

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 19 October 2023

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 10.03 am

Meeting Concluded: 11.36 am

Councillors:

Joe Tristram (Chairperson)

Wendy Griggs (Vice-Chairperson)

Annabelle Chard

Nicola Holland

Clare Hunt

Apologies: Councillors: Sue Mason and Tom Nicholson.

Absent: Councillors Marc Aplin, Stuart Davies, Michael Pryke and Martin Williams.

Also in attendance: Councillor Roger Whitfield.

Officers in attendance: Carolyn Fair, Matthew Greenhalgh, Anthony Webster, Brent Cross.

CAY Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37)

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None.

CAY Minutes

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Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 29 June 2023 – to approve as a correct record.

Recommended: that the minutes of the meeting of 29 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

CAY SEND Self Evaluation

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The report was presented by the Head of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) after an introduction by the Interim Director of Children's Services, and set out the structure and findings of the most recent SEND self-evaluation. This was due to be shared with Ofsted the following Monday in their first SEND

engagement in the region. The report showed that progress was being made and was felt to be a good reflection of SEND in North Somerset.

Further work to be done in the next twelve months was highlighted, including on the Pathway to Adulthood but work on this was in progress. The Alternative Provision framework was discussed, as well as the ethos of Alternative Provision being an intervention, and not a destination for children and young people.

The following topics were raised in discussion:

- The joint working with Adults Social Services on the Pathway to Adulthood;
- That children and young people waiting for an assessment could access an EHCP (Education, Health, and Care Plan), and that resources for parents and schools needed to be communicated;
- That growth in SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) needs being higher than the national average was due to North Somerset starting from a historically low base and the resulting inability to intervene early on;
- The hurdles to getting 100% parental involvement in Statutory Needs Assessments up from the current 82%;
- That many parents still were having difficulty understanding how to access direct payments;
- The plan for any schools that were flagged as not meeting the needs of children with SEND;
- Members were grateful for the glossary attached at the bottom of the report, which was very helpful in deciphering acronyms.

Recommended: that the report be received and comments forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY 15 Annual Report of Adoption West 2022-23

The Interim Director of Children's Services spoke to the report, which gave a summary of the activity of our Regional Adoption Agency in the 2022-23 period. There had been two ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) of participating authorities over the reporting period, both of which had noted the strength of the work of Adoption West.

In the discussion that followed the presentation, Members queried:

- Whether the scarcity of social workers was one of the factors affecting the timeliness of adoption – a much larger role was played by the behaviour of family courts, which showed differences in outcomes nationally.
- Early permanence, where children were placed with foster parents with the intention of adoption, was well used in North Somerset, and was a strength.
- That 'adoption is a last resort' referred to older children with existing familial relationships for whom adoption was not always the best option.

Recommended: that the report be received and comments forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

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The Interim Director of Children's Services presented the report covering 2022 to 2023. Although children's safeguarding had been an area of concern, an improvement was starting to be seen due to the efforts of all the members of the Partnership, some of whom had been very active. Partners from education were being reintroduced after a hiatus of some years, and officers were looking to do joint work with the Adults Safeguarding Board.

In discussion the following topics were considered:

- the narrative behind the increase in children going missing – it was important to understand the reasons for this, and an emphasis was being placed on the return to home interviews; the report lacked clarity on the number of children involved versus the total number of episodes which would be improved on in future.
- The use of the MOMO (Mind Of My Own) app to support children and young people to communicate their views and needs, and how children and young people's voices could be used to improve services.

Recommended: that the report be received and comments forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY Panel's Work Plan

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The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer discussed the Panel's work plan and invited discussion with Members for additional items to add to it, as well as picking up any actions from the meeting.

Members requested that the invitations for working group meetings be sent to all CYPS Members, and not only those who had previously expressed an interest in attending.

Chairman
