

**At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1 of the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, 2017 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Smith in the Chair

Councillors Beck, Bell, Francis, Hunt, Jackson, O'Neil, Scullion, Stewart, Tye and G. Walker together with Ms. R. Elliott and Mr. S. Williamson.

**Also in attendance:-**

Ms. Sue Carty, Director of Quality and Performance  
Mr. James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer  
Ms. Luwam Habte, Sunderland Youth Parliament  
Ms. Tracy Hassan, Children's Commissioning  
Ms. Jane Held, Interim Independent Chairman of Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Board  
Mr. Liam Ritchie, Sunderland Youth Parliament  
Ms. Beverley Scanlon, Interim Lead for Early Help  
Ms. Joanne Stewart, Principal Governance Services Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors M. Turton and N. Wright and on behalf of Ms. A. Blakey and Mr. Alex Hopkins, Director of Children's Services

**Minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2016**

Ms. Rose Elliott commented that she had attended the last meeting, although she had arrived late, and was not included in the attendances, and it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Ms. Rose Elliott in the attendance.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

Councillor Tye made an open declaration in the Early Help Update item in relation to his Council appointment to the Youth Almighty Project.

## **Commissioning of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated the Committee on the progress made in relation to the review of commissioning arrangements of children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in the city.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Tracy Hassan, Children's Commissioning, presented the report advising that Cabinet had considered a report in relation to the proposals for the existing and future commissioning of children and adolescent mental health services with the city with Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group.

The report identified that both the existing arrangements and potential alternative options needed to be explored in more detail to ensure that the future model was up to date, addressed the right priorities and outcomes for the services and demonstrated value for money. The most critical issue that had been identified was that because there was not a Section 75 arrangement in place with Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and therefore the Local Authority does not subsequently receive regular performance information identifying that services were being delivered or whether the current service offer was meeting the needs of children and young people in the city.

Following discussion at the meeting, Cabinet had agreed the following recommendations:-

- Endorse and agree to the extension of the existing contract and funding arrangements for the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for the period up to 31 March, 2017;
- Agree to work in collaboration with the Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (SCCG) as the existing lead commissioner of CAMHS in Sunderland and other partners to undertake a review of the options for the future commissioning and delivery of these services; and
- Agree to receive a further report in due course for further consideration in relation to the outcome of the commissioning and service review and the proposed next steps.

In response to a question from Councillor Walker as to how the Council found themselves in the position to not have a Section 75 arrangement in place when the CCG were being awarded £450,000 of public money, Ms. Hassan advised that it was an historic arrangement and although the reason behind it had been investigated they had not been able to get to the reasoning behind it due to changes in personnel since the original arrangement had been made. They were currently in the process of putting a Section 75 arrangement in place which would allow the authority to receive details around how the funding was being spent and how outcomes were being set and achieved.

In relation to the timescales for the arrangement, Ms. Hassan advised that a meeting was being held on 13<sup>th</sup> January to have discussions around the role of the CCG and the Council and to outline the requirements of the Section 75 arrangement.

When asked when the Section 75 arrangement would start from and if the outcomes required would be clear, Ms. Hassan advised that a review was currently ongoing but it was expected that the Section 75 arrangement would be in place sooner than June, 2017 and that it would be clear from the outset as to the expected outcomes.

Mr. Williamson referred to paragraph 5.4 and commented that 'in consultation with the SCCG' could mean to the lower common denominator and commented that the Scrutiny Committee had shared their concerns previously in the commissioning of the service. In relation to the report to be presented to Cabinet following the review, he stated that it was imperative that the local authority ensured that the recommendations were rigorous and clearly specified outcomes that were measurable and SMART.

Ms. Hassan advised that it would be much clearer in the requirements of the delivery arrangements and outcomes for CAMHS and that those outcomes would be SMART. Work was being undertaken currently to identify what information was needed from the commissioning partner so that the authority could prescribe to them in future exactly what was required.

Members, having fully considered the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report in relation to the work being undertaken by the Local Authority and SCCG to review the CAMHS provision for children and young people be received and noted.

### **Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board Arrangements 2016-2017**

The Interim Independent Chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board submitted a report (copy circulated) which set out the arrangements for the 2016-2017 Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Jane Held, Interim Independent Chair of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB), presented the report advising that it was designed to update the Scrutiny Committee on the work of the SSCB during 2016. Ms. Held advised that for a variety of reasons, not least the pressures on the very small Business Unit of undertaking a significant number of Serious Case Reviews, the Annual Report was not yet completed. An extract of the Annual Report was provided of the key points and findings and also informed the Committee of the radical changes to the Board arrangements that were agreed in principle and would be finalised at the meeting of the Board in February, 2017. Any views of the Committee would be taken into account when agreeing those final arrangements.

Councillor Smith asked when the full report would be ready and was advised by Ms. Held that it would be presented to the Board in February where any minor changes could be raised and considered before being published directly following that meeting. She commented that Members would be welcome to receive a copy of the final report which they could then compare should they wish to.

When asked if Ms. Held was happy with the level of commitment shown by partner agencies, she advised that she did not think any partner at the Board could be happy

with the way it had operated previously and she found that there had been various levels of commitment from partners but that it would be too easy to lay the responsibility for poor performance at one partner group alone. She advised that partner agencies needed to look at themselves and although it was more difficult to be self-critical it was what was required and they had improved in doing this and showing how robustly they deal with challenges before them. So, although the level of commitment may not have been there when she had first arrived, changes had been made and partner agencies worked in a different way now and improvements had been and were continuing to be made.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith about poor attendance at the sub committees of the board in the past, Ms. Held advised that the sub committees would not be part of the new structure.

Councillor Smith went on to ask if she had any concerns over the future attendance of partners and was informed that this would be something for the new Chairman of the Board to control but that she had ran a two strike and then report to the Chief Executive system which she was sure the new Chairman would look to continue or want a similar system to ensure attendances remain consistent. Ms. Held also commented that as there were fewer committees in the new structure then non-attendance of any of the partners would be more exposed than in the past.

Councillor Stewart asked what the performance framework referred to on page 8 of the report would look like and was informed that it was still morphing and being put together but that they had agreed the three obsessions as set out in the report. There had been 14/15 indicators proposed which board members were to look at at a high, strategic level and another board would work to triangulate data against practice. It was expected that the final framework would be signed off for the start of the new arrangements and she would note and pass on to the new Chairman that this Committee should be issued a copy.

When Mr. Williamson questioned the Board not progressing the involvement of schools previously, Ms. Held advised that this decision had been made previous to her appointment as Chairman and therefore she could not comment as to the reasoning behind it but that it did seem odd not to involve them.

In response to Mr. Williamson's comments around what the radical changes were, Ms. Held advised that it was the way in which the Board were to go about their business in future, which would be very different to how they were currently structured and carried out their business. In future the board would have two programme boards responsible for the delivery of the statutory objectives. The majority of work would be carried out through task and finish groups which would be time limited and appropriately led and supported to remain focussed.

Ms. Held advised that this was moving away from the national structure but that the external commissioner was happy with the proposals and discussions had been had where they had advised that so long as the board were meeting statutory requirements they were happy with the proposals for the future. Mr. Williamson commented that he was delighted to see the time led task groups were being introduced with clear outcomes.

Councillor Francis referred to proposal 7 on page 38 of the report and asked if Members of the new Board would know that they were responsible for the tactical

fulfilment of the proposals and was advised that they would. Ms. Held advised that the first draft of the strategy and business plans were to be prepared in January and that the new Board would come into fruition from April, 2017 with a clear indication of outcomes for agreement with name and timescales alongside them. At the moment there was a transition steering group who tracked every action and this would continue with responsibilities against outcomes being clearly identified for the new board's agreement in April. Councillor Francis commented that he was pleased with this approach and welcomed the new structure and plans coming to fruition.

Councillor Smith thanked Ms. Held for her report and attendance and asked that the new Chairman of the Board be invited to attend the Committee in September, 2017 to give an update on how the new board was progressing.

Members having fully considered the report, and having no further questions or comments, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- the extract of the Annual Report from the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board be received and noted; and
- the Chairman of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board be invited to the September meeting of the Committee to provide an update on the new structure and processes.

### **Sunderland Safeguarding Children Learning and Improvement Plan – Progress Update**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on the progress being made on the Safeguarding Children Learning and Improvement Plan.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Sue Carty, Director of Quality and Performance, presented the report advising that the report provided an update on key areas of progress in relation to Children's Services and that it provided a summary of the key actions and any changes in the Implementation Plan and the impact on performance.

Ms. Carty advised that there had been 7 key priorities identified for improvement following the Ofsted Inspection Report and 59 clear actions set out as part of these priorities. 17 of the actions had been completed and had been continually monitored over the last year before being removed from the action plan as complete. 26 actions were continuing to be monitored, following their completion before being removed from the plan. 8 further were continuing to be monitored before being marked as complete and 8 were ranked amber as they were not satisfactorily making progress. Ms. Carty advised that the action plan had just been updated after being in place for a year and that the new RAG rating report would continue to be provided to future meetings of this Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Scullion around the need to improve the quality of work and in which areas, Ms. Carty advised that in relation to assessments, the level of productivity was increasing but that there were still areas around the quality of the processes being undertaken which still varied between

cases so there was still work to be done to improve this. She informed the Committee that they had a quality assessment programme and that audits were carried out but that it was difficult to tackle all of the issues around having a consistent level of quality in cases. Processes were to be phased in which would in turn improve this.

In relation to the accommodation offered to care leavers, Councillor Jackson asked if a level of support was offered to care leavers also. Ms. Carty advised that it would depend upon the need of the individual. There was a lot of support for care leavers around benefits and helping prepare for independent living but that if an individual required more emotional support then this it would be identified as part of their care plan and the relevant support accessed.

Councillor Hunt commented that the provision of the RAG rating report in the past had been useful for Members of the Committee to clearly identify where there were issues. There were a lot of positives to take from the update but still huge areas to address, for example, the health passports and accommodation offer, etc. and requested that the Committee have sight of the RAG ratings to see the issues and allow them to analyse actions further and give more focus to them. Ms. Carty agreed and advised it would be provided in the future as it had now been reviewed and updated. In relation to health passports, she advised that there was a lot of working being undertaken to address the issues but that they were not yet where they wanted to be and would continue to work on the area.

Councillor Hunt went on to further comment that there were a lot of issues that were dependent upon the coming together of partner agencies and that the level of information contained within the RAG report was very useful for the Committee to see that level of information within the report. Ms. Carty advised that as the action plan was now one year old it had been reviewed. She advised that the service was particularly hard upon itself and actions were not removed until there was solid evidence of it being completed, which could stand up in front of Ofsted, and that following these stringent tests the action plan had been updated going through every action individually. She advised that a further level of actions had also been added in areas where things had moved forward onto the next stage so that when Ofsted visited again they could see the development of actions and note the improving position of the service.

Councillor Walker referred to paragraph 4.5 of the report and the improvement of the number of care leavers who are NEET from 85% to 54.5% and asked if the exact figures could be provided for these percentages so Members could see how many individuals this related to. Ms. Carty advised that these figures could be provided and asked the Committee to note that the care leaver had to be in touch with the service for them to know whether they were in fact NEET so this could affect figures.

Councillor Smith asked how the service were doing with partner agencies helping out in providing positions for work or training for care leavers within their organisations and was informed that the service had clear working relations with partner agencies such as Sunderland College, etc. but that sometimes it was about what work or training the young person wanted to do. Councillor Smith commented further that it would be helpful for the looked after children in the city to have a helping hand into further education or work and that through the service working with partner agencies this could be something to look to get a commitment from them to do. Ms. Carty

informed the Committee that this was certainly an issue she could take forward and revisit the possibility of an arrangement with partners.

Councillor Tye asked if the default was to record a care leaver as NEET if they were not in touch with the local authority and was advised that that was correct.

Mr. Williamson again referred to the lack of the RAG rating report being provided to Members as it was a request from the Committee that this was done and he did not understand why the report was not in that format. Ms. Carty advised that as the action plan had been having an annual review carried out on it, and therefore in a state of change, it had been more appropriate on this occasion not to provide it. The new and updated RAG report would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee which would show a true picture of the current action plan.

Mr. Williamson commented that NEET figures are usually recorded in quarters and asked what was being compared in relation to the 80% improving to 54.5% in November, 2016 as this was a large jump and not reflective of figures from previous years which had never seen a significant improvement like that recorded. This was either a remarkable achievement that needed to be celebrated or figures from different quarters may be being reported and compared. Ms. Carty advised that the 80% figure was recorded in June 2015 at the time of the Ofsted visit and that the 54.5% was November, 2016 as set out in the report. Ms. Carty explained that they had been working on getting in touch with care leavers who were not in contact with the service and in addition, working with care leavers to help them get into further education, training or work which could be reflected in the improved figures.

Mr. Williamson asked that in addition to providing the exact number of individuals the NEET percentages referred to, that the service also provide the same figures in relation to last year and this broken down into quarters since the Ofsted visit so that Members could compare like for like.

In relation to paragraph 2.6 of the report and the Personal Education Plans (PEPs), Mr. Williamson noted that a lot of work had been undertaken to improve them but that improving the quality of the plans still remains a priority and asked how this was being addressed and could improvements be moved more rapidly? Ms. Scanlon advised that work was currently ongoing to revise the performance of the PEP but that this needed the involvement of the schools. She advised that Officers were encouraging schools to work with the service to work on improving PEPs but that there was also the need to include the voice of the child within the process.

Mr. Williamson asked how Officers could compel schools to carry out the work and to do it well and Ms. Carty advised that the service were working with schools to provide support and training and looking to champion the PEPs, but that first they were simply looking to increase the number of PEPs being provided and updated. Now that numbers had increased the focus was upon improving the quality of those received and relationships had been built between those schools providing them and they could look to work upon the quality as the next step.

Councillor Hunt referred to paragraph 4.7 of the report and improving the quality of housing available to care leavers and commented that at the visit to the Social Workers this had been raised as an issue as they felt there was very limited suitable accommodation and asked how they had managed to have such a huge increase in the number of care leavers living in suitable accommodation. Ms. Carty commented

that it would be hard to answer that without looking in to every individual young person's case. She did advise that Harbour View had just been opened and that there were a number of taster flats available for young care leavers so that the range of options available was increasing but that this was clearly something they needed to continue working on improving.

In response to a comment from Councillor Jackson around a visit to Harbour View she had undertaken, and speaking with the lady from Centrepont who now had no involvement there, Ms. Carty advised that the decision had been taken to directly communicate with Harbour View rather than delivery being through Centrepont as they had previously as there had been a mix of vulnerable adults and children accessing provision at that time which had been felt was not appropriate.

Councillor Tye commented that he would need to see specific improvements that had been made as the views that were given to him were that provision was not improving and he requested that more information be provided on care leavers and the accommodation available to them or that they had accessed.

He went on to state that one comment he had been given was that a young person had advised that they had received support in leaving care, seeing more of their social worker and how well they had been supported. He gave an example of the service whereby he had been involved on Christmas Eve with a young person, having to involve the on duty social worker at that time who had called back within 15 minutes and worked with the young person to get them back into home rather than into Centrepont. He commented that he had in the past been very critical of the service but on this occasion had found the support given was proving that the system was improving. Ms. Carty commented that there were a lot of improvements being made in areas of the service but that consistent quality continued to be an issue over a number of areas.

Councillor Francis referred to paragraph 2.8 of the report and asked that figures on the numbers of adoption placements be provided to the Committee for the last two years to allow Members to compare how many placements there had been and how successful they were.

Councillor Smith referred to the Early Help service and asked how it was continuing, following the loss of staff. Ms. Scanlon advised that they were still working on the revised structure for the service and that the new Director would be in place from February, 2017. Ms. Scanlon advised that at this time the service was still functioning but was stretched due to staffing levels and that until the structure was finalised appointments to any vacancies could not be made. It would be the newly formed Children's Company that would look to recruit to any vacant positions in the new structure.

Councillor Smith asked that the Committee receive further information on exactly which positions were vacant within the Early Help service and how it was expected that they would be filled in the future. Ms. Scanlon explained that it would be difficult to identify the vacancies due to the review of the structure not being complete and Councillor Smith asked how long it was expected that it would take to finalise the new structure. Ms. Scanlon advised that they had to have the new structure by mid-January and therefore it was almost finalised.

Councillor Scullion referred to paragraph 4.6 of the report and the closer working relationships with Sunderland College around apprenticeship opportunities and asked if apprenticeship placements were looked at for their viability and providing clear career paths as in the past, apprenticeship options had been employers merely ticking a box to say they had some but they did not offer purposeful work prospects for the young person. Ms. Carty commented that this was a good point made by the Councillor and she was sure it was something to be taken on board to ensure opportunities were the best fit for the individual and offered future work prospects.

Mr. Williamson advised that this was an issue that had been raised by the Committee on a number of occasions in the past and commented that they had discussed having a number of Head Teachers from schools in the city who would be willing to offer interviews to care leavers for apprenticeship positions. As Head Teachers in the city were committed to appointing to apprenticeship positions a mechanism could be put in place to adopt this process, allowing the young person, should they be successful following interview, to be in a safe, secure and recognisable environment.

Ms. Scanlon commented that things would change when the apprenticeship levy was introduced and there would be more structure around apprenticeships but that the issue raised by Mr. Williamson was definitely one that could be picked up as part of that work.

Councillor Francis commented that it may be beneficial to speak with the Head Teacher from a school where an apprenticeship was already being offered in this way and then study how that transpires. He also commented that when Sunderland College was up and running the apprenticeship opportunity scheme it would be a good idea to invite them along to a meeting of the Committee to discuss how it was received and again possibly follow an individual case as part of a study.

There being no further comments or questions for Ms. Carty or Ms. Scanlon, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- the report on progress in relation to the implementation of the Safeguarding Children Learning and Improvement Plan be received and noted;
- the improvement plan report submitted by the Director of Children's Services include the RAG rating report in future to allow Members to be able to follow progress in relation to the actions from the key priorities;
- details on the exact numbers of care leavers who were NEET be provided for this year and previous years to allow comparisons to be made and trends identified be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee;
- the level and quality of the accommodation on offer to looked after children leaving care be provided to the next meeting of the Committee;
- Members receive information on the exact number and position of vacancies within the Early Help service as soon as it is available;
- Further detail on the exact number of adoption placements and how successful they were for the current and previous years be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee;
- A Head Teacher from a school in the city offering apprenticeship opportunities to care leavers be invited along to a future meeting of the Committee to share their experiences; and

- A representative from Sunderland College be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to give their findings on the work around exploring apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.

### **Consultation with Social Work Staff**

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships and Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with feedback from the Committee's visit to consult with social work staff from the North/West/South/East Locality Teams.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that it was expected that another visit would be arranged for later this month for Members of the Committee to meet with the Permanence Team who were responsible for children who are looked after permanently and have no plan to return home and that he would contact Members directly to advise of proposed dates and times for the visit.

Members commented that it was a very worthwhile meeting and that there had been a good range of staff available to meet with them. They advised that the Officers had shared a lot of information with them and Members had had chance to ask a lot of salient questions.

Councillor Smith thanked all those Members who had attended the visit and their being no further comments or questions, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the feedback report on the consultation with social work staff based in the Locality Teams be received and noted.

### **Annual Work Programme 2016/17**

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the work programme for the Committee's work being undertaken for the 2016/17 council year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Diamond presented the report and invited comments and/or questions from Members.

Councillor Tye referred to the Youth Offer item which was identified for submission to the next meeting of the Committee and asked that Mr. Diamond ensure that it be a written report, in particular giving information around how the particular piece of work was carried out, and asked that it be circulated within the agenda prior to the meeting for Members consideration.

Mr Williamson asked that legal advice be sought on whether it would be considered that there be any conflict of interest for him, in relation to the Pupil Place Planning item that was scheduled for the February Committee, and asked that he be advised of the advice given prior to the Committee meeting.

Councillor Hunt commented that Members had requested the RAG report be included as part of the Director of Children's Services monthly report at the November Committee and yet again it had not been received at this meeting. She asked that guarantees be given that the report would be received in this format for future meetings of the Committee as previously requested. Members felt they were unable to perform their role in scrutinising the services when they were not provided with the full information in the report and the RAG rating report, clearly setting out the actions and their status, would allow Members to clearly identify which actions they need to focus upon.

Members having no further questions or comments, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the information contained in the Work Programme be received and noted and Members comments in relation to future items as set out be forwarded on to the relevant Officers.

### **Notice of Key Decisions**

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 13 December, 2016.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Tye referred to the acquisition of the City Library by the Children's Company and commented that there had been a lot of comments made by residents through social media, around the refurbishment of the interior of the library prior to the new Company moving into the property. He asked if information could be sought around how the decision to refurbish the property was made as he was not convinced it was a good use of resources in the current climate given that the library was only recently refurbished. He also asked if the Director of Children's Services could look to include this information within his report to the Committee at the next meeting setting out the detailed costings and identifying where the resources had come from.

Members having fully considered the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the Notices of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

(Signed) P. SMITH,  
Chairman.