

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRUST BOARD

5.00pm, 2 NOVEMBER 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors: Brown (Chairman), Alford, Bennett and Fryer

Brighton & Hove Primary Care Trust:

Dr Louise Hulton

South Downs Health:

Andy Painton

Non-Voting Co-optees:

David Standing, Community & Voluntary Sector Forum

Gail Gray, Community & Voluntary Sector Forum

Andrew Jeffrey, Parent Forum

Priya Rogers, Youth Council

Also in attendance:

Alan Bedford, Independent Chair of LSCB

Apologies:

Councillor Pat Hawkes MBE

Mo Marsh, South Downs Health

Eleanor Davies (CYPT), Parent Forum

Graham Bartlett, Sussex Police Authority

Rose Suman, Youth Council

PART ONE

26. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

26a Declarations of Substitutes

26.1 Geoff Burgess declared he was attending the meeting as substitute for Darren Grayson, PCT.

26b Declarations of Interest

26.2 There were none.

26c Exclusion of Press and Public

26.3 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Children & Young People's Trust Board considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

26.4 **RESOLVED** – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the Item 34 in Part 2 of the agenda.

27. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

27.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 September 2009 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

28. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

28.1 The Chairman welcomed Alan Bedford, the new Chair of the Local Children Safeguarding Board, to the meeting.

28.2 The Chairman reported that Alan McCarthy had been appointed the new Chair of the NHS Brighton & Hove. On behalf of the CYPT Board, she recorded her congratulations to him.

28.3 The Chairman also referred to paragraph 23.3 of the minutes of the previous meeting, which referred to the youth careers event being organised in the city. She indicated she hoped that all members of the Board had received an invitation and hoped that members would be able to attend the event.

29. ANNUAL ADOPTION AGENCY REPORT

29.1 The Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the annual adoption agency report, which provided full information about the adoption activity and compliance with the national adoption standards within the Children & Young People's Trust and provided a profile of the work of the Adoption and Permanence teams with the fostering & Adoption Service (for copy see minute book).

29.2 The Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption, presented the item and gave an overview about recruitment activities and strategies within the service (see appendix 1 to the minutes).

29.3 The Head of Service noted the challenges the service faced in terms of the significant rise of children coming into care over the last 12 months. This rise in the numbers of children coming into care is a national picture but has resulted in particular difficulties at times in finding available fostering placements either from within in house resources or from agency foster placements.

- 29.4 The Board very much welcomed the report and congratulated the team of officers involved with this work. The Chairman also noted that the last Ofsted inspection had rated Brighton & Hove Adoption service as good with outstanding for diversity and the Fostering service as outstanding. She recorded her thanks to all the team involved for their positive performance and contribution.
- 29.5 Discussion took place on this item and on item 30. The Board referred to several points raised in the reports and presentation and sought further clarification on those. Members noted the letter box service referred to in the report and enquired what the service was about; they enquired whether the approval of foster carers was a stringent process in Brighton & Hove; and noted the use of outside agencies and queried the extent to which the city needed to use those agencies.
- 29.6 The Head of Service explained that the service operated a letter box service which facilitated an exchange of cards, letters or information at agreed intervals between adopters and birth parents in order to retain the link between the birth family and the child. She reported that one dedicated officer was responsible for this service and a record was kept of all the communications had between those parties. She indicated that the service made an effort to retain those links for children and provided particular support to birth parents and birth family members to enable them to continue to have some form of contact with the adopted child.
- 29.7 In terms of the approval of foster carers, the Head of Service indicated that it was necessary for the process to be a rigorous one. She noted that children coming into care often have a range of complex needs, and may have suffered abuse, neglect or trauma in their family background. She explained that it was essential to place children with foster carers that are sufficiently confident and properly equipped for the demands of the fostering task and able to provide a safe and secure home for a child.
- 29.8 The Head of Service also referred to the retention rates of the city's carers. She explained that, inevitably there were a few carers that retired each year due to their age, health issues or fostering no longer fitting with their family situation. She said that officers worked hard to ensure that good carers were retained by the service.
- 29.9 The Head of Service referred to the use of independent fostering agencies and confirmed that there was an increase in the use of such agencies given the rise in numbers of children coming into care. She noted that the Children & Young People Trust now had an established agency placement team and that there was a good process in place for commissioning such independent fostering services.
- 29.10 In response to further enquiry about pre birth assessment work, the Head of Service explained that due to increased numbers of referrals there had been a reduced capacity to undertake timely pre birth work. However, she reported that a multi-agency review group had been set up within the Trust to look specifically at early permanence work and pre birth care pathway. She advised, however, that the priority was to ensure that the service ensured effective and timely planning and intervention in relation to those most vulnerable babies in the care system.
- 29.11 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Board accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the Annual Adoption Agency Report and the progress of the Agency in relation to adoption and permanence activity be noted.
- (2) That the revised Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose be endorsed.

30. ANNUAL FOSTERING SERVICE REPORT

- 30.1 The Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the Annual Fostering Service Report. The report provided full information about fostering activity within the Children & Young People's Trust and provided a profile of the work of the Fostering teams with the Fostering & Adoption Service (for copy see minute book).
- 30.2 The discussion on this item was taken and considered in conjunction with Item 29 above.
- 30.3 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Board accepted the following recommendations:
 - (1) That the Annual Fostering Service Report and the progress of the Fostering & Adoption Service in relation to fostering activity be noted.
 - (2) That the revised Fostering Statement of Purpose be endorsed.

31. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

- 31.1 The Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the Performance Improvement report, which presented the performance covering the period April to September 2009 and provided the Board with information relating to the agreed priority outcomes for children and young people and the strategic actions that aim to improve performance (for copy see minute book).
- 31.2 The Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning and Governance, pointed out that the report covered not only social working, but services across the whole of the CYPT business. He noted some of the good news information, for instance the positive information achieved around child obesity and breast feeding; he also noted some of the challenges the city still faced, such as the increase of NEET and the figures on teenage pregnancy.
- 31.3 Councillor Fryer noted the information on teenage pregnancy. She sought clarification about the outcomes of the conference that took place last Summer and enquired about the steps the city was taking as a result of it, which it was not being taken prior to the event. She also queried what the situation was in relation to school meals and biometric testing.
- 31.4 The Assistant Director explained that the city had adopted some action points following the conference. He noted, however, that it was early days to know what the impact of those actions were. He reported that he was working closely with the corporate team and the intention was to report on this matter, and on what had been achieved, quarterly.

- 31.5 In terms of school meals and biometric testing, the Director of Children Services stated that she was aware that the system was causing concerns. She explained that the Head of School Admissions & Transport was the officer leading on this matter and, therefore, he would be able to give greater clarification on this issue. She advised, however, that the matter needed to be looked at again.
- 31.6 The Board referred to the number of children with child protection plan and enquired whether there had been any changes since the 'Baby P' incident. The Director of Children Services identified that, following 'Baby P', there had been an increase in referrals to social care but the early increase that showed in the report probably related to the fact that the product of integrated Services was the improved identification of children at risk.
- 31.7 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Board accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the data and analysis in the PIR be noted and the action being taken to improve performance be agreed.
 - (2) That it be agreed that new proposals, to be outlined in the next Performance Improvement Report, be considered which will address/reconcile the requirements to monitor CYPP priority indicators, the CYPP delivery plan, other key strategic plans, the National Indicator Set and the Ofsted Performance Profile.

32. BRIGHTON AND HOVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

- 32.1 The Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the final version of Brighton & Hove's Children & Young People's Plan 2009-12. The Plan addressed the requirement in the Children's Plan Guidance 2009 to demonstrate how improvements in outcomes would be achieved through the integration of services, arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and arrangements for early intervention and preventative action (for copy see minute book).
- 32.2 The Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning and Governance, noted that the Plan was essentially what it was when it was presented at the last meeting of the Board in September 2009. However, following consultation with partners, adjustments had been made to the previous draft.
- 32.3 The Assistant Director further noted that there were minor errors in the final draft being considered at today's meeting. He circulated an errata at the meeting and indicated that those amendments would be made in the final document. He also advised that those amendments would not be changing the policy as presented (see appendix 2 to the minutes).
- 32.4 Councillor Fryer noted the errata provided. She welcomed the addition of the issue of domestic violence on the Plan and noted that she would also like to see matters relating to boys also looked at and considered in such reports.

- 32.5 The Independent Chair of the LSCB advised that this body had also contributed with comments, which had been incorporated in the Plan. He indicated that this exercise had been a good example of partnership work.
- 32.6 The Assistant Director reported that, following all comments received, a full proof final version would be issued.
- 32.7 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Board accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12 be approved.
 - (2) That with regard to (1) above, all partners would take the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12 through their respective governance arrangements for approval; and
 - (3) That the arrangements for publication and distribution set out in paragraph 3.6 be agreed.

33. SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE - UPDATE

- 33.1 The Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the update on the safeguarding practice, which summarised the actions taken following the previous safeguarding report to the Board on 8 June 2009 and provided the context for discussion with the Independent Chair of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB) (for copy see minute book).
- 33.2 The Director of Children's Services welcomed Alan Bedford, the new Chair of the LSCB. She reported that, for openness reasons, it was a requirement that an independent person took on this role in order to facilitate external scrutiny to the safeguarding practice.
- 33.3 The Chair of the LSCB thanked the Board for the invitation to attend the meeting. He advised that the role of the LSCB and its independent chair entailed a different dynamic from other bodies. He noted that this body assumed a scrutiny role to some extent and that, amongst other functions, it was in place to ensure shared childcare procedures, to ensure that practice was being adhered to and that training was also being overseen across the area.
- 33.2 The Independent Chair referred to the top priorities of the LSCB and drew attention to some of them.
- He advised that various procedures were already in place; he noted, however, that the challenge laid in **(i)** ensuring that actions were taking place and **(ii)** in finding that what is happening on the ground was being done as it should be;
 - He referred to the interagency collaboration as something that would also be looked at and considered;
 - He stressed the need for ensuring confidence about using childcare procedures;
 - He welcomed the opportunity for reflection through supervision of staff, ensuring that difficulties and workload were shared, debated and managed;

- He advised that resources were under pressure whilst workload was increasing, and noted that it was important to know how to manage this current situation;
- He noted the importance of the LSCB and the CYPT Board working together, by building a strong partnership and also through sharing good practice; he also referred to the need for a check and balance responsibility and hoped this would work out well between the two bodies.

33.5 The Independent Chair advised that he had had the opportunity to visit various services and meet with the Chief Executives of different key organisations. He stated that this had been a helpful exercise in finding out what was in place, and felt that all were on board with the required strategies.

33.6 The Board referred to the pressure on resources and money. Members sought clarification about how they could ensure that, through their interface work, the partnership would not disadvantage one agency over another by disproportionate financial input.

33.7 The Independent Chair noted that the LSCB was not an alternative source of funding, but was rather working from existing structures. He stated that one of the objectives of the LSCB was to identify existing resources from which to work with and advised that this matter was top on the agenda for its meeting in December 2009. The Director of Children's Services also reassured members that a balanced contribution would be the approach that all partners would be considering.

33.8 The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Independent Chair of the LSCB for attending the meeting and addressing the Board on the work of the LSCB and the matter of safeguarding.

33.9 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Board accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the actions taken to continue to monitor and strengthen safeguarding and child protection arrangements across the CYPT partnership and the LSCB be noted.
- (2) That, with the Chair of the LSCB, the Board considers what further actions should be taken, including development of a formal protocol between the CYPT Board and the LSCB, to clarify governance arrangements for safeguarding and child protection in the city including the relationship between the two boards.

34. SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE - UPDATE [EXEMPT CATEGORY 1 AND 3]

34.1 The Board considered a separate report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the update on safeguarding practice. The report contained an appendix, which was considered under Part 2 of the agenda (circulated to Members only).

34.2 **RESOLVED** - That the recommendations detailed in Item 33 in Part 1 of the agenda be agreed.

35. PART TWO ITEMS

- 35.1 **RESOLVED** - That the appendix considered in Item 34 remains exempt from disclosure to the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 6.10pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of