

Title of report: Families Commission

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 26 September 2023

Report by: Service director, improvement

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To update the Scrutiny Committee on the Families Commission report.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The update on the Families Commission be considered; and**
- b) The committee determine any recommendations it wishes to make to relevant bodies to secure further improvement in safeguarding children and young people in Herefordshire.**

Alternative options

1. The committee could not consider the Families Commission report. This is not recommended as the Commission raised a number of concerns following their meetings with families.

Key considerations

2. Herefordshire Council Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 and found to be inadequate across each area of the inspection framework. The inspection report was published on 21 September and a Statutory Notice was issued by the Department for Education.
3. As part of the statutory notice, a Children's Commissioner was appointed to review the Council's capacity and capability to improve services within a reasonable timeframe. The Commissioner's report was published on 1 March 2023 and included several recommendations including the need for the Council to resolve, as far as is possible, all outstanding historic complaints
4. Whilst the review was being undertaken from September to December 2023, they became aware of a number of families with longstanding concerns about their experience of Children's Services in Herefordshire, some from several years ago and some much more recent. Many had complained and also raised questions at public Council meetings but families continued to feel that their views were not listened to or responded to.
5. As a result of these longstanding concerns, an independent families commission was agreed and a number of meetings were held. Details of the arrangements for the commission and the findings are attached at appendix 1.
6. The committee are requested to consider the findings of the commission as set out in appendix 1.

Community impact

7. The families commission was set up as a result of the recommendation of the children's commissioner and the improvement notice. Feedback from the commission which inform improvement in children's services, which has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
8. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to 'strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together'. Specifically, the council aims to:
 - a. Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
 - b. Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
 - c. Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people. Set out any considerations relating to community impact including contribution made to corporate plan / health and wellbeing strategy or other local or national strategies or policies

Environmental Impact

9. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

10. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
11. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Whilst this is an update to the scrutiny committees and will in itself have minimal equalities impacts, consideration has been made in the consideration of Executive decisions and the Executive Responses provided by the Cabinet.

Resource implications

12. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report which is for information and discussion.

Legal implications

13. This section is to be completed in its entirety by the legal services team.

Risk management

14. There are no specific risks directly associated with activity referred to in this report. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Children's Services each maintain their own risk registers.

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Consultees

15. There has been no public consultation on the report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 The arrangements and findings of the Families Commission.

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

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Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.