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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2023

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Present: Councillors T Bunday (Chair), Barnes-Andrews (Vice-Chair), Chapman, Lambert, Mrs Mintoff and Webb

Apologies: Councillors J Baillie

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

The Panel noted the apologies of Councillor J Baillie and that Councillor Webb had formally replaced Cllr Quadir on the Panel.

46. **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 and Robert Henderson - Executive Director Wellbeing (Children & Learning) were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- The increase in referrals over a period of time. Conversations are being held with partners to ensure referrals are appropriate and data is being interrogated.
- The number of assessments is high compared to Southampton's statistical neighbours. An audit is being undertaken to understand this and why 50% of referrals currently result in no further action.
- Levels of re-referrals are too high questioning whether cases are being closed too early, plans are not working effectively, or social work professional have been too optimistic in their decision making. A deep dive audit of re-referrals is being undertaken.
- The potential effect of the recent Ofsted inspection on the latest performance figures.
- How longer term data would enable the Panel to identify trends more effectively in performance, especially when the results may be affected by a seasonal issues.
- The Service's use of a forward plan schedule for internal audit to identify areas in need of improved performance.

**RESOLVED**

1. That, to enable trends to be identified, performance data outlining the rate of re-referrals over a longer time period is circulated to the Panel.
2. That, to enable key issues to be identified, a highlight report is attached to the monthly performance dataset presented to the Panel.

3. That the Children's Services forward plan of audit activity is circulated to the Panel to help plan future agendas of the Panel.

47. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

48. **OFSTED ILACS STANDARD INSPECTION OF SOUTHAMPTON'S CHILDREN'S AND LEARNING SERVICE**

The Panel considered the confidential report of the Head of Quality Assurance outlining the outcomes of the Ofsted standard inspection of Southampton's Children and Learning Service in June 2023 and the service response.

Councillor Winning – Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and Robert Henderson - Executive Director Wellbeing (Children & Learning) were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- General improvement across the Service;
- The Panel's gratitude for the hard work of officers and previous Cabinet Members;
- The points identified by the inspection that required attention that form part of the action plan in response to the Ofsted report;
- The requirement to reduce expenditure, particularly in 3 key areas – Children Looked After; Agency costs, Home to school transport.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Panel requested that the Cabinet Member and the Executive Director express its thanks and congratulate officers for their hard work in improving the Service;
2. That the Panel prioritises scrutiny of the Children's Services transformation programme - Building Brilliance: Building Sustainability 2023, and the service's financial plans for the 2023/24 municipal year.
3. That scrutiny of the Ofsted Improvement Plan is incorporated within the Panel work programme.