

At an Extraordinary meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on FRIDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 2008 at 11.30 a.m.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Bell, Paul Maddison and D. Wilson together with Mrs. D. Butler, Mrs. C. Hutchinson and Mrs. A. Johnson

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor P Smith – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors P. Dixon, Gofton, Morrissey, Oliver, D. Snowdon and L. Walton together with those from Mr. Frank, Mr. Pearce, Mr. Snowdon and Mr. Laverick.

Declarations of Interest

Item 4 – Sunderland CAMHS

Mrs. D. Butler declared a personal interest in the item as she was Chair of the Governors of a school involved in the pilot scheme.

Councillor R. Bell declared a personal interest in the item as a Council appointed representative on the Governing Body of Hylton Red House Nursery.

National CAMHS Review

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with information about the National Review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the final report on which was published on 18th November, 2008 and contained 20 recommendations for Government, setting out a clear vision for promoting children's psychological well-being and mental health and how to best achieve a step change in the quality and consistency of services at all levels.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the report on the national review be noted as part of the Committee's evidence gathering in relation to its policy review study of the local CAMHS.

Sunderland CAMHS – Progress Review

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with a local, regional and national overview of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, including:-

- i) a brief overview of current arrangements, work streams, opportunities and challenges to support the development of CAMHS Services locally, regionally and nationally;
- ii) an outline of recommendations from the final report of the National CAMHS review;
- iii) an update on the re-provision of specialist services at Tiers 3 and 4; and
- iv) an outline of progress in relation to the Targeted Mental Health in Schools.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Janette Sherratt, Head of Health Improvement, having advised Members of her role both within Children's Services and the Teaching Primary Care Trust, provided the Committee with a detailed commentary on the report highlighting Sunderland's contribution to the development of CAMHS best practice and addressed Members' comments and questions.

Mrs. Johnson referred to her experiences as a Child Care Worker and expressed a degree of concern at the length of time currently between referrals and a first appointment.

Ms. Sherratt advised that this gap was only occurring within the early years stage and was an 'event pressure' due to staff shortages caused by sickness and maternity leave. Because the section was a small one, any sickness tended to have a large impact on services. Ms. Johnson highlighted the importance of staff training to help cope with such situations.

Councillor Bell referred to the tiered multi-agency model of CAMHS Service provision and welcomed that an emphasis was being placed on problem solving at the earliest opportunity.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor D. Wilson, Ms. Sherratt advised that a referral could be triggered by, amongst others, a teacher, school nurse or GP, if they felt that a child was displaying a need for support. Training was provided on what should trigger a referral in respect of identifying the point where there was a need to seek additional support.

In reply to a question from Mrs. Hutchinson, Ms. Sherratt confirmed that referrals were not made without parental consent. Mrs. Butler, having enquired what happened if this consent was not given, Ms. Sherratt advised that if it came to a point where in a professional's opinion, a parent was not meeting its responsibility, or was preventing a child from receiving the care it needed, then the option existed of going down the 'Children in Need' route.

At this juncture Councillor D. Wilson circulated literature advising Members of the link between Food Intolerance and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. He contended that the issue of food sensitivities should be the first port of call when looking at a child's behaviour.

Ms. Sherratt advised that the whole idea of a multi disciplinary approach was to look at an issue holistically and it could be that food intolerance was picked up as part of the process. Ms. Sherratt stated that the evidence base in respect of the effect of food intolerance on behaviour was not at the same level as others, however, she did not feel qualified to comment further as she was not a doctor.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Wilson for his submission and stated that the important thing was that professionals were aware that food intolerance could be a factor when investigating behaviour.

Ms. Sherratt referred to the broad issue within Children's Mental Health of trying to remove the perceived stigma attached to the word 'mental'. Councillor Smith suggested that perhaps the word should no longer be used and that softer terminology should be investigated. Ms. Sherratt referred to the need to differentiate between mental health and mental illness and the general perception that they were one and the same thing. Ms. Johnson suggested the use of the term emotional health. Ms. Sherratt confirmed that the term 'emotional health and well-being' was finding favour within the schools system. Ms. Sherratt advised that she would feedback the Committee's comments regarding terminology to the CAMHS Group.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Ball, Ms. Sherratt advised that the success of referrals were measured through the use of strength and difficulties, questionnaires, parental questionnaires and satisfaction with services questionnaires.

With regard to an enquiry from Mrs. Hutchinson, Ms. Sherratt confirmed that there was no inward referral between assessment and treatment.

The Chairman drew the debate to a close having thanked Ms. Sherratt for an informative report and presentation. He stated that if Members had any further questions these should be directed to Ms. Sherratt via Karen Brown, Review Co-ordinator.

2. RESOLVED that the evidence provided by Ms. Sherratt as part of the Committee's policy review study of CAMHS in Sunderland be received and noted.

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

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.