

Minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 23 November 2023

Present: Bob Spencer (Chair)

Attendance	
Gill Burnett-Faulkner (Vice-Chair (Overview))	Kath Perry, MBE Paul Snape (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))
Janet Eagland	Mike Wilcox
Ann Edgeller	Conor Wileman
Johnny McMahon	
Gillian Pardesi	

Also in attendance: Paul Northcott, Mark Sutton and Victoria Wilson

Part One

1. Declarations of Interest

There were none on this occasion.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023

That the minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 October 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Family Hubs in Staffordshire

[Natasha Moody, Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Partnerships, Sarah Edgerton, Family Hub Operational Lead, and Debbie Nash, Cannock Family Hub Manager, in attendance for this item.]

The Scrutiny Committee heard from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and considered a presentation outlining developments within the Family Hub initiative.

The Family Hub model had evolved in Staffordshire and Members considered details of progress made to date regarding this model and the support it provided to families with children 0-19 (25 for those with SEND), including current staffing structures and the integration of priorities with the Early Help Strategy.

Whilst Staffordshire had not been one of the 75 local authorities allocated funding for the Family Hubs, they remained committed to delivering

integrated services and support through a local Family Hub approach. In March 2022, Ofsted, The Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), announced the restart of their programme of Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs). Family Hubs will contribute to the inspection under this framework, particularly regarding the integrated Early Help Offer.

The Committee heard that since their last report on this topic a diverse workforce had been recruited within the Family Hubs, with a skill set that matched all aspects of the core delivery model. Governance structures had been aligned to contribute to those of the Health and Wellbeing Board, particularly around the Early Years Advisory Board and central Early Help Partnership Board. Eight multidisciplinary Family Improvement Boards had been established. These provided challenge, scrutiny and direction in each district to support priority achievement.

A consultation had been undertaken to rebrand the Children's Centres as Family Hubs, including Basin Lane (Tamworth) and Faraday Road (Stafford) in the network of Children's Centre assets. The Early Help Strategy had been launched in each district. A performance management framework was being developed to capture how success would be measured. A core virtual help service offer was also being produced through Staffordshire Connects and the County Council's website to enable ease of accessibility.

Within Staffordshire's Early Help Delivery Plan six "Priority Pillars" had been established, these being: access; family voice and experience; leadership and governance; communities; workforce development; and, data and delivering outcomes. Detail on work within each of these priority areas was shared with the Committee. This included:

- a) work with Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) towards a Staffordshire Co-production Promise and agreed way of working around hearing the voice of the family and the family experience. This was launched in October 2023 and Members were urged to become advocates for this and to pledge their support;
- b) development and publication of the first virtual Bump to Toddler Pathway;
- c) the first version of the Family Hub logo/brand created and shared for feedback.

In the next twelve months it was anticipated that:

- a) the one brand for Staffordshire's Family Hubs would be used by the wider Family Hub Network and be recognised by families;
- b) there would be one referral form to access Staffordshire County Council Services with a view to expand on this for the wider partnership;

- c) a multi-agency triage in place within each of the eight districts;
- d) Family Hub Quality Standards in place that partners would sign up to, becoming part of the wider minimum offer for Family Hubs;
- e) a multi-agency workforce development offer for partner access;
- f) a comprehensive, easy access local offer that had been co-produced;
- g) a performance framework in each district and for the county that helped to evidence the effectiveness of work undertaken.

Members requested details of Family Hub locations and emphasised the importance of accessibility. They were pleased to note that they were most often located in areas of highest deprivation and with accessibility being a key consideration. The wider Family Hub Network was also used bringing opportunities for greater community access.

The Committee acknowledged the hugely ambitious nature of this project, congratulating the Cabinet Member and Officers on developments to date. The significant impact of effective triage was highlighted by Members, having concern over the potential impact on the initiative if this process was not accurate, and seeking reassurance around the process, training and expertise of those involved. There was a need to consider the triage process from a whole family perspective, bringing together learning from the Early Years Team, the MACE Panel and Vulnerability Hubs. The success of the SEND Inclusion Hub model had influenced this approach. Initially the new triage process would begin in Stafford, with learning from this supporting the process roll out across the county.

The Committee were pleased to note that communication was effective and partner attendance and engagement at meetings was excellent. They welcomed the work to overcome fragmentation of systems and services. The extent of the task was not underestimated, however the success of this approach helped all partners and the current strength of relationships between partners was excellent.

Whilst acknowledging the successful work to date, Members asked whether there had been any of areas of delay or concern with the process and were informed that co-production had taken longer than initially expected. There was also a need to ensure that the essential early years 0-5 work was not watered down within the 0-19 Family Hub agenda. Members heard of the proactive work with the Family Identification Operation (FIDO) system which helped to identify those families likely to need support at the very earliest point, enabling proactive early help. This system could also be used to help identify patterns and trends within an area and therefore enable targeting of resources.

Members discussed the differences in the work of the Early Years Forum and the Family Improvement Boards. They heard that performance data

would help identify priorities to drive future improvement. Managing expectations of what Staffordshire County Council delivered was also a part of this work.

Resolved: That,

- a) the emerging Family Hub model be supported;
- b) Officers and the Cabinet Member be congratulated on the progress to date;
- c) Members become advocates and pledge their support for the Staffordshire Co-Production Promise;
- d) details of: the Bump to Toddler Pathway; the Risk register; and the location of the Family Hubs forwarded to the Committee; and
- e) progress against the performance framework be shared with the Committee at either 6 or 12 months (at the discretion of the Chairman in consultation with the Cabinet Members).

4. Trading Standards including Vaping Safeguarding Concerns

[Catherine Mann, Interim Assistant Director for Culture, Rural and Safer Communities and Trish Caldwell, County Commissioner for Regulatory Services and Community Safety in attendance for this item]

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture introduced a presentation on the work of Trading Standards, explaining the varied nature of their work. Specific issues being considered at this meeting were around their work safeguarding vulnerable adults and safeguarding concerns of vaping when targeted at children.

Vulnerable adults were targeted through a range of scams, with the impact of these being much broader than financial loss, effecting health, wellbeing, family, loss of confidence and increased anxiety. Scams were any uninvited contact and could be via letter, telephone, cybercrime, and doorstep crimes. One in four of those who fell victim to a scam were likely to be repeat victims and studies showed that victims' names were shared with other scammers. Older scam victims were shown to be 2.4 times more likely to move to assisted or supported living arrangements as a result.

Only between 10-20% of incidents were reported according to the Crime Survey. In the first 5 months of 2021, 36 million people had been targeted by a scam, with those over 55 most likely to be targeted via the telephone.

The City London Police managed Action Fraud, which was the Government funded body responsible for handling reports of fraud nationally. Action Fraud figures reported 342,000 scams in the last 13 months with £2billion

worth of losses. The average age of victims had been 75 years. In the same period to October 2023 Staffordshire Action Fraud data showed 5910 incidents of fraud or cybercrime, resulting in approximately £20 million lost.

Local Trading Standards dealt with criminal activity and calculated that the amount they saved for Staffordshire consumers from scam frauds was £4.7 million. Members were urged to sign up to become scam champions to support this work.

Part of Trading Standards work to support vulnerable adults was through the installation of call blockers, which blocked recorded telephone messages and any numbers that were not pre-identified. Evidence showed that they were successful in blocking up to 95% of nuisance calls. Referrals for these products were made by GPs, voluntary agencies, social care and other partners. Trading Standards installed the blockers on a free loan basis. 208 call blocker installations had been made so far, with an estimated potential £118,000 fraud prevention as a result. Members heard details of a case study which highlighted the incredibly positive impact a call blocker installation could have.

Members asked how prevention work against scams could more effectively be shared. Partner organisations and community groups such as neighbourhood watch schemes should already be aware of this work. The Friends against scams initiative, becoming a scam Champion or scam Marshall, were all ways for individuals to highlight the issue in their locality. Links to a website detailing these initiatives, which also included helpful information around avoiding and identifying scams, could be found on the County Council website.

With regard to vaping the Committee heard that Trading Standards used intelligence to prioritise their work, targeting illicit tobacco products including counterfeiting. Members heard there were clear links to organised crime gangs and Trading Standards worked closely with the Police and HMRC on these issues, including non-compliance and selling to children.

Where an individual was trying to stop smoking, vaping was an effective tool. However, for individuals who had never smoked, and particularly for children, vaping was dangerous, resulting from their nicotine content and other unknown potential long-term impacts. The number of children using vapes had tripled in last 3 years and evidence showed that 20% of children had tried vaping in 2023.

Encouraging children to use a product designed for adults was unacceptable. There had been an increase in the number of products that

were clearly designed to attract children through their colour, flavour and use of language.

It was important to have a strong enforcement approach and Members heard that in 2022-23 National Trading Standards evidenced that 27% of 1000 test purchases resulted in illegal sales. Within Staffordshire, of 76 test purchases there had been a 9% failure where vaping illicit products were sold to children.

In Staffordshire 52000 illicit cigarettes had been seized to date, with a value of almost £50,000. 115,000 illicit vapes had also been seized this year to date. The impact of seized products on a premises was significant in lost sales.

The Government had made £3million investment to National Trading Standards to manage this issue. The Government investment in enforcement funding would go to the Border Force & HMRC, however some of this funding may indirectly support work within Staffordshire through joint projects with HMRC. New track and trace systems run by HMRC were being introduced and these would enable local trading standards to report concerns through an app where illicit vapes and tobacco were found. HMRC then take enforcement action, which could include the loss of a shops licence to sell tobacco products. Once operational this will provide an alternative enforcement route for trading standards teams.

Members queried why shops remained open where offences had taken place. In some instances, court delays created difficulties. Work was also being explored with district and borough councils on closure orders for persistent offenders.

A confidential hotline existed where concerns around non-compliance could be reported. Members asked how this resource could be made more widely known. Work was ongoing to improve this, including through local libraries.

Members asked whether work was undertaken to target the suppliers of these illicit products. This work was undertaken and led by the Police at a local and regional level. Once the level of the criminality was identified, the investigation would be undertaken by HMRC and/or the Police as appropriate.

Members asked for further enforcement data on the work of Trading Standards, including per year the:

- a) number of test purchases
- b) number of enforcements
- c) number of prosecutions

d) the percentage of successful prosecutions

Members also queried whether the enforcement policy on the County's website was current. The policy would be checked and updated if necessary. The requested enforcement data was available and could be forwarded to Members after the meeting.

The Committee raised concerns over vaping shops being positioned near schools and colleges. Planning legislation allowed for constraints to be placed on fast food premises and Members felt this approach should be mirrored for premises selling vapes. The Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Integrated Care suggested that district and borough planning considerations could address this through their Health in all Policies, embedding these restrictions in their local plans. The Committee suggested that a letter should be sent to all planning committee chairs in Staffordshire highlighting the impact of vaping and seeking their support for these restrictions. They further suggested that the letter should be sent jointly from the Chairman and the Portfolio Holder.

Resolved: That the work of Staffordshire Trading Standards be supported and that:

- a) enforcement data for Staffordshire Trading Standards be forwarded to the Committee;
- b) the Chairman and Portfolio Holder write to the chairs of the eight district and borough planning committees raising the issue of vaping, and seeking their consideration to include planning restrictions through their Health in all Policies to prevent Vaping premises being positioned near schools and colleges; and
- c) members consider becoming scam champions.

5. Work Programme

Two pre-decision scrutiny items had been requested for inclusion on 4 January 2024 meeting agenda:

- The Family Help Pilot, and
- Provision of Services for Children and Young People

As a consequence, the MASH Children's One Front Door item had been moved back to the February meeting.

Following the informal meeting with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners in October the Committee's work on Right Care Right Person had included gathering information from those local authorities within the Humberside Policing area, looking at how this initiative worked from a local authority perspective. Detail had already been shared with Members from East Riding Council and the Chairman was contacting Paul Johnson, the Clinical Director for the Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust, as the contact for Hull Council. It was anticipated that a report

summarising this work would come to the Committee in the New Year.

The Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee `s Social Care Assurance Working Group would be meeting on 4 December looking at ensuring safety within the adult social care system. The Chairman had been invited to attend this meeting but was unavailable. Mrs Edgeller agreed to represent the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee in his absence.

Members requested an additional item to their work programme on the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of Children`s Services as soon as this was available.

Members also requested a further report on developments with the Family Hub Programme. The Chairman agreed to undertake discussions with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People on the most appropriate timing for this, possibly in 6 or 12 months.

Resolved: That the amendments to the work programme be agreed.

Chair