
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2024

Present: Councillors Barnes-Andrews (Chair), Webb (Vice-Chair), Chapman, G Lambert, Beaurain, Cooper and Mrs Blatchford

Apologies: Councillors Kaur and Allen
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders and Catherine Hobbs

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

It was noted that following receipt of the temporary resignation of Councillors Kaur and Allen from the Panel, the Monitoring Officer acting under delegated powers, had appointed Councillors Mrs Blatchford and Cooper to replace them for the purposes of this meeting.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2024, be approved and signed as a correct record.

10. **EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE**

The Panel considered and noted the report of the Executive Director, Children and Learning, providing an overview of Early Years and Childcare Services in Southampton.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and the Service Manager for Early Years were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- The ability of the Early Years sector in Southampton to meet the extended childcare entitlements.
- The equity of provision across the city.
- The service's gathering and utilisation of intelligence to support the sustainability of early years provision.
- The provision and targeting of places for disadvantaged children.
- The awareness and additional resources required to address SEND requirements within early years provision.
- Workforce recruitment and retention issues and the plans in place to mitigate these challenges.
- The resilience of the sector and ability to respond to any future variations.

The factors that have resulted in the comparative strength and success of the early years sector in Southampton

11. **REPEAT CHILD PROTECTION PLANS - ANALYSIS**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Director, Children and Learning, providing analysis to understand why some families come back to Child Protection Planning for a second or subsequent time.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and the Deputy Director, Children and Learning, were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

An overview was provided setting out current levels of repeat child protection plans, issues raised by the analysis and action in train to improve outcomes, including the implementation of the Family Safeguarding Model.

The Panel discussed a number of key points as follows:

- The limitations of previous social work practice in Southampton and the legacy that this has created.
- The importance of good handovers between social workers to support effective decision making.
- The engagement of key partners in child protection plans.
- The actions taken to reform practice that provide assurance that the number of repeat child protection plans will continue to reduce.
- The delivery of the recommendations outlined in the analysis and the proposed review in 6 months' time to identify if progress has been made.

RESOLVED

- i) That, to reinforce the message about the value of good practice, the analysis of repeat child protection plans is circulated to all social workers.
- ii) That, reflecting concerns raised in the analysis relating to the impact of changes in social worker, the service undertakes an audit on the quality of handovers provided by social workers.
- iii) That the scheduled follow up analysis of repeat child protection plans is provided to the Panel when it is available.

12. **ANNUAL CONVERSATION WITH OFSTED AND PROGRESS OF POST-INSPECTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning and the Deputy Director, Children and Learning, provided the Panel with an overview of the annual meeting with Ofsted and the progress to date in relation to the post inspection improvement plan. The meeting with Ofsted was reported as helpful in relation to assessing improvement against the specific recommendations made.

There remain specific ongoing areas of improvement that the Panel discussed including:

- The proposed new Safeguarding Partnership involving Adults and Children Safeguarding.

- The quality and effectiveness of support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Housing, education, employment and training for care leavers.
- Identification, assessment and support for children in private fostering arrangements.

RESOLVED

- i) That an all-members briefing is scheduled to inform councillors about the changes that have been undertaken across Children's Services and Learning.

13. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - PERFORMANCE**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, the Strategic Performance Manager and the Deputy Director, Children and Learning, provided the Panel with an overview of current performance across Children's Services and Learning.

The Panel noted the steady improvements across a number of indicators but outlined their expectations that, as part of 'Building for Brilliance', performance relating to timeliness of visiting and supervisions will consistently be at 90% and above and that, given the increasing stability, reducing number of children in the safeguarding system and the capabilities of the workforce, the Panel will be holding the service to higher standards moving forward.

14. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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