

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),  
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Joyce, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips and  
Singh

Co-opted Members:

### 85 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mia Rees. Councillor Molik had indicated that she would be slightly late in attending the meeting.

### 86 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

### 87 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 September and 13 October 2021 were approved as a correct record of those meetings.

### 88 : INTERVENTIONS HUB

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities), Deborah Driffield (Director, Children's Services) and Suki Bahara-Garrens (Operational Manager, Wellbeing/Protection and Support) and Matt Osbourne to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey was invited to make a statement in which he outlined the background to the proposals regarding the Interventions Hub and Reviewing Hub.

Members had been provided with a presentation outlining the proposal to realign 'intervention support' elements into one cohesive 'Interventions Hub' Team and a presentation outlining the proposal to enhance capability and resources to help ensure children and families are supported at the right time, in the right place and in the right way.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on what additional services would be provided by the Hubs. Members were advised that there was a difference in regard to the complexity and high risk in cases seen by statutory services in comparison to those families that came through Early Help Hub, particularly in relation to safeguarding.

- Members enquired as to the reasons behind the rise in the number of referrals to the Child Protection Register. Members were advised that the rise in Child Protection figures was reflected in Section 47 enquiries. There has been a continuing rise since the beginning of the pandemic. It is difficult to ascertain the reasons for the rise. The figures demonstrate that more risk is being held within the family home. The intention is to keep families together.
- Members enquired as to whether the early intervention programmes were delivering as much as they could. Members also sought clarification on how children would benefit from the Interventions Hub and what outcomes were expected. Members were advised that there are currently different referral pathways and a lack of consistency in defining work plans for families. The Hub would provide one referral pathway with managers screening referrals and assessment plans. Outcomes would then be examined with families.
- Members were further advised that the Early Help services are non-statutory and do not come under Children's Services. They were introduced to allow families and young people to refer themselves when they identify that they might need support. The intention behind the Interventions Hub is to bring together staff who are already employed in Children's Services and ensure there are more robust, forms of intervention that are time limited and evidence based. It is expected that families will work with interventions specialists on a programme that suits them, and there will be clear outcomes.
- Members were referred to the presentation which describes the intention behind the Interventions Hub. There is the potential for confusion for social workers and families in regard to the range of services available. Consequently it is intended to align access to services in a more coordinated way to ensure referees receive the right service at the right time.
- Members sought clarification on what need had been identified in the review process and how the success of the proposals would be measured. Members discussed the need for more clarity about the pathways available for young people, their means of access and the advantages compared to the current arrangements, and the need for a business plan. Members expressed concern that the presentations had not clarified the identified problems and service shortfalls in current arrangements. Members considered that there was a focus on the proposed solutions without a clear exposition of the need for them or the expected gains in regard to improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Members were advised that robust business cases had been developed previously. Officers were happy to re-present relevant details. The proposals tie in with the Children's Services' strategy of 'shifting the balance' and keeping children at home where it is safe do so and in the best interests of the children. The intention is to bring the various interventions under one line of governance to ensure that children and families receive the services they need in a timely way. It is also expected to facilitate the identification of need and appropriate response, and the measuring of outcomes.

- Members were advised that while there had been a spike in the number of child protection referrals during the pandemic numbers had been reduced recently.
- Members were advised that the intention behind the Reviewing Hub was to have a more robust oversight of the progress children were making and to ensure that the right support was available at the right time. All children allocated within Children's Services would be reviewed regularly with actions recorded and monitored.
- Members sought clarification on whether the proposals would lead to an increase in costs in the short to medium term, and the level of any longer term savings. Members were advised that details were in the original business case and would be shared on request. Members were further advised that it was anticipated that more timely and appropriate interventions would lead to long term savings. Early interventions would reduce the number of children needing to be looked after. More robust reviewing mechanisms would ensure that children were in the right place at the right time.
- Members discussed how it was intended to evaluate the outcomes of the proposed changes and what sort of quantitative data would be gathered. Members were advised that in regard to the Interventions Hub a Distance Travelled tool with a baseline indicator would be used. Results would be collated to provide overall data. In regard to the Reviewing Hub targets and milestones would be set in relation to the number of care plans reviewed.
- Members sought clarification on how pathways would differ under the proposals and what was lacking in the current arrangements. Members were referred to the information in the presentation and were given further details about the various pathways. Members were advised that data had not been collated regarding Distance Travelled and outcomes of the different pathways. There is a lack in capacity for reviewing interventions and inconsistency in supervision and oversight. The intention is to bring staff together into one place to improve management, oversight and the collation of data.
- Members sought clarification in regard to the timescale for recruitment for the new posts. Members were advised that the recruitment process was well underway and shortlisting had been carried out for some posts. The Service Manager posts had been re-advertised and there had been considerable interest. Five applicants had been shortlisted for IRO/CP chair posts. It is anticipated the Grade 8 roles may be harder to fill without a market supplement.
- Members sought information on the reasons for the line management of IROs and child protection chairs being split between 2 service managers and the interrelationship between child protection chairs and IROs. Members were advised that IROs often act as child protection conference chairs. IROs have statutory responsibility and liability whereas child protection chairs do not. It had been decided that having people carry out both roles militated against effective reviewing capability, and so separate teams of IROs and child protection chairs had been set up and had been found to be more effective. It

continues to be useful to have staff members capable of carrying out both functions.

- Members were advised that children on the Child Protection Register were already being screened and their cases reviewed. There was evidence that this has already helped reduce the number of children on the register. The Reviewing Hub would consolidate and formalise these arrangements.

Members expressed their condolences to the friends, family and colleagues of Cyril Paine, a youth worker at St Mellons Youth Club who has sadly passed away.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the way forward.

Finally, Members expressed their condolences to the friends, family and colleagues of Cyril Paine, a youth worker at St Mellons Youth Club who has sadly passed away.

89 : REVIEWING HUB

90 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORT

The Chair invited Alison Jones, Principal Scrutiny Officer to present the Committee Business Report which updates the Committee in relation to any correspondence received; Work Programme Updates and an update on the Scrutiny of the Replacement LDP.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

91 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled at the meeting.

92 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

93 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Thursday 9 December 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

The meeting terminated at 6.00 pm