

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of this Committee held on  
31 January 2022

**(Present) Councillor T Long (Chair)**  
**Councillors Greaves, McDonnell, Mussell, Osundeko, Preston and Sweeney**

**(Also Present) Miss A Kirman (Parent Governor – Primary)**  
**Councillor Charlton (Portfolio Holder, Children and Young People)**

**(Not Present) Councillors Barton-Ainsworth, A Johnson and Sims**  
**Mr Williams (Roman Catholic Church Representative)**  
**Mr D Thorpe (Church of England Representative)**  
**Mrs P Lawson (Parent Governor – Secondary)**

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### **28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sims, Mr Thorpe and Mrs Lawson.

### **29 MINUTES**

\* **Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021, be approved and signed.**

### **30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of interest from Members were made.

### **31 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP**

No Declarations of party whip were made.

### **32 SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CARERS**

The Chief Executive of St Helens Carers Centre, and the Service Manager Vulnerable Adults Integrated Commissioning, were invited to attend the meeting to provide a report on the support available for young carers within the borough, particularly in respect of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact.

As of 1st November 2021, the St Helens Carers Centre actively supported 576 young carers. The Council commissions an all-age Carers Services, which includes Young Carers. The current service providers were St Helens Carers Centre and St Helens Young Carers Centre. The service identifies, assesses, and supports young carers including the provision of respite breaks and individual breaks when appropriate. They also organise training and awareness raising within all secondary and several primary schools within the borough.

The Carers Centre had established excellent working relationships with many of the secondary schools, with many schools having a member of staff dedicated to being their 'Young Carers Champion'. Some schools were better than others in respect to reaching out to the Carers Centre when they were worried about a Young Carer registered with the

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service eg. poor school attendance. In these cases, the Carers Centre worked closely with schools to put the right support in place.

The Carers Centre had built up strong relationships with many primary schools; however, they recognised there was more work needed in this particular area. The Carers Centre had recently sent out an E-Bulletin to both primary and secondary schools so that they were fully aware of the service delivery, detailing their contact details and referral process should they need to make contact with them.

As a service, the Carers Centre also send regular reports to schools informing them of the Young Carers in their school who were registered with the service (providing there is parental consent). This enabled schools to see if their Young Carers were accessing the activities programme and made them fully aware of their role so that they could provide extra support (if needed). Some schools had now started to return information such as school attendance for the Young Carers they had in their school which helped them in prioritising their support and they receive referrals into the service from schools on a regular basis.

It was queried who is the lead officer who has overall responsibility for the wellbeing of the children who are found to live in circumstances of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and chaotic lifestyles and struggle with their own mental health due to this. It was also questioned whether reassurance could be given that children found to be in inappropriate circumstance are not left in those situations.

It was confirmed that there is a Head of Service at the Young Carers Centre who would take that responsibility in their organisation. In terms of the statutory responsibility within the Council that would ultimately be the Assistant Director of Children's Services. It was also confirmed that children found to be in circumstances which were inappropriate or where there were concerns for the child's wellbeing then those children are never left in those circumstances and safeguarding referrals are made.

It was questioned whether in terms of training and awareness, whether there was a target number of schools hoped to achieve the Young Carers in School Award and what action could be taken to engage more schools.

It was confirmed that initially secondary schools were targeted for this initiative and there were 4 who currently had different levels of the award – 4 were accredited and the others were working towards the award. Primary schools weren't targeted initially for the award process as this wasn't the priority in terms of resources. Schools weren't obliged to take part in this kind of award but funding has just been granted for Young Carers Action Day and young carers themselves will be running a training day and all schools will be invited to send a representative to the training.

\* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the report be noted;**
- (2) a date be arranged for Members of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee to visit the Carers Centre;**
- (3) an update on the progress of the Young Carers in School Award and the Champions initiative be brought to a future meeting of the CYPS Committee;**

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- (4) **the Scrutiny Support Officer to gather information about the Young Carers in School Award and circulate this to Members and Headteachers for them to raise at the relevant forums.**

### 33 **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES SPOTLIGHT REVIEW REPORT**

Members were presented with the Spotlight Review Report which was held in December 2021 to review the Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Services in the borough commissioned by NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

At the spotlight review, Members of the spotlight review group (the Group) received a presentation led by the Senior Transformation & Commissioning Manager (Children and Young People's Mental Health) for NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The presentation was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

A presentation was also shared by the Council's Interim Public Health Specialist, which was attached as Appendix 3. The second presentation detailed how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes, as well as the rising numbers of school children with social, emotional and mental health needs, which had been coupled with a reduction in safeguarding referrals with children being out of school exposing some to an increased level of potential harm. The presentation further updated the Group on recent progress and developments including the immediate action taken, as well as the longer-term strategic plan.

Following both presentations, the Group welcomed the comprehensive range of children's mental health and wellbeing support in the borough, commenting that in their opinion, partner organisations had risen to the challenges of the unprecedented effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Group expressed concern around the sharp increase in the number of young people suffering from eating disorders, which had a clear impact on mental health and wellbeing. Members commented that this was clear in their work with young people generally, alongside reports that the pandemic had had massive impact on this already growing problem.

Overall, the Group welcomed the improvements made regarding the access to, and provision of, children's mental health and wellbeing services within the Borough. However, the Group wished for this topic to remain on the Committee's work programme, and for a further update be provided to this Committee in the next 12 months, which should include progress on the initiatives discussed, as well as case studies and examples of what had not gone well and lessons learned.

**\* Resolved that:**

- (1) **the CYPS Committee note the comprehensive range of children's mental health and wellbeing support commissioned by St Helens CCG in the borough, and the progress that had been made with partner organisations rising to the challenges of the unprecedented effects of the Covid-19 pandemic;**

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- (2) **Children’s mental health and wellbeing services remain on the CYPS work programme, with an update to be provided to this Committee in the next twelve months; and**
- (3) **the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 be submitted to NHS St Helens CCG for comment and response within the defined timescales.**

### 34 **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS REPORT**

At the beginning of the 2021/22 municipal year, Members of the Children and Young People’s Services (CYPS) Scrutiny Committee were concerned about whether there was a sufficient supply of foster carers within the borough to meet the needs of children and young people that required foster care. During the CYPS Committee’s work programme planning session held in Summer 2021, Members committed to holding a Task Group to explore the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

The Children and Young People’s Services Scrutiny Committee held a Task Group between August to December 2021 into the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers. The Task Group’s Report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The report covered the following:

- Fostering in St Helens;
- Current practice in St Helens;
- Marketing methods;
- Challenges and barriers to recruitment;
- Retention of current Foster Carers; and
- Foster Carers Survey;

The Task Group made 13 recommendations in total with a request for the CYPS Scrutiny Committee to approve the recommendations for submission to Cabinet for a response within the defined timescale.

\* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the CYPS Committee approve the Task Group Report and recommendations as set out in Appendix 1; and**
- (2) **submit the recommendations to Cabinet for response.**

### 35 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Children and Young People’s Services Scrutiny Work Programme was attached to the agenda for consideration by Members. The items scheduled for the next meeting of the Children and Young People’s Services Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 21 March 2022 were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

\* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the report be noted; and**

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- (2) the items for the next scheduled meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee be agreed.**

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