

6 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

7 PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A presentation (appended to the minutes) on the development of a new Participation and Engagement Strategy was received from John Herbert, Participation and Engagement Lead Officer. As a prelude to the presentation Bethany and Sheetal from the Participation Group spoke to Members about the work of the group.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The young people had received information about the Care Leavers' Offer through staff.
- The Plans put in place for young people were considered a good offer and members of the participation group who had moved out of area felt that Rutland offered more than other places.
- In response to a question from the Chair, the young people felt that their views had been listened to and that they had had the opportunity to feed into the New Care Leavers' Offer.

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The Chair thanked the young people for their contribution to the discussion. The young people then left the meeting and did not return.

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- The Care Leavers' Offer was a statutory requirement and Rutland's new Care Leavers' Offer would be published next week.
- Over 20 Care Leavers had fed into the consultation meetings and their views and experiences had in turn fed into the new Offer.
- The MyView App for Children Looked After (CLA) would be enhanced and extended for use by Care Leavers and could be used, for example, for questionnaires so that the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) could be better prepared before reviews.
- Children and young people would be involved in developing new features for the next version of the MyView app.
- Having sought the views of young people, the Independent Advocacy Service now employed two models; issues based, as some children wanted to speak to people they did not know so that advice was impartial, and relationship based where children were reassured by speaking to individuals they had an existing relationship with.
- A steering group was being set up to plan an awards ceremony to highlight some of the amazing achievements of young people.
- Children's Services had registered with ASDAN, the National Qualifications Awarding Body to offer qualifications and talents training for CLA, Care Leavers, Service families and those using Youth Services.
- Officers had worked closely with service families and were looking to develop a 'Local Offer' type database for them with information, advice, resources and activities.

- The new strategy was welcomed by Councillor Harvey who was reassured that the children's voice was being heard throughout.
- Councillor Razzell, as the Armed Forces Champion was particularly pleased to see engagement with service families.
- Councillor Begy asked how officers reached the whole teenage demographic not just care leavers. Mr Herbert cited the Youth Council and work with schools to find out what young people wanted. In addition the youth engagement team were very good at doing outreach work, going out on the streets to understand what young people needed and what they were interested in. Capacity of the team was however somewhat limited as it consisted of just two full time equivalent youth workers.
- Future iterations of the MyView app would cater for all children but Mr Herbert recognised that there needed to be engagement on all different sorts of social media platforms.
- The signs of safety practice model used by Children's Services was about asking questions of the whole family as well as of other involved parties such as religious groups or the police and helped to ensure the most vulnerable children were helped.
- Mr Herbert was conducting an audit with all teams to see how they were recording feedback, where they were storing it and how often they analysed it. Use of this data would help to develop services.
- Having been asked what success looked like to him, the Participation and Engagement Lead officer responded that it was young people being involved, and inputting to and directing projects so that they were co-produced. Any product or service was better if the users were involved in its design and development. There were however certain criteria set according to the budget available.
- The Director of Children's Services was far more ambitious for the new Strategy and was not satisfied with the existing level 3 target. The department wanted level 4, pushing for level 5. Mr Herbert's role had not existed previously but was created and recruited to in order to achieve this aim.
- The Chair requested that six monthly reports on the success of the new Strategy be fed back into Scrutiny.

8 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A verbal update on the Children's Services Improvement Plan was received from Dawn Godfrey, Director of Children's Services.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Two independent social care consultants had been commissioned to sense check the department's own assessments of the risk areas highlighted by Ofsted.
- As a positive it was obvious to reviewers that the voice of the child was being heard and that social workers knew their children well. However on the negative side the recording of the children's views was through the filter of the professional. A key area of focus therefore would be on the co-production of plans rather than writing them for the child. The development of the MyApp would help with this.
- Reviewers found that Child Protection Plans were very detailed, too much so in some cases which over complicated things. It was recommended that Plans should be more dynamic and not remain static.
- Recent work had shown an improvement in the quality of assessments. This had been accompanied by a drop in timeliness however as managers would not sign

off on the assessments unless they met the required standard. Ms Godfrey felt this was an acceptable trade-off and would prefer quality assessments over hitting timescales which had, in the event, only dropped slightly, from 90% to 86%

- The perennial issue that the department faced was the quality of its management oversight which had been exacerbated by workforce stability. A new structure was being put in place which would give CLA the high level of support they needed. Going forward there would be one team for children in need and Child protection cases and another team solely for CLA and care leavers which would enable staff to give children more attention.
- Much more emphasis was being placed on in-house fostering recruitment with a separate fostering team manager being focused on this.
- Morale had increased amongst social workers who had felt safer and more supported since the new team leaders had been in place.
- Although there had been a significant amount of workforce 'churn', the service should be fully permanently staffed by March of next year. This would mean that agency social workers could be let go, although one would be retained to continue covering maternity leave.
- Councillor Webb had previously asked a question about how many complaints the service had received. Last year during quarters 1 and 2 (April to September) the whole of children's services had received 13 complaints; this year during the same period there had only been 3 which was remarkable and a reflection of the hard work done by the team. In addition, of last years' complaints 6 had been stage 2 complaints compared with 3 this year. None had been fully upheld.
- There had been a downturn in the number of compliments received during the same period; down from 20 to 14, however in October there had already been 7 received.
- The annual conversation with Ofsted in January was not a formal session but would be used by officers to talk through their self-assessment.
- A formal focused visit by Ofsted was expected in March but focused visits do not result in a graded judgement. Another inspection was usual in 3 years' time and the department was absolutely clear that it expected to receive an improved graded judgement at this time. Although there was still a lot of work to do to move the service from the bottom half of the 'requires improvement' spectrum into the 'good' band, Ms Godfrey felt that progress had been made.
- There were several initiatives across the services to support staff wellbeing but another facet of support was having workloads that felt manageable so that stress levels could be reduced. A recent scoping report on caseloads across the East Midlands found that Rutland had the lowest level.

9 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The chair notified the Committee of two items of business that he wished to raise.

1. In response to an email that had been sent to members, the Chair reminded the Committee that the constitution, and in particular Procedure Rule 93, prohibited them from responding on any matter where there was a right of appeal to a tribunal and that it would not be appropriate for scrutiny to get involved in individual cases. However, as was so often the case, the concerns raised had stimulated a wider line of enquiry, such as the number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) cases that went to tribunal and the need for legal representation at tribunal. The Chair therefore invited Ms Godfrey to make a statement regarding the issue of SEN tribunals and her response is outlined below:

Following concerns raised by some members in regards to SEN tribunal numbers in Rutland, the following information seeks to reassure Committee members about the quantity and context of these.

- i. The numbers of complaints regarding Children's SEND service in the last **two** years up to October 2020 was **6**.*

Such complaints are dealt with at SEND service level, utilising the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy and process. The first stage in this process will be to provide a service response, as matters pertaining to the SEND Code of Practice will determine this first level response. These complaints contain confidential information and are not discussed at the Children's Scrutiny Committee as Childrens Scrutiny Committee would not be the appropriate forum to discuss individual complaints.

- ii. **13** SEND cases have been brought to the SEND Tribunal in the last **two** years. The nature of these cases is as follows:*

- Parental appeal against RCC's decision not to assess a child.*
- Parental appeal against RCC's decision not to issue an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan.*
- Parental appeal against Sections of the EHC Plan.*

*There are **5** SEND cases currently in Appeal, with an outcome yet to be reached.*

- iii. The outcome of the cases which went to Tribunal in the last **two** years is as follows:*

- 5 cases - Conceded prior to Tribunal Hearing.*
- 5 cases - Agreement reached prior to Tribunal Hearing.*
- 2 cases - Local Authority position upheld at Tribunal.*
- 1 case – Tribunal directed amendment to EHC Plan.*

Ms Godfrey also added that the service was reviewing its use of legal representation at tribunals. SEN officers were trained in appeals and were very skilled but they were not used to the legal arena. There was also a potential organisational risk if a case went to full tribunal hearing and that was why legal representation was used in these circumstances.

2. The second issue raised by the Chair concerned the CQC "Review of Health Services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding Rutland" which had identified a number of issues. Health colleagues had presented on this report at the meeting in February however the action plans to address the highlighted issues were only received last week.

After discussion at the Committee's pre-meet there was strong feeling that there was not enough information supplied on the actions taken and that there were still some outstanding concerns that the Committee would like to see addressed. The Chair therefore proposed that Health colleagues be invited back, this time to a joint meeting with Adults and Health Scrutiny, to further discuss the issue.

The Chairs of the respective committees felt that a joint meeting was necessary

because although children's welfare came under the Children's scrutiny committee, children's health was included within the Health Scrutiny's remit and therefore it was an overlapping issue.

Councillor Webb seconded the proposal and a vote was taken. The result was unanimously in favour.

AGREED:

That a joint meeting of the Children and Young People and the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee be arranged in the New Year to discuss the action plans stemming from the CQC "Review of Health Services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding Rutland". Date to be advised.

10 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 28 January 2021: Scrutiny of the Budget – Joint meeting with Adults & Health Scrutiny Committee

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30pm

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Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

John Herbert

Participation and Engagement Lead Officer

Care Leavers Participation group

Care Leavers offer

- Over 20 Care leavers have fed into the consultation meetings designed to gain the views and experiences of young people.
- The needs identified in these meetings have been collected and responses in terms of actions and resources have been discussed.
- [∞] Housing, Education, Citizenship, Mental health support, Finance are all issues where the young people have identified they feel they need more support.
- The new Offer to care leavers has been written with them in partnership. It is in the final stages of production before being signed off before Christmas.

What is Participation and Engagement?

Why is it important?

- Participation and engagement is about ensuring that CYPF (Children, Young People and Families) are involved in decision making processes on issues which affect them and that their views are heard, seriously considered, appropriately acted on and fed back as a key part of developing and improving services.
- This is vital in an era of limited resources and increasing external scrutiny. This must be embedded in practice. It will result in fresh perspectives and new ideas, services designed and delivered based on actual rather than perceived needs and assumptions and service users feeling valued and respected.

Other projects being worked on now

- MyView App for Children Looked After (CLA). Designed and developed in cooperation with CLA. Improved communication with Social workers plus interactive features, information and advice. Next iteration will be for Care leavers.
- Independent Advocacy Service
New service for all children and young people aged 0-25. Series of workshops helped identify what was needed. Two models employed: Issues based and Relationship based advocacy. 0800 number in place.
- Young people involved in the Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation Rutland Youth Council, Rutland Disabled Youth Forum and young people reached through outreach provided feedback.

Future projects

- Awards ceremony, Peer mentoring and new Pledge projects developed in partnership with CLA and Care leavers will increase confidence, resilience, skills and empowerment. (short term)
- We have registered with ASDAN, the National Qualifications Awarding Body, to offer qualifications and talents training for CLA, Care leavers, Service families and those using Youth services to improve skills base and employability. Involving local businesses in this work. (short term)
- Closer working with Service families designing a 'Local Offer' type database of information, advice, resources and activities. (medium term)
- Review childcare sufficiency offers with parents to ensure market is meeting parental requirements. (medium term)
- Developing links with Schools and School councils to drive forward community cohesion. (long term)

How will we know it has worked?

- Increased educational achievements and engagement in positive activities of CLA.
- Engagement with employers and organisations including Rotary, Lions, Inner Wheel, Chamber of commerce to support all the young people we work with. Careers help and more Apprenticeships.
- Growth of membership of children and young people's groups.
- Greater engagement with parents from early years through to adult.
- Continued partnership working with school councils and support for students/teachers to join engagement groups.
- Better rates of completion and higher satisfaction ratings in Pledge surveys for both CLA and Care leavers.

Questions?

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John Herbert

Participation and Engagement Officer

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