

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 5 July 2023 at 6.00 pm in The Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors J Jones (Chair), Z Hannington, A S Jhawar, L Parker, K Tonks, J Urey and O Vickers.
Co-optee: S Fikeis

In Attendance: D Knibbs (Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support), J Power (Policy & Development Manager), A Mason (Independent Chair: Safeguarding Partnership Board), K Fisher (Lead Lawyer: Children & Adults) and S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

Apologies: Councillor S P Burrell

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3 Terms of Reference 2023 / 2024

Members received the Terms of Reference for the Committee, there had been no changes from previous years.

RESOLVED – that the Terms of Reference, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved.

4 Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Lead Lawyer: Children & Adults presented the work programme for 2023/24. The work programme included standing items and new suggestions which had been received during the consultation.

RESOLVED- that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved.

5 Telford & Wrekin Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2021/22

The Committee received the report of the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership Board, 2021-22; the report provided an update on the work of the partnership during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Board focussed on how they could best support children and young people regarding safeguarding especially where processes had failed the child.

There were new processes put into place that examined what went wrong with referrals and what was being done to ensure efficiency and accuracy when dealing with referrals. The use of rapid review was implemented to support with this to respond quickly to errors that had occurred. This led to a structured examination of the processes of when a referral was first made and how they were handled.

Following this, Members had the following discussion and asked questions:

How had the partnership supported young people with mental health concerns?

It was recognised that mental health was a significant challenge. Early intervention work was being undertaken to support children with mental health concerns at an earlier stage.

What was the expected lead time for supporting children and young people with their mental health?

There were structures in place to support with this, especially with early years support. The Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support said there was guidance on waiting times depending on the referral. It was recognised that the Partnership should look at further guidance and performance indicators for when a referral was made.

How effective was the systems for monitoring referrals?

Referrals that were submitted electronically were easier to monitor and track.

A request was made to further understand the referral process. This would need to be investigated further due to the confidentiality due to the nature of referrals.

Members were pleased to hear about the progress and new developments from the Safeguarding Board and asked about further plans for information sharing.

The Independent Chair explained that the Board would continue to work with partners. Newly recruited Safeguarding Nurses would support with information sharing regarding health and mental health. It was recognised that health was a diverse area and that the nurses were to support with sharing information regarding this as well as providing an overview of the system.

How had the cost of living crisis affected children and families?

The impact had been seen across families in the Borough. Further work was being undertaken to address the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis and support children and their families as required.

What systems were in place to monitor if children were having breakfast before school?

Each school would monitor this and would make relevant referrals should a concerning pattern emerge.

Members asked about work being undertaken in schools.

Schools were being supported to introduce their own Children Safeguarding Boards, which were facilitated by the school but run by pupils. The aim was to help understand the issues pupils faced and how best to support them.

How were the Children Safeguarding Boards in schools operated?

The Boards were not prescriptive; schools could call them what they wanted and could be arranged as best met the needs of the schools and pupils. Parent and guardian involvement was a key aspect for them because schools needed their support to ensure that they operated to their intended purposes.

Previously, schools had implemented the 'buddy' system where pupils were paired up to support each other socially; was this still being used and if so how had it developed?

This was still being used in schools and was partnered with the school's own Children Safeguarding Board as a point of contact for children in school to speak to someone their own age or older for support.

How had the board considered establishing the scheme in early years settings?

It was difficult to do the scheme with early years due to the nature of the topics.

What had been some of the impact of the Boards and the 'buddy' system?

In some schools across the Borough, children had virtually grown up with them and knew where to go for support and to raise concerns.

What were some of the developments to the safeguarding framework and what was the impact on the Boards and the work of the partnership?

Over the years there had been developments to include different characteristics in safeguarding and its framework and the work of the Board. One was the inclusion of protected characteristics such as the LGBTQIA+ community to be included. There had been videos and workshops with the

young people to demonstrate the work that they had done. There was a focus on areas like being a good citizen and the declaration of human rights by the UN.

If a resident raised a concern or needed particular support, what could be done to help them?

Family Connect remained the first point of contact for safeguarding and support for children and young people as well as adults safeguarding concerns. Areas for contact and support were also available on the Council's website. Parents would also be able to self-refer themselves to Strengthening Families should they need further support. Eventually, residents would be able to self-refer to family hubs.

Members thanked officers and the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Partnership Board for presenting the report and speaking to members.

6 Chair's Update

Members were informed that the next formal committee meeting was scheduled for the 4 October 2023.

The meeting ended at 6.48 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday 4 October 2023