

Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday 11 April 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Chair)
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jo Barker
Councillor Brett Beetham
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Brian Hammersley
Councillor Justin Kerridge
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince

Other members in attendance

Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture
Councillor Izzi Seccombe OBE, Leader of the Council

Officers

Dan Atkins, Delivery Lead Social Worker Operational Manager
John Coleman, Assistant Director Children and Families
Jackie Kerby, Commissioner, Family Wellbeing
Marina Kitchen, Service Manager, Early Help and Targeted Support Services
Anita Lekhi, Delivery Lead Non Social Worker Operational Manager
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Deborah Moseley, Democratic Services Team Leader
Paul Spencer, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Tregaskis, Service Manager Education Service Delivery

Others Present

David Lawrence, Press

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barbara Brown and Marian Humphreys (who was replaced by Councillor Chris Mills). Apologies were recorded for Councillor Jeff

Morgan, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education. He was represented at the meeting by Councillor Izzi Seccombe OBE, Leader and Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture, who along with Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader, would be covering Councillor Morgan's portfolio during his absence through ill health.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse declared an interest in the item on Children and Family Centres Service Review and Early Help Family Support Services, due to his role on the Rugby Advisory Board for Barnardos.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.

2. Public Speaking

None.

3. Question Time

(1) Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders

None

(2) Updates from Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Assistant Directors

None

4. ILAC / Ofsted Inspection Outcome and Action Plan

The Committee received an update on the Ofsted inspection report into Children Services. This had rated the services as 'good' in all areas. Dan Atkins and Anita Lekhi took members through the report, highlighting the key strengths and specific areas graded as good. The inspectors had noted a number of areas of improvement, which were also reported.

As a result of the inspection the Council had prepared an action plan setting out the steps that would be taken to address the formal recommendations. The action plan, provided as an appendix would be submitted to Cabinet and to Ofsted. The Council was committed to addressing the areas of improvement identified as part of the inspection within the next six months. Actions and improvements would be monitored as part of the quality assurance and performance learning strategy.

Questions and comments were submitted, with responses provided as indicated:

- Councillor Roodhouse sought assurances that upcoming targets in the action plan were on track. Dan Atkins reported on progress which was as expected.
- Councillor Seccombe stated that the Council was pleased to achieve the 'good' rating of the service, especially for the children of Warwickshire. However, the aim was to continue to make progress. She also commented on the areas for improvement and the progress made since the

inspection on those areas. In particular she mentioned that the Council was now fully staffed for social workers and in a strong position to move forward to seek an 'outstanding' rating for this service.

- In response to a question from the Chair, further detail was provided on the multi-agency joint targeted area inspection, including the other services it was linked to. These unannounced inspections tended to be thematic.
- Councillor Seccombe added that such partnership inspections were reliant on the achievements of all partners and a proactive approach was taken by the Council.

Resolved

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Comments as set out above, upon the strengths and areas of improvement identified by the Ofsted inspection report, and
2. Endorses the Action Plan and requests that regular updates on the plan be brought to the Committee.

5. Children and Family Centres Service Review and Early Help Family Support Services

This item was introduced by Marina Kitchen and Jackie Kerby. At the Council meeting on 16 March 2021, a motion was approved, that this Committee keep under review the Family Support Workers' service, as part of its on-going performance monitoring. In response to that motion a report was provided, setting out the current position and performance. Background was provided on the 2019 review of early help and the resultant formation of five district/borough locality Early Help and Targeted Support Teams across Warwickshire.

The Children and Family Centre (C&FC) Service was part of the County Council's "stepped approach" to delivering support. Two providers were commissioned to deliver the service, being Barnardo's and The Diocese of Coventry Multi-Academy Trust (St. Michael's). There were 14 core sites.

The detail of the report included sections on:

- Early Help and Targeted Support Staffing (including Family Support Workers).
- Overview of service delivery, universal help, face to face consultations, targeted support and parenting offer.
- Increasing knowledge, capacity, and capability of the network, including practitioner training, locality family support network meetings and network events for safeguarding leads.
- Continual service development, with focusses around the family support waiting list, developing a dedicated work-flow consultation line and strengthening the knowledge base of family support workers.
- The core elements of the C&FC service model and its performance.
- Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service delivery and the phased approach to recovery.
- Performance up to December 2021, including the actions taken to increase performance by the commissioned providers and the service issues/challenges faced.

The Committee submitted questions and comments as follows:

- The Chair requested that broader feedback was provided for members to include some that wasn't as positive. Marina Kitchen agreed to do this, whilst advising that most feedback had been positive.
- Councillor Gilbert suggested other questions to look at the 'bigger picture' of what may not currently be provided at centres and what else the centres could do if they had the resource. Marina Kitchen clarified that the narrative in the report was from families who had received one to one support for a specific issue via a home visit. A related discussion about such services being connected to the C&FCs.
- Councillor Kerridge sought additional information about the categories used in distinguishing those attending courses, especially those who were 'identified'. Jackie Kerby explained that this data set was complex with a lot of data extracted and she outlined each of the categories. Where the family was known, they were shown as identified. Councillor Kerridge noted that training was provided in schools and he asked if it was available through other services, such as church outreach workers. It was confirmed that the specific training offer reported was through schools. However other agencies had requested such training, and this was being considered currently. Reference also to pastoral support which was accessed by a number of agencies.
- Councillor Kerridge spoke about the location of C&FCs and whether it was possible to see where people lived who were using them. This would give a picture on the proportion who lived locally and those who had to travel from other areas to access a centre. Jackie Kerby confirmed this information could be extracted. People were welcome to use any C&FC to meet their lifestyle needs, such as a commute to work. An offer to provide the data which Councillor Kerridge welcomed for both people attending centres and those accessing online/ telephone support.
- Councillor Seccombe noted that this was two service areas, provided through a C&FC or via outreach. She touched on the impact of the pandemic where venues had to be closed and the challenge now for reinstatement, especially for outreach services.
- Councillor Kerridge referred to future outreach work and strengthening communities. This seemed to focus on locations where there were C&FCs. He did not feel there had been much outreach work before the pandemic in his Studley division, which was five miles from the nearest centre at Alcester. Jackie Kerby agreed that outreach venues were important, reminding of the move away from call centres when the service was redesigned in 2019. She explained the role of the multi-agency district advisory boards. These met quarterly to look at the needs of each community and how the C&FC service could contribute to meeting those needs, alongside the services of other partners and delivered in an appropriate venue in that locality. This was a particular focus in the twelve month contract extension.
- Councillor Simpson-Vince sought more information about anonymous attendances and whether the virtual service offer was continuing. This was a large cohort. The requirement to register at a C&FC may be a deterrent for some.
- Councillor Simpson-Vince then referred to people on a new housing development in Rugby using the local C&FC. Some people using the service previously had been excluded after a period as they were deemed to be from the wrong demographic. There was a need to ensure the aims of this service translated into delivery. Officers responded that this was insightful and had been heard when the service was redesigned. Any person could have needs that required support, irrespective of their location or demography. The redesign was about creating an equitable and consistent service for all people in Warwickshire. The Chair

reflected on the feedback received when the review was undertaken. Marina Kitchen touched on the previous findings of inequity and needs being presented differently across the county, which was also true for the family support model.

- Jackie Kerby spoke about the stepped approach. The C&FC service was a universal offer for early intervention and prevention. For some, additional targeted support would be provided. Jackie Kerby spoke of the performance indicators included in the contract extension and a recent workshop for centre managers and key staff. This included the need for proactive marketing to make it clear that services were for those aged 0-19 and 0-25 for those with special educational needs. There remained a perception from customer feedback that services were only for 0-5 year olds. Examples were given of some pro-active approaches being taken. The family support workers were located at the C&FCs.
- Councillor Roodhouse reminded of previous discussions about the roadway, the stepped approach to intervention and provision of services for families on new housing estates. He praised the family support work and intervention services. His view was there should be more services, especially on the community aspect, provision for 0-19 services and linking to other agencies.
- Councillor Roodhouse then spoke of the volume of data produced. He thanked officers for the additional information provided ahead of the meeting, which was not currently available to members via the Power BI platform. He questioned if there was too much performance data and asked what was needed to achieve the desired outcomes. Further points about commissioners' use of data, that held by other agencies and direct information sources for members serving on boards. He asked what the top three performance indicators were, that should be measured. This would give providers a clear target and enable commissioners to monitor performance, giving a clearer approach.
- Councillor Roodhouse spoke about anxiety and neglect, which was the biggest issue for children and families. He touched on the cost of living increases, contributing factors to neglect and the increasing data from the safeguarding board. He was unclear how the Council was joining up its data with that from the safeguarding board and other bodies to ensure a consistent approach and how that data was used effectively to improve the services delivered. In summary there was a need to focus more. In the future, the same issues were likely to remain unless action was taken.
- Marina Kitchen responded to the above points from Councillor Roodhouse, initially on the vision for the redesigned service to provide an 'upstream approach'. The data showed that 83.3% of the cases in early help did not need to be escalated, which in turn showed the outcomes and impact of the revised approach. By ensuring the systems were in place with interventions on a stepped basis, the needs of the family were assessed and met to avoid the situation escalating and actually to de-escalate it. The community aspect was the next layer and examples were provided on the work with education colleagues to demonstrate this. Reference also to the work on priority families and the early help data maturity model. This pulled together data from a range of agencies to form data 'lakes'. It was a complex piece of work which would need time, but would provide rich data, enabling a focus on themes of practice, such as neglect or parental conflict. There was a need to create reporting mechanisms, which in itself had posed challenges. The issues had been recognised regionally and there was a government fund to which bids could be submitted for support. Marina spoke of the network approach to assisting families in financial difficulty, working with and through the Citizens Advice Bureau, community supermarkets and through the headteachers' forum. Information was shared with the network so they could signpost people to the appropriate service/ support.

- John Coleman described this as integrated performance and integrated governance. He reminded of the data maturity model, the Power BI system and ongoing work to enable members to have appropriate access to that platform. There were plans for district based integrated governance, where partner organisations would come together, to focus on the issues for children within those communities. Information was provided about the established integration between family support work and targeted youth work.
- John Coleman responded on the key datasets which Councillor Roodhouse had mentioned. Getting more children to access early years provision was a shared priority and focus. There were known benefits from children accessing the free early years provision, being more likely to be school ready and more likely to progress later in life. The second area referenced was closer working with health visiting colleagues, to ensure that children who were not meeting their milestones received support from all agencies. Again, this would assist in ensuring they were school ready.
- Councillor Seccombe picked up the points raised earlier in the debate about safeguarding and providing support for people as a 'step down' from social care to early help.
- Councillor Roodhouse pursued the points about the volume of data, suggesting a single page summary would be useful and noting the officer feedback on key data areas. Further points about the advisory boards, the proposed district-based approach, which he equated to the former local strategic partnerships, about engagement with district and borough councils and about the two providers. Finally, he spoke about the timescales and felt that this should be progressed more quickly to ensure the outcomes were achieved.
- John Coleman confirmed that the Safeguarding Partnership received regular updates around early help. There was a stepdown process from social care to early help services. Use of this had increased by 520 families in the previous year. There had also been an increase of 21% in the use of family support over the previous year. The aim was to move as many resources as possible into early help services. John Coleman also spoke on data maturity and use of data, collating that from a range of agencies into a single coherent dashboard. The aim was to accelerate this work as a priority. The data was used to target key issues such as problems associated with children not sleeping properly. Ultimately the aim was to understand the data to be able to predict future issues.
- Councillor Beetham sought more information about active waiting list management. On the Power BI information supplied ahead of the meeting he asked questions on the varying data on usage of C&FCs, noting particularly the lower usage of the centre in Stockingford.
- Marina Kitchen responded explaining the high number of referrals for family support from a variety of sources. Every referral was triaged to assess the need and appropriate course of action. She explained how family support cases were allocated. When there was no family support worker available, active management was used. A needs assessment took place to see if the case could be referred directly to the appropriate agency. The support included weekly telephone calls, which for some was sufficient. Where cases involved complex needs, the timescales for appointment of a family support worker were short. Marina gave examples of the complex case types around parenting work or mental health, reiterating that other aspects were referred to the appropriate agency before the family support worker had been allocated.
- Jackie Kerby responded to Councillor Beetham's second point about usage of the C&FCs serving the Nuneaton area. It did seem that families made more use of the centre at Camp Hill, rather than that at Stockingford. The way in which data was being recorded may also be a contributor and it was planned to move from the current paper-based registration scheme to an electronic system. It was reiterated that people could use any C&FC.

- Councillor Barker welcomed the strive for continued improvement and thanked staff for the support provided to families in her division. A comment about the limited service provided at the Badger Valley centre, which was only open for ten hours each week. The next nearest centre was in Stratford, some ten miles and a £13 return bus trip away. She acknowledged the benefits of information sharing with the NHS and would seek to assist as part of her role with the integrated care partnership work. Councillor Barker spoke about the data provided, being concerned regarding accuracy as it was obtained during the pandemic. There were a number of clear indicators of demographic changes with people affected by loss of employment, increased applications for universal credit and reliance on food banks. There was discussion about the other services delivered from Badger Valley which totalled 61 hours provision per week. This included health visiting and midwifery services. Plans for a youth club at the centre had not proved successful. Councillor Barker provided additional clarification from local knowledge and Jackie Kerby explained the role of the provider to work with other agencies in maximising use of the C&FC. Further points about the challenges on colocation and potential use of the youth fund to assist the local youth club would be discussed outside the meeting.
- Councillor Mills sought more information about services for travellers, which was duly provided. Officers who supported the travelling community were briefed on the family support offer and could assist with referrals. There were a range of courses with most being available on-line. Many cases involved people who had chosen to live in permanent accommodation within the county. Further points about the training for site managers on the services available, the aim of making it easy to access support and to prevent the need for escalation.

Resolved

That the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives the report and comments as set out above, upon the response of the Early Help Family Support Service detailing the comprehensive Family Support offer available for families from conception to 19 years (25 years with SEND) and of the Children and Family Centre service, in response to the Council motion of 16 March 2021.

6. Work Programme

The Committee noted and agreed its work programme.

7. Any Other Business

The Chair reminded that a task and finish group had been agreed previously to look at school places and school sufficiency. Members wishing to participate in the review were asked to confirm to the Chair and Democratic Services. Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince had expressed an interest in chairing the review.

8. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting had been scheduled for 14 June 2022 at 10am and would be held in Committee Room 2, Shire Hall, Warwick.

Future meetings for 2022/2023 were scheduled for:

- 27 September 2022 at 10am
- 8 November 2022 at 10am
- 14 February 2023 at 10am
- 11 April 2023 at 10am

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Chair

The meeting rose at 11:25pm