

Nottingham City Council

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 26 October 2023
from 10.02 am - 12.16 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Naim Salim (Chair)
Councillor Fozia Mubashar
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Michael Savage
Councillor Maria Watson

Absent

Councillor Samuel Gardiner
Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Adele Williams

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Cheryl Barnard - Portfolio Holder for Children, Young people and Education
Ailsa Barr - Director of Children's Integrated Services
Wilf Fearon - Head of Early Help Services
John Matravers - Head of Safeguarding Partnerships
Damon Stanton - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Nicola Ryan - Deputy Chief Nurse, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board
Catherine Underwood - Corporate Director for People
Phil Wye - Governance Officer

11 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Georgia Power - unwell
Councillor Adele Williams – leave
Councillor Samuel Gardiner - unwell

12 Declarations of Interest

None.

13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

14 Nottingham City Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education, John Matravers, Head of Safeguarding and Partnerships, and Ailsa Barr, Director for Children's Integrated Services, presented the report and delivered a presentation and highlighted the following:

- (a) Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership was established in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. It provides the safeguarding arrangements under which the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to co-ordinate their safeguarding services, identify, and respond to the needs of children in the city, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements;
- (b) the safeguarding partners responsible for the safeguarding arrangements under the Partnership are Nottingham City Council, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board and Nottinghamshire Police. An Independent Scrutineer acts as a constructive critical friend to the Partnership, encouraging reflection on practice. Other relevant agencies also support the Partnership;
- (c) the strategic priorities of the Partnership in 2022-23 were to promote, monitor, coordinate and evaluate multi agency effectiveness in safeguarding children across the child's journey, to strengthen and support a competent and equipped workforce that is committed to learning and developing safeguarding practice with the assurance that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and to evidence the impact of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP);
- (d) the Partnership's Business Plan has 7 priorities: tackling and reducing Child Exploitation, implementing the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Action Plan, ensuring that the voice and lived experience of children is integral to the development and delivery of services to children and families across Nottingham City, recognising and responding to the diverse population of Nottingham City's children, delivering the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy, understanding the impact of Covid-19, and providing leadership and ensuring core duties are met in line with Working Together 2018 and other relevant legislation;
- (e) the Partnership has developed a Threshold of Need Toolkit, to strengthen the effectiveness of practice and support the need for a child and their family;
- (f) tackling neglect must continue to be a priority if children's life chances and poor outcomes later in life are to be improved. A toolkit and a number of informative videos have been produced to promote this message. The Partnership has also developed a video resource on Professional Curiosity to further strengthen practice and knowledge in response to learning emerging from Domestic Homicide reviews;
- (g) the Partnership has held the Council to account in relation to the recent Ofsted Inspection and assurance visits, and is working together to address some of the key areas of improvement and to ensure system oversight and engagement in the improvement plan;
- (h) in 2023-24 the Partnership will re-focus scrutiny on the issue of safe and supportive transitions from children's to adult's services. The pace and impact of the Learning and Development Sub-group will be developed so that learning can be disseminated quickly using a range of methods to those who need it.

In response to questions from the Committee and during subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (i) the voice of the child can be harder to capture if the family does not speak English. Interpreters are commissioned and documents translated as appropriate;
- (j) if a child is a young carer then their voice must be heard as well as the parent's in medical situations, and understanding that there are different perspectives. There are toolkits to help with this and work is being undertaken with GP practices;
- (k) the priorities are set by the Strategic Leadership Group. These are limited to the resources available and matters arising within services, but are focused on having the greatest impact;
- (l) social worker caseloads are decreasing to a more manageable level thanks to recent improvement work that has been undertaken;
- (m) if a child is at risk of serious harm, the Partnership has a responsibility to notify the national panel within 5 days, and then complete a rapid review within 5 days. 14 of these have been completed since the establishment of the Partnership, 2 of which were used as examples of good practice. Learning is taken from these and disseminated to all partners;
- (n) decisions on what level of support is required are taken by the Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) which is run by the Council but has practitioners from all sectors. This ensures consistency of service, making sure everyone has access to the services required. Partners also have specialists, as a first port of call, such as the Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools;
- (o) funding from the Partnership is sourced from each of the 3 statutory partners. This funds learning and development and the independent scrutineer. The amount of funding required is reviewed annually;
- (p) the videos produced by the Partnership are collectively owned by the Partnership and freely available on YouTube. They are shared on social media and at face to face meetings.

Resolved

- (1) that the partnership continues to focus on recognising the voice of the child, and ensure that the Council and partners continue to improve on how they communicate with children with language barriers;**
- (2) to work to disseminate information and videos to a wider range of organisations outside the partnership;**
- (3) to continue being pro-active in any aspect of children's' lives where safeguarding is concerned.**

15 Youth Justice Service

Wilf Fearon, Head of Early Help Services, presented the report and delivered a presentation on progress made since the joint inspection in 2019 and the peer review in 2022, highlighting the following:

- (a) the Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a partnership organisation and statutory requirement of the Local Authority. The Service is staffed by Local Authority and partnership staff including seconded Probation staff, Police Officers, Nurses and Substance use practitioners. Children are supported on a range of prevention, pre-Court, and post-Court, including custodial sentence, interventions. Most work is now pre-Court intervention;
- (b) Nottingham's YJS received a full three-week joint inspection in November 2019 and was rated overall as 'Requires improvement', with recommendations for improvement on a range of areas;
- (c) In November 2022, the Service invited a Peer Review team, made up of YJS Managers from across the country, to come and review the service with a focus on four key areas: the effectiveness of the Governance arrangements, operational arrangements for First-Time Entrants, partnership arrangements supporting the work around First-Time Entrants, and local arrangements to reduce Serious Youth Violence and to support the management of high risk children in the community. The team produced a report detailing strengths, areas for consideration and recommendations;
- (d) the YJS has addressed the recommendations from both the HMIP Inspection and the Peer Review within the Operational Delivery Plan that is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Youth Justice Management Board. Key assurance activity that has been completed includes the development of a Diversity and Identity Strategy and Action Plan, ongoing participation and engagement exercises, the review and development of the Child Criminal Exploitation management process, the ongoing development of a prevention and early intervention offer, and the review and development of risk management and quality assurance processes;
- (e) immediately following the inspection the Service put in place remedial actions regarding the Out of Court process and now the Council has a robust quality assured, multi-agency Out of Court Disposal panel and is working in partnership to address the ongoing issues of high first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System. This process was recognised by the Peer Reviewers as being of a high standard compared to other YJSs they had observed.

In response to questions from the Committee and during subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (f) schools and education are an important part of the Youth Justice process, as they identify issues and begin early intervention. If a child is permanently excluded then they are less likely to be criminally exploited if they attend alternative provision. An education representative sits on the Youth Justice Board;

- (g) many youth centres with diversionary activities have been closed due to budget pressures. Time is dedicated to strengthening partnerships with external organisations so that these can be delivered, with some funding available through the Area Based Grant;
- (h) HMIP's new inspection regime begins in 2024, and the YJS is expecting another inspection that year. The management Board is aware of which improvements will be expected and is confident that the outcome will be better than the previous inspection.

Resolved to

- (1) request an item at a future meeting on alternative education provision of permanently excluded children, as well as the outcomes of the Education Priority Investment Area funding once the funding has ended;**
- (2) investigate if comparison data is available with other local authorities on demand for the service and share this with Committee members.**

16 Children's Services Improvement

Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools, delivered a verbal update on the ongoing improvement work, highlighting the following:

- (a) there has been no monitoring visit since the last Committee meeting. A visit is expected before Christmas with a focus on Care Leavers;
- (b) transformation work is continuing with Essex County Council and a peer review for Children in care. A staff celebration event was organised to celebrate the improvements so far;
- (c) an event was run with local businesses to promote the local offer for Care Leavers. The event was planned with the help of Care Leavers themselves;
- (d) there is ongoing focus on recruitment as this remains a challenge, A video has been produced that will be shared on social media to promote working in Nottingham. The lower caseloads for social workers may help to retain more staff, and staff feel confident that progress is being made.

In response to questions from the Committee and during subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (e) social workers must be qualified, but there are other roles available that do not require the qualification such as personal advisors or family support workers. There is a social worker apprenticeship scheme which currently has 6 participants;
- (f) the Council would like to reduce the reliance on agency staff, although agency staff will always be required.

Resolved to share the recruitment video with members of the Committee.

17 Work Programme

The work programme was noted.