
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2017

Present: Councillors Keogh (except Minute Numbers 17-19) (Chair), Murphy, O'Neill, Painton, Taggart (Vice-Chair) and Laurent

Apologies: Councillors Burke and Rob Sanders

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

The apologies of Councillor Burke and Rob Sanders were noted. The Panel received apologies from Councillor Keogh for Minute Numbers 17-19.

18. **COUNCILLOR TAGGART IN THE CHAIR**
MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

19. **LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (LSCB) ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 17**

The Panel considered the report of the Independent Chair of the LSCB introducing the LSCB Annual Report 2016-17.

Keith Makin, Independent Chair of the Southampton LSCB; Chief Superintendent Craig Dibdin, Hampshire Constabulary; Dr Hilary Smith, Designated Doctor; Hilary Brooks, Service Director, Children and Families Services; Phil Bullingham, Service Lead - Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Quality Assurance; Jane White, Service Lead Children's Social Care; Emma Gilhespy, Business Co-ordinator LSCB and Francesca Mountfort, Information Analyst, were present and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Panel.

The Panel noted the following:

- that whilst recognising the challenges that existed, the Independent Chair considered Southampton to be a safer place for children and young people now than when he has presented previous LSCB annual reports to the Panel;
- that Progress has been achieved due to:
 - effective and committed partnership working;
 - the good use of data;
 - the stability in the Senior Management Team at SCC Children and Families Services;
 - improving performance outcomes; and
 - close working with the Local Safeguarding Adults Board.
- that progress has been made but recognised there was still a long way to go;

- that Improving the outcomes for children at risk of neglect had been a focus of the LSCB. The Neglect Task and Finish Group had highlighted the need to increase awareness and understanding of neglect, across all agencies, so that neglect is everybody's business;
- the Panel welcomed the approach relating to neglect but requested that consideration be given to approaches to detect neglect across the 0-18 age range, including further education settings;
- that challenge was encouraged between partners on the LSCB and that these are recorded in a challenge log which is published on the LSCB website;
- the Council's Child Sexual Exploitation hub had expanded to raise the awareness of the co-ordination of all aspects relating to missing, exploited and trafficked children and young people and to reduce risks. A focus has been improving arrangements for looked after children placed out of area;
- that at a future meeting consideration would be given to developing the Panel's understanding of how the NEET figure is measured, and how it informs action across the City;
- that safeguarding concerns relating to elected home education were being considered by Parliament. The LSCB were keen to see changes in legislation to strengthen safeguarding arrangements; and
- the Independent Chair identified the key challenges moving forward as
 - child sexual exploitation;
 - on-line safety; and
 - drug use, misuse and distribution.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Panel, in recognition that neglect can take many forms, requested that the LSCB considers how neglect can be detected more effectively across the various age ranges, including those in further education settings and recommended that the LSCB engage with the Designated Officers at the 3 further education colleges in Southampton to develop this approach.
- (ii) That the Panel consider including the issue of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) at a future meeting.

COUNCILLOR KEOGH IN THE CHAIR

20. **DEVELOPMENT OF AN OFFER FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The Panel considered the report of the Service Director, Legal and Governance introducing the Cabinet report on the development of an offer for children with disabilities.

Hilary Brooks, Service Director, Children and Families Services and Sandra Jerrim, Senior Commissioning Manager, Integrated Commissioning Unit were present and with the consent of the Chair addressed the meeting. In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- in the development of the proposals the Council had engaged with a number of groups and organisations, including the Southampton Parent Carer Forum and schools;

- there was a need to introduce an eligibility criteria to make access to services for children and young people with disabilities more equitable;
- there was a risk that changes to the eligibility criteria could increase pressure on Council finances as more is understood about the needs of service users;
- the market had been receptive and there was interest in providing services that meet the needs and requests of surveyed service users;
- that lessons had been learnt from previous consultation exercises and processes relating to social care provision. Throughout the extensive pre-consultation engagement activities children and young people with disabilities had been asked what they would like and there had been an open and honest dialogue with stakeholders, including parents and carers;
- that consultation will commence on 21 November 2017 and finish on 12 February 2018. The Panel requested details relating to the consultation to be undertaken prior to the proposed Cabinet decision in March 2018.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the details of the consultation activities to be undertaken on the proposals were circulated to the Panel.

21. **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Service Director, Legal and Governance providing an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since August 2017.

Hilary Brooks, Service Director, Children and Families Services; Phil Bullingham, Service Lead - Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Quality Assurance and Jane White, Service Lead – Children’s Social Care were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair addressed the meeting. It was noted that changes relating to Phase 3 of the transformation process had created some instability but that performance was still holding up relatively well despite the upheaval.

It was further noted that the number of Children In Need had risen steadily over the past few months and that the complexity of this cohort was increasing. Phase 3 arrangements had created opportunities to target resources more effectively at this cohort, including a targeted diversion service. Officers anticipated a reduction in the number of children recorded as Children In Need from January/February 2018.

The Panel were informed that the timeliness of referrals dealt with by the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had decreased from 91% in November 2016 to 57% in October 2017. Officers identified staffing challenges as a contributory factor to the performance dip and confirmed that vacancies would be filled shortly. Re-assurance was provided that throughout the period the MASH was prioritising responses in accordance with safeguarding concerns.

To help to recruit and retain social workers, and create a stronger identity of social work in Southampton, the Panel were informed of a working group that had been established by the Council to make Southampton an employer of choice. The Panel referenced the importance of appraisals in supporting the retention of social workers.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That, statistics relating to completed appraisal rates across social work teams be provided to the Panel.

22. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel considered and noted the report of the Service Director, Legal and Governance relating to recommendations made at previous meetings of the Panel.