

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.45 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Ken Miall (Chairman), Kate Haines (Vice-Chairman), Parry Batth, Prue Bray, Jenny Cheng and Emma Hobbs

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services
Estelle Kelleway, Acting Assistant Director of Early Help and Safeguarding
Vicki Elliot King, Service Manager, Intelligence and Impact
Sarah Sesay, Performance Manager
Sal Thirlway, Service Manager Disabled Children's Team and Early Help

18. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Philip Houldsworth and Darryl Ward, Parent Governor representative.

19. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was submitted from Councillor Prue Bray on the basis that she was a Governor at the Forest School.

21. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

22. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

23. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered the Children's Services Performance Indicators report which was set out in Agenda pages 15-26. Viki Elliott-King, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact People Services presented the report highlighting the red indicators.

The following comments were made during her presentation:

1. EA1i: Percentage of Wokingham Borough State-Funded Primary Schools with a current Ofsted rating of 'Good' or better

Viki Elliott-King stated that this indicator had deteriorated as a result of two schools (Radstock Primary and Emmbrook Junior) having been judged 'Requires Improvement', and one school (Beechwood Primary) having been judged as 'Inadequate'. All three of

these schools were previously rated as 'Good'. They had been identified as being at risk by the Local Authority and work was being undertaken to support the schools.

2. EA2: Percentage of children who attend a Wokingham state-funded school (Primary, Secondary or Special) which is 'Good' or better

Viki Elliott-King stated that the reason for this indicator was the same as for EA1i.

3. EA11: 12-Month rolling voluntary turnover of qualified Social Workers within Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Service (new indicator)

Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services stated that a Task and Finish Group had been set to identify actions to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers.

In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that it could take approximately 12 months to see improvements.

In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that Wokingham compared favourably with Reading and less favourably with the other neighbouring authorities. However, the difference was not too significant and Wokingham had small numbers of staff.

4. VP4: Percentage of referrals in 2018/19 which are repeat referrals within 12 months of the previous referral to Children's Social Care

Viki Elliott-King stated that it was not unusual for referrals and repeat referrals to increase at this time of the year, before the schools are closed for the summer holidays.

In response to a question Viki Elliott-King stated that 399 referrals were received in total, and of those 94 were repeat referrals in the last quarter.

5. VP7: Percentage of children leaving care who achieved permanence (adopted, returned home or special guardianship order is granted)

Viki Elliott-King stated that in Quarter 2, four of the ten children leaving care achieved permanence. The other six children left care at the age of 18; three moving into independent living, one staying put with their foster carer, and two remaining in residential placement due to health needs. Those who leave care at the age of 18 have a transition plan in place.

Estelle Kellaway, Acting Assistant Director for Early Help and Safeguarding stated that there was a mixture of arrangements for children leaving care, with a number of children participating in the 'Staying Put' programme.

6. VP8: Percentage of child protection visits due in the period which were completed on time (within 10 days of the previous visit)

Viki Elliott-King stated that the reason for this red indicator was mainly due to issues with the recording of visits, due to pressure with workloads. Managers were aware of this issue and were working with their teams to make it simpler and easier for Social Worker to record visits. Social Workers had now been given tablets to allow them to record visits more quickly.

In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that there was no set national target in relation to child protection visits. She informed that visits should be carried out in accordance with the child's individual plan, and it was important monitor plans regularly.

Councillor Helliard-Symons, Executive Member for Children's Services stated that some progress had already been made in relation to the recruitment and retention of Social Workers. For example, the website had been updated and Social Workers were going to be given tablets to help with administration.

Councillor Helliard-Symons informed that there had been three meetings of the Social Worker Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group. It was recognised that most local authorities gave Social Workers free parking, so the Group was looking at ways in which to facilitate parking for Wokingham Social Workers. The Task and Finish Group was also looking at options around linking housing to recruitment, similar to the housing programme which was implemented a few years ago to house teachers near St Crispin's school.

Councillor Helliard-Symons also informed that Oxford Brooks University was going to come to Wokingham to carry out focus groups with the department, and to look at possible ways to attract and retain more Social Workers. Also, there were ongoing negotiations with Hampers Resourcing Recruiting Centre, who wished to break in the South East, and would be able to help with recruitment. She pointed out that it was very costly to recruit a Social Worker.

In response to a question, Carol Cammiss stated that due to the complexity for the work it was not possible to use non-qualified Social Workers to carry out visits. However, the service was looking at a range of options, for example how to facilitate recording and using other skilled workers to carry out non-statutory functions.

Carol Cammiss stated the service worked with universities and had a good programme to support newly qualified Social Workers. She also stated that the national apprenticeship programme which was due to start next year was offering a qualification for Social Workers and this was being considered by the service. Additionally, leaders were looking to build a succession plan and key workers housing.

In response to a question, Carol Cammiss stated that the service was looking at best practice in other local authorities.

In response to a question, Carol Cammiss stated that the level of risk and the level of experience would determine whether a Social Workers went on visits on their own or accompanied by someone else.

Members were interested to know how it took to train a Social Worker, Carol Cammiss stated that this varied. Estelle Kellaway stated that Social Workers had their caseloads protected in their first year of work.

In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that the service's aspiration was the Social Workers would stay in Wokingham for three to five years.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted; and

- 2) The Committee would receive an update report on the work of the Social Worker Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group when available.

24. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received the Youth Offending Service Annual report which was set out in Agenda pages 27-43. Sal Thirlway, Service Manager Disabled Children's Team and Early Help presented the report.

Sal Thirlway stated that the statutory duties of the service were: to reduce the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system; reduce re-offending by those already within the youth justice system and reduce the number of young people receiving a custodial sentence.

Sal Thirlway stated that although there had been an increase in re-offending rates, Wokingham still compared favourably when compared to neighbouring local authorities and nationally.

Sal Thirlway stated that the report presented historical data from the Youth Justice Board as well as locally collected data.

Councillor Helliard-Symons pointed out that the graph on page 34 showed that Wokingham was well below the national average for first time entrants. She believed that the number of re-offenders may have gone up as a result of a different tracking system. She wished to congratulate the Youth Offending Service team on their work and in achieving such good results.

Members noted that it was frustration to have to work with old data. Sal Thirlway explained that the Youth Justice Board had changed the way the data was tracked for the 'First Time Entrants' indicator half way through the year, which was not helpful. The local indicator was tracked differently.

Sal Thirlway informed that the number of re-offender was very low, however the statistics were impacted by two prolific re-offenders.

In response to a question Sal Thirlway informed that 'county lines factor' (mentioned on page 33 of the agenda) referred to how gangs used young people to move into different areas to sell drugs. He stated that there was national concern in relation to 'county lines'.

Members wondered if the cut backs in youth services a few years back had had an impact in the number of youth offences.

Carol Cammiss believed that the issue was the increase in the number of Child Care Protection Plans (CPP). As a result of cut backs in services, issues were not being picked up early and children were being put on CPPs later than they should have been, consequently having very demanding needs.

Councillor Bray stated that Winnersh Parish Council had been trying to set up youth services. The whole process had been very laborious, and communicating with Wokingham Borough Council had been particularly difficult. She would welcome anything that could be done to facilitate the process.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

25. DATA ON DEMAND FOR SERVICES

Viki Elliott-King presented the Data on Demand for Services report which was set out in agenda pages 45-47. She reported a large increase in social care demand in the Borough.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Compared with statistical neighbours, Wokingham's numbers were still low, however there had been a threefold increase, including in proportion to the population in the Borough;
- Possible lines of enquire were being investigated, Sarah Sesay, Performance Manager had undertaken a piece of work to find out possible reasons for this significant increase;
- It was possible that the numbers were previously too low and they were now levelling out;
- Sarah Sesay stated that in her research she found that the numbers had always fluctuated. Generally, media stories influenced the number of referrals, however this was not the case now;
- It was possible that as a result of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) that partners were now more able to recognise neglect;
- Sarah Sesay stated that she had looked at the legislation, media, leadership, economic factors, before/after inspections action plans going back 20 years; and she found that the numbers had always fluctuated;
- There was some indication that the current increase was the result of local decision making, the JTAI and an increase in awareness around issues involving child sexual exploitation;
- Members asked if it was possible that some cases may have been missed in the past. Carol Cammiss stated that in the past, in general, there were more child protection cases involving younger children, whereas now there were more cases of older children and adolescents;
- Carol Cammiss stated that children were staying in CPP's longer;
- Carol Cammiss stated that although there was no definitive reason for the increase in demand for social care services, this was in line with the national trend;
- Sarah Sesay expected that the numbers would probably go down next year, but were likely to continue to fluctuate long term. It was important to identify where help was needed earlier;
- Sarah Sesay stated that cuts in Early Years intervention and Universal Help had had an impact on the numbers and added pressure to services;
- Members asked if all Looked After Children were safe. Estelle Kellaway stated Looked After Children were more vulnerable than other children, and the service worked very hard to safeguard these children;
- Councillor Bray asked how many children with a CPP were from families which were in the 'troubled families plan'. Sarah Sesay would check and report back;
- In response to a question Sarah Sesay stated that there had not been an increase in self-referrals, most referrals came from the police and schools;
- In response to a question Estelle Kellaway stated that some children in the Child Protection Plan had mental health problems as a result of trauma they may have suffered. She stated that lot of work was undertaken through Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to help those children with mental health issues.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

26. OFSTED FOCUSED INSPECTION ON THE FRONT DOOR INCLUDING MASH

Carol Cammiss presented the report which was set out in agenda pages 49-51. She stated that Ofsted inspectors came to Wokingham on 17 and 18 October 2018 to carry out a short focused visit to the Children's Services Front Door as part of the new Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.

Carol Cammiss stated that although the inspectors were on site for only two days, this was a two week process. The inspectors had looked at data, reports, policies and cases. They asked to track 25 children, five from each category. Also, the service was asked to prepare a self-evaluation. Carol stated that they had been honest in their self-evaluation.

Carol Cammiss stated that the Ofsted report pointed out areas for improvement, but had not requested a priority action plan, and this was considered a good result. She pointed out that the Ofsted report did not reveal anything new, the service was aware of the areas that needed improving. It was positive that the report pointed out that children were safe and that workers were making a positive impact in children's lives.

Carol Cammiss stated that Ofsted had also looked into Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and they found that this needed improving.

Carol Cammiss stated that an improvement plan was already in place to address the issues raised by Ofsted, which were in line with the service's own self-assessment.

Carol Cammiss informed that this Ofsted visit did not give a grading to the service, therefore she expected that a full inspection would probably happen next year.

Councillor Helliar-Symons stated that she was pleased with the report, especially in view of the recent challenges, such as leadership instability and increase in demand. However, Ofsted had recognised that work was being undertaken to address those issues. She stated that more work was needed to improve MASH, however this was a Police initiative. She noted the positive comments that children were safe, that staff were making a difference and that the service was self-aware of its challenges.

In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that the most important priorities were caseload and stability.

Members asked what was being done to improve MASH. Carol Cammiss stated that she had met with the Superintendent and had raised the issues highlighted by Ofsted.

The Chairman was concerned about the second paragraph under *Child Protection Strategy Discussion and Application of Thresholds* on page 50 of the Agenda which read:

The inspectorate also found that sometimes thresholds applied to a need for a child protection enquires have been too low, resulting in a "small number of families being drawn into the child protection process when this is not required."

Carol Cammiss explained that this was because sometimes the service, as the statutory responsible authority, was having to make decisions without having access to all the

information they should have had. There was a need for a more robust multi-agency approach.

Members asked Carol Cammiss to make the Police aware of the issues raised.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) The Committee will receive update reports on the improvement plan

27. INNOVATIONS PROGRAMME

Estelle Kellaway presented the Innovations report which was set out in Agenda pages 59-62. She stated that in mid-2014 Munro, Turnell and Murphy Child Protection Consulting (MTM) and ten local authorities succeeded in securing Department of Education (DfE) innovations funding through a joint bid to work intensively with ten local authorities over a period of 18 months. They were independently evaluated and it was decided to continue with the project. The second phase of the project was launched in 2017 and will be for the duration of two years. She stated that the programme had been independently evaluated and that Wokingham was one of the most successful local authorities taking part in the project.

Councillor Bray noted that the average score was 50%, as shown in the graph on page 60 of the Agenda and asked what the target was. Estelle Kellaway stated that the target was 100% of open cases.

Members were interested in receiving a presentation about the programme at a future meeting and to be kept informed of its development.

RESOLVED That;

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) A presentation will be brought back to the Committee.

28. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS

Jim Leviers, Interim Assistant Director for Education addressed the Committee to present the Schools Performance Indicators and Ofsted reports which was set out in Agenda pages 63-82.

Jim Leviers stated that schools in Wokingham were generally performing well, however it was important not to become complacent as there were challenges that needed to be considered.

Jim Leviers informed that there had been five Ofsted inspections since the last meeting of the Committee, with the following results:

Hawkedon Primary School – remains Good
Rivermead Primary School – remains Good
Keep Hatch Primary School – moved from Requires Improvement to Good
Gorse Ride Junior School – remains Requires Improvement
Maiden Erlegh – remains Good

In response to a question Jim Levers stated that the data in relation to GCSE and A Level would be available in the spring (there was no set date), at that point this would be brought to the Committee for consideration.

Members noted that the A Level outcomes were not quite as strong as 2017 indicators. Jim Levers stated that they remained in range of national average, however it was not known if this was the result of the new methodology or this particular cohort of pupils. He stated that he was not concerned and that schools and academies continued to perform well.

Members asked if academies were being too restrictive in their offer of courses. Jim Levers stated that this was a national issue which reflected central government politics.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) The GCSE and A Level data would be submitted to the Committee when available.

29. FORWARD PLAN

The following items were added to the Forward Plan for the Committee:

22 January 2019

- Innovations Programme Update Report

19 February 2019

- Regional Schools Commissioner

30. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as appropriate.

31. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN - PART 2

The report was discussed in a Part 2 session.