

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 23 January 2023 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Abbott, M. Bradshaw, Bramwell, Carlin, Goodall and Loftus

Apologies for Absence: Councillors V. Hill, Jones and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Vasic, P. Murphy, A. Jones, J. Farrell, D. Roberts, K. Bazley and S. Ellison

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
CYP16 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CYP18 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The minutes relating to the Children and Young People Portfolio, that had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix 1 for information.	
CYP19 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE UPDATE	
The Board received a report and presentation from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which provided an update of the work undertaken to date following the Ofsted Focused Visit which took place on 13 and 14 October 2021 and the subsequent actions taken in response to their findings.	

The Inspectors looked at the arrangements for Children in Need, including those who were subject to a Child Protection Plan, and their report made several recommendations identified as 'areas of priority action' as outlined in the report.

It was reported that since the inspection steps had been taken to make improvements to the Service, which were outlined to Members. These improvements were overseen by a Children's Improvement Board, with regular reporting arrangements to the Department for Education.

Members were advised of a further focused visit, on 'front door arrangements' carried out on 23 and 24 November 2022. This focused on how the Council responded to contacts, referrals, strategy discussions and child protection processes. Further details on this inspection were provided in the next minute.

RESOLVED: That Members of the Board

- 1) note the steps that have been taken and the role of the Children's Improvement Board; and
- 2) support moving forward the key priorities and actions outlined in the Children's Improvement Plan.

CYP20 OFSTED FOCUSED INSPECTION

The Board received a presentation on the outcome of the Ofsted focussed visit which took place on 23 and 24 November 2022 and the subsequent actions taken in response to their findings.

Members were advised that the focus of the visit was the Council's first response in dealing with contacts and referrals to Children's Social Care and Early Help, including the strategy discussion / S27 process. Inspectors also took the opportunity to review the arrangements for managing allegations against professionals under the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) process and considered the recommendations from previous inspections, most notably the areas for priority action from the last focussed visit in October 2021.

Officers presented the key headlines from the visit and reported that there were no 'areas for priority action' identified, so no serious weaknesses existed in the quality of practice. The next steps were also outlined and discussed and it was noted that any areas for development were now

incorporated into the Improvement and Transformation programme.

The following information was provided in response to Members questions and comments:

- Regarding the recruitment of student social workers, the Council did target colleges and universities and were currently speaking to both;
- Work placements for students did take place in Halton – some work was currently being done with Hope University;
- Details of the areas being incorporated into the transformation programme were discussed – support with the workforce and SEND for example was already happening;
- Ideas on different ways of operating were always welcomed and given consideration; and
- The importance of staff supervision was discussed with regards to its purpose and effectiveness and whether this needed reviewing.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) notes the findings of the Ofsted report; and
- 2) note the update on the improvement actions presented.

CYP21 SUMMARY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

The Board considered a report and received a presentation, which summarised key work taking place locally and at a regional level to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

The presentation gave an overview of work taking place in Halton by a variety of organisations and teams such as: Halton Borough Council; Halton Public Health; NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Halton Place (Integrated Care Board [ICB] formally CCGs); and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

Preventative work was carried out by these organisations that aimed to keep children and young people mentally well. The report and presentation described core and statutory services that were available to provide direct interventions and support when children and young people were struggling.

Members' made comments or raised questions and the following information or points of clarification were provided:

- The bereavement support service for adults and children/young people had been extended for 12 months;
- Data relating to the use of services offered by 'Power in Partnership' and 'Nightstop' for 18-24 year olds would be sent following the meeting, as the information was not to hand for the meeting;
- As part of the transformation programme, it was planned that Halton would be included in the digital single point of access in the region;
- Team of Life training – Halton's Educational Psychologists and 30 Emotional Support Literacy Assistants (ELSAs) had accessed this training;
- Nationally people had complained about not being able to get through to crisis lines – this would be checked locally;
- Discussion around low aspirations of children / parents / teachers in some schools / areas in Halton – officers assured that this attitude was always challenged in schools and the Council shared its aspirations / ambitions for pupils regularly;
- Research had shown that 'inherited trauma' was a fact and existed in some families – examples of how nurture could intervene were given;
- The impact of social media on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people was discussed – especially in relation to mobile telephones being used in schools – although recognised by all as a problem it was a cultural issue that was difficult to manage. Officers would raise the matter again with governors at tomorrow's governors meeting; and
- Secondary schools were not on the list of nurturing schools – explained that it was more difficult to offer nurture in secondary settings for many reasons. For example the constant movement of students between classes and having different teachers throughout the day. It was also suggested that there could be some stigma attached to a child in secondary school who was being nurtured.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) receives the presentation; and
- 2) notes the key work and services contributing to the

Executive Director
Children's
Services

positive mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

CYP22 ANNUAL REPORT - COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS RELATING TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 1 APRIL 2020 - 31 MARCH 2021

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, which presented the Annual Report for comments, complaints and compliments, relating to Children's Social Care Services from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Publication of the Annual Report was a statutory requirement, which provided an analysis on complaints processed under the Children Act 1989 Representation's Procedure and evidenced how feedback from service users had been used to improve service delivery.

The Report also provided Members with compliments made by clients and positive feedback from workers/professionals relating to Children's Services in the People Directorate. The report also demonstrated the positive impact and outcomes on the lives of people accessing services in this Directorate.

Members welcomed the report commenting that compliments were good for staff morale and complaints were not always a bad thing as lessons could be learnt from them. Following Members questions, the following additional information was provided:

- The demand for Children's Services was on the increase in certain areas such as safeguarding and Children in Care, which was up by approximately 15% in the last two years in Halton;
- Each local authority in the Country was different; some maintained their levels of demand and some had seen increases;
- Persistent complainers were on the increase, eg. a complainant contacting more than one person with the same complaint; or one officer being bombarded with complaints from the same person;
- The Council also has a duty of care to the member of staff the complaint is aimed at.

RESOLVED: That the reports presented are accepted are the mechanism by which elected Members can monitor and scrutinise children's social care complaints and compliments.

CYP23 SUFFICIENCY DUTY REPORT 2022-2023 (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT REVIEW (CSA))

The Board received the Sufficiency Duty Report for 2022-23 (previously known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Review) CSA.

It was noted that Sections 6 and 7 of *The Childcare Act (2006)* and the associated statutory guidance: *Early Education and Childcare – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2018)*, requires all local authorities in England to undertake and provide an annual childcare sufficiency report to elected Council Members, on how they were meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make it available to the public.

The report detailed achievements since the last review and outlined Halton's current position for Members. It also highlighted any gaps in provision and how these were being addressed. The report shared the longer term effects of how Covid-19 was affecting the childcare sector. It was noted that despite the impact of Covid-19, the childcare market in Halton continued to be secure and sustainable, although there were some concerns amongst providers regarding the future with the rising cost of living.

Members welcomed the report; it was noted that from 1 April there would be an increase in the national minimum wage, so this could affect some childcare providers going forward.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the revised Sufficiency Duty Report (previously known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment).

Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.