

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 30TH JANUARY, 2023

Present – Councillors Donaghy (Chairman), Grant (Vice-Chairman), Abdullah, Connor, Finney, McKeon, Murray, Mort, A. Patel (as deputy for Councillor Radcliffe), Rimmer, Sanders, Sherrington and Taylor-Burke.

Co-opted Members

None in Attendance

Also in attendance

Councillor Galloway	-	Executive Cabinet Member – Children's Services
Ms B. Brown	-	Director of Children's Services
Mr I. Walker	-	Assistant Director of Children's Services - Social Care and Early Help
Mr J. Cooke	-	Head of Complex Safeguarding and Youth Justice Team
Ms L. Buckingham	-	Operational Manager Complex Safeguarding Team
Mrs. V. Ridge	-	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hill, McGeown, Priest and Radcliffe and from Reverend Canon Dr Bracegirdle (Co-opted Member)

Councillor Donaghy in the Chair

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved - The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 5th December, 2022 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

18. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Borough Solicitor submitted the Committee Work Programme for 2022/23 which had been formulated following the informal meeting of this Committee held on 29th June, 2022 and which would guide the work of the Committee over the course of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the 2022/23 Committee Work Programme, as now submitted, be noted.

19. YOUTH JUSTICE AND COMPLEX SAFEGUARDING IN BOLTON

Mr Cooke and Ms Buckingham gave a presentation on Youth Justice and Complex Safeguarding in Bolton.

The presentation provided details in relation to the Inspection Process which was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspection of Probate – Youth Justice (HMIP) and was similar to inspections carried out by Ofsted.

The latest inspection in Bolton had been an on-site visit held on 22nd April, 2022.

There had been three broad areas of inspection:

- Organisational Delivery of the Service;
- Quality of work with Children sentenced by the Courts; and
- Quality of out-of-court disposal work.

The HMI Probation had also carried out a separate inspection of the quality of resettlement.

The presentation summarised the outcome of the inspection with Bolton Youth Justice Service being rated overall as 'Good' and Resettlement being separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

Comments included – “a committed staff team undertook high-quality and timely assessments, leading to appropriate planning to increase desistance, keep children safe and protect victims” and “we were impressed by the staff we interviewed – they know the children very well, work well with partnership workers and are all very good advocates for the children”

Other highlights from the inspection referred to a shared culture across the service of putting children at the heart of the service and mature and respectful relationships, strength in partnership working and identifying and responding to individual diverse needs.

With regard to the Resettlement Inspection, the following comments were made:

- good use of a range of multi - agency meetings to begin early planning for the sentence and release;
- effective information-sharing and collaborative work with partners to understand and meet children's needs;
- excellent scrutiny and oversight of children who were in custody;
- Youth Justice Service was providing good and timely support for children who were preparing to be released from custody
- effective links with two local custodial establishments;
- partner agencies visit children in custody and begin work in preparation for release as per policy and noted as good practice; and
- management oversight of resettlement was effective.

Recommendations arising from the Inspections were as follows:

- Bolton Youth Justice Service:
 - review and monitor the outcomes and experiences of children from black, Asian and minority ethnic

- communities, to make sure that any disadvantage is identified and mitigated; and
- train staff on holding discussions with children about discrimination and what that means for the individual children.
- Greater Manchester Police:
 - continue to reduce unnecessary delays in all cases being referred to the Youth Justice System

Members were also informed of the ongoing Partnership work with education providers and its advantages.

The presentation went on to discuss the Bolton Complex Safeguarding Team (CST) arrangements and its current structure and function, as follows:

Engagement:

- each Child open to Child Exploitation Action Meeting (CEAM) was allocated to an officer from Child Protection Investigation Unit Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU);
- CPIU officer to engage with EXIT worker and child to deliver safeguards and develop trusted relationships;
- feedback information to Child Exploitation Action Meeting; and
- criminal Investigation where appropriate

Disruption

- new disruption meeting – Child Exploitation Disruption Action Meeting (CEDAM);
- disruption activity based on places and persons; and
- disruption delivered by neighbourhoods/partners as directed by CEDAM/Neighbourhood crime meetings.

Child Exploitation Disruption Action Meeting – intention and purpose:

- to identify for Bolton risks relating to:
- places
- persons

- where the potential victim is a child
- and actions can reasonably be taken to generate information or disruptive activity that may reduce or remove the risk

Disruption activities included:

- joint visits
- seizure of counterfeit or illegal goods
- environmental health inspections
- fire safety inspections
- housing enforcement
- civil orders such as Child Abduction Warnings
- Department for Work and Pensions investigations
- immigration enforcement visits
- taxi licensing
- landlord licencing

What the CST had delivered:

- implementation of Working Together to Increase Safety in Exploitation (WISE) Assessment – shift from a focus of risk to one of safety;
- re-Introduction of multi-agency disruption meeting – CEDAM – focus on places / spaces of concern; and
- November 2022 – CST Assurance and Assurance Audit Completed.

Over the last six months the CST had replaced the original assessment tool with the Working to Increase Safety in Exploitation in a shift from a focus of risk to one of safety. This was a recommendation and action following the Peer Review in 2021.

In the last few months there had also been the re-Introduction of Disruption Meetings with Neighbourhood policing teams now linking in with CST police and getting involved in wider disruption activity. The meeting is utilising the Home Office Disruption Toolkit and is attended by relevant agencies focussing on the Bolton's top 3 risks relating to places and persons of concern. Identification of concerns then leads to

individual problem-solving meetings where a bespoke panel will address the risks.

Members were also given a statistical breakdown of demand for the services.

The presentation also provided details of the National Referral Mechanism which was a Framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery, human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Benefits of this included:

- support for children within the criminal justice system - Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Section 45 Defence
- can lead to more appropriate service provision
- supports effective safeguarding
- ensures children are recognised as victims rather than willing participants
- can support asylum claims
- supports understanding of the national picture.

There had been 33 Referrals made by Complex Safeguarding Team between October and December, 2022

There was a Duty to Notify by all public authorities under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Following the presentation, members made the undermentioned comments/observations:

- the age groups, numbers and types of offences referred to;
- the specialities of the multi-Agency Team and associated training and recruitment;
- the factors that led to young people offending;
- the responsibilities of all Elected Members as corporate parents and the need to be kept updated on safeguarding matters;
- the benefits of community based projects;
- the prevalence of familial factors in behavioural issues;
- the need for intervention in the very early years;

- increased awareness of modern slavery;
- on-line abuse;
- the use of disruptive methods; and
- the benefits of the review tracker.

Resolved – That Mr Cooke and Ms Buckingham be thanked for their informative presentation.

20. OVERVIEW OF GREATER MANCHESTER WORK

Ms B. Brown gave an overview of the work that was taking place throughout Greater Manchester towards supporting children and young people.

Ms Brown advised that the launch of the Greater Manchester Children and Young People's Plan 2019-22 represented an important milestone in the approach to supporting children and young people in the region.

Members were given an overview of the significant progress that had been made over the course of the Plan though its key activities in respect of six of its main theme priority areas, as follows:

- school readiness;
- children in care;
- care leavers;
- mental health of children and young people;
- complex safeguarding; and
- Children's Social Care Innovation Programme.

The presentation outlined the background to how the Plan had been funded and developed and highlighted the impact of Covid on its development and outcomes.

Other issues highlighted included:

- the development of a GM brand for fostering;
- the ageing profile of foster carers;
- school readiness and early years – the first thousand days;

- Care Leaders pledge- to secure better housing across GM;
- mental health – Salford lead;
- complex safeguarding – working differently;
- Social Care Innovation – DfE funding and access to pots of money; and
- analysing progress and refining processes.

Following the presentation, members made various comments and observations, as follows:

- Bolton's involvement with the GM;
- the significant resources that would be required including procurement, planning, finance, staffing and workforce;
- outcome of investments would only be known over time; and
- the challenges of identifying suitable property for children's residential homes.

Resolved – That Ms Brown be thanked for her informative presentation.

21. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee received the minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- the Executive Cabinet Member for Children's Services held on 9th January, 2023.

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.30pm)