

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

14 JUNE 2016

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Alan Clark (In the Chair)

Councillors: Paul Beck, Ged Hall, Lesley Hamilton, Brenda Harrison and John Lauderdale.

Co-opted member: David Turner (Primary Head Representative)

Young people's representatives:

Adam Shillaw, Ben Marshal, Jack Palmer, Daniel Measor and Lauren Howells.

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Helen White, Participation Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Julie Cordiner (C of E Diocesan Representative) and Michael Lee (RC Diocesan Representative).

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hall declared a personal interest as a school governor at Sacred Heart Primary School.

Councillor Loynes declared a personal interest as a school governor of St Teresa's Primary School.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016

Confirmed.

4. Annual Complaints Report – 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2105 *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To present the Annual Complaints Report of the Child and Adult Services Department on complaints and representations for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services apologised for the report being submitted late to the Committee; the report for the year just ended would be submitted to Committee in the next few months.

The Annual Report provides information on the complaints and representation frameworks appropriate in the Department. It draws together information in relation to complaints that have been received and dealt with during the reporting period. The Report provides an analysis of complaints and compliments and draws comparisons with the previous year. Performance is highlighted in a range of areas so that practice issues may be considered.

During 2014/15, 7 compliments had been received relating to Children's Social Care. Appendix 1 to the Annual Report provided some examples of compliments received during the period. The Assistant Director commented that it was rewarding for staff to receive these compliments for the service they provided.

A total of 37 complaints had been received. Five complaints were withdrawn by the complainants and the Council determined one was not eligible to complain. A total of 31 complaints were investigated. The number of complaints received has increased by 10 from 2013/14.

Of the 31 complaints investigated, 29 of these had been concluded and 2 remained ongoing (at the time the report had been prepared). Thirty of the 31 complaints were responded to at Stage 1 in the first instance. Of these, 29 complaints were concluded at Stage 1. The one complaint that progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 remains ongoing (at the time the report had been prepared). One of the 31 complaints had not been considered at Stage 1 and proceeded directly to Stage 2. This complaint progressed to Stage 3 – Independent Complaint Review Panel and it was not known whether the complainant had progressed matters onto the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

A complaint, received in 2013/14, which was being investigated at Stage 2 was carried forward into 2014/15. This complaint progressed to Stage 3 – Independent Complaint Review Panel and it was not known whether the complainant had progressed matters onto the LGO.

Of the 31 complaints investigated, one complainant chose to have an advocate to assist them with their complaint and one was assisted by a Support Worker.

There were no complaints in relation to children's social care that progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman in 2014/15.

The Assistant Director indicated that the lessons learned were an important aspect of the complaints framework. Appendix 2 to the Annual Report outlined the context of some improvements that had been put in place as a direct result of complaints and representations received. Recommendations from Stage 2 complaints were referred to the Assistant Director for action and those from Stage 3 complaints went to the Director. The department had a Continuous Improvement Group which considered all the recommendations from complaints investigations and various inspections to ensure best practice was disseminated through the service.

Members sought assurance that the Independent Complaints Investigators utilised by the department to ensure impartiality were fully trained and up to date with safeguarding issues. The Assistant Director confirmed that this was the case and indicated that many of the Independent Investigators were former social workers or senior managers who had significant experience in Children's Services.

Decision

That the report be noted.

5. OSCARS (Out of School Provision) OFSTED Report *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform members of the recent OFSTED inspection of OSCARS Play Centre and their achievement of a grade of Outstanding for all areas of provision.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that OSCARS provided childcare for children aged 3 – 16 years and is a local authority run service. OSCARS is based at West Hartlepool Rugby Club and operates between 3pm – 6pm, Monday to Friday during school term time and sessions from 8am – 5.45 pm in school holidays. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with special education needs and/

or disabilities.

OSCARS is required to be registered with OFSTED under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The service was previously inspected in August 2012 and was graded by OFSTED as outstanding.

An OFSTED inspector visited OSCARS on the 21st April 2016 for the most recent inspection. The overall outcome for the inspection was Outstanding, and the grade outstanding was applied to all areas inspected. A copy of the full report was submitted as an appendix to the report and set out the key findings, which were:

- “Leadership is inspirational. Leaders support their staff team to provide exceptionally high-quality childcare.”
- “Children’s behaviour is exemplary.”
- The staff “are exceptionally skilled at following the children’s lead.”
- “Parents speak extremely highly of the leaders and staff and how well informed they keep them. They talk about the tremendous level of confidence their children have gained since joining and of the friendships they have formed”.
- “arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff are vigilant in their approach. They have excellent working relationships with professionals to support the individual needs of all children in their care”

There was one recommendation for further improvement “To evaluate the impact of planned changes to the outdoor environment in supporting children’s physical skills”; and the team had already started to consider this and would work to address this over the coming months.

The Chair welcomed the report and extended his personal congratulations to the staff at OSCARS for such an excellent inspection report. Members echoed the Chair’s comments. Members noted that there were 231 children on the roll for OSCARS though there were only 56 places at the scheme. The Assistant Director indicated that parents accessed the service in differing ways using only certain weekdays or only during school holidays for example. The facility could only offer places to 56 children on any one day.

The Chair requested that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the staff at OSCARS congratulating them on a second outstanding OFSTED inspection report.

Decision

That the report be noted and a letter sent to the staff of OSCARS congratulating them on their success.

6. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

There were no items the Chair considered urgent.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 12 July at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 4.20 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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