

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

8 NOVEMBER 2016

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

Present:

Councillor: Alan Clark (In the Chair)

Councillors: Lesley Hamilton, Brenda Harrison, Marjorie James and John Lauderdale.

Councillor Stephen Thomas, Chair of Adult Services Committee (Observer)

Co-opted members:

Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative
David Turner, Primary Head Representative

Young people's representatives: Callum Reed and Emma Jenner

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance (Corporate and Schools)
Helen White, Participation Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

32. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Paul Beck and Shane Moore.
Michael Lee, RC Diocesan Representative

33. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harrison and Mr Tilling and Mr Turner declared interests as school governors.

34. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September, 2016

Confirmed.

35. Deprivation Factor in the School Funding Formula 2017/18 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to ask Children's Services Committee to determine the deprivation factor to be used for the local schools formula 2017/18.

Issue(s) for consideration

Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that the local schools funding formula has to be reviewed and agreed annually. This is then used as a basis for allocating individual school budgets to schools. The LA consults with the Schools Forum in order to agree the formula. Schools Forum has been consulted and the formula factors have been agreed with the exception of the deprivation factor.

At the meeting of Schools Forum on 14 October 2016, eight options for the 2017/18 formula were considered. Four of the options included a reduction of the lump sum from £175,000 per school to £129,000 (based upon the statistical neighbour) and changes to the deprivation factor. Schools Forum agreed to retain the lumpsum at the maximum allowable value of £175,000.

The four remaining options relating to the deprivation percentage were then discussed and voted on for 2017/18, as detailed below.

- i) deprivation factor remaining at 13.5%
- ii) deprivation factor reduced to 8.8%
- iii) deprivation factor reduced to 12%
- iv) deprivation factor increased to 15%.

The Assistant Director indicated that the Forum members voted for each option. Option (i) and (ii) both received split votes of 6 for and 6 against. Options iii and iv were both rejected with votes of 2 for, 8 against and 2 abstentions. The decision had, therefore, been referred to Children's Services Committee. The anonymised school funding models for options (i) and (ii) above were set out in an appendix for Members' information.

The national average for deprivation funding equates to 8.3%, compared to the average for our statistical neighbours of 8.8% and our North East neighbours of 11.1%. Where an authority has a low deprivation factor the funding is re-distributed via other formula factors, typically through the AWPU rate (averaged weighted pupil unit) to ensure the total pupil led funding percentage meets the national requirement of a minimum of 80%.

The Chair indicated that as there were a number of school head teachers present at the meeting he would allow representatives of the differing arguments to make their case to the Committee.

The Chair of the Schools Forum, Mr Tilling, outlined the history behind the deprivation factor in the schools funding formula and the move over recent years to reduce the factor. Much of the Schools Forum discussions had been around 'future proofing' school budgets for the forthcoming national funding formula which was likely to include a much lower deprivation factor if one was applied. There were views expressed that schools in deprived areas had additional levels of funding through the 'pupil premium' applied to all children in receipt of free school meals and this was how the government was targeting support. Others considered that the local targeting of funding through the locally applied deprivation factor provided another level of assistance and was seen as the whole school cohort supporting each other. The Chair of the Schools Forum indicated that it had been a lengthy and divisive debate that had ended in the situation reported to the Committee.

The Head of St Hild's Secondary School, Mrs Gibson, had submitted a letter to the Chair of the Committee in advance of the Committee and addressed the Committee seeking an increase in the deprivation factor to 15%. Mrs Gibson commented that her school was providing a significant level of support to children from deprived backgrounds that required the additional resources provided through the deprivation factor calculation. Whilst understanding the issues around future proofing school budgets, the deprivation factor being under local control allowed the opportunity to make a difference now for the current cohort of children before the national funding regime was introduced.

Members expressed their support for the view that an increased deprivation factor would assist those schools whose children were in most need and would be seen as all of Hartlepool's schools contributing to that support. It was suggested that an increase to 15% may be appropriate.

The Chair of the Schools Forum commented that all schools did acknowledge their role in looking after all the children in Hartlepool but the deprivation factor made the situation between some schools such that a child in one could be attracting twice the level of funding a child of the same age could in another. That could not be seen as equitable when all schools had to meet the same performance standards. Some schools had to work with classes of over thirty children because they did not have the same level of resources to employ additional staffing.

The Headteacher from Throston Primary School, Mr Atkinson, made a case to the Committee for reducing the current deprivation level to 8.8%. Mr Atkinson commented that a child could move from his school to one no more than five minutes walk away and would then attract a level of funding double that at Throston. It was wrong to see some school pupils as more deserving than others. The deprivation funding could see a class of children attracting £30,000 in additional funding through the deprivation factor which was

sufficient to employ an additional member of staff. It was a postcode lottery as to what a child was worth.

The Chair of the Schools Forum commented that schools without the extra level of deprivation funding did find it difficult to provide the additional support children from deprived backgrounds may require; there was a concern among some that this could be seen as failing those children. In the end the money allocated to schools was education money, not social care funding, and while acknowledging that a level of deprivation funding may be appropriate, too high a level impacted on more schools than it helped.

The Chair considered that it was unfortunate that the decision on the level of deprivation factor in the schools funding formula had to come to this Committee for the second year because the Schools Forum had failed to reach agreement. The Chair acknowledged the points put forward in support of the alternative percentage levels for the indicator and was conscious that a level had to be decided. It was proposed and seconded that in light of the evidence put forward at the Committee, an increased deprivation level would be appropriate and that it should rise to 15%. As there were no other options put forward by Members, the Chair put the proposal to the Committee and the proposal was carried on a majority vote.

Decision

That the level of the school deprivation factor in the Local Schools Formula be increased to 15%.

36. Amendment to Instrument of Government – Rift House Primary School (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Children's Services Committee to an amendment to the Instrument of Government of Rift House Primary School in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended by the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that the governing body of Rift House Primary School had recently undertaken a review in response to a number of governor positions becoming vacant. One of the areas that they had discussed was around the term of office of Parent Governors. The school had struggled to recruit and retain Parent Governors in recent years and in response to this they proposed to reduce the term of

office for Parent Governors from 4 years to 2 years. It was felt that some parents were unwilling to commit to a 4 year period of office, particularly if their child/children would be leaving the school within this period. If a Parent Governor wishes to continue beyond 2 years, provided they were still eligible, they could re-apply for election or the governing body could consider appointing them to vacancies in other governor categories. Having a 2 year period for Parent Governors would also allow the opportunity for new parents to apply to join the governing body and bring new impetus and ideas.

Changes to the term of office in a particular category of governor were required to be identified in the Instrument of Government. A revised Instrument of Government was attached as an appendix to the report.

Decision

That the amended Instrument of Government for Rift House Primary School be approved.

37. Annual Review of the Children Looked After Strategy 2014- 2017 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to update Children Services Committee of the progress in relation to the implementation of the Children Looked After strategy 2014/2017.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that the strategy set out the development of services for Children Looked After and Assistant Director highlighted the progress made against the strategy priorities and future actions needed.

The Assistant Director highlighted the progress against each of the key strategies highlighting from the strategy "what we said we would do", "progress so far" and "actions for 2016/17" for each of the key strategies: -

- Children in Need and Family Support
- Corporate Parenting
- Sufficiency
- Care Planning for Children and Young People in Care
- A First Class Education
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing
- Care Leavers

The Assistant Director highlighted during her presentation that the Councils two children's homes had recently been inspected by Ofsted and had been rated as outstanding.

The Chair extended his congratulations to the organisers of the regional Children in Care Council conference which he had recently attended. Members welcomed the news of the two inspections and the Assistant Director indicated that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on the outcome of the inspections.

Members welcomed the very positive report. Members considered that it would be valuable for the Young Peoples Inspectors to review the services provided to young people with mental health issues with particular reference to those from families who would be directly impacted by the new benefits cap. A young people's representative indicated that the Children in Care Council were already developing a leaflet directed at young people on how they could access mental health services and outlining the types of support available. The Participation Manager added that the group were also working with the Clinical Commissioning Group on the development of a health phone app directed at young people. A headteacher representative indicated that there was also a new regional schools mental health commission with a representative young person from Hartlepool.

Members welcomed the comments. The Chair commented that past reductions in benefits to households had reflected increases in domestic violence and family breakdowns. It would be extremely useful to see reports on the effects of the benefit reductions to identify any developing trends so that future positive interventions could be made.

Decision

That the progress of the Children's Looked After Strategy and the actions for 2016/17 be noted.

38. Safeguarding in Hartlepool (April 2015 – March 2016) (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key Decision.

Purpose of report

There is an expectation that members are regularly informed of safeguarding activity within their area. The purpose of the report was to provide Children's Services Committee with information relating to safeguarding in Hartlepool to ensure they were fully informed.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services indicated that the report highlighted the volume of safeguarding work undertaken, compliance with the child protection procedures, the effectiveness of work being carried out to promote the safety and wellbeing of children within the Borough and volume in relation to Children Looked After.

The Assistant Director outlined the key statistics and points from the comprehensive report relating to -

- Early help;
- Contacts and referrals;
- Child Protection; and
- Looked after Children.

The Assistant Director highlighted some specific points for Members information; these included: -

- The number of contacts between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 was 5243, 840 less than the previous year. 1202 of the contacts progressed to referral for social care services. A detailed breakdown of referrals was set out in the report. Officers were examining the reasons behind the fall in numbers.
- A report would be forthcoming to the Committee on the results of the recent SEND inspection; there were some actions arising.
- There were 1444 child and family assessments undertaken in 2014/15 with a decrease in 2015/16 to 1172. Again, officers were examining the reasons behind the fall in numbers.
- The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days had fallen to 88.7% (from 89.5%). While this was a concern, the Assistant Director would be looking to the reasons behind the figures though the department did wish to see high quality assessments being completed in a timely manner, sometimes there could be delays.
- There were 1172 children and family assessments carried out between April 2015 and March 2016. The main factors identified in assessments were detailed in the report and a large number of cases involved domestic violence and/or substance misuse.
- Neglect continued to be the main category under which children become subject to a child protection plan. At the end of March 2016 of the 127 children subject to a protection plan 99 were under the category neglect.
- The number of children who became subject to a protection plan for a second or subsequent time in 2015/16 was 17.4% which is a small decrease compared to the figures for last year (19%). The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time and the length of time the child had been subject to a plan were important indicators of the effectiveness of interventions to safeguard children.
- There had been a rise in the number of children who had been subject to a protection plan for longer than two years. All of these cases involved

chronic neglect and included two large sibling groups.

- Hartlepool was caring for 8 unaccompanied asylum seeker children, more than any other local authority in the North East.
- The numbers of children that had had multiple placements were reported; 32 children had 2 placement moves, 14 had 3 placement moves and two had 4 placement moves. All of these children were known and one particular child had had problems with their placements.
- There were approximately 10/12 care proceedings ongoing in March 2016 there was currently 50 cases (families) in care proceedings which was large increase placing pressure on social workers and the Legal Division.
- The recruitment and retention of social workers continued to be a challenge that was also reflected regionally and nationally. There was a lack of experienced social workers wanting to work within the front line safeguarding area. This was particularly problematic with the increase in care proceedings as it needed to be experienced social workers that manage these cases in court due to their complexities. In terms of general social worker staffing a number of newly qualified staff had come into the service.

The Chair questioned if the numbers of children with disabilities receiving services were growing due to increased numbers being diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Assistant Director indicated that there were a number of children with challenging behavior but not necessarily diagnosed with ASD; many when assessed showed attachment issues. It was a problem for staff dealing with these children who were not on an ASD services pathway. The school head teacher representatives commented that this was a growing issue for schools who were having to improve their services to children with challenging behaviour and ASD. These were complex issues requiring significant service input.

The Committee debated the issues around the services to children with complex needs, challenging behavior and ASD. The increasing complexity of these children's needs were a significant issue for schools and social services. The meeting discussed issues around diet, exclusions, emotional health and wellbeing and the effects such children could have on the wide school cohort.

The Chair raised his concerns at the levels of resources linked to some of the factors that were identified as being involved in referrals to social services. Significant resources were directed towards Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), where only 21 cases had been identified last year. Significant case numbers were shown to involve domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse; two young people had died in the last twelve months due to drug misuse. The Assistant Director acknowledged the concerns but indicated that CSE was an extremely complex area that required significant resources due to both the actual and perceived levels of harm it created. A young people's representative indicated that the recent Crucial Crew event for primary school children had included the Youth Council presenting a section on e-safety.

The Director of Child and Adult Services highlighted that the Police were reconfiguring resources around their work with historic child sexual abuse which was having an effect on staff resources.

In terms of the increase in the numbers of looked after children, the Director noted the need to look at whether this was an increase in actual numbers coming into care or that more were staying in the system.

The Director also highlighted the excellent response from staff in dealing with the eight unaccompanied asylum seeking children that were being cared for in the town. Hartlepool was responding very positively in providing homes for these children and leading the way in the region. The Chair stated that Hartlepool had always shown the hand of humanity to those in need and the work of staff should be recognised in this regard.

The Chair stated that he was particularly concerned with the pressures being placed on social workers and the Legal Division in relation to the family courts timescales for dealing with childcare proceedings. The Director indicated that this arose from some recent case law coupled with the Family Justice Review which set strict timescales for child care proceedings to be concluded within a 26 week deadline. With many of the timescales allowed for various reporting and assessments, this gave local authorities a very short window of time to determine the long term plan for the child and gave social workers very little time to work with families to tackle issues that may be resolvable. The Director commented that this was a national issue which needed to be addressed by national bodies.

Decision

The Committee noted the discussions and the contents of the report, particularly noting the following:

- The reduction in the number of contacts
- The reduction in the number of referrals
- The reduction in the number of child and family assessments being undertaken
- The slight reduction in the number of children subject to protection plans
- The number of children subject to a Child Protection plan for the second or subsequent time has decreased from previous year but was still higher than 2013/14 and work needed to be done to explore the reasons.
- The increase in the number of children looked after
- The strong performance for Children looked after being adopted against regional and national information, however, this needed to be continuously monitored due to recent court judgements that appear to be having an impact on the number of adoptions granted.

39. A Better Childhood in Hartlepool (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To update Members of Children's Services Committee on the implementation and progress of A Better Childhood in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that the initial implementation phase of A Better Childhood in Hartlepool included the development of integrated teams across four localities which included: Health Visitors, Family Support Workers, School Nurses, Community Nursery Nurses and Social Workers. In addition to the four locality teams, the Intensive Response Team (IRT) has been created. The primary focus of this team is to provide intensive support and assistance to families to prevent needs escalating. The Intensive Response Team is a multi disciplinary team which consists of Family Support Workers, parenting lead, experienced health visitors and a housing support officer. Other services are aligned the team which includes: Family Nurse Partnership, CAMHS and the Educational Psychology team.

The proposed implementation date of the 1st August had to be moved to the 1st October due to issues relating to IT and health staff consultation. All staff within health and the council finally moved into the localities on the 10th October 2016. The four locality managers are holding briefing sessions with agencies, groups and organisations within the localities throughout October. The focus of these sessions is to develop relationships with key stakeholders, inform people about the new structure/pathways within Early Help and to roll out the new Early Help Assessment (EHA).

The Early Help Module is a children's integrated system developed to record a child and families journey whilst having support from early help services. This enables the family to tell their story once and ensures that the support provided by all agencies around the family is joined up. Hartlepool Child and Adult Services is one of the first areas in the country to use the Early Help Module as an integrated multi agency record keeping system. Health professionals working within the early help service have all received Early Help Module training and Parent Support Advisors within schools will be trained on the system within the next two months. Other partner organisations will have the opportunity within the next 12 months to access training and subsequently use the system.

To ensure management of caseloads is robust and safe, the teams will be managed by two Health managers and two Social care managers. Principal

practitioners from Social care will work alongside health leads and senior health practitioners will work alongside the Social care managers. This will ensure robust oversight of both organisations procedures and assist with case allocation. Supervision will take place jointly during the initial phase of implementation. Caseloads will be allocated on a weekly basis at a joint meeting with all managers. Work is being undertaken to identify and remove any duplication within the system and across services which should create additional capacity for all practitioners to undertake targeted work with families.

The Assistant Director commented that as the Better Childhood in Hartlepool is a multi agency transformation programme and it had been agreed that the oversight of this programme would be through the Children's Strategic Partnership. An operational board would be established and report to the Strategic Partnership. A number of workstreams will be established to ensure implementation is truly multi agency.

Decision

That the report be noted.

40. Annual Complaints Report - 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

For members of the Children's Services Committee to note the Annual Complaints Report of the Child and Adult Services Department on complaints and representations for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The Annual report was submitted as an appendix to the report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that the Annual Report provided information on the complaints and representation frameworks appropriate in the department. It drew 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.

The Assistant Director highlighted that it was important for the department to learn from any complaints received and actions were fed back through work groups to ensure the same issues didn't keep arising.

Decision

That the Annual Complaints report be noted and it's online publication be approved.

41. Service User Feedback (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

For members of the Children's Services Committee to note the "Listening to children, young people and families. Service User Experience report" October 2016.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that it is important that children's services understand the experience of children, young people and families using our services. Our vision very clearly sets out that we will develop services with our service users and not "do to them". The report set out the work that had been undertaken with our children and families. Continuous Improvement was a key part of the vision for Children's Services alongside being a learning organisation. It was, therefore, critical for the division to understand the views of our children and families to ensure that services are truly meeting need and empowering families to change.

Decision

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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