

Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

29 July 2021

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.35pm

Present: Councillors T Smith (Chair), Affleck, Cooper, Owen, Patrick, Sweeton.

Apologies: Councillors Homer, Jackson, Martin, Pearce, N Sharif, Welsh.

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel held on 10 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Panel welcomed Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families); and Richard Hancock, Director of Children's Services, to receive an update on outcomes from the recent Ofsted Focused Visit.

Cllr Fairfoull introduced the update on Children's improvement projects and feedback from a recent Ofsted focused visit. A recap provided the improvement journey from the 2016 inspection and more recent impacts of Covid-19.

The improvement framework is system-wide from Early Help to Leaving Care and includes:

- 7 Sustainability projects – phase one
- 4 investable propositions – phase two
- Continued investment
- Continued oversight and governance
- Cross organisational priority

The sustainability projects aim to safely reduce the number of children requiring statutory intervention and services, to strengthen preventative work and to plan for permanence at the earliest opportunity. Mr Hancock advised that there is a recognisable need to move faster and further with regard to the local offer and placements for our children cared for.

To reflect on the impacts of Covid-19, Children's Services has experienced escalating demand over the past 8 to 10 months, it was reported that work undertaken in 2018/19 has to some extent helped to lessen the overall demand. The number of children subject to Child Protection has grown by 5% to 395 for the period Nov 2020 to April 2021. The number of Cared for Children reached a peak of 730 in October 2020, reducing by 6% to 684 at the end of April 2021.

Panel members received a summary of activity undertaken during Covid-19, this includes targeted support to 400 families on a CIN plan, links with schools to support some of our most vulnerable children and the Early Years virtual offer reaching 1,200 children supported through Children's Centre pathways and 3,000 attendees on virtual groups.

Mr Hancock updated members on the national picture and challenges with regard to sustained demand and resource pressures across Children's. Cllr Fairfoull reported headline finding from the Ofsted focused visit in May 2021. This was broken into sections of the positives reported and areas in need of improvement and continued development. Discussion focused on

workforce pressures, the quality and sustainability of placements, continued support and opportunities for care leavers.

Councillor Fairfoull and Mr Hancock responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:

- Potential barriers for improvement to date
- Workforce pressures, stability and complexity of caseloads
- Achievable targets for recruitment and retention of foster carers
- Identifying where existing challenges are located and an incremental plan for improvement
- The continued role of local partnerships

Resolved: That Councillor Fairfoull and Mr Hancock be thanked for attending the meeting.

9. FUTURE ACTIVITY AND REVIEWS

The Chair advised that all panel members have received emails regarding the working groups, with the option to join. This includes a the fixed Children's Working Group and separate review of Mental Health provision as detailed in the annual work programme.

10. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY

The Chair provided a verbal update on activity of the GM Corporate Issues & Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

11. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair informed panel members of Scrutiny reports and feedback received at the meeting of Overview Panel on 26 July 2021.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel will take place on 9 September 2021.

13. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR