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**SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL**  
**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2020**

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**Present:** Councillors Taggart (Chair), Mitchell (Vice-Chair), Chaloner (accept items 1- 5) , Guthrie (accept items 1-5), Laurent and Mintoff

**Apologies:** Councillors J Baillie

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

The apologies of Councillor J Baillie were noted

7. **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair announced that there would be a special Children and Families Scrutiny Panel meeting on the 27 August to consider the Improvement Report.

8. **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Director, Legal and Governance which provided an overview of performance across Children and Families Services since May 2020.

Councillor Paffey, Cabinet Member for Children and Learning; Grainne Siggins, Acting Director of Children's Services; Julian Watkins, Service Manager Children and Families; John Harrison, Executive Director Finance and Commercialism and Phil Bullingham, Service Lead, Safeguarding, Improvement, Governance and Compliance were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- The work that social workers had done to keep in touch with children during the difficult times created by the pandemic.
- Improvements to the Early Help offer had reduced the number of children whose needs had escalated to require support from the Children In Need teams.
- There was an increased risk of hidden harm during the pandemic due to the changes in the landscape in the community.
- The quality of Information Technology resources available to staff would be crucial to the efficient and effective delivery of support during the pandemic and future waves predicted.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) That officers would examine the benchmarking data provided for LAC 1, Looked After Children, and update the Panel on the findings at 1<sup>st</sup> October meeting of the Panel.
- (ii) That an indicator measuring the number of looked after children in residential care placements be included in the dataset presented to the Panel.
- (iii) That anonymised case studies, highlighting interventions by the Early Help Service that have prevented escalation to safeguarding services, would be circulated to the Panel before the 1 October meeting.

- (iv) That briefing papers would be circulated to the Panel, in advance of the 1 October meeting, on the following:
- a. The development of City Council residential care provision;
  - b. IT provision for Children's Services in preparation for the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic;
  - c. An update on the plans for a new IT system for Children's Services.

9. **EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS - COVID 19**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Legal and Business Operations which recommended that the Panel scrutinise the actions being undertaken to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, and subsequent Government guidance, on educational attainment for children and young people in Southampton.

Councillor Paffey, Cabinet Member for Children and Learning; and Derek Wiles, Head of Education and Learning, Southampton City Council, were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

In discussions with the officers, the Panel noted the following:

- Communications had been distributed to reassure parents that schools are safe for children to attend and will be maintained as safe places for children to learn.
- Plans had been developed by all schools to support the mental and emotional health of students when they return to school.
- Plans had been developed to provide additional tuition in school and access to online courses for students who needed additional support with education attainment.

**RESOLVED** that the issue of additional support to help reduce the attainment gap is included on the agenda for 1<sup>st</sup> October meeting when the Panel undertake the customary scrutiny of educational attainment in the city.

10. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel noted the report of the Director of Legal and Business Operations which enabled the Panel to monitor and track progress on recommendations made at previous meetings.

The Panel noted that the two items of information outstanding from the last meeting had been provided and would be circulated to the Panel after the meeting.

The Panel also noted that the development of the Vulnerable Adolescents Service and the recruitment of foster carers were to be considered at a future meeting of the Panel.