
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillors Winning (Chair), T Bunday, Denness, Laurent, W Payne and Vaughan.
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders

Apologies: Councillors D Galton

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

The Panel noted the apologies of Councillor D Galton.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24 November 2022, be approved and signed as a correct record.

27. **OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT**

The Panel received the report of the Head of Quality Assurance recommending that the Panel note the detail in the Ofsted focused visit letter and the service response.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, Councillor Dr Paffey; Robert Henderson, Executive Director - Children and Learning; Steph Murray, Deputy Director - Children and Learning; and Stuart Webb, Service Manager for Quality Assurance - Children and Learning were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the Cabinet Member, and officers, the Panel noted the following:

- The feedback from Ofsted was recognised as being largely positive.
- There was nothing stated by Ofsted that was not already known about the service.
- The service understood that a number of areas required improvement, including assessment plans and the delivery of consistently good practice.
- Destination 22 had given the service momentum and there was an expectation that the improvement journey would begin to gather pace.
- Having in place an increasingly permanent workforce and a stable management team had been key to improvements.
- Following the January 2023 recruitment campaign, the service was expecting nearly all the workforce to be permanent. At the time of the report the workforce was 85% permanent. This was a positive transition from the 40% permanent workforce in place when the Executive Director joined the organisation.
- Children in Need and Child Protection services were further ahead on their improvement journey than other services as these services had been prioritised. Other services were improving but were behind safeguarding services.
- SCC was committed to providing the financial resources required to sustainably deliver high quality children's services in Southampton.

- Investing in early help and intervention to prevent children coming into safeguarding services was beginning to reap dividend.
- There was an expectation that the next Ofsted full inspection (ILACS) would take place later in 2023. The service recognised that they were not yet at 'good' but were on the right trajectory.

28. **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 Appendix 4, the following agenda item could be considered without disclosing information that could reveal the identity of an individual 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 specific details within the exempt appendix and therefore the press and the public would not be excluded from the following agenda item.

29. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

30. **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The report of the Head of Quality Assurance, was submitted, recommending that the Panel note and consider the quality assurance update provided by the service.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, Councillor Dr Paffey; Robert Henderson, Executive Director - Children and Learning; Steph Murray, Deputy Director - Children and Learning; and Stuart Webb, Service Manager, Quality Assurance, Children and Learning were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the Cabinet Member and officers, the Panel noted the following:

- That the training offer was the best around and was attracting social workers to Southampton.
- There was enthusiasm and support for Quality Assurance activity and that was being driven by the practitioners as well the senior management team.
- The consistency of quality practice still needed to improve, but the expectation was that quality of practice would be good by the end of 2023/24.

31. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel received the report of the Scrutiny Manager, which recommended that the Panel consider and challenge the performance of Children's Services and Learning in Southampton.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning, Councillor Dr Paffey; Robert Henderson, Executive Director - Children and Learning; Steph Murray, Deputy Director - Children and Learning; and Stuart Webb, Service Manager, Quality Assurance, Children and Learning were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the Cabinet Member and officers, the Panel noted the following:

- That the performance trajectory showed a steady movement across the board.
- Demand appeared to be reducing in a safe and controlled way.
- Care Director templates were being redesigned to make them easier to navigate.
- Care Director was becoming more sophisticated and was driving performance.
- The performance system was 90% complete in terms of being able to report accurately but there were still areas that needed to be addressed.
- The 30% re-referrals figure was incorrect. The system was recording children moving between teams as a re-referral. That anomaly needed to be addressed. The service also needed to understand what sat behind the re-referrals.
- The previously referenced re-referrals audit was delayed because of the Ofsted visit. It had been rescheduled to 6 February 2023.
- Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) performance was nearer 67%, which was higher than previously reported. This was another area where there was a recording issue on Care Director. However, the service was aware of each child's circumstances.
- The projected overspend at end of quarter 3 was £10m.
- The conversation would be ongoing as to whether it was an overspend by the service or that the base budget for Children's Services was inadequate.

RESOLVED: That, if timescales allowed, the key findings from the planned audit of re-referrals be summarised within, or appended to, the performance report to be considered at the 30 March 2023 meeting of the Panel.