

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14th November, 2012 at 6.00pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor S Turner (Chair)
Councillor Boleyn (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Arshad, Attwood, Bills, Casey, Caunt, J Jones, Marrey,
Mrs Rogers and Mrs Walker; Mr Bruton, Mr Taylor, Mr Tinsley, Mr Ridley,
Mrs Verdegem and Reverend Wickens.

OFFICERS

Health Reform Programme Lead – Lead Officer to the Committee; Director of Children's Services, Assistant Directors of Children's Services (Children and Families) and (Quality and Partnership), Head of Service (Social Services), Director of Corporate Resources, Treasurer and Miss K Fellows, (Directorate of Corporate Resources).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services (Councillor Crumpton), Councillor Harley, Mr N Bucktin of the Clinical Commissioning Group and Ms R Musson of the Walsall and Dudley Mental Health Trust.

21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Billingham and Mrs Simms; Mrs Coulter and Mrs Ward.

22 **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillors Caunt and Mrs Rogers was serving in place of Councillors Mrs Billingham and Mrs Simms for this meeting of the Committee only.

23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member made a Declaration of Interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

24 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th September, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

25

ACTION PLANS IN RESPONSE TO OfSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN.

The Committee received a report of the Director of Children's Services on the Action Plans in response to the OfSTED inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children (December 2011) and a Thematic Inspection of Safeguarding activity (August 2012).

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted, Members asked questions and raised concerns and it was reported as follows:-

Ms Musson of the Walsall and Dudley Mental Health Trust reported that the Individual Plan implementation date in relation to the seven areas that were identified in the OfSTED Thematic Inspection would be March, 2013 however some of the action plans would require partnership working and deadlines in relation to these had not been set.

Councillor Mrs Walker raised concerns in relation to the findings of the Inspection and the fact that the inspection had raised concerns in relation to timely access to emotional and mental health services. She also commented upon the fact that deadlines and targets would not have been met had the inspection not taken place.

Councillor Bills referred to the theme of the Thematic Inspection and welcomed the fact that the inspection had brought children and families with mental health issues to the fore.

Ms Musson stated that it was hoped that a robust action plan could be developed in relation to the actions raised by the Inspection through key partnership working.

She also reported that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, (CAMHS), conducted work in relation to family therapy for those families suffering from mental health issues.

The Chair raised concerns in relation to insufficient effective action to meet the needs of children and the lack of intervention.

Ms Musson responded stating that robust activity was taking place to ensure that there was a process to ensure that children were safeguarded and referred to the caseload management supervision system that was utilised in order to ensure this.

The Assistant Director, Children and Families stated that where there was clear evidence that there were protection issues, Adult Services would refer children and families to the appropriate services, and that measures had been taken to ensure that thresholds were understood and when those thresholds were not met measures had now been built in to ensure that children and families received the support and services that they required.

The Director of Children's Services reported that work had been undertaken as soon as the inspection had taken place in relation to the action plans referred to within the report submitted. Some of the specific actions had already been identified and actioned ensuring that children and families with mental health issues received the services and support that was required.

Mr Bucktin of the Clinical Commissioning Group advised that there was a clear plan to actively engage young people in shaping the delivery of the local health services in order to involve them in that service and ensure that this was child friendly and in order to do this, investigations into existing mechanisms that were in place across the Borough would taken into account.

The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services referred to problems with the length of time that was taken for general practitioners to recognise and deal with mental health problems, referring specifically to the referral process in order to obtain specialist help for those problems, requesting details of data on the length of time that was taken for the referral process.

Mr Bucktin advised that access points were monitored for such referrals and undertook to provide Members and the Cabinet Member with data regarding the length of time from when a patient consulted their General Practitioner to referral to a Consultant.

Mr Bucktin referred to the transformation of the programme that the Mental Health Trust had undertaken advising that the number of access points for referrals had been reduced in order to speed up the process for therapy.

He also referred to the two initiatives that were in place for patients to be referred to gateway access programmes speedily and General Practitioners being able to make referrals direct for cognitive behavioural therapy.

In responding to a question from a Member he advised that contracts with General Practitioners in relation to mental health were entered into with the expectation that services would meet patient standards and those contracts would be monitored and reviewed.

Councillor Walker raised concerns in relation to the time it had taken to deal with mental health issues suggesting that complete scrutiny was required in relation to the system for dealing with such issues in view of the fact that the inspection had taken place over one year ago and some of the specific actions still remained on amber status.

Mr Bucktin advised that there had been complex issues to deal with, which had involved working with more than one organisation, although he was hopeful that the majority of those specific actions would change from an amber to a green status shortly.

In responding to a question from the Chair, Mr Bucktin advised that the Family Nurse Practitioner resources had been agreed by the Clinical Commissioning Group, however as work had been required to be undertaken with the Black Country Trust this would not have been dealt with as expediently as had been hoped.

The Director of Children's Services advised that further updates would be brought to the next meeting in relation to the work conducted with partners to ensure that targets were met regarding timely access to emotional and mental health services. An Annual Report would be produced in relation to the progress made in relation to all agencies concerned.

She also advised that a representative from all partnerships would be requested to attend future meetings of the Committee.

Mr Bucktin also reported that in relation to maintaining registers relating to mental health problems this would form part of General Practitioners contracts and should they not comply with this requirement, there would be sanctions such as withholding payment for this part of the contract.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on Action Plans in response to OfSTED Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children, be noted.
- (2) That Members comments as referred to above, be noted.

A joint report of the Chief Executive, Treasurer and Director of Children's Services was submitted on the proposed revenue budget strategy for 2013/14 and the medium term financial strategy provided under the Terms of Reference of this Committee.

Arising from the presentation of the report by the Treasurer, Members asked questions, raised concerns and made comments. In responding to these the Director of Children's Services stated as follows:-

The Dedicated Schools Grant would be impacted upon and some support services would be reduced which would impact on Children's Services as a whole.

That there would be a reduction in staff within Performing Arts. Due to National changes reduction in Special Educational Needs requirements administrative support will be reduced by 2015/16.

That in relation to Early Years the statutory work that was required by the Directorate would continue to be undertaken.

In relation to the Early Intervention Grant a process of a through review had been undertaken within the Directorate and further work would be conducted with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services in order to identify the 2.3 million in savings referred to in the report submitted.

That the Netherton Arts Centre would be retained, however the staff at the Centre would be reduced and the Directorate would continue to provide traded services for schools, however the position in relation to the Centre would remain under review should further savings be required.

The Director of Children's Services undertook to provide Members with a written response regarding Transforming Futures and the loss of £600,000 at the end of the third year of the budget proposals as to what this figure represented as a percentage of the base budget figures.

She also advised that Youth Centres may be closed, however work would have to be undertaken in relation formulating a criteria for this, including mapping and the need for service provision especially for those who were most vulnerable. This work would be undertaken with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services. Should this work be undertaken, the Director of Children's Services advised that a report in relation to findings would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Bills urged the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services to investigate working with other authorities in order to continue the provision of the work with the Performing Arts.

The Director of Children's Services responded stating that performances at schools would continue, however extra civic performances that required additional funding would cease in order that those services that could still be delivered would be protected. She also reported that the Music Hub Grant would remain in place for a further two years.

In relation to the reduction in funding for those children with mental health issues the Director of Children's Services stated that work would be undertaken with the Health to ensure that some provision continued in order to mitigate the reduction in funding. She also reported that the impact of budget reductions were not as severe as they could have been. Some services would still be provided and there was scope to look at how this area could be mitigated.

The work conducted in relation to mental health by the Directorate would remain under review and further consultations would take place as necessary with the Integrated Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Director of Children's Services advised that in relation to Performing Arts, Government grants were being reduced nationally, however she would continue to look at and seek funding where possible.

In relation to maintaining and improving services for children and young people she stated that the Directorate would strive to maintain service delivery as successfully and efficiently as possible with the funding available.

In relation to the reduction of the Early Intervention Grant, the Director of Children's Services referred to the impact that this would have on the provision of services and in relation to the reduction in such a short period of time, advised that the main objective was to ensure the safety of children and for the Directorate to continue to meet its statutory requirements in relation to this service provision.

In relation to performing arts, the Director of Children's Services provided assurances that in line with the current budget proposals children would continue to be given the opportunity to perform.

In relation to providing corporate and safe services for children and young people, the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services advised that the main priority was not to put any child at risk within the Borough and the need to assess the overall impact of the budget.

The Director of Children's Services referred to the areas of the service that were subject to inspection and the duties to comply and carry out services in view of the inspections that the service was subject to. She also referred to the continuing need for data collection in view of the fact that general intelligence was required, advising that there had been a reduction in staff in this area of work.

The Director of Children's Services undertook to provide Members with details of the reduction of central staff within the Directorate during previous years.

In relation to Education Improvement Advisor posts, the Director of Children's Services advised that there were now five posts, three for primary schools, one for a special school and one for secondary schools. She also reported the need for these posts in view of the Directorate's statutory requirement to challenge and support schools in line with OfSTED.

The Director of Children's Services referred to some funding that had been identified in the budget due to a project not being carried out and a small sum of funding that had become available to work with troubled families within the Borough. She also referred to work that had been carried out regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Director of Children's Services provided assurances that the services provided by the Directorate would be subject to quality control and those services that were provided in line with statutory requirements would continue to be provided.

She also provided assurances that the Directorate would continue to work with partners in order to investigate possibilities of continuing to provide services for young people and their families and would also encourage voluntary partners to bid and obtain funding for this purpose.

In relation to withdrawing staff training the Director of Children's Services advised that this was in relation to graduate level training that was no longer a statutory requirement.

Regarding the provision of catering services to schools, the Director of Children's Services advised that the majority of schools were still utilising the Directorates catering services, and in the main these were provided to primary schools. She would circulate details of the number of schools utilising this service to Members.

In relation to the catering income from Himley Hall the Director of Children's Services undertook to circulate to Members details of the percentage of surplus income that the Directorate received from that service.

A Member raised a query as to whether the budget proposals would result in the closure of some Children's Centres and the Director of Children's Services indicated that a full review would be undertaken in this regard which would involve a consultation process. Following consultation a report would be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee to scrutinise.

The Director of Children's Services referred to some traded services that were provided to schools that were cost effective. She undertook to provide Members with a written response regarding the traded services that were delivered to schools by the Directorate.

Councillor Attwood suggested that the Directorate should offer services that would generate further income and the Director of Children's Services reported on the highly valued services being offered and carried out in schools and the work that was carried out with the Dudley Grid for Learning.

In response to a query from a Member, the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services confirmed that the generation of income by the Directorate was under constant review.

The Director of Children's Services reported that any income generation had to be cost effective and had to be delivered in line with the level of funding that the Directorate had available.

RESOLVED

That the Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2013/14 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in the report, and Appendix A to the report, submitted be noted.

27

THE WORK OF DUDLEY YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES

The Committee received a report of the Director of Children's Services on the summary of the purpose and structure of Dudley Youth Offending Service and to share working practices and outcomes to demonstrate how the service contribute to improving opportunities and outcomes for young people in the Borough.

In presenting the report submitted, the Head of Service, (Social Services) made particular reference to the holistic assessment process and the approach taken by the Youth Offending Service together with the operation of the three trained community panel members. He also referred to staff responsibilities and the tables included in the report referring to the three key National Indicators that measured Youth Offending Service performance.

Arsing from the presentation of the report Members expressed support and praise for the work conducted by the service.

The Head of Service, (Social Services) undertook to provide a written response to Members in relation to the percentage of those offenders who were looked after children or had previously been looked after children.

He reported that the service had significant success with young offenders and referred to the amount of time that was dedicated to working with young people.

The Director of Children's Services reported that funding in relation to the service was currently being investigated nationally and although it was not anticipated that there would be a reduction during this financial year, it was anticipated that there would be a change in funding following the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

In relation to the grant from the Ministry of Justice the Head of Service, (Social Services) reported that budget details in relation to this funding would be announced in December, 2012.

In relation to breaches of statutory orders, the Head of Service, (Social Services) reported that there was a statutory requirement to follow up such breaches within 24 hours with the aim of the service being to protect the public and victims whilst helping the rehabilitation of offenders.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, submitted on the summary of the purpose and structure of Dudley Youth Offending Service, be noted.

28 THE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE INSPECTION OUTCOMES.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services on the outcomes of the recent pilot inspection of Dudley Youth Offending Service.

In presenting the report submitted the Director of Children's Services referred to excellent results that the service had received in relation to the new inspection regime.

She referred to the full detailed report that had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting regarding the inspection and requested Members to email her direct with any questions that they may have in relation to the report.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member praised the services provided by the Youth Offending Service and the quality of work carried out by the service.

The Committee also congratulated the service and commended their work.

RESOLVED

That, the report on the outcomes of the recent pilot inspection of Dudley Youth Offending Services, be noted.

29 QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.8 AND INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no questions asked under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm