

## **Minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee Meeting held on 6 March 2017**

Present: John Francis (Chairman)

### **Attendance**

Maureen Compton	Robert Marshall
Mike Davies	Christine Mitchell
Terry Finn	Mark Olszewski
Bob Fraser	David Williams (Vice-Chairman)

**Also in attendance:** Mark Sutton and Alan White

**Apologies:** Sandra Hambleton

### **PART ONE**

#### **41. Declarations of Interest**

There were none on this occasion.

#### **42. Minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee held on 16 January 2017**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee held on 16 January 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **43. Missing Persons**

The Select Committee considered details of the missing person's service. This service conducted independent return interviews for missing and absent children and young people aged up to 18 years residing in Staffordshire (including young people placed in Staffordshire from other local authorities (LAs)). The interview was designed to uncover information that helped children from risk of going missing again and from the risks they may have been exposed to whilst missing or from risks in their home. The information gathered during interviews was shared with the LA and the Police and supported these professionals in working with the young person to build a comprehensive picture of the reasons behind the missing episode and potential risk factors.

Members heard that under section 13 of the Children Act 2004, Staffordshire, along with its statutory partners (police, health and education) were required to have in place arrangements to ensure that all statutory functions were discharged to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This included planning to prevent children from going missing, including assessing the risks, analysing data for patterns and trends associated with particular concerns and risks and taking proactive approaches to the reduction of missing episodes and the protection of children when they go missing. Staffordshire had

joined up arrangements with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to ensure missing processes and procedures were aligned.

In Stoke-on-Trent, Moorlands and Stafford the Brighter Futures service was commissioned to deliver services to children and young people who were at risk of child sexual exploitation, being exploited and recovering from exploitation. This service also provided independent return interviews for all children and young people who go missing or absent whether from home or care settings. Families First continued to deliver services to children in the remaining five districts through their own missing children support workers. Staffordshire was in the process of commissioning an independent child sexual exploitation and missing service across the whole county. This was currently out to tender and was expected to go live by September 2017.

The Select Committee asked how this new county wide service would interact with existing services and were informed that there would be a three month mobilisation period whilst the new contact was embedded, to ensure that it complemented systems currently in place and to ensure strong governance arrangements were also in place.

A performance and quality assurance framework had been designed, giving monthly and quarterly reports which gave insight into missing indicators and the level of need and vulnerability. Members received the quarter 1 and 2 2016/17 report and details of the key headlines from these reports. They noted that during this period Police had reported incidents of missing young people remaining stable with 925 missing incidents and 356 reported as absent. They also noted that the majority of incidents had been in the North of the County and were informed that there were more independent residential units in this part of the County which may account for the prevalence. It was also noted that improved reporting may have led to the increase.

Members were informed that whilst most young people who went missing were found the same day, 15% were not and they sought clarification on the length of time individuals were missing. In some instances this was overnight with individuals often staying with friends. Members heard of a recent incident where an individual had been missing from their foster placement for a four day period. There had been two cases where a young person had not been found and these had been two unaccompanied asylum seekers who it was believed had been trafficked.

The quarter figures had shown that for 10 individuals possible CSE was recorded as a reason for going missing. On questioning this Members heard that where a young person was vulnerable to CSE because of the individuals they were mixing with or the areas where they spent their time, possible CSE would be highlighted on their file to ensure the CSE Managers became involved in their care plan and part of the discussion around any missing episode. The figure did not reflect those individuals who had suffered CSE, rather those who were particularly vulnerable and therefore risk assessments around CSE were required. Where real concern existed, based on the risk matrix for CSE, then a multi-agency plan would be put in place to address the issues identified, which could include finding an alternative placement.

19% of young people had not received an interview during the reported quarter and Members sought clarification for this. Young people could simply choose not to engage with the interview and/or walk out. Members were reminded that one third of the

missing episodes were from young people placed in Staffordshire by other LAs, for example Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Sandwell. The young people may have been interviewed by their home authority social worker. Young people entering the care system were placed dependent on what was appropriate for their needs and the availability of appropriate placements. In some circumstances the individual was better placed outside their home County. Where young people are placed in neighbouring authorities their home authority remained responsible for their care, however the residential unit authority would be responsible for their missing person interview. There was no requirement for a LA to seek permission to place a child in residential care with them, however LAs were expected to notify the host LA of the placement. Staffordshire had developed a more detailed notification set of data which they felt would help inform host LAs more effectively. They had also written to LAs asking for the same level of detail to support any young person being placed in a Staffordshire residential unit.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted and the proactive measures in place to reduce missing episodes and protect children when they go missing be supported.

#### **44. Adult Social Care Market Failure Policy**

The County Council contracted for adult social care services for older people, people with long term conditions, people with a physical impairment, people with a learning disability and people with mental health needs. In line with the duties placed on the Council under the Care Act 2014, the Council leads responses to provider failure in this market. The procedure for undertaking such responses had been reviewed, with the operational processes for responding to market failure have been strengthened. The Select Committee received a copy of the revised procedure.

A summary of provider failure in the last 12 months showed eight provider failures in adult social care resulting in closure. Of these seven were in residential care affecting 140 beds with 92 service users requiring alternative provision and five failures in nursing care affecting 219 beds with 137 service users requiring alternative provision (four providers being both nursing and residential care providers). There had also been one care home closure. In addition there had been seven home care provider failure events where five or more care packages were handed back. During these events Members heard that the Council's Quality Assurance Team co-ordinated the Council's response, liaising with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Care Quality Commission (CQC) and SSoTP who had the lead role for reviewing and sourcing alternative placements.

The Select Committee asked what lessons had been learnt from these market failure events. In most market failure instances the failure had been due to a discrete set of circumstances, with no standard failure rationale. However where lessons could be taken from the individual situations these helped to inform the market failure policy going forward.

Members queried how alternative provision was found when provider failure events occurred and in view of the home care provider failure, whether the market was currently able to offer the right provision. The strains on the market were recognised with work being undertaken to address these, although the Cabinet Member (Health, Care & Wellbeing) acknowledged that the market was not currently able to consistently offer the provision required.

In general failure was due to either quality, or finances. In cases of care quality, awareness was usually raised following a routine inspection by either the CQC or the Council or following concerns raised by service users and/or their family. In other cases providers took the view that they were unable to maintain their business model within the budget allocation and therefore informed the Council of their cessation of provision. In both instances the Council would respond by finding alternative appropriate provision.

The Select Committee noted that the Council was able to charge for the actual costs incurred of temporarily meeting the adult service users' needs by providing alternative care or support, in line with the Council's Fairer Charging policy. In line with the Care Act the Council was able to continue to charge towards the care provided, however the charge would not exceed that charged prior to the market failure event during any interim placement and would then be reviewed once a new long term placement was agreed.

Members received details of the process followed when a market provider failure occurred. They also noted the proactive work undertaken throughout this area of work, including weekly contact with providers to assess capacity and work with providers to continually improve quality.

The ageing population (which would typically require greater levels of care), reduction in real terms of the budget available to meet care needs and the increase in the cost of care presented a huge challenge. This was a problem nationally and it was necessary to try and influence both the volume and price of care. To do this there was a need to work towards preventing, reducing and delaying individuals going into residential care whilst reducing the care costs by enhancing the market place. A zone model which was outcome based was expected to enhance the home care provider market.

**RESOLVED** - That the current levels in market failure be noted and the reviewed Adult Social Care Market Failure Procedures be endorsed.

#### **45. Executive Response to Preventing the Low Level Neglect of Children in Staffordshire**

The Select Committee had set up a working group to consider low level neglect, with the focus of their work being early identification of signs of neglect in children under five and its prevention by addressing risk factors and prompting good parenting. The Working Group's final report, Preventing Low Level Neglect of Children in Staffordshire, had been considered at the Select Committee meeting of 8 June 2016. At their 8 July 2016 meeting the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People had indicated that most of the recommendations made in the report were being addressed as part of the Children, Young People and Families Transformation Programme. The Select Committee now considered the formal Executive response to the Working Group Final Report.

The Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) thanked the Working group for their timely report and informed the Select Committee that he had been happy to accept their recommendations. A directory of services had been included as an appendix to the Executive Response and Members heard that as some services were in transition this

directory would need to be updated. A place based approach to future directories would help ensure a robust set of information.

Members noted Recommendation 6, and asked whether the letter had been sent to schools. The letter had been drafted however it was awaiting information on supporting young carers, alongside links to the directory requested at Recommendation 5, as part of the wider county communications policy with schools. Work was being undertaken to engage with schools strategically rather than in an ad hoc manner so that they were able to understand the wider council plans and what was expected from them. The schools landscape had changed and become more diverse and there was a need to understand their challenges to work effectively. Those schools who had been involved with the South Staffordshire pilot projects had actively engaged and it was hoped that this work could be rolled out across all Staffordshire schools in the future.

Members were aware of the proposed new 0-19 whole system, combining the work previously undertaken from 0-5 by health visitors and by school nurses. This was a more effective way of using the resources available, with non mandatory services being targeted at the areas in most need of support, particularly around good parenting and unnecessary visits reduced. Members heard of the success of the Think2 project. New ways of supporting parents and families were being developed, including volunteer peer led work through Children Centres.

**RESOLVED – That:**

- a) the Executive response to the Select Committee’s Working Group final report on Preventing Low Level Neglect of Children in Staffordshire be noted; and
- b) that progress to date be noted and a further update be provided to the Select Committee in six month’s time.

**46. Staffs Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) Annual Report 15/16**

Mr John Wood, Chairman of the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) presented his annual report to the Select Committee which outlined progress made. The Select Committee had considered their last annual report at its meeting of 14 December 2015. They now received the SSCB Annual Report 2015/16 which outlined activity by the Board during that period.

The SSBC was the key statutory mechanism that brought together representatives from each of the main agencies and professionals responsible for promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people. Members heard that since the last annual report the SSCB had made considerable progress on a wide range of objectives through effective local partnership working.

Members raised a number of queries in respect of Police activity that the Commissioner for Safety agreed to bring further information on from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), including:

- how many convictions resulted from the 108 persons arrested and processed for CSE offences in Staffordshire Force area between July 2015 and 31 March 2016;
- the capacity of the Force in respect of Operation Liberty; and
- the new domestic abuse prevention pilot Perpetrator programme funded by the OPCC.

The Select Committee noted the figures for risk assessments Staffordshire Police carried out for domestic abuse incidents. The Staffordshire MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) activity figures indicated that some incidents were by repeat offenders and Members were informed that any such repeat offender would normally be in the MARAC process. Members felt it would be useful to receive a MARAC case study as an example of this process. Domestic abuse had increased, with an expectation that this would continue to rise. This was partly due to an increase in confidence in reporting such incidents and expectations of how such reports would be received. Members were aware that children growing up in households with domestic abuse often transitioned from victim to abuser as they grew into adulthood. Members were also made aware of the importance of listening to the child and including their feedback in any report addressing the issues. Members asked for details of numbers of convictions for domestic abuse, numbers that resulted in no further action and numbers still under investigation. The Commissioner for Children, Families and Community Safety agreed to provide an anonymised status report.

**RESOLVED** – That;

- a) the report be received, and
- b) MARAC case study examples be brought to a future Select Committee meeting.

#### **47. Work Programme**

The Select Committee noted that:

- this was the last formal meeting for this municipal year; and
- a workshop session had been arranged for Thursday 9 March, 10.00am, to consider the Select Committee's response to the draft Police and Crime Plan which was currently out for consultation.

**RESOLVED** – That the work programme and workshop be noted.

**Chairman**