

Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

9 January 2020

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.40pm

Present: Councillors T Smith (Chair), S Homer (Deputy Chair), Affleck, Alam, Jackson, Martin, Mills, Owen, Patrick, Welsh, Wild.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Boyle, Cooper, Drennan, Gosling.

32. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel held on 7 November 2019 were approved as a correct record.

33. RESPONSE TO OMBUDSMAN FOCUS REPORT

The Panel welcomed Councillor Leanne Feeley, Executive Member for Lifelong Learning; and Tim Bowman, Assistant Director of Education, to provide a service response to a Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) focus report published in October 2019. The report titled, *Not going to plan? – Education Health Care Plans two years on*, is intended to place more of a spotlight on problems experienced with the SEND system.

It was reported that legislative reforms introduced in September 2014 and a refreshed SEND Code of Practice have created additional implementation and resource challenges for local authorities. A new inspection framework was also introduced in May 2016, with all local areas to be inspected over a five year period.

From a review of complaints, the Ombudsman has identified five serious problems:

- Severe delays
- Poor planning and anticipation of needs
- Poor communication and preparation for meetings
- Inadequate partnership working
- Lack of oversight from senior managers

The Panel received a service response to shared learning points detailed within the Ombudsman report, with a self-evaluation and appraisal of current strengths and improvement areas. A separate response was reviewed against case studies and key questions for Scrutiny. Strengths were highlighted for joint working arrangements at an operational level and proactive work undertaken within early years. Challenges have been identified through performance outcomes and the implementation of SEND reforms. Most notably:

- Compliance with statutory timescales for completion of education, health and care plans
- Consistency in the identification of needs

Cllr Feeley reported that Tameside is experiencing significant pressures on its High Needs budget, with a significant overspend projected for 2019/20. The authority faces a range of challenges based on the rise in general activity and requests for assessment. In 2016 a total of 139 requests were made, compared with 481 in 2019. The total number of plans maintained has increased from 700 to 1500 over the same period. Such demand pressures have impacted on capacity and the ability to meet statutory timescales for assessments, with around 43% completed within 20 weeks.

The Panel heard that local challenges reflect those identified by the Ombudsman at a national level. There is a need for significant and swift improvement in a number of areas and a strategic SEND review has been carried out. Implementation of the review will increase specialist capacity and establish more inclusive provision. Improved action will be taken to address compliance, effective auditing, pathways and delays.

Initial actions identified in the plan will start to be implemented from September 2020. These are:

- Developing more provision in the borough to avoid costs associated with out of borough placements
- Neighbourhood working to improve SEND support
- A full review of top up funding

The Chair thanked Cllr Feeley and Mr Bowman for the appraisal and the response provided to a number of questions raised by the Ombudsman. The Panel will continue to seek assurances on shared learning, with outcomes from this review to be reported at the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview Panel on 12 February 2020.

Resolved: That Councillor Feeley and Mr Bowman be thanked for attending the meeting.

34. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS

The Chair presented a report of the working group tasked to review the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers. Members have met with the Fostering Service and attended a foster carer support group meeting, with findings and recommendations to be shared with the Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families) and the Director of Children's Services.

Resolved: The report was approved and signed off by the Panel.

35. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY

The Chair is a member of the Greater Manchester Corporate Issues & Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Deputy Chair is a member of the Greater Manchester Economy, Business Growth & Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The most recent meetings were held in November 2019, with the following topics discussed:

- School Readiness
- Waste budget and levy
- Digital Strategy
- GM Brexit preparations

The Chair reaffirmed that the Scrutiny Update emails will continue to include a link to all public papers for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Committees.

36. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair advised members that an Executive Response meeting with Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families), will take place on 20 January 2020. This concludes activity to review the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers. The final report and Executive Response will be presented at the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview Panel on 12 February 2020.

The next meeting of the Children's Working Group will take place on 16 January 2020 to continue the review of Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.

Resolved: Details and outcomes from working group meetings to be routinely reported to the Scrutiny Panel.

37. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel will take place on Thursday 12 March 2020.

38. URGENT ITEMS

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

CHAIR