
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2020

Present: Councillors Taggart (Chair), Mitchell, J Baillie, Chaloner (except for items 23 to 26), Guthrie, Laurent and Mintoff
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders and Francis Otieno

Apologies: Appointed Members: Catherine Hobbs, Nicola Brown and Claire Rogers

23. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

The apologies of Appointed Members Nicola Brown, Catherine Hobbs, and Claire Rogers were noted.

Change to the Order of Business.

The Chairman sought and obtained the consent of the Committee to vary the order of business from that set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that Agenda Item 5 STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR be moved to after Agenda Item 6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)

24. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

25. **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair referred to the recent Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services and invited Councillor Paffey, the Cabinet Member for Aspiration, Children and Lifelong Learning and Hillary Brooks, Executive Director – Children's Services, to address the panel

The panel noted the following:

- That the overall judgement of this Ofsted Inspection was that the service required improvement, with a few areas that were judged overall as good.
- There were no areas that were judged to be inadequate.
- The Ofsted Inspection recognised that Children and Families Services had made significant progress in the delivery of services for children.
- The Ofsted Inspection found that children and families were receiving a prompt and proportionate response.
- The Ofsted Inspection report noted that there had been substantial improvement to services for Care Leavers, schools were held effectively to account for the impact of their work and that there was energy in corporate parenting roles.

- The Ofsted Inspection identified that the service needed to build longer term uninterrupted relationships with children as plans progressed, and to make sure all children got the right help quickly through improvement in the assessment of the effectiveness and impact of front line services.
- Children and Families Services had begun work on an improvement plan to make all services good or outstanding.

The Chair expressed thanks to all the front line staff for their work to help keep all our children safe.

RESOLVED that a formal report on the Ofsted Inspection of Children and Families Services and the response from the Children and Families Service would be included in the agenda of the next meeting of the Panel.

26. **SOUTHAMPTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

The Panel considered the report of the Independent Chair of the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership which presented the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report 2018-19. The report recommended that the Panel noted the changes to statutory guidance relating to partnership arrangements for safeguarding children and young people and that the Panel utilised the information contained in the report to inform its work.

Councillor Paffey, Cabinet Member for Aspiration, Children and Lifelong Learning; Hilary Brooks, Executive Director, Children's Services, Southampton City Council; Phil Bullingham, Service Lead - Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Compliance, Children & Families, Southampton City Council; Detective Chief Inspector Nick Plummer, Public Protection, Hampshire Constabulary; Superintendent Kelly Whiting, Southampton District Commander, Hampshire Constabulary; Katherine Elsmore, Head of Safeguarding, NHS Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group; Shiobhan West, Associate Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, NHS Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- That due to the changes to the statutory guidance relating to partnership arrangements for safeguarding children and young people, the LSCB had been transformed into the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)
- That Southampton was partnered with Hampshire, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight as there were shared services across these districts.
- There was capacity to communicate effectively and share training across the partnership
- The LSCB had facilitated good working relationships between agencies that assisted the identification of priorities for Southampton, the sharing of good practice and professional challenge
- The LSCB had identified that there was a need to develop a shared and consistent understanding across all agencies of the thresholds for safeguarding referrals and how to assess and manage risk in the community.

- The LSCB had increased awareness of the challenges of providing a joined up approach to supporting the mental health needs of Looked After Children and the transition pathways for young people from children's mental health services to adult mental health services.
- The monitoring data evidenced that the demand for placements for looked after children and suitable accommodation for children leaving care was greater than the supply of placements and suitable accommodation.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the membership of the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership is circulated to the Panel.

27. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC - EXEMPT PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

The Chair moved that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, specifically the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution, the press and public be excluded from the meeting in respect of any consideration of the exempt appendix to the following item. It was not appropriate to disclose this information based on Categories 1 and 7 of paragraph 10.4 of the council's Access to Information Procedure Rules as the information was likely to reveal the identity of an individual and the information related to action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

RESOLVED that having applied the public interest test, the press and public be excluded from the meeting.

28. **CHILD EXPLOITATION IN SOUTHAMPTON - INCLUDING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of the multi-agency response to child exploitation in Southampton, including child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

Hilary Brooks, Executive Director, Children's Services, Southampton City Council; Phil Bullingham, Service Lead - Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Compliance, Children & Families, Southampton City Council; Laura Tanner, MET (Missing, Exploited, Trafficked) Team Manager, Children and Families, Southampton City Council; Simon Dennison, Children's Resource Service Manager, Children's Services, Southampton City Council; Detective Chief Inspector Nick Plummer, Public Protection, Hampshire Constabulary; Superintendent Kelly Whiting, Southampton District Commander, Hampshire Constabulary; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- That safeguarding children from the risk of exploitation when they are outside of their homes required close partnership working from many agencies, which included the Council, schools, Hampshire Constabulary and health services.

- There had been multi-agency training delivered to schools and other community agencies which had improved practitioners awareness of the signs of exploitation and had also improved the use of the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) tool to assess children who might be at risk of exploitation.
- Southampton, Portsmouth and Havant had the greatest number of children at risk of child sexual exploitation. The areas where a high number of children at risk had been identified aligned with areas of deprivation
- Assessment of those children identified at risk of exploitation commonly identified other precursor traumatic events in their home life, such as domestic abuse, being a victim of assault or being linked to drugs intelligence.
- That information sharing quickly, within 72 hours, continued to be a challenge. Police in the city shared information on the key issues and main incidents daily.
- The police usually investigated to prosecute but with child exploitation the police had to investigate to safeguard. Investigations often centred on a particular child and they often had to move quickly to keep the child safe.
- The MET team was able to support high risk vulnerable children until the service was confident that risk levels had been reduced and they were no longer at high risk.
- The MET Hub had an increase in the high risk cohort due to improved identification of high risk factors.. As a result the MET Hub has had to prioritise this cohort.

RESOLVED

- (i) That, at the appropriate meeting of the Panel, an update would be provided on the development of the Vulnerable Adolescents Service.

29. **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Director, Legal and Governance which provided an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since November 2019.

Hilary Brooks, Executive Director, Children's Services; and Phil Bullingham, Service Lead, Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Compliance; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- The presentation of the data had improved
- That fewer children had needed to be referred into statutory services, therefore more children had been referred into the Early Help service, which was a partnership service and not all the data for this service was tracked.
- There had been a focus on child protection planning and better management of the gateway into child protection proceedings.
- A recruitment and retention working group had been formed that had reviewed exit interviews and the working environment for staff.
- There was a shortage of foster placements locally and nationally and in the private sector.

RESOLVED

- (i) That details of the scheduled learning event for social workers (CPD) is circulated to the Panel.
- (ii) That the recruitment of foster carers is considered at a future meeting of the Panel.