

# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

## Minutes - 6 September 2017

### Attendance

#### Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)  
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Daniel Warren  
Cllr Lynne Moran  
Cllr Mak Singh  
Cllr Jonathan Yardley  
Cllr Zee Russell  
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal

#### Co-opted Members (5)

Cyril Randles  
John Dovey  
Mrs Rosalie Watkins  
Brandi Thompson Wolverhampton Youth Council  
Syed Naqvi Wolverhampton Youth Council

#### Employees

Emma Bennett (Employee)  
Philippa Salmon (Employee)  
Emma Bennett (Employee)  
Alex Jones (Employee)  
Earl Piggott-Smith (Employee)

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*      *Title*

- 1      **Apologies**  
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:  
  
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
- 2      **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest recorded.

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (14 June 2017)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 6 – Draft People Directorate Commissioning Strategy

The Scrutiny Officer advised that, further to the panel discussion, Sarah Smith, Head of Strategic Commissioning, had received the Panel's comments and was working on redrafting the strategy. The timeline was to be agreed by Cabinet in November and would be circulated to the Panel for information. Emma Bennet, Director of Children's Services, confirmed that the redraft would consider the Panel's previous comments.

5 **Children and Young People Improvement Plan - Quarter 1**

The Director of Children's Services stated that the Children and Young People Improvement Plan - Quarter 1 had been originally on the Panel's work programme for their meeting in November. It had been the intention to report to the Panel twice a year with updates on Quarter 2 and Quarter 4. The scheduled dates for Panel meetings did not fit this timeline so it was proposed that the Panel receive the Quarter 1 update at this meeting and a written update on Quarter 2 outside of a formal Panel meeting.

The Improvement Plan was a self-assessment document and the recent Ofsted inspection had provided an opportunity to refresh it. The Plan included the recommendations that had been made by Ofsted as well as priorities identified by the service itself. Key actions had been agreed that would enable the Council to work towards an '[Outstanding](#)' Ofsted judgement. The Director of Children's Services reported that the plan was a living document and would be updated as outcomes developed. The majority of actions had been either completed or were on track to be completed on schedule.

The Director of Children's Services provided the Panel with background to selected recommendations. Recruitment had been ongoing to two child assessment teams to work alongside the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and these teams were now fully staffed. The Looked After Children team had been successful and the Panel queried whether a close working relationship with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) would impact negatively on children or young people who are being looked after by the Council.

The Director stated that the negative stigma of young people supported by OTs needed to be broken and confirmed that the teams did work closely together as there was often an overlap with the children coming from similar backgrounds.

In response to the Panel's questions concerning the data on the workforce, the Director stated that the Council now had a robust recruitment and retention strategy. A new HR role to manage this had been created and an employee had been successfully appointed. The Council was constantly advertising and looking to recruit new staff to the teams. The success rates of recruitment and retention impacted on the rates of agency staff and vacant posts, which in turn impacted on the caseloads of employees in post.

Policies had recently been reviewed and changes had been made to improve the Council's systems. Interviews would now be conducted when an employee left the service to determine the reasons behind the choice to end their contract, to ensure that the service could improve. The service was also no longer waiting for specific periods to interview potential employees to try and ensure that they did not lose candidates in the meantime. The Director confirmed that the Quarter 2 figures would show a drop in these rates.

The Panel requested additional information on the strategies to attract experienced staff to Wolverhampton. The Director stated that factors such as the recent successful Ofsted inspection and reputation would be a draw to the area. There would also be consideration given to factors such as health checks, financial packages, rewards, caseloads and the quality of support and supervision. The service had created the role of 'champions' within teams to encourage the development of expertise and to consult on the development of strategies. The service was also investing in training in restorative practice across all staff.

With regards to the recommendations relating to adoption, the Panel queried whether ethnicity was considered as a factor in potential adoptions, following a recent publicity. The Director confirmed the ethnicity did play a part in the decision-making process, but was not a driving factor. A placement would not fail purely based on ethnicity. The Government's Adoption Reform agenda was centred on removing barriers like these across the country.

Resolved:

1. That the Panel note progress of the quarter one delivery of the Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan.
2. That the Panel agree to receive a written Quarter 2 update on progress against delivery of the Children and Young People Improvement Plan outside of a formal Scrutiny Panel meeting.

At the end of this item, the Youth Council representatives updated the Panel on the current Youth Parliament scheme. Ballot papers were being distributed to young people that asked for views on what topics the Youth Parliament should prioritise going forward. The Youth Council representatives requested that the Councillors promote the scheme in the schools in their wards.

The meeting closed at 18:29.