
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors T Bunday (Chair), Barnes-Andrews (Vice-Chair), J Baillie, Chapman, Lambert, Mrs Mintoff and Webb
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes for the Panel meetings held on 6 July 2023 and 20 July 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

13. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Scrutiny Manager recommending that the Panel consider and challenge the performance of Children's Services and Learning in Southampton.

Councillor Winning - Cabinet Member for Children and Learning; Steph Murray - Deputy Director of Children & Learning; and, Laura Trevett - Strategic Performance Manager were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- The link between the reduction in contacts and re-referrals in August and the school holidays.
- The suitability and use of unregistered / unregulated settings and associated risk assessments.
- Progress on the proposed new children's homes in the city.
- The performance of the Fostering Service and recruitment activity
- Staff absence
- Missing data relating to health assessments for looked after children.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That information highlighting the performance of the fostering service and the recruitment of foster carers is attached to the performance dataset for 23 November Panel meeting.
- 2) That, following a spike in sickness absence, the latest HR report summarising the reasons for staff absence in Children's Services is circulated to the Panel.
- 3) That, reflecting concerns about health assessment performance, the indicator is returned to the performance dataset for the November meeting.

14. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel received and noted the report of the Scrutiny Manager which enabled the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel to monitor and track progress on recommendations made at previous meetings.

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

The Chair moved that if members did not have any specific matters for consideration in respect of the exempt Appendices 2, 3, and 5 the following agenda item could be considered without disclosing information that was subject to an obligation of confidentiality and therefore it would not be necessary to exclude the press and the public from the following agenda item.

RESOLVED that the Panel would consider the following agenda item without reference to the exempt appendices and therefore the press and the public would not be excluded from the following agenda item.

16. **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SOUTHAMPTON**

The Panel considered the report of the Scrutiny Manager recommending that the Panel consider the provisional key stage results and supplementary information, as detailed in the appendices, and discuss with the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, and invited officers, educational attainment in Southampton.

Councillor Winning – Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, Derek Wiles – SCC Divisional Head of Education and Learning, Kerica Hunt – SCC Service Manager for the Education Welfare Service, Bryn Roberts – SCC Service Manager for Inclusion and Clodagh Freeston – SCC Service Manager for Education Strategy, Planning and Improvement were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- The impact of Covid and deprivation on Key Stage exam results in Southampton, and concerns that the attainment gap between Southampton and the national average is increasing.
- The rise in the number of children entitled to free school meals in Southampton.
- The links between attainment and attendance and the efforts to reduce absence levels across schools in the city.
- The rise in the number of children being home educated nationally, and in Southampton, and the actions being undertaken by the Council to engage with this cohort and monitor risk.
- Trends relating to NEET levels in Southampton and the focus on supporting looked after children into education, employment or training.
- The reliance placed on partners who are struggling to access funding.
- Concerns relating to the adequacy of staffing resources to enable the Council to adopt a proactive approach to reducing NEETs, absence and the number of children being educated at home in the city.

RESOLVED that

1. That the school absence spreadsheet, detailing absence levels for each secondary school in the City, is circulated to the Panel.
2. That free school meals trend data, broken down by secondary school, is circulated to the Panel.

3. That information detailing the link between school absence and the Elective Home Education cohort in Southampton is provided to the Panel.
4. That the NEET level for Southampton's Looked After Children cohort is provided to the Panel.
5. That, to help develop Panel Members understanding of the school system in the City, the Panel are provided with a table classifying Southampton schools by type e.g. whether it was an Academy, Trusts, or a Maintained establishment.