

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING PARENT/CARERS
SUB-COMMITTEE



MEETING HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM - BOOTLE TOWN HALL,
TRINITY ROAD, BOOTLE, L20 7AE
ON TUESDAY 16TH JULY, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Hardman (in the Chair)
Councillor Danny Burns (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Leo Evans, Carol Richards
and Christopher Page

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. ATTENDANCE OF PARENT/CARERS - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Members of the Sub-Committee considered verbal representations from parents/carers about the Council's complaints procedure, specifically in relation to Children's Social Care and Education.

The Chair advised that following the receipt of a petition regarding complaints at the 4th June Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), it was agreed that the first meeting of this sub-committee would be dedicated to hearing from parents and carers about their experiences when making formal complaints to Sefton Council.

The Sub-Committee heard from representatives of the Sefton Parent Carers Forum and the Voice of the Families Group.

Points were made around the following issues:

- There should be a way for parents/carers to express dissatisfaction and it be logged and dealt with before something becomes a formal complaint.
- General information about the complaints process / how to complain was not easy to find.
- It would be useful if all complaints were acknowledged and an anticipated timescale for a resolution provided, along with the ability to track complaints in "real time".
- Although a specific complaints route for SEND had been established there was still room for improvement.

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- Parents and Carers often felt singled out by Children's Services staff if they had previously raised a complaint.
- No improvement to services was seen after a complaint had been made.
- Complaints were often referred to the staff member being complained about to provide an explanation, rather than an independent member of staff conducting an unbiased investigation.
- At times, a complaint was investigated but not upheld, but the evidence about why the complaint was dismissed was not provided back to the parent/carer.
- Sefton's complaints procedure does not currently allow for "class actions". Even if several parents had experienced the same problem, they each had to raise a separate complaint about it.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Sub Committee thanked parents/carers for attending the meeting
2. Comments would be fed into the ongoing scrutiny review on the complaint's procedure.