

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFEGUARDING SUB-COMMITTEE (A SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE), HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON WEDNESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2010**

**Membership**

**Councillors**

- \* Mrs T Sargent (Chairman)
- Mrs A Brown
- \* Mrs T Higgins
- \* J Knapman
- C Riley
- \* J Aldridge (*ex officio*)

**Non-Elected Voting Members**

Mr R Carson

(\* present)

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Graham Redgwell

Governance Officer

Matthew Waldie

Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 9.00 am.

**26. Apologies**

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Cllr A Brown

Mr R Carson

Cllr C Riley

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Higgins as a member of the Committee, in the stead of Councillor Hutchon, who was still recovering from an operation.

**27. Declarations of Interest**

No new declarations of interest were recorded.

**28. CQC/Ofsted Report Outcomes in respect of Safeguarding/Looked after Children – Joint working arrangements for children**

The Chairman welcomed Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Director of Commissioning, Schools, Children & Families, to the meeting.

Ms Ogle-Welbourn introduced the item by reminding Members of the benefits of joint working arrangements:

- Providing robust governance, with transparent planning and decision-making, deliverable strategies and plans, and improved services and experiences for customers
- The alignment of commissioning cycles and ensuring the effective use of resources, which should prevent duplication of activity/effort, increase efficiencies, create clearer pathways to service delivery, and deliver value for money and create a bigger impact on community services.

With regard to the structure, the Ofsted report had recognised that good work is being done, but noted that there was nobody pulling the different strands together. Under the new structure, this role is carried out by the Strategic Joint Commissioning Group, under Councillor Candy, which replaces the former Children's Trust. This receives input from Safer Essex and PCT Boards and will do so from the Health and Wellbeing Board when it is up and running. It acts through the Executive and it is subject to the scrutiny of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

The Executive uses various multi-agency resource panels (eg Essex Allocation Panel and Joint Agency Panel) to provide an agreed process for ensuring management oversight of the higher levels of need within education health and care. Multi-agency Allocation Groups (MAAGs) will provide a broad range of services across all levels of need. They are locally based, use local knowledge and professionally supported, and are accessed via CAFs (Common Assessment Framework). The use of CAFs is increasing and has not only led to a decrease in the number of cases entering the system, but has also helped those in the system to move through the process.

Several issues were raised:

- In response to a suggestion that there were too many bodies, Ms Ogle-Welbourn pointed out that they had managed to reduce the number, by removing a layer of committees, and that the SJCG served as a conduit for those remaining, acting on the information received from them, through the Executive. Involving the different bodies ensures that all relevant parties can provide input
- Four levels of need are used: 1, Universal – children with no additional needs; 2, Vulnerable - children with additional needs; 3, Complex – children with complex needs; and 4, Acute – children whose needs are complex, prolonged or critical. This helped all those involved to focus on the degree of need and to bring the appropriate resources to bear on the situation
- The Improvement Plan itself – it now includes a column to show what has actually been done, and this must be completed. There has been a general improvement, with increased awareness of problems. And the standard of audits has also generally improved.
- There is likely to be an unannounced Ofsted inspection in the near future – perhaps as soon as December, with a formal, announced one in June. The emphasis here will be on good management, which is an

ongoing process. And all staff members are now clear on what happens at an inspection and what they as individuals must do

- The reorganisation of PCTs in Essex has helped the County Council, as now, although there are still 5 PCTs, there are only two chief executives they have to deal with - Sheila Bremner in charge of the three northern ones, and Andrew Pike in charge of the two in the south of the county. Ms Bremner will be focusing on safeguarding and Mr Pike will sit on the Commissioning Board
- The CQC/Ofsted report was not only critical of the County Council, but also of the health authority – which was good, in that it demonstrated that all parties need to make changes in how they undertake the safeguarding of children
- One specific example that has demonstrated the value of working with other parties concerns notifications of domestic violence, where the definition used by the police differed from that used by Essex. This discrepancy has now been resolved, which should help to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals on this
- Members acknowledged the effort that has gone into putting systems into place that should improve administration, lines of communication, reporting, etc, but the real issue was how all these changes affected the lives of children in the care of Essex. For example, were they safer, happier, better educated? Ms Ogle-Welbourn acknowledged that some elements were hard to measure, but statistics could be used in certain measures to gauge some elements, eg a lower number of referrals and an increase in positive feedback coming to the workers in the field. And improved exam results also told their own story
- It was suggested that the five key outcomes for children in *Every Child Matters* (Be healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and achieve, Make a positive contribution, and Achieve economic well-being) might serve well as measures – although perhaps this was not a view shared by Ofsted
- Another question raised was why a joint strategic board was required to bring together two large, funding organisations – should this not be dealt with by one agency? Ms Ogle-Welbourn acknowledged the validity of this argument but pointed out that the current separation of the two funding streams made this approach impracticable at present

The Chairman thanked Ms Ogle-Welbourn for her contribution and her ongoing efforts on behalf of SCF.

## **29. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 11 November 2010, at 1.00 pm. Venue: County Hall.

The meeting closed at 10.15 a.m.

Chairman

