

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 6 January 2022

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)
Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Chris Burden
Cllr Adam Collinge (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Stephanie Haynes
Cllr Jaspreet Jaspal
Cllr Gillian Wildman

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel in attendance via Teams

Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Clare Simm
Cllr Asha Mattu

Co-opted Members (5)

Cyril Randles Church of England Lichfield Board of Education Representative
Wolverhampton Youth Council

In Attendance

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith
Emma Bennett
Brenda Wile

Scrutiny Officer
Executive Director of Families
Deputy Director of Education

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
Cllr Rita Potter, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised it was also being live streamed to the press and public. Cllr Potter advised that she was not expecting any exempt or restricted items on the agenda. A recording of the meeting would be available for viewing on the Council's website at a future date.

2 Meeting procedures to be followed

Cllr Potter explained the protocol to be followed during the meeting for asking questions and reminded everyone that microphones should be muted and cameras off unless they have been invited to speak.

3 Apologies

There were no apologies recorded for the meeting.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 Local Area Special Education Needs and Disabilities Written Statement of Action

The Chair invited Cllr Michael Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work, to make some introductory remarks about the report.

The Cabinet Member outlined the background to the findings from an earlier inspection in September 2021 by Ofsted and CQC of the local area SEND services and provision in Wolverhampton. The Cabinet Member commented on the work done in response to an earlier inspection of the SEND service provision which identified areas where improvements were required and areas of good practice to implement reforms detailed in the Children and Families Act 2014. The Cabinet Member commented on the range of work done to build on existing good practice and respond to areas where further improvements were needed since the earlier inspection.

The Cabinet Member commented on the findings in the current inspection report and the plans detailed in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) which set out the response to the six areas of significant weakness identified. The Cabinet Member invited the panel to comment on the draft report which will be presented to Cabinet and Council for approval before it is submitted to Ofsted.

The Chair invited Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, to make some introductory remarks about report. The Executive Director commented on the work done in preparation for the inspection and the work done since to draft the WSOA to respond to the weaknesses identified by the inspectors during their visit. The Executive Director reminded the panel that the inspection covered services delivered by different partner agencies who also share responsibility with the Council for implementing the disability and SEND reforms in Wolverhampton.

The Executive Director of Families outlined the key dates before the draft WSOA document is submitted to Ofsted for approval.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the range of performance and information sources from education, health and social care sectors that was shared with the inspectors.

The Executive Director invited Brenda Wile, Deputy Director Education, to give the detailed presentation and to comment on the WSOA.

The Deputy Director Education commented on the '6 focus areas' in the WSOA referenced in Appendix 1 to the main report and the detailed action being taken to address areas of significant weakness.

The Deputy Director gave further details on each of the areas identified in the report, the plans for drafting the WSOA and an update on the draft work plan to address the issues. The Deputy of Director gave an overall assessment of the work being done by the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group to respond to issues detailed in the Appendix 2 to the main report. The document is still in draft and further details will be added.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that the local authority and area clinical commissioning group are jointly responsible for submitting the WSOA to Ofsted by 16 February 2022 for approval. The Deputy Director advised the panel that Ofsted then have 20 days to make comments on the WSOA, which could require further changes to be made to address any issues highlighted. The Deputy Director advised that work detailed in the Appendix 2 to the main report is planned to be completed over the next 18 months.

The Chair invited panel members to comment on the report.

The panel expressed concern that parents and carers needing advice and support are not already aware of how to access support services and suggested a scheme where key information is provided on cards used elsewhere could be helpful in this situation. The panel commented on the importance of good communication and the use of social media sites to help support parents and carers. The Deputy Director commented on the plan to create a dedicated post to address this issue and explained that the holder would be the lead for improving communication and raising awareness about the Local Offer to parents and carers of children and young people with SEND.

The panel queried the source of the funding for the post and expressed concern if SEND resources were going to be used. The Executive Director advised the panel that the post already exists, and the aim of the change is that there would a stronger focus on improving communication with parents and carers.

The panel endorsed the plan to purchase a new IT system to reduce delays in the production of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and to improve the accuracy of information held.

The panel welcomed the report and supported the plans detailed in the draft WSOA.

The panel discussed and agreed to make some changes to some of the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to endorse the approach to co-produce the draft Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to be submitted to Ofsted by the 16 February 2022.

2. The panel feedback on the report as consultees in the development of the WSOA plan be considered in future meetings of Cabinet and Council.
3. The panel agreed to receive progress reports on actions detailed in the WSOA, as appropriate, at future meetings in 2022 and 2023.
4. The panel approved the plan for the oversight of the arrangements for reviewing progress of implementing actions detailed in the WSOA.
5. The panel agreed to note the '6 Focus Areas' identified in the Joint area SEND inspection in Wolverhampton report.