

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES
AND SAFEGUARDING)**



**MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM - BOOTLE TOWN HALL,
TRINITY ROAD, BOOTLE, L20 7AE
ON TUESDAY 28TH NOVEMBER, 2023**

PRESENT: Councillor Hardman (in the Chair)
Councillor Carlin (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Danny Burns, Evans, Howard,
Christopher Page, Richards, Spring, Brough, Byrne,
Sandra Cain and Armer

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr. Mhairi Doyle, M.B.E.
Cllr. Diane Roscoe
Joe Banham, Assistant Director of Quality
Assurance, Performance and Safeguarding
Risthardh Hare
Eleanor Moulton
David McCullough
Debbie Campbell
Laura Bootland

27. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were made.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Prendergast and Ms. Cheryl Swainbank, Parent Governor Representative.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests were received.

30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023, be confirmed as a correct record.

**31. PETITION - EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE PLANS FOR 16-25
YEAR OLDS**

The Committee considered a petition which had been received by the Council from The Voice of the Families group.

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The petition requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) should make Education and Healthcare Plans (EHCP) for 16–25-year-olds a regular and fixed feature on scrutiny committee agendas and designate a member of the scrutiny committee to be responsible for the EHCP agenda item. The petition also requested that the scrutiny committee should identify and publicise the names and contact details for the three people accountable for the provision of EHCPs.

A representative of The Voice of the Families was in attendance to present the petition.

The Committee responded with the following points:

- The Committee was grateful for the issue of EHCP's 16-25 year olds being brought to the Committee's attention.
- The Committee's agendas were formatted to ensure that all areas within the Committee's remit received specific attention.
- Championing this issue, along with all other issues the committee scrutinised, was the responsibility of all Members of the Committee.
- Parents and carers were reminded that if they had a complaint and felt the escalation process was not working for them, they had the right to contact their Ward Councillor.
- Data on EHCP's could be included in the data regularly presented to members via the Scorecard.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted; and
- (2) EHCP data for 16-25 year olds be included in the scorecard and reported to the Committee at each meeting.

32. PETITION - PUBLIC SPEAKING AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Committee considered a petition which had been received by the Council from a local resident.

The petition requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) should allow members of the public 5 minutes to speak at its formal committee meetings.

The lead petitioner was in attendance to present the petition.

The Committee responded with the following points:

- The Scrutiny Committee did not make formal decisions, it could scrutinise decisions and services and make recommendations.

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- The Committee was committed to making the committee process more accessible.
- There would be a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference (see agenda item 12 below), and public participation would be considered as part of this review. This petition would help inform discussions.
- In the meantime, the petition route remained open to the public.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be noted and be taken into consideration as part of the review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

33. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer submitting the most recent update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care, and the Cabinet Member – Education, whose portfolios fell within the remit of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member update report – Children's Social Care, attached to the report at Appendix A, outlined information on the following:

Children's Social Care:

- Stability and capacity in the workplace
- Elected Member Training
- Early Help and Protection

Cared for Children and Care Experienced:

- The Sufficiency Strategy
- Quality Assurance of Commissioned Placements
- Unregulated and unregistered Placements

Safeguarding, review and Quality Assurance:

- Practice Week
- Quality Assurance

Youth Justice Service (YJS):

- Performance
- Key Performance Indicators
- Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Serious Youth Violence
- JTAI Headlines
- New His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons Inspection Framework

The Cabinet Member update report – Education, attached to the report at Appendix B, outlined information on the following:

- OFSTED Local Area Inspection preparation
- Delivering Better Value
- SEND

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- Inclusion
- School Improvement
- Early Years
- Virtual School
- School Attendance
- Exclusions

Councillors Roscoe and Doyle attended the meeting to present their reports and to respond to any questions or issues raised by Members of the Committee.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The Social Work Academy graduates and how many were being retained by Sefton Council upon graduation.
- The Early Help offer and details of the Leeds/Bradford model and Early Help Hubs.
- Progress made in the recruitment of Foster Carers.
- The financial forecast and level of overspend.
- Reasons for the overspend.
- Practice Week in March 2024 and a reminder that Members could get involved.
- The work around county lines issues.
- The reasons for a high level of school exclusions and managed moves.
- The recruitment of more SEND officers
- The Zing Pilot.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children’s Social Care and the Cabinet Member – Education be noted; and
- (2) Reports on the following issues be brought to future meetings of the Committee:
 - (a) Exclusions and the Graduated Approach in Early Years
 - (b) The Zing Pilot
 - (c) Early Help Hubs
 - (d) Quality Assurance on EHCPs

34. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Children’s Services on progress made on the Improvement Programme.

The Committee was advised that an Ofsted Monitoring Visit had recently taken place, details of which could not be shared until the official letter outlining the findings was received by the Council. This would be in January 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

35. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES JOINT COMMISSIONING PLAN

The Committee considered the joint report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education and Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Health/NHS Place Director presenting the draft Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Joint Commissioning Strategy for 2023 – 2026.

The report detailed the process of development and highlighted the key points.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Equality Assessment Report
- The SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy 2023 – 2026
- Plan on the Page

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The cost implications and delivering best value.
- Training for social workers on Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).
- Personal health budgets and how people were encouraged to make the best use of them.
- The national shortage of education psychologists and how the strategy supported this issue.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the information provided be noted; and
- (2) a further report be submitted to a future meeting, to include information on budget implications, the graduated approach and commissioning and information on SENDIASS.

36. PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality Assurance and Safeguarding) that set out the quality assurance and performance headlines for the period August to October 2023.

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The performance Scorecard was circulated on a supplementary agenda and provided data and analysis of the Key Performance Indicators identified as illustrative of 'system health'.

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- The figures for child protection conferences held within 15 days.
- The figures for the number of assessments completed within 45 days.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Members noted as performance capacity increases, data was now beginning to focus on key areas of the service which were driving high or low performance.
- (2) Members noted assessment performance was an area where the level of detail was supporting our understanding.

Members noted the quality assurance section of the report detailed the findings of audits, amendments to the quality framework as well as the focus of Quality Assurance activity for the coming period.

37. EDUCATION SCORECARD

This agenda item was postponed to a future meeting.

38. OFSTED INSPECTIONS

This agenda item was postponed to a future meeting.

39. CONSIDERATION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND INCLUSION OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS ON THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer proposing a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference in response to a petition received from the Voice of the Families group at the meeting held on 26 September. The petition requested representation of a further three independent people on the Committee who had lived experience.

Subsequent to the meeting on 26 September 2023, Committee Members had met informally to consider the request from the Voice of the Families group; the membership of the Committee, including co-opted members; the Terms of Reference for the Committee; and how best the Committee could obtain views of service users.

It was noted that the Committee already had several co-opted members from the Diocese, Archdiocese and Parent Governor Representatives, as required by the Council's Constitution. In addition, associate members

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from Healthwatch and an independent advisory member were also on the Committee.

Members felt that the Terms of Reference within the Council's Constitution could be streamlined to reflect statutory requirements and the priorities of the Committee.

It was noted that the Committee would continue with its programme of informal meetings and visits and would continue its efforts to seek the views and perspectives of parents, carers and young people.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) A review of the Terms of Reference for the Committee, as set out in the Council's Constitution, to include the use of co-opted members and the possibility of establishing a sub-committee to formally meet with parent groups, be undertaken and any proposals for amendments be submitted to the Adjourned Annual Meeting of the Council to be held in May 2024; and

The Committee should continue to meet informally with groups of parents, children and representative groups and expand this throughout the Municipal Year, with the aim of ensuring that the voices of those with lived experience are heard and inform the work of the Committee.

40. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer that sought to:

- seek the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2023/24;
- indicate whether representatives of the Police and other Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team members should be invited to attend a future formal meeting of the Committee, or if the item should be referred to an informal meeting of Committee Members;
- note that there were no items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the latest Key Decision Forward Plan;
- note the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24;
- note the training proposals available from the Local Government Association (LGA) and in-house;
- consider the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as a potential item for in-depth scrutiny during 2023/24; and
- receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be noted, along with the additional items agreed during this meeting as follows:
 - (a) Exclusions and the Graduated Approach in Early Years
 - (b) The Zing Pilot
 - (c) Early Help Hubs and the Leeds/Bradford model
 - (d) Quality assurance on EHCP's
 - (e) Further report on issues raised on the SEND Joint Commissioning Plan report;
- (2) The Police and other Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team members be invited to attend a future formal meeting of the Committee;
- (3) the fact that there are no items for pre-scrutiny from the Key Decision Forward Plan that fall under the remit of the Committee, on this occasion, be noted;
- (4) the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24, as set out at Appendix B be noted;
- (5) the training proposals available from the Local Government Association and in-house be noted;
- (6) the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) be approved for in-depth scrutiny by Members of the Committee during 2023/24 and relevant activities be included in the schedule of the informal meetings of Committee Members and site visits to be undertaken during 2023/24, as set out at Appendix B; and
- (7) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.