

Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 27 July 2023

Attendance

Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Stephanie Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lovinyer Daley
Cllr Carol Hyatt
Cllr Qaiser Azeem (Chair)
Cllr Sally Green
Cllr Jeszemma Howl
Cllr Lamina Lloyd
Cllr Wendy Dalton

Witness

Cllr Louise Miles

Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills

Co-opted Members

Cyril Randles
Oluwatimilehin James
Cilla Tandoh

Church of England – Diocese of Lichfield
Wolverhampton Youth Council
Wolverhampton Youth Council

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith
Emma Bennett
Laura Collings
Jennifer Rogers

Scrutiny Officer
Executive Director of Families
Head of Policy & Strategy
Principal Social Worker

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Welcome and Introductions**
Cllr Qaiser Azeem, Chair, invited those in attendance to observe a minute's silence to remember Cllr Ian Brookfield, Leader of the Council.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised it was also being live streamed on the Council's website to the press and public.
- 2 Meeting procedures to be followed**
The Chair explained the procedures to be followed for the meeting.
- 3 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:

Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Chris Haynes - Cllr Wendy Dalton substitute
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Jennifer Cockayne
Cllr Jane Francis

Apologies were also received from the following:

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director Social Care
Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education

4 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of the previous meeting (15 March 2023)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 **Education, Skills and Employment Strategy**

The Chair invited Cllr Louise Miles, Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills, to make some introductory comments about the Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030 report.

The Cabinet Member advised the panel that the report was being presented for pre-decision scrutiny before approval by Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the main aspects of the presentation,

- the range of existing schemes and programmes,
- the successes achieved to date,
- the number of collaborative partnerships that the Council is involved in across Wolverhampton,
- an assessment of the different challenges facing the Council in trying to get as many people as possible, particularly young people into work.

The Cabinet Member added that the future strategy will be focused on looking at a more coordinated approach to improving skills, with a particular emphasis on targeting disadvantaged groups and promoting lifelong learning throughout the City.

The Chair invited Laura Collings, Head of Policy and Strategy, to give the presentation.

The Head of Policy and Strategy commented on the links between the draft strategy and the broader objectives as detailed in the Our City: Our Plan and that the aim is to deliver more local people into good jobs and training.

The Head of Policy and Strategy commented on the good progress being made across the City in terms of improving education achievements - 89% of schools in the City are rated as either 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, increasing employment

opportunities in health and social care and investment in first class learning facilities such as the development of the City Learning Quarter.

The Head of Policy and Strategy highlighted the challenges some residents face when trying to access learning and work opportunities, for example, one in 10 local people do not have any formal qualifications. The Head of Policy and Strategy advised that this situation has created two key challenges, the social impact on the on individuals and families which may prevent them getting into higher paid work and the wider economic challenge to the City in creating good quality jobs. The strategy is aimed at working with local partners collectively to improve skill and employment outcomes for local people in this situation which will help them access higher skills job opportunities.

The issue led to the development of the education, skills strategy draft for 2030 and the aim is to create a generational shift, led by the Council with the support of partners with a focus on holistic whole life approach.

The Head of Policy and Strategy advised the panel that the strategy will focus on achieving the following five overarching priorities:

- children have the best start in life,
- high quality education which prepared young people for work,
- post 16 provision which meets the needs of city employers,
- lifelong learning and employment pathways to good quality work
- new employer support.

The Head of Policy and Strategy added that the priorities are supported by three cross cutting principles.

The Head of Policy and Strategy commented that the City is working closely with representatives from regional, city and community partnerships and highlighted the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a key partner which is expected to help take the strategy forward.

The Head of Policy and Strategy asked panel members for their comments, questions, and feedback on the draft strategy.

The Chair reminded panel members that the report was being considered for pre-decision scrutiny and would not be available for call-in after a decision has been made by Cabinet.

A panel queried the sample size of 500 respondents which have been used to develop actions detailed in the strategy and highlighted that only a small number of these responses were from Wolverhampton. A panel member added that the situation in Wolverhampton is not comparable to that of neighbouring authorities and would have liked a more tailored place-based learning and skills improvement strategy based on the local situation.

The Head of Strategy and Policy agreed with the importance of listening to the views of local businesses and agreed to add an indicator to measure progress in this area. The work to engage with representatives when developing the strategy will continue.

The Cabinet Member commented on the reference to the wider survey of Black Country businesses as it matches the WMCA area where a lot of funding for skills

and adult education is managed and it was considered important to reflect this in the draft strategy.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the work being done with businesses in the Black Country, and particularly in Wolverhampton to encourage their staff to take up training and learning opportunities, while acknowledging the desire from businesses to be able to recruit people with the required skills and qualifications. The Cabinet Member added that the plan is to encourage businesses to recruit and train the people needed and to promote the importance of continuing professional development through different initiatives.

A panel member commented on the reference in the document to the strategy being regularly reviewed and refreshed and queried how often this would be done and the process for sharing the review findings.

The Head of Policy and Strategy advised the panel that the strategy document will be refreshed annually and agreed to bring an update on any changes for discussion to a future meeting.

A panel member commented on difficulties experienced when trying to get support as a small business owner to find apprentices and queried the effectiveness of methods used to by Wolverhampton Council to promote the training offer across the City.

The Executive Director of Families accepted the point and commented on role of the Council and other partners in supporting and promoting the apprenticeship offer. The Executive Director commented on the need for change and different types of business support, and this would include support provided by other organisations. The Council has a role in ensuring business stay afloat and that they have access to right employees with required.

The Executive Director of Families agreed to take on the panel comments and advised that will be further work to done to improve the effectiveness of the links with local employers.

A panel commented on the importance on preventing small business failing because of not getting the help and advice needed. The strategy document was welcomed and considered to be very helpful in building on strong foundations of work with the college, Wolverhampton University, and the business sector to improve skills.

A panel member commented on their personal experience of getting poor careers advice due to the focus in schools on supporting pupils considered to be good academically.

The Head of Strategy and Policy commented that this issue of young people getting good careers advice in schools was highlighted as a real challenge during the drafting of the strategy. The complexity of the current careers advice system and the lack of awareness about the different support options available was highlighted as a challenge. The Head of Strategy and Policy commented on the importance of making sure young people get the right advice at key transition points and the work being done to enhance the support offered to young people at aged 18.

The Executive Director of Families commented that the findings from post 16 review have contributed to the development of the draft strategy and the importance of e Council in helping schools, the college and training providers to work together better.

The Executive Director of Families added that the current funding arrangements do not encourage organisations to work together creatively so that young people have better career and education choices.

The Cabinet Member for Jobs and Skills thanked panel members for the very constructive and helpful comments on the draft strategy.

The Cabinet Member commented on plans to monitor the delivery of the goals detailed in the strategy and the indicators used to assess progress, for example, how many students have joined up for various courses, how many jobs have been created this month?

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there is more work to be done to improve career advice support and to better understand the data behind the unemployment figures, for example, there are young people who are recorded as unemployed but who may have caring responsibilities.

A panel member queried the baseline figures related to the priority for children having the best start in life. The Executive Director of Families agreed to provide the specific information requested.

A panel member queried the presentation of data about the level of business activity and the Gross Value Added (GVA) per head rate for levels of productivity did not include the equivalent figures for the national average to provide the context for the comments made in the report.

The Head of Policy and Strategy advised the panel that the GVA rate for Wolverhampton is lower than the national average for productivity and the issue of low skills was the main contributory factor. The implementation of the strategy is expected to improve performance against this indicator.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report and welcomed the comments from the Cabinet Member that a more coordinated and targeted approach towards supporting disadvantaged groups as detailed in the strategy.

A panel member queried the reference to consultation and engagement in the strategy with younger people and wanted details of work being done with older age groups to help them access learning opportunities.

The Head of Policy and Strategy reassured the panel that sessions have been planned to consult with adult learners about the current education offer. This information will be supported by work with employers as there is a recognition about the significant barriers to older people accessing the support needed. The service is working closely with the Adult Education Service to look at addressing these barriers.

The Executive Director of Families added that there are regular monthly meetings with colleagues from the DWP. The meetings provide information on the work being done to engage with older people on Universal Credit. The information will be used to inform the work of the strategy.

A panel member commented on the issue of intergenerational nature of unemployment in some areas and highlighted the financial impact of rules and regulations of the DWP which add to the difficulties experience when people consider job or training opportunities.

A panel member highlighted the costs of childcare and increases in the cost of living as further barriers to people considering possible job opportunities and the need to consider the impact of this.

The Cabinet Member agreed with the comments about the current financial challenges.

The Cabinet Member commented on a positive experience following the visit to Wolves at Work 18-24 offices in Bilston Town Hall and highlighted the range of support to help people seeking to get back into work or training.

The Executive Director of Families acknowledged the issues concerning the lack of suitable childcare locally and nationally and advised the panel that there have been positive conversations between representatives from the DWP and the Council.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the economic challenges and changes in working patterns which require more flexibility since the end of Covid 19. However, the issue for childcare providers is that they want people to commit to book places for the same time every week for long periods, which presents a challenge for people who do not work fixed hours.

The role of Family Hubs and health and childcare professionals in talking to people about the benefits of work and in supporting them to get the skills needed with the help of DWP was highlighted.

A panel member queried the support offered to people who did not want to pursue an academic career as promoted in the strategy. A panel member commented on the importance of celebrating and promoting non-academic skills and learning.

The Cabinet Member reassured the panel about the range of work being done to encourage young people and older people to consider jobs in technical areas such as engineering and construction and that such jobs should be celebrated.

The Head of Strategy and Policy commented on the reference in the strategy to the promotion of technical level courses and apprenticeships and highlighted the learning from the development of the Post 16 offer. The importance of raising awareness of apprenticeships and other career pathways to improving skills and growing the local economy in the future was highlighted.

A panel commented on importance of people learning soft work skills, for example, how to behave in a work environment and the limited opportunity for young people to learn these skills in schools when the focus is on academic study.

The Executive Director of Families welcomed the comments and advised the panel about changes in the offer to schools from the Connexions Service which could help people develop these skills. The Executive Director of Families added that the aim will be to encourage the Connexion Services to work more with schools and widen its role to give more young people opportunities to gain work experience.

There is also the opportunity for other organisations to help build the confidence of young people and provide them with work skills, such as answering the phone.

A panel member queried the reasons for drop off in participation rates for education, training, or employment post 18 compared to the rate for 16 and 17-year-olds and there was concern that the rate is significantly lower than the rest of the Black Country.

The Executive Director of Families commented that a report on school educational performance will be presented to the panel on 31 January 2024 for discussion. The Executive Director of Families added that there have been positive improvements in attainment rates across key stages except at Key Stage 5 level. There has been specific targeted work being done with schools to improve the situation in response to this.

The Executive Director of Families commented that the majority secondary schools do engage with the local authority and the school improvement team. The Executive Director suggested a copy of the education performance report be shared with the panel in advance of the next report in January 2024 to give some context.

A panel member commented on the importance of providing funding for childcare places to support people wanting to attend courses should be raised with Government.

A panel member commented on the focus in the strategy on engaging with large companies and suggested that the Council should also be working with small business owners to encourage and support them to offer work experience opportunities to young people and highlighted the importance of using informal business networks to promote the offer.

A panel member commented on the limited range work experience opportunities for young people interested in a career in arts and humanities and specifically for young people under 16 to apply or support in finding a placement.

The Executive Director of Families agreed to investigate the issue report back to a future meeting. There is a small team in the Council involved in co-ordinating and supporting people wanting work experience opportunities. The issue will be discussed with the team about ideas for supporting small business offering work placement experience.

The members of Wolverhampton Youth Council were asked to contact the Participation Officer if they needed help in finding a work experience placement opportunity within the Council.

The Cabinet Member thanked the panel for the helpful contributions and comments on the draft strategy.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the draft Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030 to be actioned and included in consultation response.

2. The Head of Strategy and Policy to share baseline data on city indicators related to the priority 'Children have the best start in life' with the panel.
3. A copy of the Education Performance in Wolverhampton Schools and Settings 2021-2022 report to be shared with the panel.
4. A refreshed draft of the Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030 strategy to added to the scrutiny panel work programme after 12 months to review progress on delivery against performance measures.

7 **Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023-2024**

The Chair invited Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, to present the report on behalf of Alison Hinds, Deputy Director Social Care.

The Executive Director of Families gave apologies on behalf of the Deputy Director who was not able to attend the meeting.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023 – 2024 report is presented annually to the panel for discussion and comment. The publication of the report is a requirement of Ofsted under the inspection of local authority for children's services framework.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the document is refreshed at the end of the financial year and new draft is published in June 2023 and then shared with Ofsted as part the annual conversation. In addition, there are regular meetings with Ofsted throughout the year to review progress. The report is used to provide the opportunity to reflect on practice, celebrate areas of success and identify areas for improvement.

The Executive Director of Families gave a brief commentary on key findings from the presentation.

The Executive Director of Families commented on key achievements for 2022 - 2023 against the strategic Council priority - Strong families where children can grow up well and achieve their full potential.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the priorities for 2023 - 2024 and advised the panel that the aim was to continue embedding restorative approach into social work practice, to continue the journey of aiming for excellence in social work practice using the quality assurance framework.

The panel were invited to comment on the report and the presentation.

A panel member thanked the presenter for period and queried the support for children who are asylum seekers and details of the numbers of cases. The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the end of March 2023 there were 33 young people in care who were unaccompanied asylum seekers. The previous year the figure was 25 young people.

The Executive Director of Families commented on quality of work done by the Council to support unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Executive Director of

Families outlined the processes followed under the National Transfer Scheme Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children for managing referrals.

The Council has a good relationship with colleagues at the Refugee and Migrant Centre who support the offer to unaccompanied asylum seekers. There is also monthly health and wellbeing panels specifically for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and their needs.

A panel member queried the impact on the service of the reported increase in the number of referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), compared to statistical neighbours at the end March 2023.

The Executive Director of Families commented that referral rates to the MASH have been consistent and there were no specific concerns about the current trend which is much lower when compared to historical figures. The overall view is that case referrals numbers to the MASH are appropriate.

A panel member queried the criteria for not treating a case as a 'repeat referral' and commented on the need to avoid a child or young person having to go through the referral process again.

The Executive Director of Families commented that in some situations a family does not want to engage with the members of the Early Help Team and the case will then be referred to the MASH and recorded as a repeat referral in this situation. The service needs the consent of the family to work with them at the early help level stage.

A panel member queried the reasons for the significant reduction in the number of children and young people on a Child Protection Plan being visited within the agreed timescale reported when compared to numbers for 2021 – 2022. The issue of workforce shortages was suggested as a factor.

The Executive Director of Families agreed that workforce shortages were a factor in the increase of missing children and young people not being visited within the agreed timescale. The Executive Director reassured the panel that in response to the issues extra resources have been added to improve the situation.

In addition, changes have been made to encourage social workers to record visits when completed to keep the records updated. The Executive Director of Families added that the assessment is that there is a higher number of incidents involving a smaller number of children and more work is needed to understand the reasons for this.

A panel member commented on the reference in the report to a greater emphasis on tackling issues within the family and queried the reasons for the much lower levels of engagement by fathers compared to mothers in the programme and wanted details of the work being done to improve this situation.

The Executive Director of Families suggested it might be helpful to have a separate meeting to discuss the issues raised. The Executive Director of Families acknowledged the challenges and commented on the work being done to improve the offer and engage with more fathers. The Executive Director of Families agreed to make enquiries to get more details about the level of involvement of fathers across the different projects in the programme and update the panel.

The Executive Director of Families invited Jenny Rogers, Principal Social Worker, to give further details.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel about the work being done to unlock the potential of family network and that there is a real focus on involving fathers as the tendency has been to focus on engaging with mothers and the maternal family rather than fathers and paternal family. The issue will be looked at in more detail from a social work perspective to help inform further actions to improve the offer to engage fathers.

A panel member asked for further details in the number of children receiving support at the end of March 2023 compared to March 2022 and queried if the figures suggest that the service is supporting fewer children needing more than early help intervention.

The Executive of Director of Families advised the panel that the data shows that overall, the Council is intervening and offering families support at an earlier point rather than intervening to support families on a statutory basis. The Council is working on voluntary basis with more families which is reflected in the data showing an increase in the number of children receiving early help intervention.

A panel member queried plans to provide better support for post 16 students and the work being done to promote the sources of help available. A panel member also queried the support available to young people with SEND wanting to study at sixth form.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the specific targeted support for young people with SEND as they transition out of school.

The Executive Director of Families agreed to share the six-monthly progress report and details about the transition work. The Executive Director of Families outlined examples of the work being done with schools and Wolverhampton University to better meet the young people with SEND, the training of teaching assistants and developing SENCOs (Special Education Needs Coordinators) in the workforce planning.

A panel member welcomed and supported the principle of restorative practice referenced in the report and commented on the benefits of this approach when working with families.

A panel member expressed concern about high rate of school exclusions compared to national figure, while noting lower rate for suspensions. A request was made for more update to date information on the exclusion rates.

A panel member commented on the lack of information about the context for children missing education and details about how the performance of Wolverhampton compares with other areas as the information is not included in the report.

The Executive Director of Families reassured the panel that the Council has increased resources, following an inspection, to better identify and support children missing education (CME). The CME tracking system was replaced by the ILACS in March 2022 to improve the tracking of children and young people.

The Executive Director of Families commented that a report on school exclusions and suspensions was presented to the panel previously and suggested a copy should be shared with new members. The Executive Director of Families commented on the development of the school inclusion framework and that the Council is working closely with schools to prevent exclusions and challenging schools when young people are excluded.

The Executive Director of Families outlined plans to reduce the number of school suspensions and exclusion and advised the panel that a new SEND inclusion strategy is being drafted and suggested it should be presented to a future meeting for pre-decision scrutiny.

A panel member asked for a briefing paper detailing progress against the priorities for 2023 - 2024 in six months. The Executive Director of Families agreed to present the information to a future meeting of the panel.

A panel member welcomed the investment in the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and commented on the need to extend the offer to other areas services across the city. The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the current strengthening family hubs network will become designated as Family Hubs. The funding from DfE was welcomed but there was only limited capital funding to open new hubs in other areas.

A panel member commented on the increase in the number of exploitation cases since 2021. The Executive Director of Families commented that increase could be due to the extra resources which has identified more young people considered to be at risk of exploitation.

The work of the Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub has helped to triangulate softer sources if intelligence to identify and support children and young at risk of exploitation. The Executive Director of Families advised that Wolverhampton has been selected as one of three Government Pathfinders schemes to test out different models for supporting children at risk of exploitation and suggested a report on the programme could be presented to a future meeting of the panel.

A panel member queried the reasons for the reduction in the number of foster carers and asked for details of the strategy to replace them to the levels needed to meet expected demand.

The Executive Director of Families commented that nationally there has been a reduction of number of foster carers because of Covid 19 pandemic where people have reassessed their priorities and at the same there has a high number of people choosing to retire from fostering. The Executive Director of Families commented on the improved performance of the fostering service which has placement stability rates above published figure when compared to regional and national averages. There are also more children being placed internally and an increase in children staying within the extended family network with support rather than going through the mainstream fostering route. The involvement in the Pathfinder programme will also provide increased opportunities to offer flexibility to use family networks in the adoption of children and young people.

A panel member queried the reason for the increase in the number of parents choosing to home educate their children and if this was due to the lack of support

offered or the education offer. The Executive Director of Families reassured the panel about the robustness of the arrangements to support families considering home education and to offer support to parents who have made the decision. The Executive Director commented on possible reasons for parents choosing to home educate.

A panel member commented on the increase in the number of children with SEND, emotional and mental health issues and asked for further information on the support available to meet this need. The Executive Director of Families shared the concern about the increase and the issue was discussed at a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The provision of mental health services is an NHS England commissioned service and the issue has been raised with the organisation and the Integrated Care Board locally.

The Executive Director of Families commented that the situation is a national crisis and highlighted the importance of working with partners to respond to the increase in young people needing help, while acknowledging workforce and other challenges.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report and presentation.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report and the achievements for 2022- 2023.
2. The panel supports the priorities for Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation for 2023 – 2024.
3. The Deputy Director Social Care to consider the panel comments on the draft document.
4. The panel to consider the suggestions from the Executive Director of Families for further reports to be added to the work programme.

8 **Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2022 - 2023**

The Chair invited Jennifer Rogers, Principal Social Worker, to present the annual report.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the role covers both children and adults' social workers which aligns with the think family approach. The main remit of the role is the around the recruitment retention social workers, learning and development of social workers quality assurance. The role also links to the priorities in the Our City Our Plan.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that the presentation would focus on the work done in children services in 2022 – 2023 to improve the quality of social work practice.

The Principal Social Worker gave highlights of the work done in the areas listed below over the last 12 months:

- Quality of Practice – Children's Services
- Workforce
- Professional Standards and Practice Development

- Raising the profile of social work and connecting with practice
- Challenging inequality

The Principal Social Worker commented on the key work priorities for 2023 – 2024 highlighting continued work to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers and responding to the challenges detailed in the report. There will be further work to develop quality assurance with a focus on feedback from social workers and triangulating this with information from practice and inspection reports.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the need to build on the good Ofsted inspection report in March 2023 and to continue improving practice and to prepare for the next inspection.

The Principal Social Worker will be co-ordinating the response to the Government consultation on the national independent review of children's social care published in February 2023, focusing on exploring trauma informed approaches to help support the wellbeing of social workers and people with secondary trauma better in supervision sessions.

The panel were invited to comment on the report.

The panel welcomed the plans for increasing the number of social work placements and more training for social workers.

A panel member welcomed the plan to encourage people to consider a career in social worker and to retain existing social workers. The panel discussed the idea of members attending the social work conference event and queried if this would be possible. The Principal Social Worker commented on the plans for the annual joint adults and children's social work conference in November 2023 and agreed that panel members would find the keynote speakers and workshops sessions very helpful.

The Chair suggested that any panel members interested in attending the conference should speak to the scrutiny officer.

A panel member thanked the Principal Social Worker for honesty in talking about the challenges that social workers experience in the report.

A panel member queried the reference in the report to the policy of reimbursing social workers locally for the costs of renewing their annual professional registration with Social Work England and if the offer is open to current social workers and the impact on retention rates. A panel member also queried if there were any conditions attached to the social workers getting this help, for example, would they be expected to remain with the Council for a set period like the situation in the private sector.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that as regards employees applying for social work apprenticeships it would be expected they would stay for at least two years after completion. The Principal Social Worker added that many of the people applying have been working for the Council and was confident they would choose to stay.

The Executive Director of Families endorsed the policy and accepted the challenges in offering the opportunity to people who may decide to leave at the end but was

confident that non-qualified social work employees taking the course would want to stay. The Executive Director of Families highlighted the success of people originally supported to do Social Work qualification some years ago have progressed to become service managers and heads of service in the Council.

The panel congratulated the presenter for the report and the efforts to retain social work talent and the holistic approach to considering the needs of the workforce.

A panel member offered to meet separately with the Principal Social Worker to share experiences of developing a retention plan which has been piloted in NHS Trusts and ICB. The Principal Social Worker welcomed the offer and agreed to arrange a meeting.

Resolved:

1. The Principal Social Worker to note the comments of the panel on the draft report.
2. The panel endorse the work of the Principal Social Worker and approve the priorities proposed for 2023 – 2024.
3. The panel members to contact the Scrutiny Officer if they would like to attend the joint annual adults and children's social work conference in November 2023.

9

Children and Young People - Draft Scrutiny Work Programme

The Chair invited Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present the report.

The Scrutiny Officer outlined the draft agenda for future meetings of the panel.

The draft work programme would be updated to take account of the recommendations arising from the reports presented to the panel.

The panel were invited to comment on the draft work programme and to suggest further topics they would like further information on. The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that Wolverhampton Youth Council have been asked to submit topics to panel work programme.

A panel member was concerned about the number of the agenda items for the next meeting of the panel in October 2023. The panel discussed with the Executive Director of Families the timing and content of agenda items. The panel suggested the issue should be discussed further at the agenda planning meeting. The panel supported the idea of adding a further date to the panel work programme if needed to help ensure there is time to give the topics due consideration.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note report.
2. The Scrutiny Officer to note the comments of the panel about the panel work programme.

The panel wanted to formally record their thanks and appreciation to the Executive Director of Families on all the work done and leadership of the service during her tenure, with such integrity and honesty. The panel congratulated the Executive

Director of her successful appointment as Chief Executive of Walsall Council in July 2023.