
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.15am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 10 October 2019

Present:

County Councillors:

J Chandler (Chairman)
J Baker (Vice Chairman)
G Butland (left after Item 4)
M Durham (substitute)
B Egan
C Guglielmi
J Henry (Vice Chairman)
P May
R Pratt
P Reid
C Souter

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, were also present throughout.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Deakin, Lumley, McEwan (for whom Councillor Durham substituted) and Weston, R Carson (Education representative) and Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex

2. Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman subject to a correction of meeting date under Item 2.

3. Questions from the public

There were no questions from the public.

4. Respite Care

The Committee considered report PAF/23/19 which specifically addressed action points arising from the June 2019 meeting of the Committee. The following joined the meeting to introduce the update and support the discussion.

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Cabinet Member – Children and Families,
Christina Pace, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, Essex
County Council,
Russell Breyer, Director Local Delivery (Children and Families).

During discussion the following was highlighted and/or noted:

- A review had been undertaken to determine the focus of future work as part of developing a three year strategy. The focus would go beyond just residential care and include other options such as foster care, direct payments.
- The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Maples and Lavender facilities would not close during the three year strategy review period.
- The service would also look to increase fostering numbers.
- Families had indicated that they wanted more opportunity to highlight their own profile, circumstances and challenges during the assessment process. The service had recruited a development officer whose priority would be to further develop that assessment process. The appointee was a full-time senior social worker who would not be distracted by case work.
- The volume of cases for the assessment panel was high with only a 10-15 minute timeslot available for each case. The family social worker represented families at the hearing.
- Through engagement with families the service would scope out how to improve communication and feedback on the assessment process.
- In the end a professional decision would be made on assessing need. However, the families' social worker had an ongoing relationship with families and would review arrangements if they were visibly not working for them.
- The service was looking to find better ways to communicate with families and involve them more in developing future service design.

- Families would be invited to join workshops being held to help shape future service design. The service was also exploring how to include families that were using foster carers in those discussions.
- The managers of the Lavender and Maples short break homes would also help shape the offer for those being considered for respite care.
- A late appendix report had been tabled at the meeting. Members queried whether data was available on the number of applications and referrals made. Whilst contributors did not have precise figures to hand they did stress that the complexity of cases was increasing and that they were increasingly having to respond to that challenge often with further resource. There had been some disruption to services and in some cases officers had worked through other options with families and in most cases they had been able to meet needs within a reasonable timeframe.

Conclusion:

The Chairman thanked the contributors for their update. The Committee were encouraged by the work now being planned to include families in future service design. It was agreed that a further update would be provided in Spring 2020 once the workshops had been held and further work on preparing a draft strategy undertaken.

The meeting then adjourned at 11am and reconvened at 11.09. Cllr Butland left the meeting during the recess period.

5. Essex Safeguarding Adults Board

The Committee considered report PAF/24/19. The following joined the meeting to introduce the update and support the discussion.

Fiona Davis, Director Safeguarding and Quality Assurance,
Paul Bedwell, ESAB Safeguarding Board Manager,
Neale Thomas, Criminal Justice Commissioning Support

Contributors outlined the Board's three year strategic priorities and actions for the current year as well as reflecting on some key outcomes from the previous year.

During discussion the following was highlighted and/or noted:

- A key output during the last year was agreed revised safeguarding guidelines with Southend and Thurrock councils which were also now more aligned with London Boroughs so as to be coterminous in arrangements cross border wherever possible.

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- The views of District Councils had been sought to help shape future priorities.
 - In terms of measuring performance, the County Council's safeguarding team were measured against delivery of the strategic plan. A performance dashboard looked at day to day safeguarding (referrals, substantiated referrals etc) and there was ongoing work with the police to determine any further data that they may collect which could further inform the Board.
 - The majority of budget funding for the Board was contributed by the County Council, Police and Health.
 - There would be a number of activities and media releases during national safeguarding week in November.
 - There would be further focus on transitions between children's and adult services and ensuring appropriate levels of support to young adults.
 - A number of thematic reviews were underway at present and the report to the Committee had highlighted the one on homelessness. It was highlighted that the review included input from Healthwatch Essex.
 - A Horizons review had looked at what pushed people to the margins of society through intensive work with a targeted rolling cohorts of 10 individuals. Most of these individuals would have deprivation and emotional wellbeing and mental health challenges. To date the project had worked with a total of 53 people and 16 who had been street homeless had been rehoused. There was also evidence of other outcomes such as reduced substance abuse. A mosaic of funding for the project had been received from Public Health, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and others. Members queried whether the Horizons project could be extended beyond its pilot area. Harlow, for example, had not been included as it had had a previous comparable service - "streets are homes". However, the project would be re-procured next year and it was likely that it would expand to reach to these other areas.
 - Some members suggested a link between delays in Universal Credit causing rent arrears which could lead to homelessness. There was some floating support available to those experiencing delays to try and mitigate that problem and work with landlords and district council housing departments. Officers agreed to provide some further data on the numbers who had benefited from that service.
 - Waiting lists for Deprivation of Liberty assessments had reduced. The Board had been receiving quarterly reports on this. Further

contracted resource had been put in place. However, there was a concern that a change in legislation next year, which would introduce wider ranging Liberty Protection Safeguards for those 16 years and above, may significantly increase the number of people needing the assessments (will not just be those in formalised care settings).

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked the contributors for attending and they left the meeting.

6. Work Programme

The Committee considered and noted report PAF/25/19.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be on Thursday 14 November 2019.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.57am.

Chairman