

## **HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL**

MINUTES of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 8 October 2015 at 9.00 am in The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, of the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

### **Present**

Councillors Darren Sanders (in the Chair)  
Ryan Brent  
Gemma New

### **Also in attendance**

Councillor Alicia Denny

#### **31. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stuart Potter, Margaret Foster and Phil Smith.

#### **32. Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillor Gemma New declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 - Support services for people aged 16-25 living in isolation - in that her daughter is currently registered with the Teenage Pregnancy Team.

#### **33. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2015 (AI 3)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the chair of the panel.

#### **34. Support services for people aged 16-25 living in isolation (AI 4)**

The chair welcomed Sharon George and Teresa O'Toole (Positive Family Future Transformation Team), Lisa Caine (Manager of the Young Parents Support Service) and Kay Crockford (Teenage Pregnancy Reintegration Officer) to the meeting.

Sharon George explained to the panel that the Positive Family Future Transformation Team have been working in Paulsgrove since May 2104 following the response of the Public Services Board which brings key partners in the city together. Despite a huge amount of money being spent on families there is no change in the family status. One particular family had up to 50 professionals involved. The Public Services Board sponsored a team to look at services from a family perspective using the Vanguard Method, a method looking from outside in. The Troubles Families programme was seen as an opportunity to address these challenges. The "ACT" system, acceptance commitment therapy, has been used.

Sharon went on to explain that there are three distinct issues. First, it aims to identify families from when they first arrive in the community. If they are not

connected with the local services then things can quite quickly start to unravel. This is seen as a 'wobble point'. If they are not registered with a GP then the family cannot access any health support. The system then introduces a single case holder, from existing services, which will ensure that the right service and support is available for the family, known as the Navigator. Now the Housing Service under take a welcome visit and identify any support necessary at the very earliest point of concern. As an example, single parents are advised about the Children's Centres, community centres and youth groups etc. Families now feel linked in and know where to go for support. The Navigator becomes a positive contact for these families. Whatever happens with savings this model maximises support for families in the community. This is all basic but once they know about the services they can act independently. This is a simple model based around one visit which then plugs people into the community which will reduce any feelings of isolation.

Teresa O'Toole, Positive Family Futures Transformation, explained that people would loop round and yet deliver the same service. So the transformation team tried to look at something different. The Substance Misuse Team use 'ACT' to help sustain positive behaviour, so the team looked at whether this could also apply to anxiety and isolation. As an example, we have been working with one particular family and have seen a huge shift with the parent engaging with the community. Mum is taking responsibility for her life changes, is keeping focused and is now making real sustained changes. She is now proudly talking about what she has done rather than keeping her head in the sand. Relationship building is very important. Teresa felt that there are a lot of single mums living in Portsmouth who live in isolation, who are concerned about social care getting involved and removing their children if they ask for any kind of help. This 'ACT' is a positive shift. It was noted that the 'ACT' model is at very early stages but at a recent seminar over 60 GP's, schools and community leaders had attended and were looking at how to work with families.

Teresa went on to explain that starting with what is important to the family is crucial, i.e. getting on with neighbours, paying rent, children going to school. If we can get in earlier, we can make a positive shift change much sooner. This also helps to promote their ownership and empowerment.

Lisa Caine, the manager of the Young Parents Support Services ('YPSS') explained to the panel that YPSS provides support to young people who become pregnant whilst at school or in further education. The service supports young people through a positive pregnancy, parenting and future life chances, by working with schools so that they do not become disadvantaged. The service will pick up a young person up to the end of Yr11 and will support them through further education, with childcare etc to help keep their aspirations. Young new parenting can lend itself to feeling isolated from their peers who are moving on. If support services are not available young parents can fall into isolation. There are easy things for schools to do to support young mums at school during their pregnancy as they are at high risk of feeling isolated. Many young mums suffer from anxiety and mental health problems particularly with drink or drug issues in their family. There has been a lot of preventative work undertaken in schools with sex education and the teenage

pregnancy figures have come down significantly. We do seem to be getting more school age dads. This can be very hard for the boys especially if they do not tell anyone. They have the same thoughts and anxieties as the girls do. Young parents do need direct support. They need someone to go along with them to an appointment as they are unsure of where to go, how they will be treated by staff etc. This all breeds anxiety and isolation.

Sharon George explained that this it is about recognising these concerns early on and working out how to support them.

Kay Crockford, the Teenage Pregnancy Reintegration Officer explained that the team provides an outreach service and also work with young dads. One group meets on a Wednesday at the children's centre in Cosham. Young parents are taught PSHE (personal social health and economic education) life skills to help support healthy eating, activities, education. Young people can attend these sessions from when they are pregnant up until Yr11. The schools support their attendance at these sessions. However this does depend on childcare and how the delivery went. New mums are entitled to 18 weeks maternity leave from school but this is not encouraged as it would have a detrimental effect on their education. 'New' mums are encouraged to return to school within six weeks of their baby being born as this is a really significant period in their schooling. The team offers one-to-one work with individuals and mentoring if required. Home visits are also undertaken as it is often the case that the parents of these young parents also need some support to alleviate those fears of being a parent at such a young age. It might take a little more navigation but the young person can still achieve their aspirations. Paid childcare is available up to the age of 20. Peer influence is a factor in the feeling of isolation in young parents. We often have young mums come back to the Wednesday group who are in college with their child in nursery, taking the course they want etc which gives the new parents something to aspire to, to see for themselves what they can achieve as young parents. The future can be positive for the young parent and their child. Young parents can also get other support services to our children's centres as they get to know what else is available. Young dads feel that they need to get a job, leave school etc. We suggest weekend work to help support financially in a small way whilst continuing school or college for the longer term. Their peer group do not understand how they feel as new parents. They need to know about labour, pain, what to expect at the birth. Young dads are given authorisation from school to go to scan appointments and a few days off from school after the birth. Peer support is very important for young dads. As an example, we have one young dad who thought he was the only 'young dad' in the city. When he was told he was one of three he was really surprised. We have offered him the opportunity to meet with the other dads so that they can talk about their feelings etc. Being able to share how they feel is incredibly important and reduces feelings of anxiety and isolation.

### **35. Date of next meeting (AI 5)**

It was agreed that Lucy would arrange the next meeting in consultation with the chair.

The meeting concluded at 10.25 am.

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Chair of the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel