

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

8 March 2023

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors T Sharif (Chair), Welsh, J Homer, Martin, Patel, Robinson, T Smith

Apologies: Councillors Owen, Reid

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by members of the Scrutiny Panel.

33. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel held on 11 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

34. SEND UPDATE

The Panel welcomed Councillor Leanne Feeley, Executive Member (Education, Achievement and Equalities); Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Children's Services; and Jane Sowerby, Assistant Director of Education, to receive an update on improvements to SEND services.

Councillor Feeley introduced the presentation and provided members with a recap on past Scrutiny activity related to the Local Area Inspection and a requirement of the authority to produce a written statement of action (WSoA) against 10 priority areas. This can be a complex area of work and significant improvements have already been made to improve services and outcomes. It was reported that:

- The WSoA was signed off by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission on 1 July 2022.
- Progress against the plan is monitored monthly by the SEND Improvement Group and is reported at Education Attainment Improvement Board on a quarterly basis.
- External monitoring by the Department for Education (DfE) takes place on an informal basis monthly and formal meetings held quarterly.
- A full-time designated project manager is now in post to directly support improvement projects.

Members reviewed each of the 10 priorities detailed with the WSoA and received a summary of progress highlights to date. It was reported that a new Ofsted inspection framework was published in September 2022, with the future re-inspection of Tameside SEND services to be completed using the new framework.

A summary of progress and improvement highlights provided members with additional detail of aspects such as a renewed local offer being available for children, families and professionals; parent/carer consultations; EHCP quality assurance framework; SEND scorecard and the importance of co-production and engagement of partners.

Information was provided on priority task and finish groups and supported by performance analysis, with comparable data showing improvement status against each of the 10 priorities from November 2022 to February 2023, with a new approach to progress rating. The breakdown showed:

- 3% actions in red
- 47% actions in amber
- 18% actions in green
- 32% actions in blue

It was reported that changes to the structure and performance of the SEND team has produced positive outcomes in relation to the timeliness of assessment and EHCPs. Stakeholder surveys will allow for greater awareness and understanding to monitoring progress, with a future focus to be placed on annual reviews. Added detail provided on improved methods of co-production and engagement with partners, with a new strategic structure for SEND Partnership Board having been shared and agreed.

Councillor Feeley and officers responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:

- Improvements to quality and timeliness of assessments and timescales for review and monitoring for each child.
- Access, waiting times associated with educational psychology and budgetary pressures.
- Improving awareness of the local SEND offer within communities and across the borough.
- Approach and strategy for promoting inclusion.
- Preparations for the new inspection framework.
- Establishing a broader offer for SEND that includes Early Help and family hubs.

Councillor Feeley and officers thanked for attending the meeting.

35. TAMESIDE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

The Panel welcomed Dr Henri Giller Independent Chair of Tameside Safeguarding Children Partnership; and Tony DeCrop, Assistant Director, to receive the partnerships annual report for 2021-22.

36. CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE SCORECARD

The Panel received an update on progress against indicators set within performance scorecards measuring Early Help and Children's Social Care outcomes.

37. SCRUTINY BUDGET LETTER

The Panel received for information, a letter of the Scrutiny Chairs to Councillor Jacqueline North, First Deputy (Finance, Resources & Transformation), in response to annual budget update sessions held on 16 January 2023. The Chair advised members that the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview Panel received the letter on 8 February 2023.

38. SCRUTINY ACTIVITY 2022/23

The Chair advised that a report presented at the joint meeting of Cabinet and Overview Panel on 8 February 2023 included a summary of the Scrutiny Panel's activity during the year.

39. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair advised members of Scrutiny reports tabled at the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview Panel on 8 February 2023. Items specific to the panel include:

- Children's Workforce Strategy – Social Worker Recruitment and Retention

- Scrutiny update
- Summary of activity for 2022/23

The Chair thanked members for their participation and contribution throughout the municipal year.

40. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that this is the last formal meeting of the Scrutiny Panel for the 2022/23 municipal year.

41. URGENT ITEMS

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

CHAIR