

Nottingham City Council

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 31 March 2022
from 10.01 am - 12.34 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Maria Joannou (Vice Chair)
Councillor Phil Jackson
Councillor Jay Hayes
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos
Councillor Maria Watson

Absent

Councillor Carole McCulloch

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Cheryl Barnard - Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People
Ailsa Barr - Director of Children's Integrated Services
Jane Garrard - Senior Governance Officer
John Matravers - Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Phil Wye - Governance Officer

69 Chairing Arrangements

As the Chair was absent from the Committee, the Vice-Chair chaired the meeting.

70 Apologies for absence

Councillor Carole McCulloch – unwell

71 Declarations of Interests

None.

72 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 as a correct record and they were signed by the Vice-Chair.

73 Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21

John Matravers, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, delivered a presentation to the Committee on the Report, which is a statutory requirement for the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP) to publish each year, and highlighted the following:

- (a) the strategic lead responsibility for safeguarding is shared between three statutory partners; the Local Authority, Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System and Clinical Commissioning Group, and all three of these are represented on the NCSCP. A number of sub-groups are also established such as safeguarding reviews, child death overview and audit;
- (b) the NCSCP's business plan 2020-23 has six priorities:
- To ensure the voice and lived experience of children is integral to the development and delivery of services to children and families across Nottingham City.
 - To recognise and respond to the diverse population of Nottingham City's children, targeting work where necessary.
 - To deliver the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership Neglect Strategy.
 - Tackling and reducing Child Exploitation.
 - To understand the impact of Covid-19.
 - Providing leadership and ensuring core duties are met in line with Working Together 2018 and other relevant legislation.
- (c) the NSCSP has a responsibility to inform the National Panel if a child is at risk of serious harm as a result of neglect or abuse. Four referrals have been made this year which is in line with expectations. On each case the national panel has agreed with the recommendations and also they have commented on the quality of partnership working in Nottingham.

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

- (d) the rise in the cost of living will have an impact on families and young people, and support services such as the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network in schools will be key to identifying these young people that are at risk, and referring them. Poverty by itself is not necessarily a factor that will require intervention;
- (e) schools are not a statutory part of the NCSCP as they are represented by the Local Authority, but the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network was set up to enable them to receive relevant communications on safeguarding. This is held three times a year online and participation has increased during and since the pandemic;
- (f) Nottingham's diversity is important and all young people must be reached and supported regardless of their English ability and heritage;
- (g) the independent scrutineer who works with the NCSCP formerly was a senior manager at NSPCC. She is very experienced and makes strong challenges;
- (h) early intervention is important and must be a priority. The Local Authority is promoting access to free childcare for 2 year olds to families that are eligible;

- (i) hearing the voice of the child is important. Various fora are available to do this such as the Children in Care Council, Primary Parliament and discussions with other young people.

74 Children's Integrated Services Transformation Programme

Ailsa Barr, Director of Children's Integrated Services, delivered a presentation and highlighted the following:

- (a) a diagnostic assessment of the Children's Social Care service conducted from October to November 2021 compared Nottingham City's service activity to similar councils elsewhere. This identified that a number Children in Need and Child Protection plans could have been prevented through an earlier intervention with some running on for longer than necessary. It also identified that a revised focus on early intervention would avoid children being taken into care, that there is scope to increase the number of children in foster care with a corresponding reduction in residential care, and that there is potential to enable more children in care to leave care earlier;
- (b) following the diagnostic assessment a business case was developed for the proposed Children's transformation programme that would see Nottingham City Council improve the outcomes, safety and experience of its children and young people, as well as having a positive financial impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (c) due to its size, scale and pace needed, an external delivery partner is needed to provide the experience, expertise and capacity to deliver the transformation plan;
- (d) the programme is designed to improve the outcomes of Nottingham's young people and families. This will be achieved by working with practitioners across the service to design and implement a new operating model. A key outcome will be a reduction of bottlenecks and improved processes to help practitioners spend more time helping young people, and gain greater satisfaction from their roles;

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

- (e) one of the outcomes of the transformation plan is that fewer Children in Care will be housed in residential care homes. Whilst some children will always require this support, the majority will be better in foster homes so the Council aims to increase the number of foster carers and match children appropriately;
- (f) the aim for 11 new foster carers is believed realistic. The process takes around 6-7 months with home visits, screening and training and many who show interest do not go through with the process. Support for existing foster carers is also important to maintain;
- (a) the Council's establishment of social workers is appropriate to the work required if fully recruited and retained. The aim is for Children in Care social workers to work with no more than 18 children but some work with more. Recruitment and

retention of staff is a challenge but the transformation message may attract applicants. Improved routes to career progression are also being explored.

Committee members suggested that a frontline social worker or foster carer attend a future meeting, as well as the delivery partner when they are appointed.