

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 26th July, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Kolker (Chairman)

Councillors L Brown, S Gardiner, P Hoyland, D Mahon, D Neilson, W Livesley,
G Merry, M Sherratt, B Silvester and McCann

Apologies

Councillors J Clowes, K Edwards

In attendance

Councillors H Gaddum and R Bailey

Officers

Lorraine Butcher	Director of Children's Services
Fintan Bradley	Head of Strategy, Planning & Performance
Mark Bayley	Quality Assurance Manager
Tony Crane	Head of Service, Early Intervention and Prevention
Kate Rose	Principal Children's Safeguarding Manager
Glynis Williams	Safeguarding Manager (Conference and Reviews)
Mark Grimshaw	Scrutiny Officer

75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

76 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2011 be approved
as a correct record.

77 DECLARATION OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None noted.

78 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the Public who wished to address the Committee.

79 ANNUAL ANNOUNCED INSPECTION

Lorraine Butcher, Director of Children's Services, attended to provide an oral brief on the outcomes of the Announced Inspection of the Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements. In providing some key headlines, it was reported that the service had received positive feedback in a number of areas, outlined as follows:

- Quality of case work
- Partnership working
- Significant improvement in educational outcomes for Cared for Children

Ofsted were particularly impressed at the progress that had been made considering the level that services were at when inherited from Cheshire County Council. Lorraine Butcher noted that Cheshire East had not been rated as 'good' due to the fact that an authority needed to show improvement for more than two years to be rated as such; something which was impossible for the newly formed authority. Despite this, the service was confident that a solid base line had been set for further improvements to be made. These were outlined as follows:

- Improving safe care assessments
- The extent to which children and their family's views were taken into account when shaping services.
- Equality and Diversity issues
- Increased availability of care placements in the local area.

The full report would be published on 12 August 2011 and it was suggested that a formal report could be brought to the Committee on 20 September 2011 outlining the findings and subsequent action plan.

RESOLVED – That the Director of Children's Services be requested to submit a report at the next meeting of the Committee outlining the findings of the Announced Inspection and the resulting action plan.

80 CHILDREN & FAMILIES PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mark Bayley, Quality Assurance Manager, attended to the present the year end 2010/11 performance report for the Children and Families Service.

Mark Bayley explained how the previous year had seen a number of changes in the performance reporting landscape, and how the service had had to deal with substantial changes to the National Indicator set in which decisions were made about which measures to keep and those to discard. He reported that a number of new indicator demands had been placed on the service, most of which were difficult to quantify. Lorraine Butcher asserted that the challenge for the service was to move away from a target driven culture to create performance measures that were meaningful and designed to improve life for Cheshire East's children and young people. It was reported that a newly developed scorecard would help in achieving this.

Mark Bayley concluded by saying that it was the aim of the directorate, in terms of performance, to be able to link performance management with changing practice and delivery so that it became a powerful driver of improvement.

A number of comments were made with regards to the difficulty of interpreting the information provided on a number of measures. For instance, it was described how some measures had a 'red' rating yet it appeared that the target had been met. Similarly, it was noted that it would be useful if there was more meaning behind the 'RAG' allocation and if benchmarking information against other authorities was provided. Lorraine Butcher agreed that this information should be provided and the reason why it hadn't been was that the large number and nature of the indicators had made it difficult to provide more nuanced information. It was confirmed that the slimmed down and more focused performance scorecard in development would provide this information.

It was queried whether there would be any implications of schools becoming Academies on the performance of Cheshire East. It was confirmed that there would be implications as most of the Borough's stronger schools were now or becoming Academies.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Children and Families 2010-11 performance paper be received and noted.
- b) That the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the work which has been undertaken in establishing an effective performance reporting system leading to improved outcomes for children and young people.
- c) That the newly developed performance scorecard be brought to the Committee on a quarterly basis for review.

81 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS REPORT 10/11 - ANNUAL REPORT

Kate Rose, Principal Children's Safeguarding Manager and Glynis Williams, Safeguarding Manager, attended the meeting to present the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). It was explained that the IRO had become a statutory role following the implementation of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 in April 2011. This Act set out a number of principles to which the IRO was expected to assess their respective authority against:

- a. Increase scrutiny and oversight of the child's care plan
- b. Increase participation of children and young people and their families
- c. Securing greater stability for children
- d. Care plans must be able to meet court requirements
- e. Clear processes of assessment, care planning, intervention and review to improve experience and outcomes for cared for children.

The report stated Cheshire East's level of compliance with these principles and the actions required if the respective targets had not been met.

The Committee queried why the Cared for Children population in Cheshire East was higher than the national average. It was explained that there was a working

hypothesis that before structural changes had been made to the Child Assessment teams and referral process, children had been skipping a number of interventions and going straight into care unnecessarily. It was reported that since this system redesign the number of children in care had reduced and this trend was expected to continue.

A concern was expressed with regards to the role of the Children's and Adults Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in terms of Cared for Children. It was suggested that an item be added to be work programme to review this in more detail.

A number of comments were made regarding the high quality of the report but it was suggested that in future years it would be useful to have a summary page attached to the main report.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That the recommendations and priorities set out in the report be supported
- c) That it be agreed that the report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board
- d) That in subsequent years, a summary page be provided in addition to the main report.
- e) That a review of the CAMHS service in terms of its relationship with Cared For Children be added to the work programme.

82 CHESHIRE EAST FAMILY SERVICE

Tony Crane, Head of Service, Early Intervention and Prevention, attended to present a report on the Cheshire East Family Service. He described how the implementation of a new Family Service was a response to a range of initiatives and strategies both from recent internal Task and Finish Reviews and national policies.

With this in mind, he reported that a new flexible operational structure had been developed in order to create a service with a defined function and identity.

Whilst agreeing with the principle, The Committee felt it would be useful to see more detail behind the costs and rationale of the newly developed operational structure. It was suggested that this be circulated to Members. It was also suggested that the policy be revisited in six months in order to review its efficacy.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Committee agree to the development of a Cheshire East Family Service and the targeted approach to prevention.

- b) That the costs and rationale of the newly developed operational structure be distributed to Members of the Committee.
- c) That the policy be revisited in six months for review.

83 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members considered the work programme. It was suggested that due to its impact on the 2012/13 Business Planning Process, the review of Home to School Transport should be brought forward in order to align with the relevant timescales. It was also asserted that as the issue not only encompassed Children's policy but also Transport policy it would be appropriate to invite Members of the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee to be involved. Considering the impact on Scrutiny resources it was suggested that the review of Care Leavers be suspended and reconvened after the Home to School review had reported.

RESOLVED –

- a) That a Task and Finish Group looking into Home to School Transport be established and that Members of the Environment & Prosperity Committee be invited to participate.
- b) That the Task and Finish Review on Care Leavers be suspended until the final reporting of the Home to School Transport review.

84 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee gave consideration to the extracts of the forward plan which fell within the remit of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

85 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 1.35 pm and concluded at 3.45 pm

Councillor A Kolker (Chairman)