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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Present: Councillors Guthrie (Chair), Bell, Laurent, Mitchell (except agenda items 1-8) and Dr Paffey
Appointed Members: Rob Sanders

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

The apologies of the Cabinet Member for Education – Councillor J Baillie were noted.

16. **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair noted that the Executive Director of Wellbeing – Children and Learning had invited members to contribute their thoughts on the draft Children and Young Peoples Strategy as part of the consultation process.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

18. **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 Appendices 2, 3, and 5 the following agenda item could be considered without disclosing information that was subject to an obligation of confidentiality 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 the exempt appendices and therefore the press and the public would not be excluded from the following agenda item.

19. **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN SOUTHAMPTON**

The Panel considered the report of the Service Director, Legal and Business Operations, which set out the provisional 2020/21 Key Stage exam results in Southampton.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Councillor P Baillie; and Southampton City Council Officers, Rob Henderson, the Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning); and Clodagh Freeston, Service Manager, Education Strategy, Planning, and Improvement; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

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

- The Oasis Academies had not published or shared their exam result data with the Local Authority.
- Periods of school closure due to the coronavirus pandemic had impacted the implementation of measures to improve performance and had also impacted on the availability of data to measure improvement. The Progress 8 data was not available for evaluation of the exam results in relation to the intake.
- Local Authority Officers visited all schools maintained by the Council on a regular basis to ensure that schools offer sufficient support and used funding in a way that provided good value. Whilst it was acknowledged that children's education had been affected by the pandemic, Officers have found that schools have been able to flex to ensure that the curriculum was as wide and varied as possible and children were being assessed and supported to help them make adjustments to progress in their education.
- Sharing best practice was a function of the education forums operating in the city.
- Data on school attendance had not yet been submitted by schools.
- The Council monitored and tracked school admissions and pupil moves closely, all reports of off rolling were investigated and if evidence of off rolling was found the schools were challenged.
- There had been an increase in the number of children Electively Home Educated.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Executive Director would engage with the leadership of Oasis Community Learning to encourage them to reverse their policy not to share school attainment data with local authorities.
- 2) That, if available, the Panel would be provided with an overview of the disparity between KS4/5 projected and awarded grades at Southampton schools and colleges.
- 3) That the latest available school attendance data for Southampton schools would be circulated to the Panel.
- 4) That available KS4 attainment data for Southampton children who were home educated would be circulated to the Panel.
- 5) That, to develop understanding of the attainment of Southampton's care experiencing children and young people, the Virtual School Annual Headteacher Report would be circulated to the Panel.

20. **POST 16 PROVISION, PARTICIPATION AND NEET**

The Panel considered the report of the Service Director, Legal and Business Operations, which set out the provisional 2020/21 Key Stage exam results in Southampton.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care, Councillor P Baillie; and Southampton City Council Officers, Rob Henderson, the Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning); and Clodagh Freeston, Service Manager, Education Strategy Planning, and Improvement; were present and, with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Panel.

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

- On pg. 27 of the report pack, it stated that 75% of students attending City College come from disadvantaged backgrounds, however the correct figure was in fact approx. 40%-50%.
- Whilst some of the 6th Form provision in the City was outstanding the funding for 6th form provision means that small 6th forms in schools were not very economically viable and were therefore not always delivering the quality of 6th Form provision our children need.
- Merging provision for post 16 education had been explored in the past and the Department for Education had carried out another review of provision in the area and were due to publish the review in 2022. However, the situation was complex, and it had proved difficult to achieve the investment required for improvement.
- The Council had engaged with the Department for Education and local further education providers as a strategic partner to influence the development of a road map that would provide a long-term sustainable solution for post 16 provision in the City.
- There was a capital programme for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) which included post 16 provision and focussed on increasing capacity in local schools and special provision within the city.
- The pandemic had exacerbated the issue – but some cities, such as Bristol and Coventry had seen NEET rates fall in 2021. The Panel questioned what had happened in these cities that had not happened in Southampton?
- Analysis would be carried out to understand why measures implemented to improve engagement had been successful for young people in Year 12, but this had not filtered through to Year 13.
- The number of young people whose destination was unknown was high and included young people who may have moved out of the City and cannot be contacted.
- Three Engagement Workers had been employed to support young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to be ready to engage, to deliver targeted work to prevent young people becoming NEET and to help and to help track down young people whose destination was unknown.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That analysis would be undertaken of Post 16 performance to identify the reasons behind the attainment gap, particularly the achievement of A*/A grades, between Southampton Further Education providers and national performance.
- 2) That, research to learn from best practice in reducing NEET levels, would include liaison with Bristol City Council and Coventry City Council to identify how they had been able to reduce NEET levels during the pandemic.
- 3) That analysis would be undertaken to improve our understanding of the reasons behind the rise in NEETs between Yr12 and Yr13 in Southampton.
- 4) That the Panel would be provided with data which enabled comparisons to be made between the level of ‘unknowns’ in Southampton and other areas.

21. **CHILDREN AND LEARNING - PERFORMANCE**

The Panel received the report of the Service Director, Legal and Business Operations, which recommended that the Panel considered and challenged the performance of Children and Learning Services in Southampton.

Robert Henderson, Executive Director Wellbeing (Children and Learning), Southampton City Council; and, Julian Watkins, Service Manager, Children and Learning Department, 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:

- Demand at the front door remained high, despite school holidays. August figures were 20% higher than previous year.
- The number of Section 47 enquiries was low at 59 in August. A restorative approach had been adopted which worked with families to help them work out who they could rely on for support in their community rather than relying solely on services provided from an external source. This had reduced the number of cases escalating to Section 47 when an assessment plan was already in place for a family or a referral to an early help service would be more appropriate.
- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub had dealt with 100% of referrals within 1 working day
- Southampton was part of a voluntary Unaccompanied Assylum Seeking Children (USAC) scheme along with 17 other Local Authorities, which includes guidance that 0.07% of 0-17 population should be USAC. Southampton had so far received less than that number and was capable of meeting the challenges of receiving more USAC if necessary.
- Southampton had received a cohort from the Afagan Resettlement Scheme, these families had been accommodated and did not include any UASC.
- Sunderland's Children's Services was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted following incremental improvements from an inadequate judgement in 2015. The situation and background of different councils made it difficult to draw direct comparisons, however the Destination 22 review of the children and families service in Southampton included similar improvements that had been successful in Sunderland.
- Positive news was reported regarding the recruitment of Assistant Team Managers within each of the six Protect and Court Teams and Newly Qualified Social Workers joining from September

RESOLVED:

- 1) That feedback would be provided on the relatively high levels of missing children in August 2021 in comparison to August 2020. (EH5-QL)
- 2) The number of Single Assessments completed had been low compared to other similar areas. As posed by the commentary (EH3), the Panel requested clarity as to whether the figure was a reflection that our Early Help offer was working well to prevent risk with families escalating, or, that professionals were not aware of some families in need and were therefore not referring them into the service.

22. **MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

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