

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held as a remote meeting on Tuesday, 9th February, 2021

Chairman:
* Councillor David Keast

* Councillor Pal Hayre
Councillor Martin Boiles
* Councillor Ann Briggs
* Councillor Fran Carpenter
* Councillor Peter Edgar MBE
* Councillor Floss Mitchell

* Councillor Jackie Porter
* Councillor Malcolm Wade

*Present

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

94. 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.

95. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

96. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

97. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements.

98. PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services with an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker (PSW).

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- Exit interviews with social work officers leaving the organisation were always carried out through the workforce development team and the feedback was collated. A six monthly report containing this information was reviewed by the management team.
- New social workers who have transferred to Hampshire from other Local Authorities generally observed how the 'Hampshire approach' was different and refreshing to that which they had experienced previously.
- The role of the PSW linked into Children's Services Departmental Management Team (CSDMT) through the Assistant Director for Children and Families.
- Ensuring the wellbeing of staff, whilst challenging due to different ways of working throughout the pandemic, was of utmost importance. Participating in regional and national networks to share how other Local Authorities were working and to collaborate on best practice enabled the Hampshire team to continue to review and develop their approach.

The Panel congratulated the PSW on the ever evolving role and for establishing innovative and creative practices.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the role and work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker.

99. HAMPSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD 2019/20

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services providing a summary of the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Annual Report 2019-20.

In response to Member's questions, it was confirmed that:

- The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) referred to within section 8 of the report is responsible for reviewing information on all child deaths. Serious child safeguarding cases are reviewed by a separate group, the Learning and Enquiry Group, to determine if a review is appropriate to identify improvements to practice.
- GP and maternity services can refer a family to Children's Services before birth if there was a known history of child abuse or neglect.
- Children's Services provide the majority of funding to the Hampshire Safeguarding Partnership with funding also provided from partner agencies.

- Ongoing initiatives, such as Every Sleep Counts, were regularly revised and refreshed with messaging being circulated widely through GP surgeries, via newsletter, social media, the County Council's website and through the workforce.

The Panel discussed the mental health of care leavers and how they were supported through Children's Services and through CAMHS. It was noted that care leavers were more likely to experience mental health problems.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the annual report of the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Annual Report 2019-20.

100. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services providing the annual update on the work of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) in Hampshire.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- The report covered the period from 1 July 2019 to 31 July 2020 which mirrored the time period that each Local Authority submits their IRS annual update.
- Virtual meetings were proving successful although it had been recognised that not being able to hold physical meetings during the pandemic had meant that interactions were slightly different. A participation survey was due to be circulated in March 2021 to evaluate experiences and to gauge the desire to continue meeting virtually in some capacity once the pandemic had passed.
- The role of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was to review the Local Authority and other partner organisations ensuring that they are fully meeting the child's needs.
- An average IRO caseload was 50-70 cases, working with one child or family on average three times a year. The role was not a close liaison role such as that of a social worker hence the larger average caseload numbers.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Service.

101. UPDATE ON LOCKDOWN 3

The Panel received the presentation of the Director of Children's Services with an update on the activities and ongoing work throughout the third national lockdown.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- Enhanced support was being offered to staff throughout the pandemic although staff absences due to mental health and stress were lower than in the previous year. Members noted that there would likely be a lasting mental health impact both locally and on a national scale once the pandemic had passed.
- The same criminal checks were carried out for volunteers as well as for employees.
- Virtual events and meetings had generally experienced higher attendance particularly from partner organisations who had found it difficult to attend some physical meetings previously.
- Children's Services as a department was fit for the next decade and transforming its practices continuously. Members noted the considerable regulations around children's social care but that the department were striving to develop new and innovative ways of working and improving. Members praised the departments reactive response to the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the content of the presentation.