

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2019 AT 2.00 PM IN ANTRIM BOARD CENTRE

1. **PRESENT** Mr D Cargo (Chair)
 Mr J Craig Mr K Mulvenna
 Mr G Lundy Ms O'Connor

2. **IN ATTENDANCE**

Ms S Long, Dr C Mangan, Mr D Hanna, Mrs U Turbitt, Mrs E Craig, Mr C Reid, Ms E Bremner, Mrs L McGovern and Mr C McNickle and for part of the meeting Mrs H Fraser, Ms A Hall and Ms K Mawhinney.

Mr T Clarke, Access NI Manager, was in attendance for item 8.

3. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Ms Á Andrews, Mrs P Carville, Mrs M Culbert and Dr M Dynan.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare interests where appropriate during the course of the meeting.

5. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2019**

The minutes* (CPS/12/19/3) of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 were agreed on the proposal of Mr Mulvenna and seconded by Mr Lundy.

6. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
 - 6.1 **CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (2019-22) (6.1)**

Dr Mangan said that work had commenced on the development of a digital solution to track the training of staff across the workforce in relation to child protection and safeguarding. Further work was required to ensure that a robust evidence base would be available on an ongoing basis. In the interim, training would continue to be delivered.

 - 6.2 **INTERNAL AUDIT OF CHILD PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN OPERATIONS AND ESTATES (JANUARY 2018) (8)**

Dr Mangan advised Members that the Action Plan had been presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting on 7 October 2019 and it had been well received.

 - 6.3 **INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRIVATE TRANSPORT OPERATORS (2019/20) (9)**

Ms Craig said that 788 drivers and escorts used by contracted private operators had received training to date. The Chair drew Members' attention to the scale of work required to be undertaken by the Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) on this matter. Mr Hanna said a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

Action: Committee to receive updated information on CPS training for private operators.

6.4 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONSULTATION - GUIDANCE ON INFORMATION SHARING FOR CHILD PROTECTION PURPOSES: EA RESPONSE (12)

Dr Mangan reported that EA's response to the Department of Health consultation on Guidance on Information Sharing had been submitted.

7. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed Mr Craig and Dr Dynan as new Members of the Committee. He expressed his thanks for their membership and Dr Mangan informed Members that future Committee meetings would coincide with the dates of the Children and Young People's Services Committee.

8. PRESENTATION FROM ACCESS NI

The Chair welcomed Mr T Clarke, Access NI Manager, to the meeting and invited him to deliver his presentation on the work of Access NI.

Mr Clarke informed Members that Access NI was a criminal history disclosure service within the Department of Justice and that it had commenced operations in April 2008 in accordance with Part V of the Police Act 1997. He highlighted that EA was Access NI's largest single customer and it was noted that EA had submitted 7591 applications for enhanced checks during the current financial year at a cost of approximately £250k.

Mr Clarke provided Members with the type of information that could be disclosed, or not disclosed, as part of an Access NI check, including information on the process for disclosure and eligibility for disclosures. A discussion ensued on the disclosure of pending legal proceedings at the time of application. Mr Clarke said that an enhanced check could disclose non-conviction information or 'soft intelligence' if the police believed that it was relevant to the role applied for. This included information about ongoing police investigations. A Member queried whether multiple checks were required for various roles within EA. Ms Mawhinney said that one check would qualify a person for multiple roles as long as there had not been a break in service for more than 90 days.

A Member queried whether registered bodies received a copy of the applicant's certificate. Mr Clarke said that EA would be made aware of instances where relevant information had been listed on an applicant's certificate. In such instances the applicant would be required to provide a copy of the certificate as part of the pre-employment checks.

A Member queried whether school governors were required to complete Access NI checks. He highlighted that Boards of Governors increasingly met at school premises during school hours. Ms Long said that the Membership and Teaching Appointments Committee (MTAC) had considered this matter in May 2019 and had noted that governors did not meet the requirements of the definition of regulated activity as there should be no requirement for governors to have unsupervised access. Mr Clarke said that school governors were checked in England and Wales and a Member agreed with this approach. A Member said that flexibility was required in how schools operated and that schools were required to risk assess their environment. Ms Long said that the paper considered at MTAC would be made available to Members.

A discussion ensued on EA's duty to refer individuals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Mr Clarke highlighted that EA had a duty to refer when it had removed a person from working with children or vulnerable adults due to the person being cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence, being involved in inappropriate action or neglect, or a person satisfying the harm test. It was noted that the duty to refer continued to apply in instances where the person resigned in advance of action from EA and it continued to apply when a report had been made to another body such as the PSNI. Members expressed concern that there was a lack of awareness in this area and the Chair requested that officers should consider assurances on this matter in more detail.

Mr Reid drew attention to a meeting between Committee Members and the DBS which had taken place on 31 October 2019. He said that further engagement between the DBS and the wider education sector had been planned for 2 March 2020. He also said that the Committee could receive a presentation from the Police Common Disclosure Unit. This was agreed.

A discussion ensued on the placement of pupils during international exchange visits. A Member expressed the view that host families in foreign countries should be subject to the same checks as applicable in Northern Ireland. Mr Clarke said that a Certificate of Good Conduct would provide some assurance in this regard.

The Chair thanked Mr Clarke for his presentation and he left the meeting.

Action: *Paper on pre-employment checks for school governors, as considered at MTAC, to be circulated to Members. Officers to consider assurances in relation to EA's duty to refer individuals to the DBS. Officers to schedule a presentation from the Police Common Disclosure Unit.*

9. DRIVER AND ESCORT PROTOCOL - AUDIT

Ms Bremner presented a status report* (CPS/12/19/8) in relation to an audit of driver and escort protocols. The audit had made six recommendations, one of which had been categorised as Priority 1 (driver and escort training). Ms Bremner said that significant progress had been made on all recommendations: three recommendations including the priority 1 recommendation had been completed, and three priority 2 recommendations were on track to be completed but were dependent on confirmation of resource. She provided further information on the actions taken in relation to driver and escort training. Training in relation to the Passenger Assistance Training Scheme had commenced in August 2019 and a total of 740 drivers/escorts (57% of the workforce) had received training. Further sessions would be scheduled on an ongoing basis.

Ms Bremner said that the priority 2 recommendation in relation to the review of current policy content had also been completed. She highlighted that EA Transport had reviewed and updated driver and escort manuals and all EA employed drivers and escorts had been asked to sign to confirm receipt. Members noted that the manuals had made a clear connection between organisational values and the role of drivers and escorts as well as reinforcing important duties such as vehicle checks.

A Member queried EA's policy on mandatory drugs testing for drivers and escorts. Mr Hanna said that where there was evidence that a driver was under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the PSNI would be contacted and asked to intervene immediately. He said that Translink operated a random drugs and alcohol monitoring scheme. This was appropriate as Translink's main function was to transport passengers. A comparison was made between Translink and EA as a multifunctional organisation. Members agreed that further consideration should be given to the management of risk in this area.

A Member queried whether drivers and escorts were required to declare relevant medical issues. Mr Hanna said that in order to obtain a vocational licence a driver had to pass an additional driving test and meet medical conditions. He highlighted poor driving behaviour as a key risk.

Members noted actions taken in relation to monitoring and reporting systems, a handover protocol for children with SEN, governance systems and risk management. A Member paid tribute to the work of special education drivers and Ms Bremner highlighted that Phase 3 of the SBRI Smart School Project had commenced live testing in two special schools in November 2019.

Ms Bremner said that, subject to the population of EA's Transport structure, a broader update on the Transport Service would be provided at a future meeting. The Chair suggested that the status report should be forwarded to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for information. This was agreed.

Action: Consideration to be given to the management of risk in relation to driver substance abuse. Further update on the Transport Service to be provided at a future meeting. Status report to be forwarded to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for information.

10. CHILD PROTECTION SUPPORT SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

Ms Craig presented the Child Protection Support Service Annual Report 2018/19* (CPS/12/19/9). She highlighted the core activities and functions of the service which included helpline support, training, multi-agency working, case management reviews, and the Children in Entertainment and Employment Team (CEET).

Ms Craig referred to the number of performance licenses issued by EA which had increased from 2115 in 2015/16 to 8262 in 2018/19. As a consequence of this, she drew attention to an increase in chaperone training delivered by CEET. Comparisons were made between licensing arrangements in NI and other UK regions. Mr Reid highlighted local good practice in this regard.

Dr Mangan referred to employment permits issued by EA for school aged children. She said that this was an area for further development to help ensure that employers, parents, the general public and schools had an awareness of the implications of the legislation and the protections afforded to children and young people.

A Member referred to the 6105 calls that had been made to the CPSS helpline. He expressed the view that, due to an improved awareness around mental health, children and young people had become more open to discuss difficult situations with responsible adults. Ms Craig agreed that this had facilitated the identification of child protection and safeguarding issues.

Members paid tribute to the work of the CPSS throughout the year and a Member highlighted the diversity of functions undertaken by EA.

On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Mr Lundy, the Committee approved the Child Protection Support Service Annual Report 2018/19. Members agreed that the report would be uploaded to the Members' website and forwarded to the SBNI for information.

Action: Child Protection Support Service Annual Report 2018/19 to be uploaded to the Members' website and forwarded to the SBNI.

11. CASE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Mr Lundy, it was agreed that discussion on this matter would be held in committee.

Reports were provided on five CMR cases.

On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Mr Lundy, the Committee agreed to resume the meeting.

The Chair reported that while in committee progress reports on five CMR cases had been received. He also reported that Members had been updated on how the CPSS team had trialled various processes to deal more efficiently with CMR cases. This included engagement with schools at an earlier stage.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 6 February 2020.

The meeting ended at 4.08 pm.