

Voice of the Child Overview Panel

13 September 2017

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.10pm

Present: Councillors T Smith (Chair), Sidebottom, M Smith, R Welsh

Apologies for absence: Councillors J Lane, Pearce, Peet

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Voice of the Child Overview Panel. It was discussed that the Panel will have responsibility to ensure that the voice and lived experience of children is reflected in the improvement activity. It is important that focus is placed on providing supportive and constructive checks to existing policies, procedures and partnership working.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received a draft paper outlining the proposed Terms of Reference for the Panel.

Resolved: That the Terms of Reference is approved and adopted by the Panel.

3. UPDATE ON OFSTED INSPECTION AND MONITORING VISIT

The Panel received copies of the full Ofsted inspection report published on 9 December 2016; and the Ofsted letter from the monitoring visit which was undertaken on 8 and 9 June 2017. A summary of the Voice of the Child findings within the Ofsted report was also provided to draw particular attention to findings and recommendations within the report which will influence future work and enquiry of the Panel.

Members discussed the challenges that services now face in order to improve and the way by which improvements are both measured and monitored. With Ofsted identifying a number of areas in need of improvement relating to the voice of the child, the work of this panel will aim to ensure any failings are addressed in a way that significantly improves outcomes for all children who find themselves in touch with Children's Services.

The Chair also discussed the need for transparency in the way that service improvements and outcomes are relayed between Children Services, partner agencies and Elected Members to drive on-going improvement. This includes important messages such as improvement progress and achievements to continued challenges where a shared approach and responsibility may be needed.

Resolved: That close attention is placed on future Ofsted monitoring activity and the direction of the Panel's activity.

4. OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Members discussed how the Panel will look to engage directly with children, as well as looking at some of the processes for gathering, recording and learning from the voice and lived experiences of children and young people.

It was discussed how important the voice of the child can be when acting as a flag for a range of problems and potentially unidentified issues within a service. There is a need for an appropriate level of open and honest feedback systems, both for children to be heard and for staff to raise any concerns with managers and Elected Members.

A key part of the improvement journey is to ensure children are encouraged to be fully engaged by feeling comfortable, safe and confident to express their views on a range of procedures and decisions which will ultimately affect them in the short, medium and long-term.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

The agreed area of work and future activity includes:

- For an initial meeting to be arranged with the Children in Care Council to learn more about the ways in which the voices and lived experiences of children are represented.
- To look at the wider engagement with children beyond children in care.
- To further explore best practice and professional guidelines.
- To map out how the voice of the child is heard in individual cases, how it is recorded, how it is acted upon and the ways by which collective learning and improvements are achieved.
- To explore how the voice of the child is collated across caseloads to draw out the learning points for wider service development.
- To benchmark with an area that is judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted with regards to the voice of the child.
- To review other sources of evidence that will improve the way that services review and act upon a range of findings and outcomes, e.g complaints.

Resolved:

(1) For an informal meeting to be arranged before 1 November 2017, for members to meet with young people from the Children in Care Council.

(2) For details of the meeting with the Children in Care Council to be circulated to members by email and as a calendar invitation.

(3) For the Panel to receive a paper at the next meeting on 1 November 2017, with details of best practice and professional guidelines to ensure the voice and lived experiences of young people are incorporated within all aspects of Children's Services.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Voice of the Child Overview Panel will take place on Wednesday 1 November 2017

7. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR