

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors Amanda Carter, E Flint,
A Forsaith, C Gruen, J Illingworth, S Lay,
J Lennox, A Marshall-Katung, L Martin,
K Renshaw, J Senior and R. Stephenson

CO-OPTED MEMBER (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)

Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – School Staff Representative

Ms H Bellamy – School Staff Representative

Ms L Whitaker - Young Lives Leeds

48 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

49 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

50 Late Items

With the agreement of the Chair, one late item of business was added to the agenda - "Notification of Serious Incidents Review". This matter came to light following the despatch of the agenda and the Chair deemed this to be a significant matter requiring the Boards urgent consideration. A copy of the report had been provided to Board members and published to the Council website prior to the meeting. (Minute 54 refers).

51 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

52 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bithell, Councillor Hussain, Councillor Richards and Co-opted Member Kate Blacker.

Councillor J Lennox attended as substitute for Councillor Bithell.
Councillor L Martin attended as substitute for Councillor Hussain.
Councillor Amanda Carter attended as substitute for Councillor Richards

53 Minutes - 26th January 2022

An amendment to Minute No. 42 'Performance report for the financial year 2020/21' second paragraph was requested to read *"It was highlighted that there are currently 1,333 children looked after, which is a rate of 78 per 10,000."*

RESOLVED – That, subject to the amendment recorded above, the minutes of the meeting held 26th January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

54 Notification of Serious Incidents Review

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report introducing an issue which had been brought to the attention of the Chair in respect of the processes supporting the Notification of Serious Incidents.

In introducing the item, the Chair advised that he had been made aware that there had been some instances where differing views were evident within the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership in relation to whether or not to categorise a case as a notifiable Serious Incident. Arising from that, a local review of notification arrangements had commenced in December 2021 with a report due to be considered by the Partnership at the end of March. The Chair expressed his view that the current review of notification arrangements, and the background to it, should reasonably have been brought to the attention of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board at an earlier stage; and because of the seriousness of the issue, he had requested this issue be considered as a matter of urgency at this meeting.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Fiona Venner - Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq - Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth - Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Rebecca Roberts - Section Head, Social Care Legal and legal adviser to the Safeguarding Partnership Board
- Jasvinder Sanghera CBE – Independent Chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Section Head, Social Care Legal and legal adviser to the Safeguarding Partnership Board, provided an overview of the framework introduced by the provisions of the Children Act 2004 and amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to support the delivery of multi-agency services to protect and safeguard children. The Board received information on the establishment of

the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the national panel) and the framework for reporting serious incidents commonly referred to as Notifications. It was highlighted that the duty to report serious incidents to the national panel falls to the local authority in which the child or young person resides.

The Board was provided with the timeframe for actions to be taken following the notification of a Serious Incident and an overview of those actions, culminating in the partners determining whether or not the information/learning gathered is sufficient to implement and learn from, or whether further learning is required, perhaps in the context of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR).

Members additionally noted the following:

- The criteria taken into consideration by partners when determining whether a CSPR is appropriate, as contained in The Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018, part 11.
- Since the new arrangements were established in September 2019, Leeds had made 6 notifications involving suspected abuse or neglect, and one notification which did not.
- The LSCP is undertaking 3 CSPRs (including one where no notification was made) and the Review and Advisory sub group of the LSCP is currently overseeing 10 other cases where the criteria for a notification was not deemed to have been met, but learning could still be gathered.

The Chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership provided an overview of the remit of her role as the Independent Chair and explained to the Board that in August 2021, she had raised initial concerns regarding the existing notification processes. Linked to this, she highlighted that although the Partnership is tasked with working collaboratively and to share information, she felt that the framework requiring the local authority to make notifications of serious incidents in some way may hamper collective decision making when identifying cases where serious harm had occurred. It was highlighted that one case had particularly reinforced her concern and led to her also seeking advice from the Chair of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, Annie Hudson, as well as commissioning a local review of the notification arrangements.

At this point, the Chair indicated his wish for the Board to be able to discuss specifics related to this issue and acknowledged that those discussions may touch upon a current or recent Serious Incident case. As such the Chair requested, and the Board agreed, to holding those discussions in private, in order to maintain the confidentiality of any such cases. The public interest in maintaining confidentiality in relation to any Serious Incident case which may be discussed outweighed the public interest in holding the discussions in public.

RESOLVED – Under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rules 10.4 (1) and (2) the Board entered into private session.

At the conclusion of discussions held in private, the meeting resumed in open session and discussed the following matters:

- The role of the Review and Advisory Group in considering cases of most serious harm and its focus on the impact of harm and long-term harm on children and young people.
- There had been two cases where differing views were evident within the LSCP on whether or not to categorise a case as a notifiable Serious Incident and where the local authority had not made a notification.
- The local review being undertaken provided an opportunity for partners to share their own individual processes supporting the notifications made to the LSCP, highlighting the importance of sharing the rationales and pre-notification discussions.
- The role and powers of the Independent Chair and her concern that she was not aware of the number of cases considered by partners but not presented to the LSCP for discussion.
- The view of the Chair of national panel of Leeds' notification history.
- Whether reputational damage could be a factor in a decision not to make a notification.
- The use of retrospective notifications should new evidence come to light, which would prompt a Rapid Review and instigate learning.

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships provided the Board with assurance of the commitment of the Directorate to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and advised that the Notification and Rapid Review process was just one of a number of ways to support learning after an incident or serious case.

The Executive Member highlighted that as Leeds provided good Children's Services, the local authority made less notifications than other authorities, and in light of the disagreement between partners, a review of processes had been implemented with input requested from the National Panel.

The Director of Children and Families confirmed that consultation with other local authorities was undertaken when considering Notifications and advised of the other learning opportunities, aside from Serious Case Reviews. The Director also offered his apologies that this matter had not previously been drawn to the attention of the Chair.

The Board also heard from the Deputy Director of Children and Families who confirmed that following discussions in 2021, a Notifications framework was developed whereby the Independent Chair was made aware of a case in the first instance, followed by partners and after discussions, if it was felt that the criteria was not met, a written rationale was provided.

Discussions covered the following matters:

- Concern that under existing internal processes, there will be a number of cases which had not been brought to the attention of the LSCP Review and Advisory Group.

- Support for the request made by the Chair of the LSCP to receive the rationale for the decision made by Childrens Services not to pursue a notification in respect of a specific 2021 case.
- The role of the resolution process in strategy discussions with partners and whether a similar solution would be appropriate for Notification discussions in the event that partners had differing views.
- Whether a representation should be made to the Minister to review that part of the legislation which vests the Notification process only to local authorities.
- The structure of Safeguarding Children Partnerships within neighbouring authorities.

In conclusion the Chair reiterated that he had not previously been aware of concerns relating to the Notification process and noted the offer to bring back the findings of the local review work, which is due to be concluded in March, for the Scrutiny Board's consideration.

RESOLVED -

- a) To note the content of the report and discussions on the information presented during the meeting.
- b) That once available, the findings of the local review work are brought back to the Scrutiny Board for consideration and that all partner members of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership who are party to the Notification process are invited to contribute to the Board's consideration of the review findings.
- c) To thank the Independent Chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership for her participation in the meeting.

55 Future in Mind: Leeds Strategy - Update

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report presenting an update from NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group surrounding the implementation of the refreshed Future in Mind: Leeds Strategy.

The following were in attendance to present the report:

- Councillor Fiona Venner - Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Jayne Bathgate-Roche - Pathway Integration Leader, NHS Leeds CCG
- Emily Griffiths - Associate Director of Pathway Integration, Children, Families and Healthy Populations, NHS Leeds CCG

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships gave a brief introduction highlighting the Strategy had been refreshed in 2021 and was set in the context of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, as well as the impact of trauma and poverty on children and young people. The Strategy had strong links to the 'All Age mental health' strategy and the Adults Mental Health Partnership Board (AMHPB). Importantly, both Future In Mind and the AMHPB share the priorities of the impact of trauma and the impact of the period of transition from the care of Childrens Services to Adult Social Care.

The Associate Director of Pathway Integration, Children, Families and Healthy Populations, NHS Leeds CCG highlighted the strength of partnership working in the development of the refreshed Strategy. Moving forward the Strategy seeks to embed “think family” across all partner groups and to address the disparity of investment in children and young people’s mental health services through its links to the Childrens Population Board and its focus on transforming services, especially at that period of transition.

The Pathway Integration Leader, NHS Leeds CCG, outlined the work undertaken to support the 7 areas of work within the Strategy, each led by a different partner:

- Support – to ensure access to services and the right support at the right time
- Early Intervention – how to bring partners together to make an early impact
- Parity of investment in children and young people’s mental health – noting investment for ‘trailblazer’ teams to work in Secondary school age education settings.
- Transitions - work to identify arbitrary ‘cut-off’ points between provision of services to children and young people as they move into adulthood and access adult support services.
- Family Support – how to equip families to support their child.
- Children with medically unexplained symptoms – support for those with symptoms of long Covid, fatigue and other symptoms which may not yet have an identified medical cause.

The Board discussed the following matters –

- How education settings which are not part of the Local Authority or member of a Childrens Services Cluster can be encouraged to participate and utilise the support available under the Strategy.
- Funding for CAMHS and referral times.
- Resources to support early intervention after trauma and the implementation of Navigator roles in hospital Accident and Emergency departments.
- Support for children entering early years education with little or no experience of social interaction.
- The role of Youth Services in identifying and supporting young people who may be experiencing mental health issues.
- The possibility for service provision in the community to provide care close to home.

RESOLVED – To note the content and recommendations set out within the Future in Mind: Leeds Strategy - update report.

(Councillor Venner left the meeting at this point)

56 Children and Families Services Covid-19 response and recovery

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to a future Board meeting.

57 Inquiry into Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families - Formal Response

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to a future Board meeting.

(Councillor Illingworth and Councillor Amanda Carter left the meeting at this point).

58 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out the forthcoming work schedule, with the latest version appended to the report at Appendix 1.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser introduced the report and highlighted the work items scheduled for March. It was noted that an additional meeting may need to be scheduled during April as there was no guarantee that the findings of the Notification of Serious Incidents Review would be available in time for the Board's March meeting (minute 54 above refers).

RESOLVED –

- (a) To note the report and the work schedule attached at Appendix 1.
- (b) To note that an additional meeting may need to be scheduled in April primarily to consider the findings of the Notification of Serious Incidents Review.

59 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the next formal meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board will be on Wednesday 30th March at 10:00 am (pre-meeting at 9:45 am).

The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm