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| Subject: | Local Government Association Safeguarding Peer Review update report | | |
| Date of Meeting: | Children, Young People and Skills Committee 21 November 2016 | | |
| Report of: | Pinaki Ghoshal – Executive Director of Families, Children & Learning | | |
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| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the outcome of the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Safeguarding Peer Review which took place in September 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the positive comments made by the LGA peer review team and be assured the local authority will be taking forward the identified areas for consideration appropriately and in a timely way.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The local authority was inspected by Ofsted in May 2015 under the single inspection framework. This inspection focussed on the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. A review of the city's Local Children's Safeguarding Board was conducted alongside inspection.
- 3.2 Ofsted found that overall the local authority required improvement to be good, but did find that the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence, those going through the adoption process, care leavers and our Leadership, Management and Governance was good. They also judged that the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) was good.
- 3.3 The local authority considered the Ofsted report to be fair and accepted the findings and recommendations. Ofsted recognised that the authority had already identified all the areas that needed improvement and work had already been underway to change the key elements of service delivery.
- 3.4 In October 2015, as part of that planned improvement work, a significant restructure took place across the children's social work services, introducing a relationship based model of practice and realigning most social work in to new

- Pods. The pods allow for greater continuity for families, with all staff in the pod having an oversight of all cases.
- 3.5 Recent data indicates that the new structure is having a positive effect, with numbers of children in care declining and a more stable workforce being established.
 - 3.6 This committee has a clear priority to take the council on an improvement journey to delivering excellent services and in order to check our progress towards that the Director of Families, Children & Learning approached the LGA to coordinate a safeguarding Peer Review.
 - 3.7 The detail of what the review looked at is given below. In addition we asked them to look at some specific areas relating to our new model, our plans and to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB).
 - 3.8 The review process included some detailed reviews of our live cases (including talking to social workers and pod managers), a review of lots of our documents and data prior to their arrival and then many interviews and visits during their week on site.
 - 3.9 The onsite review took place 26th – 30th September 2016. The week started with two presentations. One by the local authority setting the local context and outlining where we thought our post Ofsted progress had got to. This was followed by a presentation by the review team on their early thoughts. The team then participated in a full timetable of visits and interviews across the week. These included meetings with front line staff, managers, partners, elected Members and young people.
 - 3.10 The concluding presentation, detailed in the following paragraphs, was delivered on Friday 30th September. These findings were welcomed and the identified areas for consideration were discussed in detail. It is felt that many overlap with existing improvement plans although we await the outcome letter to confirm this, then work will be prioritised to make further progress in these areas. These will include
 - Families, Children & Learning Directorate Management Team to work on a better communicated vision for the service
 - Consideration to be given how to provide more capacity for Members to prioritise the vital Corporate Parenting role
 - An increased focus on tightening up operational standards around management oversight of cases, producing good quality chronologies on cases and not allowing drift to occur by closing down inactive cases earlier.
 - Discuss with partners about creating extra capacity in the city's systems
 - 3.11 The detailed letter giving more detail on the findings and suggested areas for consideration will be shared by the LGA shortly and this in turn will then be shared with those that were involved the review.

4. FINDINGS OF THE PEER REVIEW

4.1 The review team looked at the following areas in detail and delivered positive observations and suggestions for considerations within each.

Vision, Strategy and Leadership
Effective Practice, service delivery and the voice of the child
The case records review they undertook both before and during the visit
Outcomes, impact and performance management
Working together (including Health and Wellbeing Board)
Capacity and managing resources

4.2 In addition we asked them to take a detailed look at the following areas

Can outcomes, especially from the new social work model be demonstrated? In particular is practice purposeful? Is the voice of the child clear and having an impact? Are managers challenging?
Are plans clear and consistent with the priorities (is there a golden thread)?
Evidence for the voice of the child within the LSCB.

4.3 Their key findings included

- That there was confidence in the management team
- No inadequate work observed
- Improvement needs to be consolidated and impact demonstrated
- Ensure the right balance across self-improvement and audit
- A drill down on cases reveals variable quality of assessing planning & recording
- Consolidate a simple outcome based vision for children, young people and their families in Brighton and Hove
- Use the knowledge that you have to narrate your own story and express your aspirations for children and young people as outcomes
- Whole system approach informs joint commissioning
- Some of the Ofsted recommendations are still being followed up.

4.4 There were some detailed areas for consideration given and will be confirmed in more detail in the outcome letter and where these are not already in development plans they will be fully considered and appropriate action or discussion with partners will take place as soon as possible.

5. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 The local authority is not obliged to participate in peer review activities and could simply wait for the next Ofsted inspection framework and connected timetable. However, that is likely to be 2018 at the earliest and it was felt important to get a reputable external perspective on our progress much sooner than that.

5.2 There are other peer review methodologies that the local authority also engages with, mainly coordinated by the South East Regional Sector Led Improvement Programme. In recent years we have used that process to conduct peer reviews into our arrangements for supporting Missing Children and to look creatively about future use of our Children's Centres.

- 5.3 The LGA Safeguarding Peer Review process has a very strong reputation across the country and many authorities use the process to either prepare for an Ofsted inspection or to check progress since Ofsted visited. It is a wider review process that most others in that the review team is large and often includes an elected Member from another authority, this is not typical in other processes.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Partners and service users were involved in the peer review process. We specifically asked for the LGA team to include a health professional so that a range of meetings could take place with health partners, enabling the LGA team to be able to see the whole process across the city. They also met with Sussex Police during the week both at the Safeguarding Investigation Unit at John Street Police Station and at our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The findings of the peer review have been welcomed and work is now being prioritised accordingly. Officers, partners and elected Members who met with the team over the week have reported back how useful the process has been, with practice and experience shared with a range of colleagues who would not normally meet.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any areas identified for development will be met from within existing resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Louise Hoten

Date: 07/10/2016

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The peer review allows members to have an evidence based evaluation of the progress being made to deliver on the aspirations for the quality of the service. The service is essential to the authority meeting statutory duties to children in need of protection and children in need. Under 2013 Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services the Lead Member has political responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children's services

Lawyer Consulted:

Natasha Watson

Date: 11/11/2016

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Making appropriate provision for vulnerable children, young people and their families who need the support of our social work services is key to enabling them to achieve their potential.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.2 Improving safeguarding provision across the city will help build more sustainable communities and will boost health and wellbeing amongst children and young people and their families.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

