

---

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2021**

---

**Present:** Councillors Taggart (Chair) (except for items 29 and 30), Mitchell (Vice-Chair), Chaloner (except for items 28 and 29), Guthrie, Laurent (except for items 28 and 29) and Mintoff (except for items 32,33 and 34)

**Apologies:** Councillor J Baillie

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

The apologies of Councillor J Baillie were noted.

COUNCILLOR MITCHELL IN THE CHAIR

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

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

30. **SOUTHAMPTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

The Panel received and noted the report of the Independent Chair of the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership that provided the Panel with an update on the work of the Partnership during 2019/20.

Derek Benson, Independent Chair of Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership; Councillor Barnes-Andrews, Cabinet Member in attendance; Robert Henderson, Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning), Southampton City Council; Phil Bullingham, Head of Service: Children's Social Care, Southampton City Council; and, Julian Watkins, Head of Service: Safeguarding, Southampton City Council were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the safeguarding partnership in Southampton is strong and robust and working well. Attendance at partnership meetings has been good and all agencies have remained focused on children's safeguarding throughout the pandemic. Over the last year the partnership has seen that some children have become more resilient, but there has also been an increase in cases of neglect, domestic violence and incidents of young people requiring support for their mental health.

## COUNCILLOR TAGGART IN THE CHAIR

### 31. **SERVICE VISION AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Director – Children and Learning which recommended that the Panel noted the progress and commented on the revised service vision and the developing Children and Young People’s City Strategy.

Councillor Barnes-Andrews, Cabinet Member in attendance; and Robert Henderson, Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning), Southampton City Council; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

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

- The strategy had strong vision and clear values.
- That there would be meaningful consultation on the strategy with staff and stakeholders.
- That a new partnership board, with representation from a range of partners would be established to give stakeholders the opportunity to engage in decisions about service delivery.
- That plans for locality-based working required further development.
- The Practice Framework clearly identified five essential details that would be in every child’s file.
- That the implementation of five protected Continuing Professional Development days for all staff would be monitored.
- That Foster Carers are a key section of our workforce and should be included in the Workforce Academy.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That at a future meeting of the Panel, analysis would be presented that identified how many children’s files, from a sample of cases, include the ‘Southampton 5’- things we should see on every child’s file as identified in the Practice Framework.
- (ii) That the Executive Director would consider how training for foster carers would be included in the development of the Workforce Academy.
- (iii) That members of the Scrutiny Panel were invited to the 9 March 2021 workshop / seminar on becoming a Child Friendly City.

### 32. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Director – Children and Learning which provided an update on progress against the revised Children and Learning Improvement Plan.

Councillor Barnes-Andrews, Cabinet Member in attendance; Robert Henderson, Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning), Southampton City Council; Phil Bullingham, Head of Service: Children’s Social Care, Southampton City Council; and,

Julian Watkins, Head of Service: Safeguarding, Southampton City Council were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

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

- The well-being of Social Workers was promoted within teams and individual support had been provided as required, which included a free counselling service for staff.
- A national directive for all authorities to take on their fair share of children who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers has increased the number of Looked After Children who were Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers in Southampton.
- Analysis of referrals identified that cases had been closed too early as a family's problems came back shortly after the case had been closed, thereby requiring another referral.
- That increased use of Early Help services as a part of a step down offer would reduce the number of re-referrals. It had also been identified that more referrals could have been appropriately allocated to Early Help services instead of assessment or child protection teams.
- Additional staff who had been employed temporarily to meet the increase in demand last year have been added to the establishment and will be moved to permanent contracts.
- Investment had been made into establishing a Workforce Academy.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (iv) That the Executive Director reflected on the language used in the report when referring to service areas, practice and outcomes that required improvement.

### 33. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel received the report of the Director, Legal and Governance which provided an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since November 2020.

Robert Henderson, Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning), Southampton City Council; Phil Bullingham, Head of Service: Children's Social Care, Southampton City Council; and, Julian Watkins, Head of Service: Safeguarding, Southampton City Council were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

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

- There had been high demand pressures for teams that supported Looked After Children.
- A Principle Social Worker had been appointed to engage the workforce in practice development, to share and promote best practice and to develop and maintain relationships with Social Workers from other authorities in the region.

### 34. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel noted the report of the Director, Legal and Business Operations which enabled the Panel to monitor and track progress on recommendations made at previous meetings.

The Panel noted that all the requested information had been provided and utilised to inform the discussion of the agenda items.