

SAFEGUARDING SUB (COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES) COMMITTEE

Friday, 25 September 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Safeguarding Sub (Community & Children's Services) Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Randall Anderson
Marianne Fredericks
Professor John Lumley

Gareth Moore
Deputy Joyce Nash
Dhruv Patel

Officers:

Fern Aldous	Town Clerk's Department
Philippa Sewell	Town Clerk's Department
Ade Adetosoye	Community & Children's Services
Moushumi Bhadra	Community & Children's Services
Simon Cribbens	Community & Children's Services
Pat Dixon	Community & Children's Services
Pip Hesketh	Community & Children's Services
Julia Hodson	Community & Children's Services
Sharon McLaughlin	Community & Children's Services
Chris Pelham	Community & Children's Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Elizabeth Rogula.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Members were invited to elect a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 29. A list of Members eligible to stand was read out and Gareth Moore and Professor John Lumley indicated their willingness to serve. A ballot was therefore conducted as below:

Gareth Moore: 5

Professor John Lumley: 1

RESOLVED – That Gareth Moore be elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year.

4. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Members were invited to elect a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 30. A list of Members eligible to stand was read out and Professor John

Lumley indicated his willingness to serve. Elizabeth Rogula had expressed her desire to stand previous to the meeting and was considered as an applicant in her absence. A ballot was therefore conducted as below:

Elizabeth Rogula: 4

Professor John Lumley: 2

RESOLVED - That Elizabeth Rogula be elected as Deputy Chairman for the forthcoming year.

The Chairman thanked the outgoing members of the Committee, Chief Commoner Deputy Billy Dove and the Reverend Dr Martin Dudley.

5. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members had provided Officers with several questions prior to the meeting. The summary of these are presented in italics as below.

How can the Corporate Parenting Board exercise its role effectively without other partner agencies being at the table?

Officers suggested that a proactive approach should be adopted and a forward plan created. Yearly updates from partners could then be scheduled. In response to an enquiry by Members the Town Clerk clarified that the Committee did have challenge powers.

Should young people be invited?

Members felt that the engagement of young people should be strengthened, although it was agreed that this did not necessarily require their attendance at the meetings of the Sub-Committee as long as their views were meaningfully considered. There was an option for the Committee to meet with a representative from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and it was acknowledged that the Grand Committee was addressed by the Youth Mayor on occasion.

Members noted that the terms of reference included a reference to the committee "exercising its functions with regard to the views of relevant service users". It was felt this allowed the Committee to exercise a wide-ranging scrutiny function in regards to relevant partners.

RESOLVED – That a work programme be developed in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chair, that officers undertake to open a communication pathway with the CiCC, and that the terms of reference be noted.

6. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th February be approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Visits

Officers advised that the requested visit to Adult Care Service users had not been able to be undertaken. Members asked that a further attempt be made.

When will the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report be available for the Sub Committee?

Officers advised that the report would be available for consideration at the Sub-Committee meeting scheduled for 17 December 2015.

7. CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING REVIEW

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which provided an overview of the key service improvements that had been made in relation to safeguarding. Members discussed the report, noting that communicating the message through the right channels was vital to the success of safeguarding children.

How can the service ensure that the threshold is clear and understood by partners?

Officers advised members that there were a minimal number of referrals that were deemed NFA's (no further action required). It was felt this was a sign that thresholds were clear to partners. Regular multi agency events had taken place to communicate threshold levels to partners, with a further event due to be held in January 2016. Officers advised that information could be found on the website and partners were regularly made aware through the work of the Early Help Sub group and the City Safeguarding Executive.

Members queried whether the low amount of NFA's could be seen as a sign that borderline cases were not being referred to the authority. Officers explained that the configuration of the Early Help and Social Care teams under a single management line allowed for cases that were under the threshold to still be picked up by the service; all partners were encouraged to approach the service if unsure about a case.

It was felt that a recent rise in the number of referrals was due to a heightened awareness of safeguarding issues amongst partners, increased activity from the police and launching of the thresholds tool. The rise brought the City in line with its statistical neighbours. Members asked that additional information on referrals form part of future performance reporting.

What progress has been made on the recommendations of the last Ofsted Inspection?

Officers detailed the service improvements that had been undertaken since the last inspection including the introduction of the CiCC, increased awareness of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role, the commissioning of the electronic social care recording system, Frameworki, and the introduction of the Virtual Headteacher role that has supported improvement in the quality of Personal Education Plans for Looked After Children. A strategic review of Domestic Abuse had also been completed which included a new Domestic

Abuse Coordinator role, improved Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and new Domestic Abuse Forum).

RESOLVED – That officers undertake to include referral figures in performance reporting coming to future meetings of the sub-committee, and that the report be noted.

8. **CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services detailing Corporate Parenting developments, activity and performance for the year 2014-15. Members noted that majority of Children Looked After (CLA) in the City were unaccompanied asylum seekers. This cohort were more likely to be older and male compared to the CLA populations of other local authorities, and it was recognised that their profile is markedly different from that of the City's wider population of children and young people.

How do the CLA numbers compare to those of other authorities and what does this say about the threshold levels?

Officers explained that although levels were slightly higher than London levels of CLA, the small size of the cohort meant that this variance was the equivalent of a single child. Quality assurance processes, both internal and independent indicated that the threshold levels had been applied appropriately in decisions to take children into care.

How has the consultation of CLA been used to improve the service?

Young people had asked for better information on their entitlements and a welcome pack was being developed with current CLA as a result. CLA were noted to be integral to the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the City's "pledge" to CLA. A report on consultation with young people would be coming to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

How many CLA are in placements that meet their ethnic or cultural needs?

The ethnic and cultural needs of the young people were assessed and efforts made to get placements with the closest cultural fit. The Corporation used independent fostering agencies to maximise the range and choice of potential placements to meet such needs. The suitability of the placements was reflected in their long term stability. In response to an enquiry by members, officers undertook to investigate whether the City's boarding schools could play a bigger role in the placement of looked after children.

How do CLA and Care Leavers know what they are entitled to?

This was achieved through the work of social workers, the independent reviewing officers and foster carers. A welcome pack of information for CLA was also being developed in consultation with young people.

How many CLA medicals are done within the specified timescale from reception into care?

Officers explained that medical assessments were contracted to Whittington Hospital. All CLA had a medical assessment and whilst the medicals were seen to be completed within the required timescales, the reports could sometimes take longer to be sent to the Social Worker. The issue had been raised with the Whittington at the Children Executive Board. A report on the issue would be coming to the Sub-Committee at their meeting scheduled for 17 December 2015.

What work is being done to ensure that our CLA have a health passport?

Work on the health passport was due to be carried out by Whittington although there had been delays in the commencement of the project at both the Corporation and Hackney Borough Council. The need for progression had been raised with the Whittington at the Children Executive Board, and the Corporation had made themselves available to pilot a system if this would assist in this. Members advised that they would be happy to be a pilot for the project.

What progress has now been done to ensure that our CLA have all got life story work?

Quality assurance processes had identified that life story work was not complete for all CLA; this was now being addressed and the City's recording system was being amended to better record and monitor life story work. Specialist training for staff had also commissioned to ensure the quality of life story and maximise its value to understanding and meeting the needs of CLA. It was felt this work could be more challenging to complete for unaccompanied asylum seekers as relationships between practitioners and the young people could take slightly longer to develop and support the building of trust.

RESOLVED – that officers undertake to investigate the potential inclusion of City Boarding Schools in the care package and that the report be noted.

9. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and were shown a video of a recent activity week organised for 8 of the young people. Officers reported that the young people had received a certificate from the Royal Yachting Association, and two had been identified for excellence in leadership. The VHT added that she had received comments about one of the young people from their teacher, praising the trip and the positive impact it had on the individual's commitment to their education.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

10. LOCAL AUTHORITIES DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO) ANNUAL REPORT

The Sub Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services informing members of the activity of the Local Authority

Designated Officer (LADO) over the past year. Members asked that the paper be circulated to the Committees of the City Schools to promote the LADO role.

Is there confidence that partners are making referrals?

It was noted that referrals made to a school would be treated differently depending on the nature of the allegation, with only those involving a member a staff being first directed to the City, with all others first going to the local authority of the child's residence. The LADO was working with agencies to help promote the role and raise awareness. There had been an increase in referrals in the first quarter of 2015.

How well is safer recruitment policy and practice understood in the Corporation and across partner agencies?

This was currently being reviewed by HR, who would approach Community and Children's Services if an issue arose. The Corporate Safeguarding policy, which included the role of the LADO, had been circulated to Safeguarding Champions across the Corporation.

In response to an enquiry by members, officers noted the importance that cases passed to other authorities were followed up on. It was acknowledged that it was not a statutory duty for LADO's to update the former authority on cases they had taken on. Officers advised that the LADO action plan would be coming to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED –that the report be circulated to the City Schools Committees and the Grand Committee, and that the report be noted.

11. **PRIVATE FOSTERING REPORT**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services. Members discussed the report, noting that communications had been disseminated to raise awareness but still needed to be strengthened to ensure that all those who were private foster parents knew they were such. It was acknowledged that it was vital to know where children were placed at all times and that it was the statutory duty of a school to inform the authority if they knew a child had moved. Officers confirmed that there was Communications Plan in place and that this had also been shared with the City Safeguarding Executive.

Members asked that the paper be presented to the Grand Committee and that members of the Portsoken Ward were made aware of the issue.

RESOLVED – That the report be presented to the Grand Committee, that Portsoken members be informed, and that the report be noted.

12. **QUESTIONS OF MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

The dates of the next committees were noted to be:

23rd October 2015

17th December 2015

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business

14. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

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

Item

15-18

Paragraph

1&2

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th February be approved as an accurate record.

16. **COMPLAINTS REPORT APRIL 2012-DECEMBER 2015**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services presenting an overview of the complaints received since April 2012.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

17. **ANNUAL REPORT VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER ACADEMIC YEAR 2014-15**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services updating them on the work of the Virtual Headteacher.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

Members agreed to the extension of the meeting under Standing Order 40

18. **MISSING CHILDREN REPORT 2014/15**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services updating them on missing children.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

19. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

20. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 3:56pm

Chairman

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