

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	ITEM No.
REPORT OF: Children's Safeguarding Overview Project Group CONTACT OFFICER: Julie Gallagher Principal Democratic Services Officer	
TITLE: PROGRESS REPORT – April 2019	

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work of the Children's Safeguarding Sub Committee 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, J Grimshaw, M Hankey, N Jones, J Walker and M Whitby.

Interim reports were presented to the Committee in March 2015, March 2016, June 2017 and April 2018 setting out the findings and recommendations of the Group. In May 2018 it was agreed that a formal sub committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be established. It was agreed that the Committee would meet at least four times a year and would be Chaired by Councillor Susan Southworth.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The Group has met on the following occasions:-

24th July 2018
16th October 2018
8th January 2019
2nd April 2019

Members were supported in their work by Tony Decrop Interim Assistant Director and Bart Popelier Strategic Lead Safeguarding, both of whom work

in the Department for Children and Young People

During this municipal year the Committee agreed that the focus for 2018/19 should include the following:

Child Sexual Exploitation – Receive briefing on the work of the team across Greater Manchester with focus on the awareness raising work undertaken and areas of concern within the Borough.

OFSTED – Overview of the inspection findings as well as plans in place to address the issues raised.

Healthy young minds– Karen Whitehead attended the meeting to provide an update on the healthy young minds safeguarding processes

Performance Monitoring and LGA Peer Review– Continue to receive quarterly monitoring reports in relation to safeguarding children

Troubled Families– Examination of the support and early intervention provide by the team.

Care Leavers– Sue Harris, attended the meeting to provide an update on the work being undertaken to address those children reported as Missing from Home.

The July meeting was held at the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Bury Police Station, enabling elected members to witness first-hand how the service operates and meet front line staff, as well as senior officers.

The Chair also met with the Executive Director Children and Young People to discuss specific concerns in respect of social worker recruitment, agency spend, caseload and staff sickness. These concerns and further assurances were sought at a subsequent meeting of the sub-committee in April.

4.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE GROUP

4.1 Child Sexual Exploitation

Members considered this item at two meetings of the sub-committee. Representatives provided Members of the group with an update in respect of the work undertaken to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Members sought assurances in respect of reported CSE and grooming in parks within the Borough, police involvement and information sharing with the relevant statutory agencies. As well as links with schools safeguarding teams and capacity within early intervention and support.

Members were informed that work has subsequently been undertaken to develop a complex safeguarding team to assimilate work, in practice this will mean that there will be a social care team dealing with CSE, child criminal

exploitation missing from home and domestic abuse.

The team has three key priorities; prevent, protect and prosecute and awareness raising is key to this.

Members discussed areas of concern in particular police capacity and overall demand management. As well as the positive work undertaken in respect of training and a planned social care restructure.

Members commended the work undertaken by the staff and the Greater Manchester funding agreed to appoint early intervention project workers to tackle the root cause of violence and prevent young people from getting involved in criminal activity.

4.2 OFSTED

Members discussed the process and findings of the inspection. The Inspectors reviewed the local authority's arrangements for contacts and referrals in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) for children who need help, including safeguarding. Inspectors also considered thresholds for early help and statutory services for children in need, including those in need of safeguarding. A wide range of evidence was considered, including case discussions with administrators, social workers, managers, representatives from partner agencies, and senior staff responsible for quality assurance and performance management. Performance data and management reports were also reviewed, and children's case records were sampled.

During discussion of this item, the Interim Executive Director acknowledged the areas for concern which had been highlighted, including the need for more work to be done in respect of the "voice of the child". With regard to the issue of Early Help through the Oasis team it was reported that issues and improvements were being addressed through the transformation process and auditing. On the wider issue of auditing, the Interim Executive Director explained how robust auditing had now been implemented through internal departmental audits which include effective follow up to create a cycle of improvement.

4.3 Healthy Young Minds

Karen Whitehead, Strategic Lead, Children/Families Health Issues submitted a Briefing note in relation to Healthy Young Minds (HYM) – Safeguarding processes. In Bury, Safeguarding is an integral part of the work of the team's work with young people and their families.

The Strategic Lead provided members with an update in respect of the key priorities including an agreement to increase the upper age eligibility criteria from 16th to 18th birthday for new referrals and widen the service offer.

The Strategic Lead provided an overview of the HYM service including waiting times and additional commissioned services including a specialist

neurodevelopmental nurse. As well as supporting the local delivery of work streams including the crisis care pathway, vulnerable groups, GM Mentally healthy schools and the GM inpatient Mental Health offer.

4.4 Performance Monitoring - Key Performance Indicators and LGA Peer Review

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. Following consideration of this item and concerns raised by the Chair in respect of some of the performance information, a subsequent meeting was arranged between the Chair and the Executive Director to discuss performance issues.

With regards to the Peer Review, members were informed 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 Assistant Director reported that work is undertaken with social workers as part of their professional development, to ensure plans are succinct and outcome focused. 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.

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

Troubled Families

A report was submitted from the Interim Executive Director for Communities and Wellbeing outlining how the Council safeguard the most vulnerable families in Bury, an overview of the programme, the successes of interventions and how residents are safeguarded.

Members considered information in respect of numbers on the programme; actions undertaken and risks within the programme. Members commended the work undertaken in supporting this programme of work.

Care Leavers

Sue Harris, Strategic Lead, Placement Services attended the meeting to provide an update in relation to the services and support provided to care leavers.

Member's primary areas of concern included: the high numbers of children not in education, employment and training, those teenagers living in unsuitable accommodation, the need to increase the number of supported lodgings premises and ensuring the voice of the child is properly reflected. Members also discussed changes to the care lever's offer.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Members of the group supported by Strategic Leads within the Department have met on four occasions, interviewed 18 different Council Officers and visited the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

The Ofsted report stated that

"Clear political scrutiny is evident through a Children's Safeguarding scrutiny board and strong political attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board. There are sufficient checks and balances in the governance system holding the leadership of children's services to account, providing coherent political and strategic oversight".

'It was recognised by Ofsted that the expertise and knowledge of this group was one of its strengths. However, it needs to be accepted by anyone who is on the group that meetings start at 5-00/30, and that attendance at 4 meetings each year is a basic requirement. When Members are appointed to

this group by their respective political group, this needs to be taken into account. Consistency is vital'.

Members have continued to hold Children's Services to account by providing continued, effective and constructive scrutiny of safeguarding within the Council.

Looking forward, it is hoped that the work to date can be built upon during the forthcoming Municipal Year.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS 2019/2020

1. That, in order to retain the expertise and knowledge developed throughout the review, where possible the existing membership be retained and meeting dates be held quarterly and scheduled in advance.
2. That regular updates be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Group.
3. Performance update will be standing agenda items
4. That group continue to monitor concerns raised in respect of capacity and social worker retention.

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