

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Tuesday 8th February 2022

Chairman:
p Councillor Arun Mummalaneni

p Councillor Ann Briggs
a Councillor Nick Adams-King
p Councillor Prad Bains
p Councillor Christopher Donnelly

a Councillor Juliet Henderson
p Councillor Wayne Irish
a Councillor Adam Jackman
p Councillor Malcolm Wade

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Adams-King, Cllr Jackman & Cllr Henderson. Cllr Pankhurst & Cllr Parker attended as the Conservative deputies.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

13. DEPUTATIONS

No deputations were received.

14. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked if any members wished to share any recent experiences with visiting Hampshire's Children's Homes.

Cllr Briggs recounted a trip to the Children's Home in Havant, noting the positive environment and that young people who had left regular return to visit for meals etc.

The Chairman encouraged members to arrange a visit.

15. COUNTY LINES AND LOCAL DRUGS NETWORKS

The Panel received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of Children's Services efforts to tackle county lines drug trafficking and its associated issues. This included how a higher emphasis is placed on children at risk of being missing, exploited or trafficked (MET) and the role of the Willow team. The District Operational MET meetings were also included.

The Panel were informed of the numerous long term impacts of children who are exploited in these ways and the interventions used for short term and medium disruption. It is often not easy for Children's Services to access environments they need to however, and so a number of other methods have been used such as Health & Safety or Fire regulations. This has allowed other agencies to access places of concern and report on suspicions.

The Panel noted the considerable resource and effort it takes to get to the dealer at the centre of the trafficking. This is compounded by Hampshire being an importing area due to its transport network, university accommodations and affluence. However it also received details on the recent success in this area including the use of 'Gang Injunctions' in Basingstoke.

In response to questions members found that;

- There have been 369 individuals linked to County Lines drug trafficking in Hampshire.
- This is a national issue but Hampshire is in a strong position with tackling it due to the effective methods of identification.
- Referrals are received from a number of agencies including Health, Schools & parents.
- There have been additional resources provided to the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub specifically for this issue.
- There is not thought to be any links between those targeted for exploitation and any specific societal group. It was noted that children already known to Children's Services are thought to be less likely to become involved due to this being a strong protective factor.
- The National Crime Agency has ultimate responsibility for closing down the County Lines Trafficking.

Resolved: That the Children & Families Advisory Panel note the contents of the presentation on County Lines and Local Drug Networks.

16. ANNUAL PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER REPORT

The Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the role and activities of Hampshire's Principal Social Worker. This role was introduced in 2017 and serves to act as a link between frontline social work and senior management to report on their views and experience.

The Panel noted the key objective of this role is to ensure that strategic direction and decision making is informed by the realities of social work practice. There is also an active role in shaping the branch's approach to continuous improvement and service development, including the Hampshire Approach. This role also has the strategic lead for participation, ensuring that strategic priorities are in line with feedback from the children and families that the service work with and for.

The Panel heard how there had been extra focus on staff wellbeing as a result of the pandemic and the various stresses this places on individuals both inside and outside of work. There has also been an ongoing commitment to tackling the structural barriers to equality with the introduction of resilience sessions for newly qualified social workers.

In response to questions members found that;

- There is a robust supervision offer for social workers which cover their case work and the impact on them.
- The greatest challenge for social work continues to be working with families – delivering hard messages in a way which does not damage working relationships. It was also noted that demand continues to increase due to professionals greater awareness of issues and a degree of professional anxiety linked to high profile cases.
- Exit interviews are conducted and the main reasons for moving on are linked to career development and salary.
- The department is aware of social workers with experience in Hampshire spreading the Hampshire methods to other areas.

Resolved: That the Children & Families Advisory Panel is aware of and notes the role and work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker.

17. **ANNUAL INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE UPDATE**

The Panel received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Service.

The Panel heard how the primary role of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan and consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.

The Panel received the detail on the development of the IRO service, including information on caseloads, the profile of the team and how it reflects the identity of the children it is serving.

The Panel noted that 94.1% of Children Looked After Review meetings had been on time compared to 71.8% the previous year and that 98% of children over 4 years of participated in their reviews, an increase from 88.2%. It was noted that these improvements were largely due to the change of working practise required during the pandemic, and the introduction of technological communication.

The Panel received a specific update on the issues identified for development in the previous annual report and the significant progress made against these, alongside the newly recognised areas for development for the year ahead.

Resolved: That the Children & Families Advisory Panel note this report on the work of the Independent Reviewing Service.

18. **JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION FEEDBACK**

The Panel received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the feedback received following the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection. This was a multi-agency pilot inspection with representatives of Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission & Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Services.

Members heard that the inspectorates spent two days in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), interviewing and conducting focus groups with social workers, police officers, health professionals, managers and senior leaders. The inspection was case focused and looked at the experience of the child, triangulating case work across the three agencies.

The presentation listed the large number of positive aspects of the MASH the inspection highlighted and the Panel noted the feedback received for the other agencies involved.

Cllr Chadd expressed her thanks to the whole team for their outstanding efforts, noting how positive it was that the Hampshire method was being used elsewhere.

Resolved: That the Children & Families Advisory Panel note the feedback from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

Chairman, Children & Families
Advisory Panel