
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2017

Present: Councillors Keogh (Chair), Murphy, Painton, Taggart and Laurent

1. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Councillor Taggart be elected as Vice-Chair for the 2017/2018 Municipal Year.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3. **THE PROVISION OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN SOUTHAMPTON**

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Economic Development and Skills which provided the Panel with requested information on apprenticeships in Southampton.

Following discussions with Councillor Paffey, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Hilary Brooks, Service Director, Children and Families Services, Amanda Percy, Post 16 Adviser and Sarah Stannard, Principal of City College, it was noted that from the action plan established at a previous scrutiny panel meeting, the Ambassador Scheme, the annual graduation ceremony and the Access Southampton website had been implemented.

The national landscape for apprenticeships was changing with funding for increased participation in apprenticeships due to come to an end and a new Apprenticeship Levy and a new target for three million apprenticeships by 2020 was being established.

The Panel questioned the 48% completion rate for apprenticeships. It was noted that the local completion rate was higher than the national average. There were several reasons for non-completion of an apprenticeship including:

- Young people chose to move on to other opportunities, some apprenticeships were four years long, so completion rates were below completion rates for college courses, of which the majority were only one year long.
- Employers ended apprenticeships due to closure or restructure of business or poor performance dismissal.
- The retail sector was traditionally poor at retaining apprentices due to lack of recognition for the apprenticeship qualification, which provided a low incentive for young people not to take up better opportunities.
- Employers who provided good schemes had good completion rates.

The Panel questioned the difference between the number of Level 4 apprenticeships compared to level 2 or level 3 apprenticeships and were reassured that the apprenticeships offered matched the needs of local businesses.

The Panel questioned the impact of attainment of Maths and English GCSE's in the take up of apprenticeships and it was discussed how employers' entry criteria varied for each type of apprenticeship and employers placed more value on young people being "work ready". One of the policy priorities of the national Youth Parliament was to improve Life Skills education for young people.

The Panel questioned the participation of care leavers in apprenticeship schemes and were reassured that a number of initiatives were being implemented to improve outcomes in this area, including the appointment of a Lead Apprenticeships Advisor who would liaise with the Pathways Team.

The Panel questioned the participation rates of young people in higher education in Southampton. It was noted that a plan to raise participation was being funded through the Southern Universities Network.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That clarification be provided to the Panel on how the figure for Higher Apprenticeship starts was calculated.
- (ii) That the Council's approach to maximising apprenticeships as part of the Council's workforce, particularly opportunities for care leavers and vulnerable young people, be considered at the 27 July meeting of the Panel.
- (iii) That, to raise aspirations, through the Southern Universities Network the Local Authority should seek to encourage universities to inform schools with regard to how well their former pupils had done at university.

NOTE: Councillor Keogh declared a pecuniary interest in that he was a Teacher at Richard Taunton Sixth Form College and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion of this item.

NOTE: Councillor Taggart declared a pecuniary interest in that she was employed at Brockenhurst College and her partner was employed at Barton Peveril College, and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion of this item.

4. **CHILDREN'S AND FAMILIES - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel noted the report of the Service Director, Legal and Governance which provided an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since April 2017.

Following discussions with Hilary Brooks, Service Director, Children and Families Services, Jane White, Service Lead Children's Social Care, and Phil Bullingham, Service Lead - Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Quality Assurance - it was noted that overall performance had improved.

It had been encouraging to note that the number of Single Assessments completed in 45 working days and the number of Looked After Children visited within timescales had improved. The decrease in the number of children on a Child Protection Plan correlated to the increase in Children with a Child In Need Plan.

The Panel questioned the reasons for the completion of Pathway plans not being 100%. It was noted that this was partly due to difficulties completing plans for young people who were in custody.

The Service Lead - Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Quality Assurance - outlined the Quality Assurance Business Plan and the development of a high quality performance framework to support decision making.