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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JULY 2019**

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**Present:** Councillors Taggart (Chair), Mitchell, J Baillie, Guthrie, Laurent and Mintoff

**Apologies:** Councillor Chaloner and Rob Sanders

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

The apologies of Councillor Chaloner and also of Appointed Member Rob Sanders were noted.

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

**RESOLVED** that the minutes for the Panel meeting on 6 June 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

9. **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Director, Legal and Governance providing an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since May 2019. The Panel discussed the performance with the Cabinet Member for Aspiration, Children and Lifelong Learning and the Children and Families Senior Management Team.

The Panel were informed that demand continued to rise at the same time as changes were being introduced and embedded into Children and Families Services. New referrals remained high and Children In Need (CIN) numbers had risen. Since January 2019 there had been a 66% increase in children with CIN plans in Southampton.

To increase capacity, alleviate pressure and stabilise services, additional project teams had been commissioned to support the assessment team and the Child Protection and Court Team (PACT). These were scheduled to start in August 2019. It was hoped that this intervention would help to prevent a future increase in Looked After Children (LAC).

The Panel were informed that the increase in demand for services and the complexity of cases had resulted in increased pressure on staff. This in turn had increased vacancy levels in key service areas.

It was recognised that despite the increased demand, Children's Services remained robust; MASH timescales had rebounded; Early Help changes had begun to show signs that they could help to reduce demand on the MASH; LAC numbers were stable and the strong multi-agency partnerships across Southampton and Hampshire were providing support.

To develop understanding of the reasons behind the surge in demand for safeguarding services in Southampton the Panel were appraised of the analysis that was being undertaken by the Council's Intelligence and Strategic Analysis Team. The Panel requested that this analysis be presented at the 26 September 2019 meeting.

Concerns were raised at the high number of children that were recorded as missing in June 2019. The Panel were informed that voluntary organisations had been commissioned to complete return interviews for children that were placed out of the city that had gone missing; that the Council were exploring opportunities to enable more children to be looked after within the city; and that the analysis being undertaken by the Council's Intelligence and Strategic Analysis Team, alongside examination of the return interviews, would hopefully provide insight into some of the issues that were resulting in the high levels of children being reported as missing.

The Chair welcomed the response from the Cabinet Member and Senior Management Team with regards to the performance concerns outlined, and restated the commitment to prioritise the Children and Families Performance item at meetings of the Panel until further notice.

**RESOLVED** that the Panel:

- i. Receive the analysis undertaken to identify where service demand was coming from at the 26 September meeting of the Panel; and
- ii. Be provided with an overview of the missing children statistics in Southampton, including the number of missing children that were known to safeguarding services.

#### 10. **EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE DATA**

The Panel considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Aspiration, Children and Lifelong Learning outlining performance with regards to Education, Health and Care (EHC) Assessments.

The Cabinet Member, the Service Lead for Education and Early Help and SEND Service Manager were in attendance and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the meeting.

The Panel discussed a number of points including:

- The performance presented to the Panel was 2018 data. EHC assessment performance had improved considerably since then and there was an expectation that for the remainder of 2019 90% of assessments would be completed within the statutory timescales.
- Capacity issues had been a factor in the poor outcomes in 2018.
- The service benefitted from good working relationships with NHS Southampton City CCG and education partners.
- The service was encouraging schools to be inclusive so that all schools took responsibility for outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities from their communities.

**RESOLVED** that the Panel

- i. Receive the end of year Education, Health and Care assessment performance figures when they were available; and
- ii. Be provided with anonymised case studies showing examples of completed EHC assessments.