

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)**

**THURSDAY, 19TH MARCH, 2015**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors J Elliott, J Jarosz, P Latty,  
S McKenna, K Renshaw, B Selby, B Urry  
and F Venner

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)**

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)

Mrs J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Ms J Hazelgrave – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)**

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative

Ms S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative

Ms C Bewsher – Looked After Children and Care Leavers

## **65 Late Items**

There were no formal late items of business to consider. However the Chair agreed to accept the following supplementary information in relation to agenda item 7:

- Kinship Care case studies
- Kinship Care and Special Guardianship newsletter (Autumn-Winter 2014).

The above information was not available at the time of agenda despatch but was subsequently made available on the Council's website. (Minute No. 68 refers)

## **66 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

## **67 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors C Gruen, K Mitchell and M Rafique and from Co-opted Members; Mr A Graham, Ms K Jan and Ms T Kayani.

Notification had been received that Councillor S McKenna was to substitute for Councillor C Gruen, Councillor J Jarosz for Councillor K Mitchell and Councillor B Selby for Councillor M Rafique.

## 68 Inquiry into Kinship Care

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented evidence as part of the Board's inquiry into Kinship Care.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Update on the development of services and support to kinship carers in Leeds
- Kinship Care Family and Friends Policy
- Kinship Care Guide for England
- Forgotten Children, Children growing up in Kinship Care (Grandparents Plus)
- Relative Experience, Issues and Challenges for Kinship Carers (Grandparents Plus / Family and Parenting Institute / Family Lives)
- Staying Put (The Fostering Network)
- Kinship Care case studies
- Kinship Care and Special Guardianship newsletter (Autumn-Winter 2014).

The following representatives attended the meeting:

- Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director of Children's Services (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services)
- Sarah Johal, Assistant Head of Service (Looked After Children)
- Val Hales, Team Manager (Fostering and Adoption)
- Wendy Sanderson, Team Manager (Kinship Care Team)
- Stephen Boorman, Section Head, Legal Services
- David Cousins, Grandparents Association
- Bridget Lindley, Family Rights Group
- Andrew Walker, The Fostering Network
- Ann Pemberton, Home Start Leeds
- Ann Russell, Kinship Carer.

The key areas of discussion were:

- An explanation regarding the legal framework, particularly the Children Act 1989.
- Formal and informal arrangements, special guardianship and child arrangement orders.
- Main reasons why children become looked after; parents go to prison, mental health issues, alcohol and substance misuse and child neglect.
- Advantages to kinship care, particularly that the child had an existing relationship with the carer. Research indicated that outcomes were slightly better than those in foster care / unrelated care.
- Impact on sibling arrangements – often siblings stayed together under kinship care arrangements.
- Kinship care retained family history and provided greater stability.

- The need to develop work with schools as existing work with clusters was considered inconsistent.
- Complex family arrangements and challenges associated with children placed abroad.

The Scrutiny Board watched a 5 minute Youtube case study video by Grandparents Plus 'Tony and Christine's story – Keep families together'.

The Chair then invited kinship carers in attendance to share their experiences regarding kinship care and the support arrangements in place.

Other key points discussed were:

- Greater support needed to help with children's emotional and behavioural issues.
- The need to develop and publicise the range of support available, particularly ensuring that services were easily accessible.
- The need to develop links with the mediation service to support breakdowns in kinship care arrangements.
- Data gathered in relation to kinship care – often older carers with health issues and limited support network.
- Development of family and friends policy – emphasis on early support was extremely important.
- Role of the Young Carers Group.
- 'Mockingbird model' being developed – pilot project which provided kinship support.
- Confirmation that support for transition from primary to secondary school was undertaken by Targeted Adolescent Mental Health Service (TAMHS) – a city-wide service available across all schools.
- Clarification sought whether suitable and timely support was available via Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and TAMHS? The Scrutiny Board was advised that this area could be improved.
- Work being undertaken by NSPCC and University of Bristol regarding unification with birth families.

The Chair thanked representatives for their attendance.

**RESOLVED** – That the above issues be incorporated into the Board's final inquiry report.

(Councillor K Renshaw left the meeting at 12 noon and Councillor S McKenna at 12.05pm during the consideration of this item.)

## 69 Minutes - 26 February 2015

**RESOVLED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2015 be approved as a correct record.

**70 Work Schedule**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the current municipal year.

**RESOLVED** –That the Board's work schedule be approved.

**71 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday, 23 April 2015 at 9.45am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.15am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.20pm.)