

8 December 2014

Agenda Item: 15

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND CULTURAL SERVICES

NATIONAL CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES CONFERENCE 2014: 29 – 31 OCTOBER 2014

Purpose of the Report

1. To report back on Member and officer attendance at the National Children and Adult Services Conference which took place in Manchester between 29 and 31 October 2014.

Information and Advice

Background

2. The County Council's representatives were Councillor Muriel Weisz, Councillor Kate Foale, Jon Wilson (Acting Corporate Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection) and Anthony May (Corporate Director of Children, Families and Cultural Services). David Pearson, Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Public Protection attended in his capacity as the President of the Directors of Adult Social Services and played a prominent role in the conference.
3. This report describes the business of the event and an evaluation by the Council's representatives of its success, with particular reference to the business of the Council and the achievement of learning objectives. The report is supported by reference to the speeches and presentations which are on the conference website, hosted by the Local Government Association.

Purpose/Aim of the Event

4. The National Children and Adult Services Conference is the major annual national conference for adults and children's services.
5. This conference is designed to provide an opportunity to further understand and get up to date information on proposals to deal with issues in adults and children's services.

6. Attendance at the conference was with the following objectives:
- understand the policies and strategies of the Government for adults and children's services
 - receive information on best practice across the country
 - hear from expert speakers and Government Ministers on a range of policy developments, key challenges and opportunities in adults and children's services.

Achievement of Objectives

7. The conference had a full agenda of speeches, plenary sessions, workshops and exhibitions. It also provided opportunities for Members and officers to talk to colleagues across the country about the various issues and challenges facing adults and children's services.
8. The conference was addressed by the following leading politicians:
- Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health
 - Norman Lamb, Minister of State at the Department of Health
 - Edward Timpson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
 - Andy Burnham, Shadow Spokesperson for Health
 - Tristram Hunt, Shadow Education Secretary
 - Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
 - Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State for Education
9. A large number of topics were covered and some of the key issues are summarised below.

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

10. Tackling child sexual exploitation is a key priority for all local authorities. During the course of the conference there was an opportunity to learn from other local authorities (and Police Services) about their practice in this area. Among the key points arising was the need to coordinate a strategy across all services working with children to prevent exploitation as early as possible, protect victims and to rigorously pursue offenders. Such a strategy should be based on a thorough understanding of the context in which exploitation thrives, with clear actions assigned to key agencies under a single plan. In Nottinghamshire, there is a single plan to tackle sexual exploitation and it is reviewed on a regular basis by the Children and Young People's Committee. However, it is the intention of the Corporate Director for Children, Families and Cultural Services to bring a further report to the Children and Young People's Committee in January 2015 with options for greater scrutiny by Elected Members in this critical issue. In the meantime, officers are following up the good practice examples highlighted to Anthony May and Councillor Foale at the national conference.

The Role of Ofsted and the Inspections of Children in Need of Help and Protection, Looked After Children and Care Leavers

11. Ofsted implemented a new inspection framework in November 2013. The experience of Ofsted and local authorities with this framework was the subject of a dedicated session led by Ofsted, the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services. It is highly likely that Nottinghamshire will be inspected under the existing framework in 2015 so there was much to be gained from listening to the experiences of Ofsted and other Councils. Ofsted is clear that the framework is more rigorous and challenging than before but committed to the principle of inspection being a significant test of local arrangements which is designed to drive up standards.

Three New Levels of Social Worker Professional standards

12. Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State for Education announced that children's social work will be restructured, with a new set of professional standards. Nicky has tasked Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for Children and Families to develop new assessment and accreditation systems for three levels of practice:
13. Child and family practitioner status:
 - an essential requirement for any social worker holding cases of children in need, children at risk of harm and looked-after children
 - this will set a stretching new standard for all those employed in the most demanding front-line social work roles.
14. Assessed and accredited supervisor status:
 - for those managing and supervising frontline social workers
 - it is imperative that front-line workers are managed and supervised by those with the knowledge and skills needed to shape that practice excellence.
15. Social work practice leader:
 - a senior leadership position, focused on the quality of frontline practice in a local area, accountable for the quality of that practice, alive to brilliant practice, alert when things are going wrong
 - a role that will complement the corporate leadership role of the director of children's services, allowing a wider pool of leadership talent to be considered for those roles while the rigorous focus on social work practice sits with the new practice leader
 - there is a need to understand how this will 'fit' with the existing Principal Children and Families Social Worker (PSW) role. The PSW role is now well embedded in most local authorities.
16. All three standards will be based on the new statement of the knowledge and skills needed for children's social work which Isabelle Trowler will publish in December 2014.

17. The assessment and accreditation systems for all three levels will be developed over the next few months with the roll out of the new standards happening next year.

Learning from the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Pathfinder

18. There were helpful presentations about what local authorities, partner agencies and families can do to achieve better outcomes for young people with SEND. Nottinghamshire has been a pathfinder authority. The Pathfinders are in response to The Children and Families Act 2014 which introduces a comprehensive, birth to 25 years SEND system and gives new rights and protections to 16-25 year olds in further education and training. The Act introduces new arrangements which include Education, Health and Care Plans, a local offer which provides information about support available to children and young people and families, and personal budgets. Experience from the Pathfinders shows that there are benefits to joint commissioning between education, health and care services, and a focus on the active engagement of children and families in the planning and evaluation of their services.
19. These new arrangements are now fully in place in Nottinghamshire and have been the subject of reports to the Children and Young People's Committee, which will be responsible for monitoring performance in the future.
20. Members and officers felt that the Conference was very effective in providing an opportunity to learn about the key issues in these areas of service and the future direction.
21. Details of the speeches and presentations can be found at the link below.

www.adass.org.uk/ncasc-2014

Other Options Considered

22. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the report on Member and officer attendance at the National Children and Adult Services Conference which took place in Manchester between 29 and 31 October 2014 be noted.

Anthony May
Corporate Director, Children, Families and Cultural Services
and Deputy Chief Executive

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

25. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 27/11/14)

26. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

National Children and Adult Services Conference 2014 – report to Children & Young People’s Committee on 14 July 2014

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0540