



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

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT  
ON TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Burns (in the Chair)  
Councillor Spencer (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Carlin, Evans, John Kelly (Substitute  
Member for Councillor Dowd), Prendergast, John  
Sayers (Substitute Member for Councillor Murphy)  
Yvonne Sayers and Webster

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. M. Byrne, Healthwatch Sefton  
Mrs. S. Cain, Independent Advisory Member  
Ms. M. McDermott, Parent Governor Representative  
Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member - Children's  
Social Care  
Councillor Roscoe, Cabinet Member - Education

**10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dowd and Murphy; Councillor Wilson and his Substitute Councillor Christine Maher; Ms. K. Christie, Healthwatch Representative; Ms. C. McDonough, Parent Governor Representative; and Father D. Seddon, Archdiocese Representative.

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

**13. SEND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE**

Further to Minute No. 6 of 6 July 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education updating Committee Members on the progress made against the actions taken and progress made regarding the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Continuous Improvement Plan.

The report indicated that the Health and Wellbeing Board provided system leadership, kept the Council's Cabinet informed of progress and, if

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

necessary, would escalate concerns to this Committee to provide additional scrutiny of the Improvement Plan. The report set out the background to the matter, together with an update against the continued commitment to delivering improvement.

A letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, revoking the SEND Improvement Notice in Sefton, was attached to the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress made and the fact that the SEND Improvement Notice in Sefton has been lifted by the Department for Education be noted; and
- (2) robust governance around any further developments be continued to be delivered through the SEND Continuous Improvement Board, with oversight being provided by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

### **14. LSCB ANNUAL REPORT**

Further to Minute No. 21 (1) of 26 January 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education detailing the work undertaken by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), known from September 2021 as the Safeguarding Partnership, the purpose of which was to safeguard children and work together with a collective aim to better improve the outcomes for children and young people.

The report indicated that the Government had abolished LSCBs from September 2019, except where the local area still had serious case reviews underway, and there was a grace period to September 2020. LSCBs were legally abolished in January 2021. Sefton LSCB had agreed to continue to call their board an LSCB until new arrangements were introduced in September 2021 when the partnership arrangements were renamed Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The Sefton LSCB Annual Report 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021, was attached to the report and detailed the partnership approach to safeguarding children and young people in response to the COVID 19 pandemic that resulted in the Government introducing restrictions through The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. The regulations allowed for easements to child care practice and afforded staff across the partnership and families to adhere to the national guidance through Public Health England. Practice across the partnership had to be adapted to ensure children were kept safe as far as possible within the restrictive practice. This practice impacted on the pace of change for the partnership on actions identified in the previous year which were outlined in the Annual Report. Acknowledgement and appreciation of the work that all staff had undertaken throughout the pandemic in such demanding

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

circumstances, as well as the added stress on children and families, was also included.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Best practice by other local authorities regarding the child's lived experience.
- Procedures for serious case reviews.
- Requirements for continuous staff development.

RESOLVED:

That the work of the LSCB over 2020-21 and the progress made through the arrangements, including work with partners on training, local practice review, formerly known as serious case reviews, and more recent work under the pandemic conditions with Covid-19 where services were working under challenging conditions to ensure children were continued to be kept safe, be noted.

### **15. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education on the Annual Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report that provided information about the IRO service within Sefton between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. This was a developing service that continued to work to support good outcomes for children and young people in Sefton.

The report indicated that the IRO service was set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO had changed from the management of the review process to a wider overview of the child's journey, including regular monitoring and follow-up between reviews. The IRO had a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for children that were Looked After and for robust challenge.

The Safeguarding and Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021 was attached to the report.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Development of a culture of appropriate challenge.
- The benchmark to measure appropriate challenge.
- The advocacy and independent visitor service and how this could be developed.

RESOLVED: That

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

- (1) the work undertaken for the year and the actions under the improvement plan for children's service be noted; and
- (2) the fact that the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service needs to be developed to a wider offer, in line with the IRO handbook and Children Act requirements, be noted.

### **16. PERSISTENT PUPIL ABSENCE WORKING GROUP UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS**

Further to Minute No. 22 (3) of 26 (3) 26 January 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education providing a summary update detailing progress and activity against the recommendations produced by the Persistent Pupil Absence Working Group that had previously been established by the Committee.

The report set out progress to date against the recommendations and referred to the impact of Covid 19 on children and young people, particularly in terms of school attendance and disruption to education.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Reasons behind the increase in home schooling since the Covid 19 pandemic and measures taken by the local authority to maintain school rolls.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

### **17. SEFTON INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Further to Minute No. 9 of the Health and Wellbeing Board of 9 June 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health that presented the latest position regarding steps to develop a Sefton Integrated Care Partnership following approval from the Cabinet in April 2021. Since submission to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the report had been slightly updated to reflect a change in terminology following the publication of the Health and Care Bill in July 2021.

The report set out the background and development of an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) in Sefton; milestones; progress made to date; key deliverables; expectations from the Integrated Care System; governance and accountability of the ICP; the emerging Start Well Programme; and concluded that Overview and Scrutiny might offer further oversight to the process.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised matters on the following issues:

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

- Mental health provision for children and young people.
- Access to health services during the Covid 19 pandemic and the resulting impact on children and young people. Reports on Access to General Practice and Dentistry had been submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) and these could be provided to Members of this Committee, for information.
- Delivery of the ICP and reporting of future progress.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be received;
- (2) Members' oversight be given to the direction of travel and decisions as they develop;
- (3) the reports on Access to General Practice and Dentistry submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care and Health) be provided to Members of this Committee, for information; and
- (4) the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health be requested to submit a further update on the Sefton Integrated Care Partnership Development to the meeting of this Committee scheduled for 25 January 2022.

### **18. ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education that provided an overview of the activity in the Adoption in Merseyside (AIM) service for 2020/2021 and outlined recent changes within the service since April 2021.

The Merseyside Regional Adoption Agency Report for 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 was attached to the report.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

### **19. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

Further to Minute No. 27 of 26 January 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education that provided an overview of the activity in the fostering service for 2020/2021. The report also provided an overview of the more recent changes within the service since April 2021. The report set out information on re-branding; recruitment involving all the Council to help with advertising for foster carers; working with local businesses on help to

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

recruit foster carers; and the recruitment of a new panel advisor and a new panel chair.

The Sefton Fostering Service Annual Report 2020-21 was attached to the report.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Residential settings in Sefton.
- A forum for foster carers.
- Marketing of the service outside of the Borough.
- Engagement with local businesses.
- Praise for staff and foster families for their continued work throughout the Covid 19 pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

### **20. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT**

Further to Minute No. 40 of 16 March 2021, the Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education that provided a profile and overview of Sefton's Children in Care (CIC) and Care leavers during 2020-2021, reporting on annual activity, and highlighting strengths and areas for development in supporting CIC and care leavers in Sefton. The report set out the current number of children in care; the number of children subject to Care Orders; together with areas for development within the service.

The Sefton Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2020-21 was attached to the report.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised issues on the following:

- Out of Borough placements.
- Semi-independent provision and regulation.
- Numbers of children and young people from outside the Borough and impacts on availability of services and support.
- The role and work of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

### **21. CABINET MEMBER REPORTS**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

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 Services Improvement Board;
- Staff Engagement;
- Improvements to Quality;
- Induction of Cabinet Members;
- Remodelling of Children's Services Structure;
- Inspection of Residential Home;
- Developments in Corporate Parenting; and
- Workforce and Organisational Development.

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

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- Schools;
- Safeguarding; and
- Virtual School.

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

RESOLVED:

That the update reports from the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care and the Cabinet Member – Education be noted.

## **22. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer reviewing the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of 2021/22; reporting on progress of the Secondary School Performance and Attainment Working Group; reporting on progress of the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group; requesting agreement to the establishment of a new working group; identifying any items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee from the latest Key Decision Forward Plan; and receipt of an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Work Programme for 2021/22 was set out at Appendix A to the report, to be considered along with any additional items to be included and agreed.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

The report set out the progress to date made by the Secondary School Performance and Attainment Working Group and indicated that the Committee had agreed to defer further consideration of the matter until Autumn 2022. Progress to date made by the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group was also outlined, as a Member of the Committee had agreed to serve on the Working Group that had been established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills).

Further to Minute No. 9 (4) of 6 July 2021, the Committee was requested to establish a working group on the impact of Covid 19 on the primary curriculum.

There were no items for pre-scrutiny within the current Key Decision Forward Plan that fell under the Committee's remit, on this occasion.

The report set out an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the Committee asked questions/raised matters on the following:

- The possibility of including the impact of lockdown and home schooling on the proposed working group on the impact of Covid 19 on the primary curriculum.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Work Programme for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) the fact that the Secondary School Performance and Attainment Working Group has been deferred until Autumn 2022, be noted;
- (3) the progress of the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group be noted;
- (4) a working group on the impact of Covid 19 on the primary curriculum be established, to include the consideration of the impact of lockdown and home schooling, comprised of the following Members of the Committee:
  - Councillor Spencer
  - Councillor Yvonne Sayers
  - Mrs. S. Cain, Independent Advisory Member
  - Ms. M. McDermott, Parent Governor Representative;
- (5) 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; and



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
AND SAFEGUARDING) - TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

- (6) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.