

Minutes of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

31 July 2023

-: Present :-

Councillor Law (Chairwoman)

Councillors Billings, Nicolaou, Twelves (Vice-Chair) and Joyce

Non-voting Co-opted Member

Dave Hammond, Devon and Cornwall Police (virtually)

(Also in attendance (virtually): Councillors David Thomas and Tyerman)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received Mike Cook (non-voting Co-opted Member) and Councillor Bye, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Board held on 27 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

3. Ofsted Annual Conversation Letter

The Director of Children's Services, Nancy Meehan, provided the background to the Ofsted Annual Conversation and highlighted the key points raised in the letter dated 19 May 2023 and responded to questions in respect of the following:

- It was suggested that 10 flats were needed for care experienced young people, was bed and breakfast accommodation being considered for urgent housing.
- What was the expected numbers of care experienced young people requiring housing over the next two years.
- How does the different options e.g. guardianship, fostering etc impact on the future housing requirements.
- What incentives were being offered to encourage more people to foster or remain as foster carers as a result of the cost of living crisis.
- When was the new Ofsted Framework Inspection due and would the assessment of accommodation form part of the main Ofsted Inspection.
- What age was it assumed the care experienced young person would be leaving home.

- Were HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) considered suitable accommodation.
- Where were the care experienced young people currently being housed if there was a shortage of suitable accommodation.
- What was the impact from the asylum hotels and the unaccompanied asylum seekers and was sufficient funding provided from the Government to support these individuals and families.
- What was the average age of the unaccompanied asylum seeker children.
- The Council was relying on a percentage of 43 flats coming through for care experienced young people, if we were inspected now what grading would we get.
- Were Section 106 Agreements sufficient to help allocate new housing to care experienced young people.
- What areas in Torbay were most appropriate for care experienced young people to live.

It was agreed that the previous paper on housing need for care experienced young people would be updated and circulated to the Members of the Board as this provided details of what the Council was already doing to help support them with their housing requirements.

Members supported the ongoing fostering recruitment campaigns and were encouraged to contact the Director of Children's Services if they were holding events in their Wards to see if they could provide a manned stand to encourage more people in the community to become foster carers.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the contents of the annual Ofsted letter be noted and the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board's gratitude be passed onto all the staff involved for their continued hard work on behalf of our children, young people and their families;
 2. that the Director of Children's Services and Director of Pride in Place be requested to review two or three recent Section 106 Agreements with affordable housing and assess how they have addressed allocation of properties to care experienced young persons and to consider if there is a need to review our Section 106 policy to give preferential opportunities for care experienced young people to secure suitable accommodation before it is opened up through Devon Home Choice; and
 3. that the Director of Children's Services be requested to analyse the types of accommodation required for our care experienced young people and report back as part of the sufficiency update.
- 4. Our Promise to You - The Torbay Pledge to care for and care experienced children/young people**

The Divisional Director of Safeguarding, Becky Thompson, outlined the submitted report which provided an update on the activities to deliver the 'Our Promise to

You Pledge' and the Cared For Community and My Voice groups and responded to the following questions:

- It was proposed that every year the 12 members of the Local Authority Children in Care Council would be up for election, how would this work in practice. Action: the Participation Officer (Sophie De Sousa) was requested to advise the Children in Care Council that Councillors would welcome the opportunity to be invited to their meetings.
- Members noted that previously the Sub-Board had a care experienced young person but that they had stepped down and colleagues were looking for someone to replace them. Members felt that it was important to ask the new young person what time of day would suit them for the meetings as they wanted to ensure that the Sub-Board tried to accommodate this to enable them to be able to attend and take part. Action: the Participation Officer (Sophie De Sousa) to speak to the young person to see what time would be suitable for them and to liaise with the Clerk who will see what could be done to accommodate them.

Members acknowledged the positive work being done with children, young people and their families and ensuring that their voice was integral to all our work.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that considering the activity outlined within the submitted report, and the changes to the Children in Care Council, the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board endorse a review of the Pledge, to be carried out with our cared for and care experienced children and young people, to determine whether their views, wishes and priorities remain the same, or need to be revised and amended. The revised 23-26 Pledge (renamed in line with the children and young people's views) be presented to the Sub-Board at a future date; and
2. that the young people in the Children in Care Council be invited to come to the meeting of the Sub-Board to talk to us about the revised Pledge when it is launched.

5. Exploitation and Children Missing

The Service Manager, Front Door – Ellie Clark, provided an update on the partnership work being undertaken in respect of exploitation and children missing as set out in the submitted document and responded to the following questions:

- Were the young people aware that they were being assessed and who else was involved in the assessments.
- How were we reacting to social media and Apps which enable and encourage sexual exploitation.
- What was being done to support those vulnerable people who were also being excluded or were absent from schools to reduce the risk of them being exploited.
- We currently have 173 young people involved in exploitation, how has that changed in the last twelve months and how do we compare to other areas.

- As a result of more intelligence and awareness numbers of young people being or potentially being exploited was increasing, how long do you expect these numbers to climb before we start to see a reduction.
- Were the online risks local or worldwide.
- Was there sufficient support from Government to tackle this issue.
- How do we engage with other local authorities to share good practice.

Members noted the contents of the report and the work being done by the Council and its partners to tackle exploitation and acknowledged that they would be reviewing exclusions and attendance on 18 December 2023.

6. Children's Continuous Improvement Board Update

Members noted that due to the change of date of the meeting, the item on the Continuous Improvement Board Update had been deferred.

Members received an update on the Leadership, Management and Governance Action Plan and noted that the application for a Child Friendly Torbay was well under way with a further meeting being held with UNICEF on 16 August 2023. Supervision and management was continuing to be monitored as this was a vital part of business as usual and was a requirement to ensure that we were compliant for future Ofsted Inspections.

The Director of Children's Services, Nancy Meehan, highlighted the urgent action being taken to address lack of sufficiency in CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services), including a Partnership Summit called by the Chief Executive with the Chief Executives and Leads from all key partners to try to find a positive way forward against a background of shortage of qualified staff and other contract issues. Whilst there was a need for formal CAMHS processes there were huge benefits of early intervention and support around emotional wellbeing which could reduce the need for higher level CAMHS support in the future, through health and education services. Members asked the following questions:

- How long was the contract with Child and Family Health Devon.
- What other interventions could be put in place.
- Have we offered a training bursary to help encourage people to apply.

Resolved (unanimously):

That a deep-dive around the wider provision of mental health, therapeutic and emotional wellbeing services to provide early support and reduce the number of people meeting the threshold for CAMHS for children and young people in Torbay be brought forward to a spotlight meeting of the Sub-Board to be held as soon as possible replacing the item in the work programme scheduled for 19 February 2024 as this is a priority area.

7. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme 2023/2024

Members considered the draft Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme for 2023/2024.

Resolved (unanimously):

That, subject to the below, the Initial Children and Young People's Work Programme for 2023/2024 as presented, be approved, and be kept under regular review by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and the Scrutiny Officer:

- i. a deep-dive around the wider provision of mental health, therapeutic and emotional wellbeing services to provide early support and reduce the number of people meeting the threshold for CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) for children and young people in Torbay be brought forward to a spotlight meeting of the Sub-Board to be held as soon as possible replacing the item in the work programme scheduled for 19 February 2024 as this is a priority area.

8. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

The Sub-Board noted the contents of the submitted action tracker.

Chairwoman
