

Cabinet Member Brief
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
13th September 2022

Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Update

The Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Cabinet Member Reference Group met on 24th of August 2022. The following updates were received:

Updates from the Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Steering Group

Officers from Public Health provided an update from the Partnership Steering Group meeting held 24th August 2022.

The Cost of Living Crisis was discussed. The focus of the meeting was what actions can be taken by local agencies. There is an aim to enhance all local opportunities and collaboration. Sefton Councils' new landing page and handout were promoted, the webpage taking residents directly to a Cost of Living support page.

Members were updated on enhancing support via Community Warm Hubs. Community spaces are being surveyed, such as libraries and leisure centres, and how they can be enhanced as constructive spaces, for example providing cook and eat sessions, wellbeing activities.

Sefton CVS is conducting research on how voluntary sector partners might provide support, e.g., warm hubs, drop in for coffee, meals, advice etc.

The group collectively endorsed the importance of the research as sharing findings can support long-term planning and can also promote the wider work that Sefton Council and the NHS are providing.

NHS advised they have a 100-day challenge to discharge patients; this information will be useful for onward support.

Community Pantry Update

Cabinet Members received an update regarding the community pantry model in Sefton.

Recruitment has begun for a position in the sustainable affordable living program. This role is to investigate, coordinate and access resources to develop a stronger program going forward.

The Members were informed that St Leonard's has opened three pantries, however, are already having to make changes to meet demands including opening an extra day.

Figures for the first three weeks of the summer food program have been analysed, so far, we have provided 2072 meals, giving a 40% increase from last year. Support is on the ground, however, more innovation and collaboration is needed with partners in order to maintain provision.

Childhood Poverty in Sefton

Cabinet Members received an update on the Childhood Poverty Strategy. Officers from Public Health presented a draft report of the Sefton Child Poverty Strategy which has now been developed. It details how Child Poverty would be tackled in Sefton. It was advised that a data refresh update is already needed.

It was requested that Cabinet Members comment on accuracy, design, style, tone, and pace. It was noted that the draft has been peer-reviewed by members of the University College London Institute of Health Equity group and received positive responses. The Strategy has been presented to the Cheshire and Mersey Marmot group, it received positive comments on the partnership approach, and it is now seen as a blueprint for a regional approach.

Next steps: the final strategy will go to Cabinet for approval in October 2022. A formal launch is planned for October/November 2022.

Feedback from C&M Marmot work

Cabinet members were advised that the last Marmot meeting was devoted to the Sefton Childhood Poverty Strategy and how they can replicate Sefton's approach.

It was noted that going forward, performance monitoring of the Marmot indicators will need to be prioritised. The indicators have been increased from 6 to 8 priorities, and there are now 28 sub-indicators, discussions to be taken outside of the group and updated at next meeting.

Council Tax Energy Rebate

Cabinet Members received an update on the Energy Rebate Scheme. Payments of £150 to all households on bands A-D. In Sefton, there were almost 110,000 households that required payment. 109,464 households have now received the payment.

Members were made aware that there has been a discretionary scheme set up, £700,00 for appropriate relevant cases in houses from band E-H with a Council Tax reduction. Payments are still being processed and should be completed by end of September 2022.

ELAS Update

Cabinet Members received an update on ELAS performance for the Council's local welfare support scheme up to July 2022. It was reported that ELAS volumes are very high, but manageable from an operational perspective.

- End of July 4308 - double volume in the same period year before.
- Food vouchers 1336 - up 55% in the same period year before.
- Utility vouchers 2100 - 70% in the same period year before

Child Poverty and Children Entering Care

Cabinet members were made aware of The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) report and recent research exploring the link between poverty and entering care.

Poverty is associated with poorer outcomes for children, that is higher rates of overweight and obesity and an increased risk of entering care. Researchers have estimated that between 2015 and 2020 just over 8% of care entries nationally were linked to rising poverty.

Cabinet members noted the relationship with wider health and care issues associated with poverty.

Household Support Grant

Officers from communities updated on the Household Support Grant. It was highlighted that initial conversations with the DWP have taken place about Household Support Fund 3 (HSF3). This will run from October 2022 to March 2023. Funding allocation is yet to be confirmed, however, it has been noted that it will be similar to HSF2 allocations. Final guidance is due imminently.

Healthy Start Voucher Uptake

Cabinet members received an update on Healthy Start Voucher Uptake.

Uptake has increased from December 2021 at 55% to June 2022 at 67%. There are suggestions that uptake has increased further with access now being digital.

Healthy Start Champions are now front of house in Family Wellbeing Centres and maternity services are now back in Centres from September 2022. Early help staff hope this will further help promotion. Other ideas being considered are the inclusion of information in the child's red book.

Requests for Action

Cabinet Members requested that Period Poverty I to be discussed at the next meeting.