

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held in LB 31 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 22 December 2015 from 10.02 am – 11.45 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Georgina Culley
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)
Councillor Chris Tansley

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Josh Cook
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Nancy Barnard	- Governance Manager
Clive Chambers	- Head of Safeguarding and Quality
Chris Cook	- Chair of Nottingham City Safeguarding Children's Board
Rav Kalsi	- Senior Governance Officer
Nick Lee	- Head of Access and Learning
Charla McDevitt	- Patra Trainee, Constitutional Services
Councillor David Mellen	- Portfolio Holder for Early Intervention and Early Years
Alison Michalska	- Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Michelle Roe	- Executive Officer, Children and Adults
Councillor Sam Webster	- Portfolio Holder for Schools

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Ginny Klein (non-Council Business)
Councillor Azad Choudhry (leave)

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Chris Tansley declared an interest in agenda item 5, Safeguarding in Schools, as he is a governor of Berridge Primary School. He concluded this interest did not prevent him from speaking on that item.

10 MINUTES

Subject to the amendments listed below, the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair:

Minute 5 (i), add the number "20" to read "16.4% are placed over 20 miles from Nottingham".

Minute 7 amend the dates of future meetings to read 16 February and not 16 January.

11 AGENDA ORDER

The Chair agreed to take the item on Safeguarding in Schools first due to the availability of colleagues to present.

12 SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS

Clive Chambers, Head of Safeguarding and Quality introduced a report to the Committee. Councillor David Mellen, Portfolio Holder for Early Intervention and Early Years, Councillor Sam Webster, Portfolio Holder for Schools, Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults and Nick Lee, Head of Access and Learning were also in attendance and contributed to the discussion. The following points were highlighted:

- a) Schools have a unique role in keeping children safe. Research conducted by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children found that children find it hard to talk about abuse, and that if they are going to talk to someone about it, they are most likely to tell someone in school. Therefore, schools need to ensure that the professionals most likely to be approached by children experiencing abuse are well trained and supported.
- b) All schools have designated safeguarding leads who meet together every month. This network provides a direct line of communication between the safeguarding leads and the Safeguarding Board. The network is also an opportunity to update leads on national issues. Colleagues are about to start recruiting a small cohort of advanced safeguarding leads whose role will be to work with their own schools and other schools to share their skills and knowledge and bring challenge and scrutiny into schools.
- c) The work being done at the moment builds on solid foundations. The City Council provides ongoing training in schools, which can also be bought by academies, to support staff with their safeguarding responsibilities and to support children in supporting their own safety. Examples of the latter are Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and a free play for secondary schools to raise awareness of sexual exploitation.

During discussions the following information was provided:

- d) Responsibility for safeguarding training lies with the school and the governing body. This applies to maintained schools and academies. Colleagues will be sending a self-assessment tool to all schools and academies in the city to audit what training activity has taken place. Schools must comply with safeguarding legislation regardless of their status. The Director of Children's Services and relevant Portfolio Holders are responsible for safeguarding and all schools are accountable to them. The Safeguarding Board also has a role in challenging schools that are not meeting standards.
- e) SRE focuses on what makes a healthy adult relationship rather than just the sexual elements of relationships. It is delivered by Equation, a local charitable organisation. The play that was referred to is another opportunity to raise issues. Nationally, there is a requirement for schools to deliver SRE but no requirements

in terms of what's covered or how much time is spent on it. This results in the quality of SRE varying significantly between schools.

- f) Home education is monitored by a dedicated team of two – a co-ordinator and a former teacher who is involved in quality assessment. However, there is no requirement for any home educating family to register with the Local Authority. There are currently 164 children registered as receiving home education in Nottingham but this does not necessarily represent every home educated child as some families may have chosen not to register. If a child was on a school roll and has been withdrawn they have to follow a deregistration process so the Local Authority is aware of them. The Council may not be aware of those who have never been educated in school whose families choose not to register. On occasion, partner organisations such as midwives and health visitors come across home educating families and alert the Local Authority.
- g) There are networks of home educators and colleagues are strengthening relationships with these groups. There are also very clear routes for safeguarding. For example when a family registers, a check is carried out to determine whether there has been any previous social care contact. If there are any safeguarding concerns as a result of contact with home educating families these are raised in the normal way through duty team. Support is provided to families where there are issues.
- h) Children waiting for a place in school follow a separate process to home educated children. Work is underway to process children as quickly as possible and the waiting time has reduced. Colleagues currently try to get everyone placed within a term which is a legal requirement. If the child is not placed, the Authority can support the child with school work if parents are in a position to support them.
- i) In terms of quality of education provided via home-schooling, the former Teacher provides families with advice and support on the quality of the education they provide. If there are consistent concerns the case can be referred to Education Welfare.

RESOLVED to

- (1) thank the contributors for the report and information provided at the meeting;**
- (2) consider carrying out further scrutiny on Home Education as part of the Committee's work programme for 2016-17.**

13 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Councillor David Mellen, Portfolio Holder for Early Intervention and Early Years introduced the report. He was supported by Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults and the following points were highlighted:

- a) There is an important difference between Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and abuse. CSE involves a child receiving something in exchange for sexual activity.

Often young people do not recognise that they're being abused and may refer to their abuser as their partner or boyfriend. Exploitative relationships are characterised by disparities in age and power.

- b) CSE can occur online where young people are persuaded to send pictures or other information via the internet. Groups of people, usually groups of men, can be involved in exploiting young people. Usually, girls are targeted but boys can be targeted as well. Those that are particularly vulnerable to CSE include those who are neglected or separated from their carers, unaccompanied asylum seekers, those in care homes (because of their historic experiences not any inaction on the part of the home), and those missing from care homes.
- c) CSE is not new and work has been underway to tackle it for many years, however far more attention has been paid to it over the last 18 months due to high profile cases in Rotherham and Oxfordshire. There is some very good practice in the city and colleagues have worked with the Department for Education and the Home Office to help develop government best practice.
- d) A CSE co-ordinator has been appointed as an expert and lead professional for both City Council colleagues and professionals from partner organisations to seek advice from. The Co-ordinator disseminates learning and shares lessons should things go wrong. Nottingham City Council continues to work closely with Nottinghamshire County Council.
- e) Bringing offenders to justice is a challenge. Young people often don't make good witnesses because to the damage that has been done to them. There is also a focus on protecting children from harm and preventing crimes from occurring so often there is no conviction to be sought.
- f) There is a multi-agency CSE Panel chaired by Helen Blackman, Director of Children's Social Care at Nottingham City Council, which tracks each individual vulnerable child that we are aware of. It pulls together information around perpetrators, hotspots, and areas where children congregate that makes them vulnerable. It also ensures that information sharing can happen between organisations.
- g) Work has been done to train and inform the wider workforce and others such as taxi drivers and hotel staff of signs of CSE so they can act as eyes and ears in the community. Young people might talk to other people in positions of trust. We have also done a series of lunchtime seminars to get message out to as many staff as possible. Youth and play workers have also been trained to look out for signs of CSE such as a child having more money than would be expected without explanation or having jewellery or an extra phone.
- h) Child Abduction Notices are very effective and are used to prevent children from being exploited. The notice prohibits specific individuals from approaching specific children.
- i) Nottingham City Council is developing a more sophisticated database and will continue to work with the Police to identify perpetrators and vulnerable children. The Council is planning to write to all parents via schools in the New Year

informing them to look out for indicators of CSE. This is allied to a national campaign taking place in 2016.

During discussions the following further information was provided:

- j) Social workers with high levels of case work tend to be those on front line. Those working with children in care tend to have fewer longer term cases usually in the high teens in number. If it goes over this number it tends to be because they are working with a large sibling group. Some have fewer if they are dealing with very complex cases.
- k) Relationships between social workers and care homes are much better than they were historically and they are managed by the same person. All homes are now small units with 2-3 children and all are rated good or outstanding. There is no issue over who raises concerns and no hierarchy that impacts on this. Homes are extremely closely regulated with monthly internal inspections and 6 monthly Ofsted inspections.
- l) There are very good relationships between the Police and other agencies and no concerns about data sharing. In its report into Police Effectiveness in December 2015, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary found that, Nottinghamshire Police is still developing its understanding of CSE but there is an urgent need to expand the knowledge of the threat, harm and risk posed by CSE in Nottinghamshire. This was in relation to area policing teams and not to public protection specialists.
- m) One child at risk of CSE is too many but the actual number we are concerned about is small, between 10 and 15.

RESOLVED to

- (1) Thanks the contributors for the report and information provided at the meeting;**
- (2) Invite the CSE Co-ordinator to a future meeting to discuss the role and an update on the work underway to tackle CSE in Nottingham.**

14 SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS IN NOTTINGHAM

Nick Lee, Head of Access and Learning delivered a presentation to the Committee on exclusions from schools in Nottingham. Cllr Sam Webster, Portfolio Holder for Schools also contributed to the discussions. Key points raised included the following:

- a) Only head teachers can make the decision to exclude and this must be done on disciplinary grounds where there has been a breach of the school's behaviour policy. Decisions must be taken within legislative frameworks, including equalities legislation that requires reasonable adjustments to be made in the case of disability, including Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- b) When determining whether to exclude a child, head teachers must reach their decision on the balance of probability rather than beyond reasonable doubt.

Exclusions cannot be made on the grounds of parental behaviour or academic performance and the focus must be on enabling the school to operate, not on punishing the child.

- c) Fixed term exclusions can be for a period of between 1 and 45 days per schoolyear. These can be used as a sanction but should also be a period of time when the school can plan for managing the pupil and their behavioural issues when they return.
- d) For the first five days of exclusion the child should not be in a public place during school hours. They should be at home and parents can be fined if they are not. On the 6th day of a fixed term exclusion, the governing body becomes responsible for the full time education of the child. If alternative arrangements are not possible the school should set and mark work for the child.
- e) Parents have no right of appeal against fixed term exclusions but they can ask governing body to consider their views. Governors must review the decision and consider reinstatement if an exam will be missed or if a child has been excluded for more than 15 days in any single term.
- f) In the case of permanent exclusions from the 6th day the Local Authority is responsible for arranging alternative provision. The governing body is also required to review the decision of the head teacher to permanently exclude a child. Parents are also entitled to request an independent review which must take place within 15 days of the request for the review. If SEN are a factor the parent can require the attendance of an SEN expert at the review hearing. Reviews cannot reinstate the child but can recommend that the governing body review their decision.
- g) Following a permanent exclusion the Local Authority where the child is resident is responsible for the provision of their education. The City Council uses facilities at Denewood and Unity learning centres or other alternative provision if appropriate. The City Council is working with Nottinghamshire County Council to provide a broader range of support. If appropriate, the child may return to a mainstream school.
- h) There has been a significant increase in the number of secondary exclusions in recent years from 28 in 2012/13 to 111 in 2014/15. Since a number of city secondary schools were taken into special measure there have been significant changes in school leadership, and a big focus on improving behaviour which is likely to have impacted upon this rise.

During discussions the following points were raised:

- i) The funding that follows the pupils after they are excluded from school does not cover the cost of the exclusion and alternative provision. Discussions are currently underway about seeking full cost recovery from schools that the cost of exclusion rests with the school not the Local Authority.
- j) Following a permanent exclusion Key Stage 4 pupils tend to go to alternative provision rather than Denewood or Unity and providers of alternative provision

are quality assured. Denewood is currently in special measures but the latest monitoring report from Ofsted suggests that good progress being made. Unity is currently rated as requiring improvement. Alternative provision is currently being examined and proposals can be reported to the Committee in the future. Improving alternative provision is a priority and the rigid academic approach that schools are increasingly required to take does not work for all pupils.

RESOLVED to

- (1) thank contributors for the information they provided;**
- (2) to request that further information on the plans for alternative provision is brought back to the committee at an appropriate time.**

15 WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Rav Kalsi, Senior Governance Officer, introduced a report of the Head of Democratic Services seeking to establish the programme of activity for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year for 2015/16.

RESOLVED to

- (1) review the work taking place in Nottingham on missing children, the alternative provision available for children without a school place in Nottingham, and to receive input from the Children in Care Council on potential work programme ideas at the next Committee scheduled for 16 February 2016;**
- (2) agree the work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for 2015/16, as summarised in the report, subject to the addition of a review of Sex and Relationship Education in Schools in Nottingham.**