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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD
18/01/2024 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor Moores (Chair)
Councillors Adams, Bishop, H. Harrison, Hurley, McLaren,
Mushtaq and Rea

Also in Attendance:

Rhys Attwell
Paul Axon

Constitutional Services
Chief Executive Officer Positive
Steps

Matthew Bulmer
Rick Bolton

Director Education Early Years and
Skills

Business Manager OSCP

Julie Daniels
Henri Giller

Director of CSE
Independent Chair Safeguarding
Partnership

Chris Lewis
Kelly Rennie

Youth Services
Operations Manager (Positive
Steps)

Member of Youth Council

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no Public Questions for the Board to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

Noted that questions not received a response from Inspector
following the last meeting.

Resolved that: the minutes of the meeting held on 16th
November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

6 **YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2023/24**

Paul Axon (Chief Executive Officer) and Kelly Rennie
(Operations Manager) both from Positive Steps presented a
statutory report, which had been approved nationally by the
Youth Justice Board about the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24.
Which was presented to the Scrutiny Board over the delegated
responsibility and service provisions provided by Youth Justice.

An overview was provided to members about what Youth Justice Services do and what the main objectives are for Positive Steps, these were the following:

- Reducing the number of first- time entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice service
- Reducing re-offending by children subject to statutory Court Orders or Out of
- Court Disposals
- Reducing the use of custody for Children

While additionally:

- Effectively safeguarding the children, we work with
- Effectively protecting the public from harm
- Enhancing the voice and experience of victims of crime committed by children

It was also noted by Members that the vision of Oldham Youth Justice Services is to provide provisions which is the following:

- Child First in its effective partnership approach
- Ambitious and inspirational for the children and families it works with
- Truly collaborative and led by the voice of the child
- Pursuing excellence in governance and leadership
- Achieving outstanding outcomes in inspection programmes

Members were informed about the crime figures around ethnicity. With a discussion taking place around the data and training being conducted by Positive Steps to tackle unconscious biases in the justice system. It was noted that the Youth Justice Services have carried out exercise and training around Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) related issues, even having a serving Police Officer who was currently on secondment undertake diversity and unconscious bias training. It was noted that in general children involved with the Justice System, can have difficult relations with the Police Force, with positive steps trying to encourage one to one session with said Police Officer to try and remove any stigma children using the service may have.

Cllr Colin McLaren raised questions around implementing recommendations on the experience of BAME children within a review, with it being noted by Paul Axon that a review was still currently underway with multi-agency partners, who are aiming to feedback voices to the Youth Justice Board.

It was noted that black and minority ethnic backgrounds are over-represented at all stages of the criminal justice system in Oldham.

Cllr Colin McLaren asked questions concerning prevention and targets that Youth Justice was taking to tackle criminality at a young age. It was noted that an early intervention programme for children who had received no further action taken against them by the Police and Crown Prosecution Services had been

underway with the hopes of being able to help 52 children throughout the year.

Reverend Jean Hurlston asked a question expressing a keen interest to see Youth Justice Services work with families as well as Children, with Kelly Rennie informing members that caseworkers will work with children and families in a two-sided attempt at approaching a child's circumstance and understanding their family background.

There was a discussion around the training being provided for Speech and Language Therapy as well as Neurodiversity training. The Chair felt strongly that if early intervention in life can be carried out for speech and language, it could stop issues later in life. It was also noted that as well as training, counselling sessions are being offered to youths to discuss any issues which may affect them, as well as Nurse Health assessments and Specialist Education such as allowing children to be Park Rangers.

Cllr Helen Bishop asked if the re-offending rates on Page 21 of the agenda pack needed updating. Cllr Helen Bishop was informed, that the data on page 21, were the most up to date data on the reoffending rates on Oldham.

Members noted the success story around re-offending rates, with Oldham being reported as having one of the lowest re-offending rates nationally.

Resolved: That the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 be noted.

7

OLDHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered and discussed the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 1 April 2022- 31 March 2023. The report was presented by Dr Henri Giller the Independent Chair of the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership.

It was noted by Dr Henri Giller for additional context that report covered the second year of a three-year strategy, which had been developed by Oldham Council, Greater Manchester Police, and the Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group. To guarantee that all children and young people in the area receive protection and safeguarding.

Members noted the key strategic aims which were the following:

- Excellent practice is the norm across all practitioners in Oldham
- Partner agencies hold one another to account effectively
- There is early identification of new safeguarding issues
- Learning is promoted and embedded
- Information is shared effectively
- The public feel confident that children are protected

Members also noted that performances have continued to be scrutinised and monitored by the Partnership Performance Management group. Data presented showed that contact to MASH was at 29,647, contacts converted to referrals was 5,372, 2906 s47 enquires initiated, 543 children looked after as of March 2023, 507 children on child protection as of March 2023 and 273 children electively home educated.

Members noted safeguarding priorities for 2022-23, with the Partnerships five priority areas for that year being Neglect, complex and contextual safeguarding, domestic abuse, children's mental health and the impact of trauma and transitions. It was further explained that the Partnership had undergone specific developments on modern slavery and the contextual safeguarding around the topic.

Members noted the role of independent Scrutiny within the partnership with there being provisions carried out by an independent person who assesses the effectiveness of the arrangements which had been enacted. It was noted that whole relevant agencies are working with the Safeguarding Partnership, Oldham had faced continued difficulties in staffing across the different partner agencies within April 2022- March 2023. It was further explained that between partnership agencies quality assurance and information sharing is a standard practise, as well as across partnership agency training developments designed to prioritise safeguarding concerns which had been identified.

Members noted that the demand in terms of contact received was significant, with there being 1,200 active cases. It was further explained that Oldham are receiving significant more contact than neighbouring authorities, however it was noted that this does not translate into an increase in referrals being made.

It was expected that the demand placed on Children's Safeguarding Services would continue to grow, with Dr Henri Giller stating that Partnership Agencies would agree on the increase in demand. A suggested solution to slow down increase demand, was earlier intervention strategies.

Cllr Lucia Rea stated that for strategic aims, the Safeguarding team should promote and raise awareness around safeguarding issues through increased advertising, to increase public awareness. It was further stated that schoolwork, around identifying signs and symptoms would be vital, with effective communication being key to safeguarding risks.

Cllr Colin McLaren asked how the safeguarding team are "strengthening the transitional safeguarding offer" from page 62 of the report. It was confirmed that Children's Safeguarding Services are collaborating with multiagency partners work around 'positive steps' in terms of CSE's whole team working around this issue.

It was further explained that youth violence is a joint targeted area of inspection amongst multiagency partners, with Mind Authority initiatives having completed a report on youth violence.

Questions were raised by members concerning provisions if a child have been exploited for criminal intent, with Dr Henri Giller stating that progress had been made to support children who had been exploited instead of prosecuting them.

Cllr Helen Bishop commented on the issue of young men/boys who had been victims of exploitation are less likely to come forward and share with the appropriate authorities their experience. It was noted that there are gender issues within the topic of exploitation, with authorities and partners dedicated to different initiatives to encourage those to who have been victims to speak up.

Resolved that the Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report be noted.

8

RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL AREA INSPECTION ON SUPPORT AND PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND)

Matthew Bulmer (Director for Education) presented the 'Response to the Local area inspection on support and provision for Children and Young people who have special education needs and/ or disabilities (SEND)' to the Scrutiny Board.

Members noted that a joint Ofsted/CQC area SEND inspection of the Oldham partnership had taken place in June 2023. Following the Conclusion of the Inspection the Managing director of Children and Young People for Oldham Council along with the Chief Executive for the Integrated Care Board were informed that the Inspection report had found Oldham Partnership to be inadequate.

Members noted improving government structures was taking place, with a Local Inclusion Partnership Executive Board having been set up. The aim of the partnership board was to bring together key statutory partners including the Oldham MBC, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board and system partners. To set up an evidenced based local inclusion plan in setting out how the needs for young people and children are delivered in line with the national standards.

Members noted Service Improvements within section 5 of the report. It was discussed that several PAP actions have been completed, a joint area data dashboard had been developed and a speech and language therapy recovery plan had been developed.

Councillor Colin McLaren said that they were pleased to see steps were being taken to address the inadequate outcome of the inspection report and wished to see how the journey will be and what the focus and objectives will be.

Matthew Bulmer said that tackling issues around school age children receiving a SEN report was a priority, with there being 45,000 children and only 3% having an education plan. It was also said that reducing the waiting list for speech and language therapy was an objective, with 1,800 being on a waiting list at the current time. In addition, new governance structures such as the Partnership Executive Board should help with meeting objectives, being provided with comprehensive data and meeting regularly every quarterly.

Councillor Colin McLaren said that he wished to see the steps taken to address staffing issues.

Matthew Bulmer in response stated that demand on the system is at all-time high, with Oldham Council having the statutory duty to provide provisions and support children with SEN needs. It was explained that significant additional resources have been used in Oldham at Oldham Council within the value 11 million pounds.

Reverend Jean Hurlston asked a question concerning sustainability and 'balancing the books', and if the increase in demand on the service was down to more children having disabilities.

Matthew Bulmer responded that Covid had played a huge part in increasing demand on the service, especially in younger children. It was also stated that in general there had been an inherent increase in the complex demand on the system. With there being a stigma around parents not trusting the system, with additional support being needed to upskill the workforce to deal with growing demand. However, it was noted that this would require more money from central government.

Councillor Maggie Hurley asked what other improvements had been made apart from Speech and Language.

Matthew Bulmer responded that there had been improvements around other neurodevelopment issues, with an integrated team who work with children who have mental health issues through a commissioned service. More however can be done in mainstream settings, but speech and language are a majorly targeted issue.

Councillor Maggie Hurley asked how many children are waiting for a Child Health Plan Plus since the inspection?

Matthew Bulmer stated that they were unsure of the figure and would provide an answer outside of the meeting.

Members were concerned about how many people are having to wait to receive access to Speech and Language therapy, with Matthew Bulmer informing members that work is being conducted with Partners to stop the waiting list rise above 1,800.

Councillor Lucia Rea asked how the figures compare nationally to neighbouring authorities.

Matthew Bulmer answered that given social issues, poverty and lack of parents having information about services the overall SEND needs are higher nationally and regionally.

Chair requested an update in six months' time (July) on the progress made for the next inspection.

Resolved that: Scrutiny Board provided a response to the Local area inspection on support and provision for Children and Young people who have special education needs and/ or disabilities (SEND).

9 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Update provided by the Chair, additional update in June 2024 requested over operation Sherwood.

Item 3 and 4 of the work Programme to be a workshop.

Resolved that: the Work Programme be approved.

10 **KEY DECISION DOCUMENT**

Upgrade and Refurbish of Spring Meadows, Stanley Road, Shaw and Medlock Children's Centre.

The Urgency of this matter is due to:

- 1) The decision is needed to deliver a comprehensive refurbishment programme to meet the Family Hub Programme timescales agreed with the Department of Education as part of the requirements of the Family Hub grant and the local Family Hub Board.
- 2) The decision cannot wait until the end of the call-in period because it will delay the start of the programme plan, specifically delaying confirmation of contractors being on site in the first Family Hub on the 15 January as planned with both the contractors and children's centre staff.

11 **RULE 13 AND 14**

The Chair noted that there was no update on rule 13 and 14.

The meeting started at 18:00pm and ended at 20:00pm.

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