

Central Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ



please ask for Jonathon Partridge

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date 13 February 2014

NOTICE OF MEETING

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date & Time

Tuesday, 25 February 2014 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford

Richard Carr
Chief Executive

To: The Chairman and Members of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Cllrs Mrs A Barker (Chairman), N B Costin (Vice-Chairman), R D Berry, D Bowater, Mrs G Clarke, Mrs R J Drinkwater, Mrs D B Gurney, P Hollick, D Jones and R B Pepworth

[Named Substitutes:

Mrs S A Goodchild, K Janes, B Saunders, A Shadbolt and N J Sheppard]

Co-optees: Mr Chapman (Parent Governor), Mr Court (Parent Governor), Ms Image (Roman Catholic Diocese), and Mr Reynolds (Church of England Diocese)

All other Members of the Council - on request

**MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THIS
MEETING**

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence and notification of substitute members.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2014 and to note actions taken since that meeting.

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest and of any political whip in relation to any agenda item.

4. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

5. **Petitions**

To receive petitions from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

6. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

To receive any questions, statements or deputations from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of part A4 of the Constitution.

7. **Call-In**

To consider any decision of the Executive referred to this Committee for review in accordance with Procedure Rule 10.10 of Part D2.

8. **Requested Items**

To consider any items referred to the Committee at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

Reports

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
9	The impact on children of living in family circumstances of domestic violence and abuse	* 11 - 18

The Committee will receive a report and presentation relating to the impact on children of living in family circumstances of domestic violence and abuse in order to:-

1. increase the understanding of Members in relation to the prevalence of incidents
2. consider how best to support a multi-agency partnership approach to deal with the issue.
3. reach consensus on some outcome focused recommendations that will enhance the offer to children living in these circumstances

The Committee has invited a significant number of persons to contribute to this discussion in order to agree evidence based recommendations.

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CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 21 January 2014

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs A Barker (Chairman)
Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	R D Berry	Councillors:	Mrs D B Gurney
	Mrs G Clarke		P Hollick
	Mrs R J Drinkwater		D Jones

Parental Co-optees: Mr J M A Chapman
Mr S Court

Church of England
Co-optee:
Roman Catholic
Co-optee:

Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	D Bowater
		Mrs C Crook

Substitutes:	Cllrs	K Janes (In place of D Bowater)
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Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
		Mrs S Clark	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services
		A L Dodwell	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services
		M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
	Ms D Hill	Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services
	Mr J Partridge	Scrutiny Policy Adviser

CS/13/91 **Minutes**

The Committee received the Minutes of the previous meeting and commented that the reference to "GP surgeries" (Minute CS/13/83 refers) related to specialised health clinics.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record in light of the clarification above.

CS/13/92 Members' Interests

None

CS/13/93 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman advised the Committee that:-

- Jonathan Chapman had been appointed as a parent governor representative co-optee, an election to appoint a second representative would be undertaken soon.
- Three recipients had received honours in the New Years Honours list in Central Bedfordshire.
- A presentation had been arranged for Members at Hawthorn Park Community Primary School that would support the Committee meeting in February.
- An overview that had been sent to Members of the Committee concerning developments in child protection legislation.

CS/13/94 Petitions

None

CS/13/95 Questions, Statements or Deputations

None

CS/13/96 Call-In

None

CS/13/97 Requested Items

None

CS/13/98 Executive Member Update

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update, concerning a report to Executive in March 2014 regards changes to schools in Dunstable, which would be presented to the OSC in due course. Cllr Versallion also referred to recent visits to Cedars Upper School and Redbourne Upper School and Community College, to discuss GCSE results and other matters, which had been very positive.

The Committee raised several questions, to which Executive Member responded as follows:-

- From September 2014 all but one of the upper schools in Central Bedfordshire would have transferred to being academies, the remaining upper school was a foundation school.
- The Council would continue to lobby central government on the manner in which it allocated funding to local authorities and schools through mechanisms such as the F40 Group, which campaigned for fairer funding in allocation.

CS/13/99

Draft Budget 2014/15, Medium Term Financial Plan 2014-18 and Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2017/18

The Executive Member introduced a report that outlined the Council's draft Budget for 2014/15, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme, which had been presented to Executive on 14 January 2014. In addition to the proposed budget the report set out the efficiencies and key pressures on the directorate. Cllr Versallion emphasised the increasing demand on children's social care as a result of demographic change and the difficult context within which the Council had drafted a budget for Children's Services. The Executive Member thanked colleagues and the remainder of the Executive for their support in setting the budget.

In light of the report and the further clarification provided by the Executive Member the Committee discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Whether a £300k pressure relating to the disaggregation of the adoption and fostering service (CSP1406) was realistic. In response the Executive Member commented that the quality of service had remained high and he was confident that £300k was a realistic figure. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services also commented that £300k was a realistic figure at the present time, although long-term assurances were difficult due to uncertainty over demographic change. In addition the Committee were informed that careful monitoring was undertaken of children's homes and other placements in order to ensure that, where it was appropriate to do so, children and young people were placed close to home.
- Whether there were proposals to change arrangements for adoptions panels in light of the disaggregation of the service. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that several options were being considered to make the process more efficient without losing the quality of service.
- The impact of changes in the numbers of school improvements advisers employed by the Council and the services that could be delivered. In response the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that where some schools experienced difficulty interpreting the Council's policies on raising standards a strategic community approach to supporting school improvement was necessary. A commissioning approach to the issues was in place. The Executive Member also commented that £1.5m had been allocated for school improvement commissioning and recent Ofsted inspections had been positive in relation to school improvement.
- The manner in which the Council was able to respond to pressures in school transport and progress in relation to walking assessments. The Executive Member advised the Committee that a revised policy was being

developed and walking assessments were about to be underway, although in some cases the outcome of the assessment may result in the Council needing to fund improvements. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services also advised the Committee that the role of the Children's Services directorate was to set the policy, it was important for the directorate not to be involved in the commissioning or delivery of the service as these were technical matters. It was also noted that the Department for Education were thinking of changing the school transport formula in 2015/16.

- The level of progress the Council had achieved in relation to rationalising existing transport for children with disabilities at Ivel Valley. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services agreed to provide an update to the Committee outside of the meeting.
- The level of progress in relation to bringing children back into local placements, which address their Special Educational Needs (CS3). The Executive Member commented that work was underway to bring children back into Central Bedfordshire. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services clarified that the approach was to ensure children preferably did not go out of area in the first place rather than bringing them back into Central Bedfordshire after they started school.
- Whether a reduction of 25 Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements by 2015/16 was feasible. In response the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that the target was ambitious but possibly achievable and would need careful monitoring in the future.

In addition the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that the report should be revised in relation to the new efficiency (CSE1410) that was identified in the report alongside the reallocation of school improvement activity (CS10).

RECOMMENDED that the Council's draft Budget for 2014/15, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2017/18 be endorsed in light of the challenges faced by the Directorate.

CS/13/100 **Fees and Charges (2014/15)**

The Executive Member introduced the proposed revised fees and charges for Children's Services, which included a 2% increase in charges for music services. It was proposed to review fees for school transport for 2015/16. In light of a question the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services advised Members of a £40k fund for vulnerable children to provide opportunities to access music lessons. The Pupil Premium could be used by schools to fund music services and governors were encouraged to discuss with their schools the services that were made available to students in order to add value.

NOTED the report

CS/13/101 **Work Programme 2013 - 2014 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee were advised that the meeting on 06 May would consider proposals for changes to schools in Dunstable, it was proposed that this

meeting take place in Dunstable from 7.30pm. Following discussion it was agreed that officers should re-consider the date and time of the meeting and confirm the changes to Members.

RECOMMENDED that the current work programme be approved.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.21 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated

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Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 25 February 2014
Subject: The impact on children of living in family circumstances of domestic violence and abuse.
Report of: Cllr Amanda Dodwell – Deputy Executive Member Children's Services
Summary: The report outlines the current work around Domestic Abuse across the Council with particular regard to the involvement of children.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director – Children's Health
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

- Improved educational attainment.
- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.

Financial:

1. There are no direct financial implications from this report.

Legal:

2. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.

Risk Management:

3. Not applicable

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not applicable

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Not applicable

Community Safety:

6. Not applicable.

Public Health

7. Not applicable

Sustainability:

8. Not applicable.

Procurement:

9. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is asked to consider making recommendations that would enhance the Council's offer. The Outcomes of this meeting will be written into a full report and made available to the Executive members for further consideration.

Introduction

10. The Council has a key role to play in addressing domestic violence and abuse. This is a cross-cutting issue in that it can affect anyone, resulting in directorates across the Council providing services to support domestic violence.
11. There are also a number of key Council partners that provide services for victims of domestic violence and abuse, and the Council teams and services involved in responding to victims engage with these partners in different ways and at different points through a victim's journey.
12. Domestic violence and abuse is an issue that is picked up in a range of strategic plans and boards across Central Bedfordshire, including the Community Safety Partnership (CSP); Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP); Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB); Safeguarding Adults Board (LASB); Criminal Justice Board (CJB) and the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC).
13. Domestic abuse has adverse impacts on the health and wellbeing of victims, and is closely associated with child abuse and neglect, as well as a range of other social issues including homelessness and substance abuse.
14. It has always been challenging for commissioners to address, affecting many different local policy agendas and requiring the cooperation of multiple agencies to resolve it. In addition, the public sector is now operating in the harshest financial climate for a decade: local areas must deal with competing demands for funding in the face of significant spending reductions.

Context

15. The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:
"any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

The definition was changed in April 2013 to include those aged 16-17 years of age and worded to include coercive control.

16. In 2012 around 1.2 million women suffered domestic abuse and national research shows:
- one in three women experience abuse in their relationships
 - on average there will have been 35 assaults before the police are contacted
 - Every minute in the UK police receive a call for assistance concerning domestic abuse
 - Domestic abuse claims the lives of two women every week in the UK
 - 30% of domestic abuse starts in pregnancy
 - 70% of high risk domestic abuse victims have children
17. Locally research in Central Bedfordshire shows that:
- There are on average 49 domestic abuse incidents reported to the police each week.
 - On average 36% of domestic abuse incidents were noted to have had a child present
 - In 2012/13 36% of domestic abuse incidents reported in Central Bedfordshire were from repeat locations
 - Since the change in the definition in April 2013 to incorporate 16 – 17 year olds, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of incidents reported each month. Based on the current reporting level it can be predicted that there will be a 6% increase in the number of incidents reported over the next 12 months.

With the changes in the domestic abuse definition and the increase in population it can be predicted that by 2021 there will be an estimated 18% increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents reported.

18. Appendix A provides detail of reported incidents (where a domestic abuse incident has happened but no crime) and crime (where a crime is recorded) for 2012 and 2013 in comparison with Luton and Bedford.

Supporting Victims

19. A range of partners, statutory and non-statutory, invest in services to support victims of domestic violence and abuse. These include two key services considered as essential for supporting victims at the highest risk of significant harm, the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA).
20. MARACS are where statutory and voluntary sector partner's work together to share information on the highest risk cases, and a coordinated safety plan to protect each victim, and their family, is developed. Because multi-agency support is not successful without a close relationship with a victim, the work of IDVAs and MARACs are inextricably linked, with an IDVA representing the victim at the MARAC.
21. IDVA's are trained advisors providing independent specialist support, both emotional and practical. They engage with adult victims from the point of crisis and facilitate access to the resources of local agencies to keep each victim, and their children, safe. Central Bedfordshire has a shared IDVA Service with Bedford Borough Council, with 2 full time IDVA's for Central Bedfordshire.

22. Between July 2012 and June 2013 the IDVA's for Central Bedfordshire received 185 referrals of which 30% were re-referrals. National research indicates that 57% of all victims supported by an IDVA experience a complete or near cessation in abuse suffered following three to four months contact. Where abuse continued, 43% advised it was at a much lower level.
23. An average of 22 cases are referred to Central Bedfordshire MARAC each month (based on data from November 2012 – October 2013) with non police referrals accounting for 49% of all referrals. During this period there were 257 referrals to MARAC and 376 children were present in the households of the cases referred.
24. National research concludes that for every £1 spent on MARAC at least £6 of public money can be saved annually on direct costs to agencies such as the Police and Health Service. It also shows that following intervention by a MARAC and the IDVA service up to 60% of domestic abuse victims report no further violence.
25. The Council supports victims through a range of service areas including:
 - Housing advice and applications to prevent homelessness when fleeing violence and abuse
 - Strategy – developing and co-ordinating strategies that reflect victim needs
 - Commissioning – programmes and services for victims, including refuge provision
 - Safeguarding adults and children – assessment, conference and review
 - Health – links to drugs, alcohol, young people.
 - Training – delivering domestic abuse training programmes for front line professionals
 - Sanctuary Scheme – providing home security for victims
 - Signposting to other domestic violence and abuse services including voluntary sector
26. Specific programmes that the Council has implemented include:
 - Project Relay: Working with schools in areas where there are high levels of domestic violence and abuse incidents, within 24 hours of an incident happening involving a child/children Information is shared between the police and the Project Relay Support Officer who makes contact with the school Safeguarding Lead at the earliest opportunity. The school then puts both covert and overt interventions in place to support the child/children as they feel appropriate.
 - Children's Refuge Worker: There is a dedicated worker, working with children at the refuges in Central Bedfordshire using play therapy and other therapeutic interventions to enable the children to talk about what has happened to them and allow the worker to identify effective ways to support the child. This work provides positive future outcomes building self esteem and confidence in the child and ensuring that they understand that abuse and violence is not the norm.
 - Sorted: Commissioned counselling provision for young people that have witnessed domestic abuse and violence.
 - Freedom Programme: A 12 week rolling programme for women to understand more about domestic violence and abuse.

- Community Perpetrator Programme: Bedfordshire Probation Trust was commissioned to deliver a pilot community based perpetrator programme. The programme was for men who recognised their abusive and violent behaviour and wanted to change it. Since the programme began referral levels have been lower than expected, and an evaluation to be carried out to consider this and other key learning from the pilot. Due to national changes to Probation Trusts the pilot will end on 01 April 2014; however work has begun to assess options for provision of a perpetrator programme from 01 April 2014.

27. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has recently completed an inspection of Bedfordshire Police as part of its review of police response to domestic violence and abuse across England and Wales. The inspections seek to answer two main questions:

- What is the effectiveness of the police approach to domestic violence and abuse, focusing on the outcomes for victims?
- Are risks to victims of domestic violence and abuse being adequately managed?

Feedback to Bedfordshire Police at the end of the inspection is that there are areas for improvement. Following the inspection feedback the force has completed an initial review of its processes and will engage with partners in due course.

28. Council and Community Safety Partnership leads for Bedfordshire have met with the police lead to look at how we can become more effective in our response to domestic abuse, including the potential for joint commissioning and looking at different ways of working. This work will continue to progress over the coming months.
29. At an operational level partnership working is proactive with positive working relationships between a range of partners. There are some areas for further improvement, for example sharing information. In formal settings such as the MARAC and Child Protection Conferences, information is shared well however outside of these meetings it is less clear as to what is shared on a day to day basis.

Challenges

30. The Councils' service demand for domestic violence and abuse cases is high, with the majority of direct demand being in Children's Services, Intake and Assessment, and Adult Social Care, Health and Housing in Housing Needs. Indirect service demand, via commissioned services and programmes such as IDVA, MARAC, SORTED also continues to be high.
31. Some of the commissioned services are finding it particularly challenging, with resources very stretched just dealing with the highest risk cases and in some instances demand for services has outstripped capacity. For example, therapeutic interventions for children.
32. The majority of Council and partner services for domestic abuse and violence are targeted at those victims at highest risk of harm. This is seen as the most effective way of targeting resources, but there is a need to consider the longer term demand on public services and how we can respond more effectively, at an earlier stage, thereby preventing longer term draws on resources that continue to reduce.

33. It is recognised that there are gaps in services for victims who do not meet the threshold for a high risk victim, assessed by a risk assessment. Where a victim does not meet the threshold, support is available, although access to MARAC or IDVA is not. This increases the risk of these victims moving into the high risk category in time. In addition services for minority communities or those where there are particular vulnerabilities need to be further developed to ensure those more vulnerable victims and their children access services.
34. Funding to continue services is a significant challenge. Central Bedfordshire MARAC and IDVA provision are partially funded through Home Office grants that end in March 2015. The continuing need for the Council, and other partners, to find efficiency savings are increasingly putting services for victims of domestic abuse and violence at risk and at this time funding to continue the perpetrator programme is still being sought, and funding to continue IDVA and MARAC from April 2015 has yet to be identified.
35. Children's Services continue to see a high number of repeat child protection cases due to domestic abuse. In the most recent quarter Domestic Violence was a factor in 64% of repeat Child Protection plans, but this has been as high as 73% in a quarter, whilst averaging 66% this year to date.
36. Health partners are a vital in developing effective support for victims of domestic abuse and violence. There are clearly identified links between domestic abuse and violence and substance misuse (drugs and alcohol), mental health and pregnancy. The transition of Public Health into the Council has supported improved joint working; however work with the Health and Wellbeing Board needs to be developed further particularly as the Clinical Commissioning Group commissions a range of services including mental health and substance misuse services.
37. New legislation, Domestic Violence Disclosure (DVD) and Domestic Violence Orders (DVO) is also being introduced and whilst positive measures to support victims and their families this will place further demand on partners such as the police to implement and deliver.
38. At a strategic level the links with criminal justice partners needs to be developed further. Police are already a key partner; however Crown Prosecution Service and Court Service, Probation and Prison Services also have a part to play in improving outcomes for victims and their families. Without the right support victims may choose not to progress a prosecution and return to face more abuse, placing themselves and family at further risk. In some cases, where Orders have been put in place, breaches have not been responded to by the appropriate agencies and the victim remains vulnerable and at risk.

Conclusions and Next Steps

39. The Committee is asked to consider making recommendations that would enhance the Council's offer. The Outcomes of this meeting will be written into a full report and made available to the Executive members for further consideration

Appendix:

Appendix – Recorded incidents of domestic abuse and violence

Appendix **A**

Recorded incidents of domestic abuse and violence

1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013			
	Number of incidents recorded	Number of locations where a Child Present *	% of recorded incidents where child present
Central Bedfordshire	2588	1067	41%
Bedford	2498	936	37%
Luton	3665	1430	39%
1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012			
Central Bedfordshire	2469	930	38%
Bedford	2313	901	39%
Luton	3327	1335	40%

*Child present as recorded by the police means that there is normally a child/children resident at the offence locations, they have not necessarily witnessed the incident or been at the address at the time. The actual number of individual children involved is likely to be much higher.

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