

# Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

8 November 2018

**Commenced:** 6.00pm

**Terminated:** 7.45pm

**Present:** Councillors Peet (Chair), T Smith (Deputy Chair), Affleck, Bowden, Boyle, Buglass, Carthey, Cooper, S Homer, Jackson, Wild.

**Apologies for absence:** Councillors Billington, Mills, Taylor, Welsh.

## 23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel held on 13 September 2018 were approved as a correct record.

## 24. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT

The Panel welcomed Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member (Children's and Families); and Richard Hancock, Director of Children's Services to receive a progress update on the recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit, future improvement priorities, governance and safeguarding arrangements.

The first of two presentations provided members with an overview of the most recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit carried out on 22 August 2018. This is the sixth visit since Tameside Children's Services were judged inadequate in 2016. Mr Hancock advised members that the visit reviewed the progress made to services for looked after children, with a focus on:

- The quality of assessments and care plans
- The timeliness of permanence planning
- The effectiveness of management and role of Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- The effectiveness of corporate parenting

The Panel heard that findings showed the Council's updated self-assessment accurately identifies the key areas for improvement within the services for looked after children. The overview indicated that while the pace of improvement had been slow in the period since initial inspection that actions have been taken to address this and to strengthen oversight and management of services.

Cllr Ryan discussed the work we do well, which includes the application of thresholds for bringing children into care and effective safeguarding arrangements. Statutory visits to children are taking place regularly, children are seen alone by their social worker, recordings of visits are thorough and the voice of the child is evident.

Mr Hancock advised that membership and terms of reference of the Council's Corporate Parenting Board had recently been refreshed, with the appointment of Cllr Ryan as the new Chair. Ofsted commented on the renewed drive and focus this had created. In the last six months the board has ensured that looked after children are able to access apprenticeships and work experience opportunities within the Council. The Children in Care Council is also attending the meetings, with a young person appointed as co-chair.

Mr Hancock advised members that a significant amount of improvement work remains and that the monitoring visit highlighted a number of areas requiring further improvement. It was said that the overall quality of child and family assessment and plans remain weak; the role of

the IRO is not as effective as it should be; permanence planning is not robust and is not considered soon enough; and that life story work is not being completed with all looked after children. Ofsted acknowledged that senior managers were aware of the deficits and plans have been put in place to take immediate action to address and rectify the origins of the problems.

It was reported that the difficulties encountered in securing a stable workforce remain the services biggest challenge. Ofsted identified that the efforts being made by the leadership team to recruit permanent social workers is now showing some positive results.

A comprehensive action plan is now in place to address all identified improvement areas from the visit, with a range of activity continuing to help embed and improve current performance with regard to looked after children, but more widely across Children's Social Care.

A second presentation provided a short update on general governance and safeguarding arrangements. As part of the meeting papers members had received a copy of the Children's Governance Review which had been presented at Executive Cabinet on 25 July 2018. The paper included a breakdown of governance arrangements and proposals to initiate a new Starting Well Board as a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Proposals were also included to deliver new Children's Partnership Workshops within the Neighbourhood Model.

Mr Hancock informed members that proposals to develop a revised approach to local safeguarding arrangements are now well underway, with the new Executive Safeguarding Partnership Board arrangements expected to come into place later this year.

The Panel thanked Cllr Ryan and Mr Hancock for their honest appraisal of the most recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit and recognition of the immediate improvement work required. A number of concerns were raised regarding permanence planning and a significant need for the service to ensure that life story work is undertaken with all of our looked after children.

Cllr Ryan and Mr Hancock recognised the detrimental impact that future uncertainty can have on our looked after children and also how the lack of consistent and confident social work practice can result in some children not receiving the life story work that is much needed.

Arrangements for permanence planning have been revised, with additional foster panels in place from 1 September 2018. The capacity and workloads of Social Workers will no longer mean that life story work is over looked, with this becoming a compulsory aspect. Plans are in place to support Social Workers to improve skills and confidence to undertake this work.

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

## **25. IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM**

The Chair advised members that the Impacts of Welfare Reform is a topic included within the Panel's current work programme and that work will now start to plan future activity. The Scrutiny Manager was invited to present information and insight on a number of specific and concentrated impacts to inform future lines of enquiry for the Panel. The Chair confirmed that an agreement had been reached with the Place and External Relation Scrutiny Panel for a joint working group to be established to progress this work early in 2019.

A concern was raised in relation to the short notice of information being presented on the Impacts of Welfare Reform and that the statutory notice period for meeting papers to be circulated had not been met.

The Chair advised the Panel that the item was to be received as a supportive tool to both inform and direct future activity. As such, the presenter and content of the presentation was

not, by nature, official scrutiny business and the decision to prevent any delay to receive this information was viewed in the best interest of the Panel.

The Chair sought agreement from the Panel for the item to be delivered in the way it was intended. A general consensus was reached to proceed as planned.

**Resolved:** That members are to be contacted by email outside of the meeting to express an interest in becoming a member of the joint working group.

## **26. CHILDREN'S WORKING GROUP**

The Chair informed members that a fixed Children's Working Group is to be established for the remainder of the 2018/19 municipal year. The group will hold a specific remit to consider matters relevant to Children's Services and Education.

The Children's Working Group is to be chaired by Councillor Teresa Smith and membership will include councillors from the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel, co-opted adults and co-opted young people. The Children's Working Group will report directly to the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny panel with the routine and timely reporting of activity.

The Terms of Reference was approved by the Panel, with the first meeting of the Children's Working Group scheduled to take place on 28 November 2018.

## **27. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on recent activity and future priorities for the Panel. The Panel confirmed future work priorities to include:

- Quality of Care Homes – the working group met with managers and staff from the Quality Improvement Team on 25 October. Plans will now be made to visit a local care home.
- The Chair to conclude past activity relating to Suicide Prevention.
- Welfare Reform – information presented to inform future work and focus.
- Monthly update emails - all scrutiny members are now receiving a monthly update email to raise awareness and participation in a range of open consultations and engagement exercises, including resources to support members in their scrutiny role.

## **28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel will take place on 10 January 2018.

## **29. URGENT ITEMS**

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

**CHAIR**