

## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 22 January 2019 from 11.00 am - 12.53 pm**

#### **Membership**

##### Present

Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Jim Armstrong (minutes 29-34 inclusive)  
Councillor Azad Choudhry (minutes 29-33 inclusive)  
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora  
Councillor Brian Parbutt

##### Absent

Councillor Sue Johnson (Chair)  
Councillor Georgia Power  
Councillor Chris Tansley

#### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Becky Cameron - Engagement Lead at Nottingham Community Voluntary Services  
Chris Cook - Independent Chair of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB),  
Nick Lee - Director of Education Services  
John Matravers - Service Manager for Safeguarding Partnerships (NCC)  
Alison Michalska - Corporate Director for Children and Adults  
Zena West - Senior Governance Officer  
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance officer

#### **29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Sue Johnson - unwell  
Councillor Chris Tansley - personal  
Councillor Georgia Power - personal

In the absence of Councillor Sue Johnson, the meeting was chaired by Councillor Glyn Jenkins.

It is noted with sadness that Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim, member of this committee, passed away on 25 December 2018.

#### **30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **31 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2018 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair presiding.

#### **32 NOTTINGHAM CITY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

Chris Cook, Independent Chair of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB), John Matravers, Service Manager for Safeguarding Partnerships (NCC), and

Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults, were in attendance to present the Nottingham City Safeguarding Board Annual Report for 2017/18.

To support the thorough Annual report and also with reference to the next agenda item on Proposals for replacing Safeguarding Children Board arrangements, a detailed PowerPoint was delivered which is included in the initial publication of the minutes.

Chris Cook briefly outlined the purpose of the NCSCB and highlighted the following points:

- (a) as a reflection of the expanding risks to children, the NCSCB headline statement now also refers to online activity: *'We want all the children and young people of Nottingham City to be safe from harm, inside their home, outside their home and online'*;
- (b) the aim of the Board is to involve all agencies in working together in partnership to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children by providing scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of policies and practices across the partnership;
- (c) the second annual NCSCB 'Every Colleague Matters' event on 'Empowering the Workforce to deliver Excellence in Safeguarding Practice' was attended by more than 350 practitioners from across the safeguarding partnership;
- (d) one of the issues raised was changing the culture and mindset with regard to missing appointments in that this should be considered as a flag requiring further investigation, particularly within the health sector where 'was not brought' should raise professional curiosity. Nottingham CCG commissioned a promotional animation which has been well received by partners and welcomed by Chairs of other Local Safeguarding Boards and their partners;
- (e) the Quality Assurance Sub-Group of NCSCB has completed audits on Child Sexual Exploitation, out of hours referrals to Children's Social Care, quality of plans for cases where the concern was physical abuse and medical neglect;
- (f) emerging issues such as the use of online media and forums, county lines drug trafficking, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery and radicalisation are issues where awareness is raised with partners. Initially several Police forces were treating children involved in county lines activity as compliant criminals whereas now there is a better understanding that they are exploited victims;
- (g) child neglect is a very complicated issue with wide ranging elements. Domestic violence can be very closely associated to child abuse and there is a lot of very effective partnership working to prevent female genital mutilation.

Questions from the Committee were responded to by Chris, John and Alison as follows:

- (h) the Police and Crime Commissioner regularly attends regional safeguarding meetings, particularly when there are issues such as exploitation;
- (i) although every effort is made to ensure that every child is known to the systems and can be monitored, realistically no absolute guarantees can be given that this is the case. Children from traveller communities are usually identified only if their parents or carers apply for a school place, medical treatment or benefits. Where children are

known to be home schooled then their education (and welfare) is followed up as formally they are considered as 'children missing education'. Education colleagues work with the parents to ensure that home schooling meets the required standards although the standard of some home schooling is excellent. If access to home schooled children cannot be gained, then safeguarding powers are utilised, with the assistance of the Police if necessary, to gain access and ensure that the children are safe. It is only possible to respond to what is known about but it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the safety of children. Alerts or concerns can be raised anonymously but do need to be reported;

- (j) in practice, risk can only be minimised and not eradicated, but with all partners, including in the county, networking, working together and communicating, then minimised risk can be achieved;
- (k) there are designated GP Leads for safeguarding who also link with staff at QMC. The CCG is very proactive in safeguarding and promotes training and education amongst staff and partners, including funding the 'was not brought' film which highlights the need to proactively respond;
- (l) schools have been very proactive in promoting safeguarding practices and approximately 700 school Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) meet three times a year to share information and highlight emerging concerns. Use of the Internet can be positive but protection and education is required regarding some elements;
- (m) it can be difficult to raise issues and concerns with parents without alienating them. A common thread has been raised that people don't want to ruin positive relationships with parents and so where there is any level of doubt surrounding suspicions, they say nothing. One aspect of much of the training provided to partners is taking a mutually caring approach in finding common ground such as 'we both want your child to be safe but maybe we won't always agree on the best way to do this';
- (n) online safeguarding concerns have been raised by the DSL Network and whilst it's important that safeguarding bodies don't attack the online world, the risks need to be highlighted. The NSPCC regularly attend events and promote 'staying safe online'. Online organisations such as Google are doing some positive work to promote safeguarding, but awareness still needs to be raised;
- (o) the City and County Safeguarding Boards have a joint exploitation subgroup focusing on online concerns and the Police are also very active. Young people and children easily access social media and other roots of influence via phones and iPads and whilst the risks from social media continue to develop, it's important that the safeguarding mechanisms can speedily identify and either address or highlight as a risk the areas of concern;
- (p) further information on the work of NCSCB, including information and training and how to raise safeguarding concerns, can be found here: <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/children-and-families/nottingham-city-safeguarding-children-board/> or via twitter and Facebook with links available to other agencies such as the National Crime Agency.

**RESOLVED to note the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report.**

### **33 PROPOSALS FOR REPLACING SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ARRANGEMENTS**

Chris Cook, Independent Chair of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB), John Matravers, Service Manager for Safeguarding Partnerships (NCC), and Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults, were in attendance to inform the Committee of the proposals for replacing the safeguarding children board arrangements.

The following points were highlighted and questions from members responded to;

- (a) following a national review it was found that some safeguarding boards were inadequate and so a structure is proposed for their replacement by June 2019. This will consist of safeguarding partners including the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group for the local authority area and the Chief Police Officer for the area which falls within the local authority area, all of which will be tasked to ensure that there are appropriate safeguarding practices embedded and awareness of risks;
- (b) it is proposed that the new organisation will have the title of Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership. A short presentation, attached to the initial publication of the minutes, provides further information on the structure of the partnership. It is noted that whilst Nottingham's current safeguarding model is considered to be functioning appropriately, the new legislation does require a few minor changes to be made to ensure the requirements of the Act are met;
- (c) in addition a National Panel will investigate the most serious and complex safeguarding failure cases and issue revised practices and procedures if necessary, and ensure that national learning from incidents takes place to prevent re-occurrence. Local learning reviews will also take place where gaps or failures have resulted in risk. It is proposed that learning and sharing of good practices and successful approaches will also be shared;
- (d) the revised structure is considered robust places a new emphasis on establishing stronger connections with third sector organisations;
- (e) the approach of other local authorities varies and while some have refreshed their safeguarding board structures, others have decided that there is no need for an independent chair, particularly as the OFSTED inspection requirement has been removed;
- (f) OFSTED will still have responsibilities in that if the local partnership notifies OFSTED of a significant incident where a child has been subject to significant harm or death, all parties within that partnership will have 15 days to undertake a review, and in an open report determine what the right responses should be at a local and if necessary national level;
- (g) this approach will only work when there is partnership buy-in, and a commitment to meet the required timescales. Proportionate reviews such as this are proposed to be speedier, more efficient, and make better use of resources;

- (h) the criteria by which the partnership can be structured are open to different interpretations, but the structure can be altered if required. An initial review will take place within the next 12 weeks, and will be undertaken by a multiagency inspectorate.

Members of the committee welcomed the continuing involvement of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee with the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**RESOLVED to note that the committee is satisfied with the continued progress in Nottingham to safeguard children.**

### **34 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Nick Lee, Director of Education Services, was in attendance to update the Committee on the educational attainment of Nottingham city schools for the academic year 2017/18.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) a range of academic data is created each year and covers different aspects from early years through to GCSE aged pupils;
- (b) all early years/foundation stage pupils are assessed with regard to how ready they are to start school education, and then later assessed on the progress made in social, personal and emotional development, language and communication, reading and writing. There has been a steady rise year on year in this measure and whilst nationally 71.5% of children this age were considered ready to start school, Nottingham is only 3.9% lower than this national figure, which is positive when the low starting point of several years ago is considered;
- (c) since 2012, standards of intake pupils assessed have risen by 31% to 79%, whilst nationally there has been a 24% increase to 82%, with children in the city receiving free school meals achieving 2% higher than children receiving free school meals in other parts of the country;
- (d) Nottingham's foundation stage pupils are at a noticeably lower standard of reading, writing, maths and English than the national average, but the gap is reducing and reduces significantly by the time children reach Key Stage 2, by which time progress in mathematics is particularly good;
- (e) Key Stage 2 pupils nationally ranked results are as follows:

Expected Standard

Reading improved by 2 places (124/150)

Grammar, punctuation and spelling worsened by 16 places (111/150)

Maths worsened by 30 places (109/150)

Writing worsened by 16 places (135/150)

Higher Standard

Reading improved by 21 places (123/150)

Grammar, punctuation and spelling improved by 19 places (70/150)

Maths improved by 22 places (82/150)

Writing worsened by 12 places (120/150)

- (f) changes have taken place with regard to GCSE examination marking so it is not possible to compare like with like of previous years' exam results and the 'Attainment 8' measurement of GCSE qualifications;
- (g) school attendance has improved from a very low starting point several years ago and secondary school absence is now below the national average. Whilst primary school absence is slightly above the national average, once combined, absence rates meet the national standard.

The Committee's questions were responded to as follows:

- (h) whilst progress in achievements have been made for looked after children, detailed statistics with finer detail regarding comparisons with other local authorities for the starting point and improvement of looked after and previously looked after children is not immediately available. This can be provided to the Committee following the meeting. Outcomes overall for looked after children continue to improve;
- (i) overall, gaps against national standards/achievement are narrowing as the educational standard of Nottingham's children improves, but it should be noted that the City's boundaries are tight compared with other cities and do not include many of the suburban areas where achievements may be higher. Historically, where there is deprivation, there is a pattern of low educational attainment and Nottingham is the 4<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority in the country;
- (j) progress is good, but it is vital to recruit and retain high quality teachers, particularly in core subjects. Nottingham City has established strong relationships with other local authorities where significant improvements have been made and carefully has carefully considered their methods and approaches;
- (k) every pupil's performance is considered to understand patterns and where the underlying struggles occur so they can be focused upon. There has been a lot of investment in identifying the underlying issues and care is taken to target resources for the best outcomes;
- (l) academies are responsible for how they allocate pupil premium funding and whilst there has been an overall improvement in educational attainment across the board, it is still necessary to challenge academies and hold them to account where concerns are raised;
- (m) volunteers can be very valuable and whilst other similarly deprived areas such as in London can attract a wealth of volunteers to support learning, this is not so easily achieved in Nottingham;
- (n) literacy remains a focus and the success of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library reading scheme, which has been promoted by the City Council, has encouraged and inspired children to read more;
- (o) the City Council communicates with both of Nottingham's local universities, but has limited authority when it comes to academies. Academies also need to be involved and prepared to share data, to enable universities to utilise that data to be able to

suggest ways in which educational attainment can be improved. Becky Cameron, Engagement Lead at Nottingham Community Voluntary Services, offered to liaise with the Local Authority and her connections at the Universities to help strengthen existing relationships with a view to collaborative work to improve educational attainment;

- (p) the City Council already works effectively with leaders of the Fernwood School Academy Trust with regard to the school's successful methods and approaches.

Committee members welcomed the progress to date and particularly the achievement of meeting and exceeding the national average for attendance, which had required a significant investment of time and effort, but which is now showing the results in raised progress and attainment levels.

When asked how the Committee could further support educational progress in the City, Alison Michalska, Corporate Director for Children and Adults, suggested that the promotion of the value of schools and education could receive greater positive emphasis, including how well the City's schools are performing. There also needs to be ability to challenge where necessary on issues such as exclusion and the necessity to balance the impact on one child against the impact on the other children.

## **RESOLVED**

- (1) to note the Committee's thanks to Nick Lee and Alison Michalska for their attendance and update;**
- (2) for the Committee to encourage promotion of the continued improvement of Nottingham City Schools and the value of education.**

## **35 WORK PROGRAMME**

Zena West, Senior Governance Officer, introduced the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

**REOLVED to note the content of the work programme.**