complained about problems with accessing WIFI, computer systems that did not talk to each other and out of date hardware. The Interim Assistant Director reported that underdeveloped IT arrangements are a "blocker" to effective agile working.

Responding to a Member's question in respect of work needed to address issues raised as a result of the Peer Review, the Interim Assistant Director

reported that some of this work can be and has been undertaken immediately. Other recommendations, for example, funding for the social work practice model, Signs of Safety may take up to six months to complete

The Strategic Lead, Safeguarding provided members with an update on performance, this included information in respect of

- Number of Contacts
- Number of Referrals
- Number of Repeat Referrals
- Children in Need
- Child Protection

Members discussed the rise from 25% to 33.5% in the numbers of repeat referrals. The Strategic Lead reported that this is the fourth highest in the northwest and has been highlighted to the Safeguarding Board as an area of concern. Engagement work has been undertaken with partners to minimise repeat referrals and to promote support via the early help and intervention model.

**It was agreed:**

1. Representatives present be thanked for the update. The Sub Committee would continue to receive regular performance updates.
2. Tracy Keeling, Strategic Digital IT Lead would be invited to the next sub-committee meeting to provide members with information with regards to work being undertaken to address the problems raised in respect of IT.

**CS.05 NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

**It was agreed:**

That the next meeting of the Group be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019, to consider the following items:

- **Healthy Young Minds**
- **IT Update**
- **K. Dolton to attend**

**COUNCILLOR S SOUTHWORTH**

**Chair**

**(Note: the meeting started at 5.30pm and ended at 7.10pm)**