

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

**MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2017**

**Overview
& Scrutiny**



PRESENT: Councillor Murphy (in the Chair)
Councillors Carragher, Hands, Keith and Spencer.
Mrs. C. Palmer, Parent Governor Representative.
Fr. D. Seddon.

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs. S. Cain, Advisory Member.
Miss. L. Kitt, Healthwatch Representative.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bennett, Bradshaw, Brenda O'Brien, Pitt and Webster.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were received.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 21 and 30 June 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

**16. LICENSING/CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION WORKING GROUP
FINAL REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance that presented formally the final report of the Licensing/Child Sexual Exploitation Working Group.

The Working Group, that was a joint Working Group with Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulation, Compliance and Corporate Services), was established with the following Terms of Reference and Objectives:-

- To review the Council's legal and safeguarding position in relation to the issue of any licence following allegations of child sexual exploitation;
- To consider whether all relevant pathways, methods of referral are sound with respect to escalation of CSE referrals;
- To ensure that key sectors are informed, aware of how to raise concerns concerning CSE; and
- To liaise with the Home Office and lobby for legislative change should the need arise.

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Accordingly, the Working Group had met on numerous occasions to undertake such review and its Final Report, together with associated recommendations, was attached to the report.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be recommended to:-

- (1) request Sefton's Members of Parliament to lobby the Home Secretary to strengthen the existing Legislation regarding personal licences to Include:-
 - a) A national data base of personal licences;
 - b) A fit and proper persons test;
 - c) In particular provision to allow a Council to defer determination of a personal licence where the Individual is currently involved in a Police Child Sexual Exploitation investigation where a licenced premises is central to those investigations;
- (2) request Sefton's Members of Parliament to lobby the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that Care Providers who offer residential placements for 16 – 18 year old children and young people are inspected by a regulatory body;
- (3) in order to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation issues with Sefton parents, request the Head of Schools and Families to promote the Child Sexual Exploitation e-learning tool with all schools and governing bodies and with a request that school e-newsletters contain a hyperlink to the e-learning tool;
- (4) rather than the Merseyside local authorities dealing with licensing/CSE issues in a piecemeal or individual way, the Liverpool City Region be contacted to seek the adoption of pan-Merseyside standardised policies particularly bearing in mind the cross boundary nature of taxi/private hire journeys; and
- (5) request that the Head of Regulation and Compliance and the Head of Children's Social Care submit a joint monitoring report to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Resources) and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) to be held on 16 and 30 January 2018 respectively, setting out progress made against each of the recommendations set out in the report and that thereafter, monitoring reports be submitted to the Committees on a six monthly basis.

17. DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY WELL-BEING SERVICE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Social Care and Health in relation to the development of the Family Well-being Service. In March 2017 the Council had approved the proposed development of locality working and the report provided the Committee with the opportunity to comment on the proposals to develop Family Wellbeing Centres.

The report set out the following:-

- the background to the matter;
- the context for Children's Centres;
- the context for Family Centres;
- the proposals for the re-modeling and development of a Family Wellbeing Service;
- the current funding model for Children's Centres and Family Centres;
- the proposed funding formula to support the new operating model for the Family Wellbeing Service;
- Legal considerations and the Childcare Act 2006; and
- Details of consultations and engagement on the proposed changes to the delivery of Family Centres and Children's Centres.

A full Equality Impact Assessment would be carried out and property considerations would be assessed.

The Committee was requested to note the intention to fully engage on the proposals and to comment on the following:-

- The principles of the Family Wellbeing Service; and
- The approach being taken towards the development of a funding formula.

Members of the Committee raised the following observations:

- The requirement to have a proportionally based funding regime.
- The requirement to break down barriers and manage the change sympathetically in relation to service users using a new building to access services.
- Parking facilities and access in and around the proposed centres needs to be considered including the higher volume of service users accessing the centre.
- Regular analytical studies to ensure that resources meet the need as a consequence of new housing developments.
- The reporting mechanism includes the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) in relation to updates and progress.

RESOLVED: That

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- (1) the draft strategic vision and principles for the development of Family and Wellbeing Centres be noted;
- (2) the proposal to implement a new funding formula be noted;
- (3) the fact that public engagement and consultation is planned to commence the week beginning 25 September 2017 be noted; and
- (4) the Director of Social Care and Health be requested to provide a progress report to the next meeting of the Committee, scheduled to take place on 14 November 2016.

18. UPDATED CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Children's Social Care in relation to the updated Children's Social Care Improvement Plan. In April 2016 an Inspection had taken place of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. The report was published on 27 June 2016.

An action plan was developed that addressed the 11 recommendations made in that report and this was submitted to Ofsted in October 2016. The plan had now been reviewed and updated to focus on current priorities and to ensure that the service continued to improve to ensure that all services provided to children were good or better and improved their outcomes.

The updated plan was available for Committee Members to provide them with an opportunity to comment on the plan, the actions and priorities. Progress reports and the performance scorecard that underpinned the plan would continue to be submitted to the Committee on a six monthly basis.

A "Children's Services Draft Improvement Plan 2017-18" was attached to the report as an appendix.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the new action plan and priorities for continuous improvement be endorsed; and
- (2) six monthly progress reports, with the performance scorecard that underpinned the action plan, be submitted to the Committee on an on-going basis.

19. ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Children's Social Care that provided part of the monitoring of the Sefton Adoption Service required under the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 and

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Adoption Minimum Standards 2011. The report provided details of adoption activity from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The report indicated that almost all children placed for adoption had been placed from public care. It was a challenging task for local authorities and the courts to analytically conclude that parents could not safely parent their child or children. Adoption was a last resort for children after all other options had been completely exhausted and minimum delay was crucial in securing permanence for children.

The report indicated that attachment and neuroscience research had been key in identifying that early permanence provides better outcomes for children. Due to their previous experiences of trauma, abuse, broken attachments and separation, children placed for adoption often had greater difficulties in managing their emotions, behaviours and feeling safe in relationships. Adoptive parents needed to be exceptional parents and provide therapeutic parenting that over time would help children heal from trauma. As an Adoption Agency the Council had a duty to find the right families for children, families who had fully evidenced their motivation, emotional resilience, adoptive parenting capacity and openness / reflection of their own attachment history. In recent years the Government had made significant policy and legislative changes to promote children leaving the looked after system to the emotional and legal security that adoption provided. It was now expected that 80% of care proceedings would be completed within 26 weeks. The younger a child was on placement, the better chances of successful adoption. This led to the "Fostering to Adopt" initiative that had allowed children to be placed in their potential place of permanence with approved adopters who were temporarily approved as foster carers. This route to adoption promoted early attachment and minimised the disruption of moves for children. The Adoption Scorecard was introduced in May 2012 in order to compare, monitor and improve Local Authorities' performance against specific timescale measures. Significant changes had also been made relating to the recruitment and assessment process for prospective adopters which reflected a speedier process. These changes were published as Statutory Guidance. The Sefton Adoption Service Annual Report 2016-17 was attached to the report as an appendix and detailed Sefton's progress in the last year.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the content of Sefton's Adoption Service Annual Report 2016 – 2017 be noted; and
- (2) Officers be congratulated on the proactive way in which the "Family/Friend Preparation Training" had been developed and would be utilised on a regional basis.

20. FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Children's Social Care that provided information about the Fostering Service and outcomes for children and young people looked after by Sefton Council, from 1st

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April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The purpose of the annual report was to inform the public, Elected Member's, Partners and staff of the progress and developments in the Service during this period.

The report indicated that in 2016/17 the Fostering Service had continued to develop and improve practice to meet the needs of children and young people looked after by Sefton and address the requirements of national guidance and fostering standards.

The remit of the Fostering Service was highly circumscribed by legislation and regulations. The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 were the primary sources of legislation that guided fostering practice, but the service also took account of other child care legislation such as the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and the Care Leavers (England) Regulation 2010.

When a child or young person became looked after, it was one of the most important and significant changes in their life and it was critical that the families who looked after these most vulnerable children/young people through foster care were the best they could be. Sefton Council wanted to create a fairer future for our most vulnerable children/young people and their families; the Council wanted every child/young person to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. For those young children who could not remain or return home safely to their birth families, good quality foster care offered them the best opportunity to experience a warm and loving family environment while appropriate plans were made for their future.

The aim of the Fostering Service was to provide high quality care for children and young people in safe, secure and nurturing families by means of recruiting and developing highly skilled foster carers.

Sefton currently had 86 mainstream fostering households, comprised of 70 couples and 16 single carers, with a total capacity of 130 children placed in short-term and long-term placements. A number of these places were not currently available at the end of March 2017. This had been explored and a plan developed to make better use of the available capacity and to monitor this more regularly. There were 58 Connected persons / kinship households, 96 carers, 38 couples, and 20 single carers. Sefton foster carers carried out a good job in supporting children and young people who did not move placements frequently as a rule and they stayed with their carer(s) until either the outcome of care proceedings or when the care plan was for them to return to the care of birth parents.

The Sefton Fostering Service Annual report 2016-17 was attached to the report as an Appendix and detailed the activities during 2016 – 2017.

RESOLVED:

That the activity that has taken place in relation to fostering in the year 2016 -17 be noted.

21. OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK - PRESENTATION

Further to Minute No. 5 (4) of 21 June 2017, the Head of Children's Social Care gave a presentation on the Ofsted Inspection Framework. The presentation outlined the changes to the Ofsted Inspection regime and the requirement to thread the inspection principles into all the processes undertaken at a local level in order that the Authority is consistently inspection ready.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

22. CABINET MEMBER REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance in relation to the most recent report of the Cabinet Member – Children, Schools and Safeguarding for the September 2017 period. The report included details of Academisation; South Sefton College; SEND Inspection; National Funding Formula; Early Years Foundation Stage, KS1 and KS2 outcomes and an update on Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017/18

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member update report be noted.

23. WORK PROGRAMME - KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regulation and Compliance that sought the views of the Committee on the Work Programme for 2017/18, the identification of potential topics for scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by a Working Group appointed by the Committee and the identification of any items for pre-scrutiny scrutiny by the Committee from the Key Decision Forward Plan.

Members of the Committee requested that feedback from the consultation in relation to "Family Well-being Centres" be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) prior to the report being considered by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2017/18, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) the following additional items be added to the Work Programme:-

"Progress report on the implementation of recommendations of the Not in Education, Employment and Training Working Group", to a future Meeting of the Committee; and

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“Progress report on Family Well-being Centres” scheduled to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) on 14 November 2017;

- (3) it be acknowledged that the Committee had one outstanding Working Group in relation to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service; and that work would be completed with the Final Report being submitted to the next Meeting of the Committee;
- (4) a Working Group be established to review the topic of “Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment”; and in that respect the following Members be appointed to serve on the Working Group:-

Councillor Spencer, Sandra Cain, Carrie Ryan-Palmer and Libby Kitt; and

- (5) the Head of Regulation and Compliance be requested to contact those Members who were absent to seek their interest in serving on the Working Group referred to in (4) above.