

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.)