

## **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 22 April 2026 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG**

**Present:** Councillors L Parker (Chair), C Chikandamina (Vice-Chair) and A S Jhawar.

**In Attendance:** D Knibbs (Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support), P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)) and D Thomas-White (Managing Solicitor: Children and Adults).

**Apologies:** Councillors E Aston, I Preece, K Tonks, J Urey, S Fikeis and C Morgan.

#### **CYP17 Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **CYP18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **CYP19 Telford & Wrekin Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2024/25**

The Executive Director: Children Services and Public Health and the Chair of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board introduced the item and welcomed John Clements, Independent Scrutineer for the Partnership who presented the key findings of the annual report of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board covering the 2024/25 financial year.

Members heard that the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board was a partnership board responsible for multiagency safeguarding arrangements to protect and safeguard vulnerable children and was funded by Telford & Wrekin Council in equal partnership with the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board and West Mercia Police.

The role of the Independent Scrutineer was to act as a 'critical friend' to the partnership by engaging with senior leaders, practitioners, children and families, reviewing casework, chairing audits and drawing insight from a wide range of evidence sources.

The presentation was structured around four key areas:

- Compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023;

- The day-to-day effectiveness of the partnership;
- Outcomes being achieved for children; and
- Issues for the partnership to consider.

Members were advised that the partnership had strong governance and operational arrangements in place, aligned with the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 statutory guidance. This included a clear leadership structure, an appointed Partnership Chair, agreed priorities informed by consultation with children and young people, a scrutiny plan, and a strong quality assurance framework. Regular multi-agency case audits, learning reviews and rapid responses to emerging issues were highlighted as strengths. The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) undertaken in July 2025 had provided external validation of the partnership's arrangements and impact.

It was reported that positive and constructive working relationships existed across partner agencies at both strategic and practitioner levels. Partners were able to challenge one another appropriately, and subgroups were considered to complement each other effectively. The Partnership Chair and Manager were described as providing strong leadership and coordination. Staff across agencies were reported to be motivated, engaged and committed, and the partnership had responded well to the demands of the July 2025 JTAI inspection.

Members heard that practice across the partnership was largely graduated, proportionate and strengths-based, with a strong focus on working with the whole family. Early help remained central to the local system, with Family Hubs and Family Connect identified as particular strengths. Performance data showed that repeat referrals and repeat child protection plan rates remained below both regional and national averages. Case audit activity had consistently identified good-quality multi-agency practice.

Independent Scrutineer for the Partnership highlighted several areas for further development, including the completion of a comprehensive multi-agency performance dashboard, reviewing the impact of changes to police harm assessment arrangements, increasing senior health leadership engagement within the partnership, and ensuring timely confirmation of funding arrangements (noting that funding had since been confirmed for the following 12 months).

Looking ahead, Members noted the challenges facing the partnership during 2026/27, including the scale of national reform across children's social care, policing and the Integrated Care Board, increasing levels of need among children and families (including SEND, poverty and emotional wellbeing), ongoing financial pressures, and the impact of disproportionate leadership demands falling on the local authority.

Members discussed the role of partners beyond the statutory safeguarding arrangements and engagement with schools, clubs and the voluntary sector. The Independent Scrutineer advised that, in addition to the three statutory

safeguarding partners, the Partnership works closely with a wide range of agencies including education providers, probation and ambulance services.

It was explained that, whilst not all partners attend Board meetings, there were established communication routes through sub-groups and partnership networks to ensure safeguarding information is shared effectively. Members heard that where domestic abuse incidents involved children, information was routinely shared with the local authority and relevant schools to ensure appropriate support can be provided. The Family Hub network and Family Connect were also highlighted as key access points for families seeking support.

Following questions raised on the programme of multi-agency case audits, the Independent Scrutineer explained that audits are undertaken on a planned basis, typically every three months, focusing on thematic areas such as child exploitation and domestic abuse. However, the programme remains flexible to respond to emerging issues. The audit process involves gathering information from partner agencies on a number of cases, analysing both strengths and areas for improvement, and identifying learning to improve practice across the partnership. Officers added that this is complemented by a significant programme of single-agency reviews within children's social care.

In response to questions regarding the discontinuation of the neglect sub-group, Members were advised that this decision followed a review of performance and priorities. It was reported that extensive work had previously been undertaken in relation to neglect and that performance indicators, including repeat referrals and child protection rates where neglect was a feature, had shown sustained improvement.

Members heard that the family safeguarding model and wider partnership approach were contributing to positive outcomes for families. The Partnership had subsequently reviewed the position after a further six months and was satisfied that performance had been maintained. It was emphasised that the Partnership would remain responsive and could revisit this area if required.

Members asked about the extent to which the voices of children and young people are embedded within safeguarding arrangements. Officers outlined a range of engagement activity, including child protection plans, co-production work through Families First for Children initiatives, and targeted engagement with specific groups such as care-experienced young people. It was highlighted that children and young people contribute to the development of policies, materials and practice approaches. Members were also advised that feedback from children was regularly reported back to the Board through established governance arrangements, ensuring that their views inform decision-making across the partnership.

## **CYP20    Work Programme**

The Managing Solicitor: Children and Adults presented the updated work programme.

Members were advised that this was the final meeting of the current municipal year and that the work programme for the next year was in the process of being developed, with a report due to be presented to the Committee in July.

It was noted that outstanding items included the Children and Young People Strategy, a site visit to the SEND Hub and a workshop relating to mental health. Members were reminded that there remained an opportunity to propose further items for inclusion in the work programme and were encouraged to submit suggestions to Democratic Services.

**CYP21     Chair's Update**

The Chair invited Members to put forward any additional topics for future consideration, noting that capacity remained within the work programme.

An update was provided in respect of the proposed SEND Hub visit scheduled for 30 April 2026. Due to limited availability from Members, it was suggested that an alternative date be identified. It was noted that the visit would need to take place during working hours. The Chair confirmed that a revised date would be explored.

The meeting ended at 6.47 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:**            Thursday 9 July 2026