



Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held via Zoom on Thursday, 27th August, 2020 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Mr P Ainsley (Chairman)
Mr N Begy
Mr K Bool
Mrs J Burrows
Mr R Coleman
Mrs S Harvey
Mrs S Webb
Mr Peter French

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mrs D Godfrey Interim Director for Children's Services
Ms S Logue Health and Wellbeing Officer/Children's Services Support Officer
Mrs J Morley Governance Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Wilby Portfolio Holder for Children's services and Education
Miss G Waller Councillor
Mr M Oxley Councillor
Mr A Walters Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding – Adults, Public Health, Health Commissioning and Community Safety

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Menzies, educational co-opted member.

2 RECORD OF MEETING

The record of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2020 was confirmed as correct.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

5 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions with notice had been received from Members.

6 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

7 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Webb was nominated for the position of Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee by Councillor Burrows and this was seconded by Councillor Harvey. Councillor Webb gave a short speech to Members outlining her suitability for the role and there being no other nominations, a vote was taken and a unanimous vote for Councillor Webb was given.

8 OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Report No.101/2020 was received from the Interim Director for Children's Services.

The purpose of the report was to inform the Committee on the actions taken in response to the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted and their progress, including the governance of the improvement plan. The Committee was further invited to share their views on any areas where they felt progress was slower than expected and how these might be mitigated.

As a prelude to discussion on the report, two young people representatives spoke to the Committee about their experience of the Ofsted process and how they felt being interviewed by the inspectors.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Councillor Wilby also gave a short introduction in which he emphasised that since the Ofsted report a huge amount of work had gone into improving the service including a change of management structure and processes to embed the new culture.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The young people who met with Ofsted would have preferred individual interviews because of the sensitive nature of the questioning which centred on their life stories. A group session should have been used only at the end to answer more generic questions.
- Some of the terminology used by the Ofsted inspectors had not been understood.
- The young people felt that if the answers they gave were not what was expected, then the inspectors continued to probe which left the young people feeling they had not been properly listened to.

- Overall those involved with the Ofsted interviews felt that the experience had been a negative one.

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The Chairman thanked the young people for their insights and echoed Councillors' comments that these should be shared with Ofsted. The young people then left the meeting and did not return.

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- Mrs Godfrey, Interim Director of Children's Services, confirmed that Ofsted were satisfied with the improvement plan that had been submitted to address the findings of the inspections.
- The Plan's main focus was on taking a new approach to the governance of improvement and this had included the setting up of the Children's Services Improvement Board which reported directly to Cabinet on the progress being made.
- Management oversight and decision making underpinned all good practice and the importance of this was again emphasised by Mrs Godfrey.
- From the 1 September there would be an entirely new and permanent front line management team.
- The culture change had been made more challenging as straight after the Ofsted inspection the Council had gone into lockdown which had inhibited the pace of change. However there was now a golden opportunity to progress with the introduction of the new management team and more people moving back into the office.
- Management was not yet fully satisfied that all care plans were good enough but they were confident they would get there.
- The quality of pathway plans for care leavers had improved and more work had been done in conjunction with care leavers to achieve this.
- Signs of Safety was the preferred model of practice. It had been adopted by Rutland several years ago but had never been properly embedded. This was being addressed by an on-going programme of training and learning.
- The tracker shown as Appendix B highlighted progress that had been made but it was crucial that this progress was sustained in order that the Children's Services could be consistently good. The key to achieving this was effective workforce planning with good and stable staff.
- Managers were supervising social workers in a more structured and regular way which was important as when it didn't occur, social workers felt unsafe and unclear on practice standards. Continuous professional development was now mandatory across the board which gave confidence that there would be a more stable workforce than there had been previously.
- Councillor Wilby, the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Education offered to report back to the Committee in a few months on how the staffing changes had impacted on the service.
- All team managers had been, or were going, on the First Line management training programme which was a very well recognised national programme. More senior managers were also enrolled on Signs of Safety training courses.
- In response to a question from Councillor Begy, Mrs Godfrey confirmed that staff had been trained on the Liquid Logic system but that the service was looking into the system further because there was more that it could do for them.

- It wasn't possible to review 100% of cases but there was a deep dive review of approximately 10 cases a month. Data had been used more effectively to help improve quality.
- Mr French, educational co-opted member, cited Sandwell Council as an example of where a culture change around the wellbeing of staff had helped them to retain social workers, and asked whether this approach had been considered by RCC. Mrs Godfrey responded that much thought had gone into ensuring staff wellbeing, especially during the current Covid crisis where being absent from the office could make staff feel isolated. Alongside the increase in management supervision, Mrs Godfrey also regularly spent a half day undertaking a 'step into my shoes' exercise where she shadowed staff and got an unfiltered, 'straight from the horse's mouth' view of issues within the service and how the staff were feeling.
- There were ongoing discussions on plans to bring people back together in the office which would be especially helpful for the student social workers who were now working alongside the team. Outdoor team meetings and staff picnics had also been organised.
- Culture change had also been embedded by practices such as being very clear about the standards required, leading by example and celebrating good practice such as staff nominating each other for a star of the month award.
- It was likely that the next full inspection by Ofsted would be in 2023. The service was, however, expecting a focussed visit that would look at a particular area of practice, at some point in 2021.
- Following a question from Councillor Oxley regarding young people leaving care and the options available to them, Mrs Godfrey stressed that the Council wished to increase the number of children who benefitted from 'Staying Put' arrangements whereby young people remained with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday. A campaign was planned to recruit more foster carers to achieve this goal. In addition an affordable housing review was being planned which would link into work on young people leaving care and in need of housing support.

RESOLVED:

1. That in January the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Education will provide an update on the impact of the changes being made to the staffing structure within Children's Services.
2. That a formal response from the scrutiny committee be fed-in to Ofsted through the 'annual conversation' process that takes places between Ofsted and RCC. The wording of such to be agreed by the committee at a later date but which reflects the comments of the young people who gave evidence to the committee of their experience being interviewed by Ofsted. This to include their preference for individual interviews instead of a group session and avoidance of terminology that was not known or understood.

9 ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2020-21

The Committee discussed items that had been provisionally included in the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee work programme for the municipal year 2020-2021.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The Committee had requested an additional meeting in the first term to review Rutland schools' responses to Covid 19 and the factors affecting the wellbeing and resilience of our young people. Mrs Godfrey commented that it would be better timing to hold this meeting in the Spring when much more data would be available and schools would be in a position to effectively feed into the report and any analysis.
- Councillor Begy had concerns that time was moving on and children had mock exams in January that could be affected.
- Councillor Burrows was particularly concerned about the effect that disrupted schooling had had for vulnerable children but was reassured by Mrs Godfrey that the work of the Childrens Improvement Board allowed the department to capture any immediate concerns about individual children.
- The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Education would provide the Committee with the expected and actual numbers of children starting back at school.

RESOLVED:

That the draft annual work plan as attached be **APPROVED** subject to an option to review and add the item on Rutland Schools' response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the factors affecting the wellbeing and resilience of our young people, to the November, rather than March meeting.

10 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no other urgent business.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would be held on Thursday 26 November 2020 at 7pm.

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00pm

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