

## Minute of Meeting

### Education and Children's Services Policy Board

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 20 May 2021	13:00	Teams meeting,

**Present:** Ms Mary Jane Bird, Provost Lorraine Cameron, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor Edward Grady, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Jim Harte, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Karen Kennedy, Councillor Scott Kerr, Councillor John McNaughtan, Councillor Will Mylet, Mr Jack Nellaney, Councillor Jim Paterson, Councillor John Shaw, Mr Ravinder Singh, Councillor Jane Strang

#### Chair

Councillor Paterson, Convener, presided.

#### In Attendance

J Calder, Head of Service (Curriculum and Quality), G McKinlay, Head of Schools, J Trainer, Head of Childcare & Criminal Justice (all Children's Services); G McLachlan, Senior Finance Manager, G Dickie, Partnering & Commissioning Manager, R Devine, E Grey and P Shiach, Senior Democratic Services Officers, D Pole, End User Technician (all Finance & Resources).

#### Also Attending

D Walker and T Durning (Renfrewshire Children's Services Champions Board).

#### Recording of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Board would be recorded and that the recording would be available to watch on the Council's website.

## **Apology**

Councillor Rodden.

## **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Graham declared a non-financial interest in item 6 of the agenda as he was a volunteer with Barnardos and intimated that it was his intention to remain in the meeting and take part in any discussion or voting thereon.

### **1 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report**

There was submitted a joint revenue and capital budget monitoring report by the Directors of Children's Services and Finance & Resources for the period to 5 March 2021.

The report projected a revenue underspend of £0.094 million and a breakeven position in respect capital as at 31 March 2021 for Children's Services. It was noted that for financial year 2020/21 the projected outturn position was split into core and Covid-19 related variances.

#### **DECIDED:**

(a) That the projected revenue outturn position for Children's Services detailed in Table 1 of the report be noted, and that it be further noted that the forecast position was based on best estimates and confirmed government support at this point in time. The service would continue to apply the flexibility within specific grant funding permitted by the Scottish Government in order to achieve a breakeven revenue outturn position; and

(b) That the projected capital outturn position for Children's Services detailed in Table 1 of the report be noted.

### **2 Children's Services Health Safety and Well Being Strategy 2019-2022 Update**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the annual update of the Children's Services Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2019/20 which had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic; and to the 2020/21 Strategy which, both of which were attached as appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

The report intimated that the Council's health and safety strategy placed a responsibility on each service to prepare an annual report evaluating the management of health and safety within the service. Children's Services had a proactive approach to health and safety as evidenced by the attainment of accreditation and certification to BS OHSAS 18001:2007 which measured the suitability and effectiveness of the Service's occupational health and safety management systems. The update demonstrated the Service's commitment to continuous improvement in health and

safety performances and summarised the achievements to March 2021 for Children's Services.

The report referred to the Duty of Candour process which was currently in place.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That the progress of the Children's Services Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019/22 be noted;

(b) That the progress of the Children's Services Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020/21 be noted; and

(c) That the inclusion of Duty of Candour Incidents process in the Children's Services Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019/22 be approved.

**3 Children's Services Service Improvement Plan 2020/21 Outturn Report**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Children's Services Service Improvement Plan 2020/21 outturn report which provided an update on the performance of Children's Services for the 12-month period.

The report intimated that in March 2020 the Service had identified key actions that it aimed to achieve over the following three years. However, given the unprecedented nature of events in 2020/21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these three-year plans had been curtailed and replaced by service delivery plans which covered a single year. The report highlighted the key achievements of 2020/21; progress against performance measures and included details of those actions delayed or cancelled as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and/or the need to refocus service priorities in order to manage the pandemic response.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That the content of the report be noted;

(b) That the achievements of Children's Services during 2020/21 which fell within the remit of this Board be noted; and

(c) That it be noted that an outturn report was presented to the Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board at its meeting held on 18 May 2021 in respect of service areas falling within the remit of that Board.

**4 West Partnership Improvement Collaborative: Interim Improvement Plan**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the West Partnership Improvement Collaborative's Interim Improvement Plan.

The report intimated that the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) was made up of the eight authorities: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and

West Dunbartonshire Councils. The Improvement Plan set out the key areas for collaborative action to bring about improvement across the partnership region and captured those areas where collaboration amongst the partners would be beneficial. It was noted that not all schools or councils would participate in all activities, but the plan set out the RIC's offer based on stakeholder views and as such the plan did not replicate or duplicate the improvement plans of each partner council. The report detailed how the Plan was organised including key areas and an interim action plan.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## 5 **Mid-year Scottish Attainment Challenge Report**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Scottish Attainment Challenge mid-year report.

The report intimated that in 2016 Renfrewshire had become one of nine challenge authorities. As part of the grant requirements a bi-annual report was submitted to the Scottish Government which outlined progress towards the three long-term outcomes of improving learning and teaching; improving health and wellbeing and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The report highlighted the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic including the changes in working practices and routines. However, despite this, the Attainment Challenge continued to build on progress and all workstreams had adapted and continued to deliver quality, evidence-based approaches.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Graham, having previously declared an interest in the following item, remained in the meeting.

## 6 **Scottish Attainment Challenge Impact Report 2015-2020**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Impact Report which covered the five-year period from 2015 to 2020.

As detailed in Minute item 5 above, Renfrewshire became one of nine challenge authorities in 2016 with the overarching aim of closing the poverty-related attainment gap. As part of the overall scrutiny of the programme, the Council in collaboration with Education Scotland produced a five-year report providing detail and evidence to 34 questions and provided qualitative and quantitative answers in respect of how implementation of SAC impacted upon the culture and systems of local authorities to ensure equity for children, young people and families affected by poverty; how SAC had positively impacted upon or contributed to educational outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty; and which lessons had been learned and what were the future priorities for SAC. The report detailed progress made and the next steps for the programme.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

## 7 **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for Education Establishments**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to a mental health and wellbeing policy for education establishments across Renfrewshire to support the work establishments were doing around mental health and wellbeing.

The report intimated that the policy would ensure that all education staff working with children and young people in Renfrewshire were provided with the necessary information and self-evaluation framework to plan for improvement whilst also identifying the effective practice already in place. The policy provided a template and outlined universal and targeted approaches to support the mental health of children and young people as well as signposting them, staff and parents to sources of support. Training opportunities for staff were also highlighted. It was noted that there was a version of the policy for secondary schools and the other for primary/early years establishments.

**DECIDED:** That the content of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for Education Establishments be noted as a helpful digital policy document to support consistency and high quality practice across Renfrewshire educational establishments.

## 8 **SQA Alternative Certification Model**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) alternative certification model.

The report intimated that on 7 October 2020 it was announced that the planned diet of SQA National 5 sessions for 2021 would be cancelled. This was followed by the announcement on 9 December 2020 that the planned diet of SQA Higher and Advanced Higher examinations for 2021 were also to be cancelled. Schools have been asked to take the lead on determining provisional grades based on assessment evidence, something which had never happened before. The revised alternative certificate model (ACM) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher was published in February 2021 and the report intimated that schools were working to ensure the successful implementation of the ACM. Pupil awards would be based solely on their demonstrated attainment subject to: internal centre-level moderation; subject-level moderation, either through local authority or regional improvement collaborative networks; review of summary data by centre senior leaders; and review of summary data by the central education team.

**DECIDED:** That the arrangements for and progress of the implementation of the Alternative Certification Model in Renfrewshire as part of the 2021 certification process be noted.

## 9 **School Holiday Arrangements School Session 2022-2023**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to proposed school holiday arrangements for the school session beginning August 2022.

The report intimated that in line with consultation arrangements three possible

proposals were circulated to staff, parent and pupil councils, teaching and other trades unions for consideration. The school holiday proposal preferred by the majority of consultees was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report with Appendices 2 and 3 showing the holiday patterns less favoured. Appendix 4 provided a summary of consultation responses.

**DECIDED:** That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to set school holiday arrangements for academic year 2022/23 in line with Appendix 1 to the report.

## 10 **Age of Criminal Responsibility Act**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Age of Criminal Responsibility Act which received Royal Assent on 11 June 2019.

The report intimated that the Act had been implemented on an incremental basis, the next stage of which would increase the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from 8 to 12 which aligned with the minimum age of criminal prosecution in Scotland. The target date for implementation was autumn 2021, and would mean that children under 12 would no longer be charged with criminal offences, would no longer be stigmatised by being criminalised at a young age, labelled as an 'offender' or disadvantaged by having convictions for the purposes of disclosure which could adversely affect them later in life. It was noted that the number of children under the age of 12 so charged in Renfrewshire had been low historically with approximately 20 children being charged each year with criminal offences. It was noted that staff training and multi-agency professional guidance would be undertaken to support the change in legislation and practise.

**DECIDED:**

(a) That it be noted that the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 received Royal Assent on 11 June 2019;

(b) That it be noted that since 29 November 2019 children under the age of 12 could no longer be referred to a children's hearing on offence grounds;

(c) That it be noted that the age of criminal responsibility would increase from 8 to 12 in the autumn of 2021; and

(d) That it be noted that multi-agency professional guidance and training would be provided to assist staff in discharging the change in practise.

## 11 **The National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Project**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Project which had been established to develop a new approach to the joint investigative interviewing of children in Scotland. A JII was undertaken by a police officer and a social worker when it was suspected that a child had been subject to some form of abuse.

The report intimated that the aims of the new approach were to improve the quality of experience of child victims and witnesses, minimise re-traumatisation and improve the quality of evidence gathered to prevent the need for these children to have to give

evidence in person as part of a court process. The new approach was called the Scottish Child Interview Model, the pilot phase of which had begun in 2019 involving six local authorities and three police divisions with two further pilot sites commencing in 2020/21 involving another two local authorities. The first pilots were now live with the two final pilot sites expected to go live later this year. Renfrewshire Council was participating in the North Strathclyde Pilot together with East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils, Police Divisions G and K, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Paisley, Glasgow Dunbartonshire and Greenock Sheriff Courts, and North Strathclyde Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. Children 1st was also a partner.

**DECIDED:**

- (a) That Renfrewshire's involvement in the North Strathclyde Pilot be noted; and
- (b) That it be noted that a further report on implications for policy and practice in Renfrewshire would be submitted to this Board once the pilot had concluded.

**12 Keeping Brother and Sisters Together**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the issue of children who were accommodated by local authorities being placed in separate placements from their siblings which had been identified by the Independent Care Review as an area which required attention.

The report intimated that the Renfrewshire Children's Champions Board had carried out a survey to obtain the views of care-experienced young people in Renfrewshire and had produced the report "Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together" which was attached as appendix 1 to the report, and had developed a policy for Renfrewshire, appendix 2 to the report, which contained the pledge "When children come into care Renfrewshire will place brothers and sisters together". However, the report recognised that there would be times when brothers and sisters wouldn't be placed together and this was reflected in the policy.

**DECIDED:**

- (a) That the leadership of the Children's Champions Board on the production of their report "Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together" be acknowledged; and
- (b) That the policy on keeping brothers and sisters together which had been developed on a coproduction basis by the Children's Champions Board and Children's Services be approved.