

## **SOUTH STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

**13 January 2019**

**Commenced:** 18.30pm

**Terminated:** 20:10

**Present:** Councillors P Fitzpatrick (Chair), Affleck, Alam, Bowden, Chadwick, J Fitzpatrick, Kitchen, Owen, Robinson and Welsh

**In Attendance** Jeanelle De Gruchy – Director of Population Health

Richard Hancock – Director of Children’s Services

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Cooper

### **9 MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

**The minutes of the meeting of the South Strategic Neighbourhood Forum held on 14 October 2019 be approved as a correct record with the addition of Councillor Welsh recorded as present.**

### **10 CHILDREN’S SERVICES – CURRENT POSITION AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT FOR 2020**

The Director of Children’s Services presented before Members and began by giving details of the three week program of inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services in May 2019.

The Director then outlined the judgements arising from the inspection and explained that some important improvements had been made, such as:

- The scale and effectiveness of early help services had been strengthened through a new locality-based model that was now serving most children well;
- A new multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) was ensuring that referrals about children for whom there were safeguarding concerns were almost always dealt with quickly and appropriately; and
- An ‘edge of care’ team was working intensively with families to ensure that children only came into care when they needed to.

However progress, particularly in services for children in care, was very new and so impact was inevitably limited.

Improvements and areas of focus over the past 12 months were outlined.

With regards to the areas of focus for 2020, it was explained that the system was now more stable, but 2020 would see a continued focus on areas already targeted in 2019 and additionally a specific focus on areas including:

- Work Force Development;
- Consistency in quality;
- Complex Safeguarding;
- Children in Needs;
- Children at the ‘cusp of care; and
- Looked after Children – including Fostering, placement sufficiency and permanency.

The Director concluded by explaining that a multi-faceted and co-ordinated approach was required, in order to safely and appropriately reduce the need for Local Authority Care, to stabilise the current

cohort, progress children through to permanency more effectively, step children down where appropriate and provide for a range of placements to best meet children's assessed needs. The 7 projects to support these objectives were detailed as follows:

- Early Help and Prevention at a Neighbourhood Level;
- Family Intervention Service;
- Team around the School Plus;
- Duty/Locality Restructure;
- Positive Futures (Respite/Assessment);
- Fostering Service Improvement; and
- Placements Review and Sufficiency.

Members discussed the progress on reducing the reliance on agency workers and the integration of the locality and MASH team. Members expressed concern at the social worker turnover, the director gave assurances that the average caseload had fallen and that the service had recruited a number of new social workers and the situation would continue to improve as they gained experience.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

### **11 TACKLING POVERTY IN TAMESIDE**

The Director of Population Health submitted a presentation providing information with regard to tackling poverty in Tameside.

It was explained that the Council and partners were rethinking the approach to tackling poverty and the causes of poverty. To do this, engagement was taking place with residents and partners to understand the nature of poverty experienced in Tameside, how it impacted on people's lives and how best to support residents experiencing poverty to move out of poverty.

The presentation provided statistical information in respect of poverty levels in England, including child poverty, with the highest levels of child poverty in Tameside occurring in Ashton and Hyde Godley.

The main causes of poverty were outlined and potential levels of intervention were explored.

Discussion ensued with regard to the content of the presentation. Members expressed concern that it was often more expensive to be poor, it was highlighted that credit unions could be a great help but more should be done to encourage uptake. Members discussed communities where Credit Unions were not being promoted.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

**CHAIR**