



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

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, BOOTLE
ON TUESDAY 4TH JUNE, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Hardman (in the Chair)
Councillor Danny Burns (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Evans, Hinde (Substitute Member for
Councillor Porter), Christopher Page, Parker,
Prendergast, Spring and Williams (Substitute
Member for Councillor Harrison)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Roscoe, Cabinet Member – Children,
Schools and Families
Sandra Cain, Independent Advisory Member
Michelle Ravey, Archdiocese Representative

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harrison Kelly, Porter and Richards, Gemma Armer, Maurice Byrne, Karen Christie and Stuart Harrison.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024, be confirmed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. PETITION - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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

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

The petition requested that the Committee investigate the complaints procedure that was currently being offered. Parents had raised concerns over the waiting times, questioned the capacity to deliver the promised services and the impact this had on vulnerable families. Each complaint

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was individual but there was no procedure to allow several families to jointly raise concerns.

The Committee responded with the following statement:

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already identified complaints as an area for exploration during the coming year, as some concerns about the way the process operates had already been raised by parents and carers. We will add the issues raised here to the terms of reference of our scrutiny review.

In relation to the specific issue of joint complaints, our complaints process allows for individuals to raise concerns. If a pattern emerges from multiple complainants raising similar concerns, then it is expected that this will be addressed within the respective service by the appropriate Service Manager.

Notwithstanding the formal complaints process, if several families wish to jointly raise concerns, then they can contact the Service directly. It is encouraged that the matter is dealt with at initial point of contact, or by referring concerns to appropriate managers for action, alongside routinely offering a meeting with relevant staff or managers to provide a more responsive and supportive service to clients, particularly when it relates to on-going care or support.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted; and
- (2) Feedback on the complaint's procedure from the Voice of the Families be considered when the Committee carries out its scrutiny review on Complaints.

6. PETITION - RIGHTS OF THE VOICE OF THE FAMILIES

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

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

Please can the scrutiny committee support the right of the voice of the families to hold protests, present petitions, meet groups and individuals concerned and dealing with children's services, raise issues and to do this without being targeted, labelled and being the victim of falsehoods by individual councillors and Sefton personnel.

The Committee responded with the following statement:

The Committee absolutely supports the right of any residents of Sefton to peacefully protest and promotes the right of any family members and other

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individuals who use children's services to raise any issues that they have about those services with this Committee.

Because parents and carers told us that they felt the work of this Committee could be more transparent and that it could be made easier for parents and carers to raise issues directly to the Committee, Members have reviewed the Terms of Reference of this Committee and introduced an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of the Committee. In addition, a new parents and carers Sub-Committee has been established.

Anybody who believes that they have been treated by an officer or elected Member of this Council in a way that is inappropriate or disrespectful, is free to complain to the Monitoring Officer in the case of elected members and in the case of an officer, to their line manager using the corporate complaints procedure.

RESOLVED: That

the petition be noted

7. PETITION - FASD TRAINING

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

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

Please can the scrutiny committee investigate the issue of the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) training (that it being provided by Sefton for teaching staff, health and social care staff and families. Families are concerned that there is none. Promises of training that does not take place has increased the pain of the families involved.

The Committee responded with the following statement:

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have already been told by parents and carers about the challenges of bringing up children affected by foetal alcohol spectrum disorders and had already added foetal alcohol spectrum disorders to the list of topics that the committee may wish to look at over the coming year.

In relation to the training currently provided to Sefton staff, the Committee has been advised that the SEND board agrees that awareness raising/training around FASD should be provided. However, sourcing the appropriate training has presented some difficulties. Officers have been liaising with the Beyond (Cheshire and Mersey Integrated Care Board) team who have been auditing NICE guidance re FASD in maternity services and looking at training/pathway development opportunities for the

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wider workforce. This training may take time to develop, so the option of running some training locally is being explored.

The Committee agrees that this is an important issue and will be asking for further updates from officers about progress in sourcing and delivering FASD training.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted; and
- (2) the Committee to request further updates on the progress made in sourcing and delivering FASD training.

8. 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, Schools and Families whose portfolio fell within the remit of the Committee.

The Cabinet Member update report was presented as two reports covering Children's Social Care, attached to the report at Appendix A, and Education, attached at Appendix B.

The Cabinet Member update report – Children's Social Care, outlined information on the following:

Childrens Social Care

- Early Help
- Ofsted Monitoring Visit
- Integrated Front Door
- Help and Protection
- Youth Justice Service
- Cared for and Care Experienced Children
- Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance
- Practice Improvement

The Cabinet Member update report – Education, outlined information on the following:

Education

- SEND – Education, Health and Care Plans
- Staffing Update
- Graduated Approach
- Partnership Working
- Co-production
- SEND Strategy

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- Sufficiency Planning
- Feedback from Ofsted
- Alternative Provision
- Exclusions and Attendance
- Elective Home Education
- Inclusion
- School Improvement
- 14-19 Participation
- Early Years
- The Virtual School
- School Admissions Update and School Appeals
- Pupil Place Planning
- Education Safeguarding.

Members of the Committee raised the following queries:

- The new CHAT service and when data would be available.
- The progress made as outlined in the recent Ofsted Letter.
- Apprenticeships and how the Council could encourage more businesses to take an apprentice.
- The pace of change in Children's Social Care and when further reductions in inadequate practice might be reported.
- How outcomes for Team Around the School were measured.
- Where the 'Family Justice Plan' could be viewed.
- EHCP's and the current numbers of Plans.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

9. FAMILY HUBS

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the recent changes made to the Front Door and developments in Early Help which had seen a move from Family Wellbeing Centres to three main Family Hubs with a network of smaller hubs.

Members of the Committee raised the following queries on the report:

- How residents are supported to access the centres
- Outreach arrangements for areas further away from a Family Hub
- How capacity is built in to manage calls at busy times.
- Details of any feedback since the changes to the Front Door were introduced.

The Committee noted that there would be an Ofsted Inspection later in June and feedback would be provided to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

10. 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.

Information was provided on the following:

- The ongoing work on the areas identified for improvement by the Children's Services Commissioner.
- Further recommendations suggested by the Commissioner.
- Re-structure of Children's Services

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT

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 February - April 2024.

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

The steady increase in 'good' audits was noted and Members commented that they looked forward to seeing further improvement in the next six months.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

12. SEFTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Committee considered the annual report 2022-2023 of the Sefton Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. The report related to all board activities completed between April 2022 and March 2023.

The purpose of the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board was to safeguard children and work together with a collective aim to better improve the outcomes for children and young people.

RESOLVED:

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That the contents of the report be noted.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CS&S) WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

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

- seek the views of the Committee on the draft Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2024/25;
- note the programme of informal meetings attached at appendix B;
- note the topics suggested for in-depth review of Child Poverty, ADHD/ASD services and Health Inequalities in Care Experienced Children;
- note there were no items for pre-scrutiny by the Committee on the latest Key Decision Forward Plan; and
- receive an update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix A - Work Programme for 2023/24;
- Appendix B – Programme of Informal Meetings

Members of the Committee raised the following questions/issues:

- That School Meals Provision be added to the work programme for a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the draft Work Programme for 2023/24, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be agreed, along with any additional items to be included and agreed;
- (2) the informal briefing sessions as outlined in Appendix B be held, as and when required, rather than the establishment of a traditional working group during 2024/25;
- (3) note the topics of Child Poverty, ADHD/ASD services and Health Inequalities in Care Experienced Children for in-depth review;
- (4) the fact that there were no items relating to Children's Services on the Key Decision Forward Plan for the period 1 July - 31 October be noted; and
- (5) the update on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

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