

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD**  
**20/11/2024 at 6.00 pm**



**Present:** Councillor Hobin (Chair)  
Councillors Adams, Z Ali, Aslam, Ball, Bishop, Hughes, Malik  
(Substitute), McLaren and Moores (Vice-Chair)

Also in Attendance:

Julie Daniels (Director of Children's Services)  
Matthew Bulmer (Director of Education, Early Years and Skills)  
Anthony Decrop (Assistant Director of Safeguarding)  
Cllr Mushtaq (Cabinet Member)  
Colette Morris (LADO)  
Wendy Nicholls (LADO)  
Leanne Cooper (Assistant Director of Social Work Services)  
Durga Paul (Constitutional Services)

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Shuttleworth and Cllr M Ali (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills).

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for this meeting to consider.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that, the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 be approved as a correct record with an amendment to item 9 agreed.

**Amendment to the following sentences within item 9**

*In response to Members questions concerning the Council funding the secure welfare, it was confirmed that this was a court ordered payment up to £32,000 a week. The Council had no option but to follow the court ordered payment.*

**To be amended to**

*In response to the Council funding the secure welfare provision for a child at a cost of 32k per week, it is important to note that the secure welfare order is a court order. The Local Authority therefore have to commission a secure welfare bed, of which there is limited availability nationally.*

## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT



The Board received the Corporate Performance Report from the Director of Education, Early Years and Skills and the Director of Children's Services. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of corporate performance against agreed service business plan measures for the 2024/25.

Director of Education, Early Years and Skills gave Members an overview of the Performance Measures & Business Plan Report for Education & Early Years. The Board heard of all of the areas where targets were being met or exceeded and about areas where targets were not met. Officers explained that although targets have not been met in some areas such as EHCP review time frame and 3-4 year old funding, these figures still rank high nationally.

Members suggested that some of the figures and percentages provided without targets lacked comparatives for context. Officers explained where the figures place Oldham regionally and nationally and clarified that Oldham are one of the most inclusive boroughs in terms of Primary exclusions and suspensions. They are the second lowest in Greater Manchester for Secondary permanent exclusions and below the national average for Secondary suspensions.

In response to Member queries, Officers explained that EHCP reviews are spaced out throughout the year where possible to avoid backlogs and delays, but Officers try to carry them out at transition points- start and end of the year- so some periods are busier than others.

The Director of Children's Services presented on the Children's Social Care & Early Help Performance Measures. The Board heard briefly about some of the areas where targets were being met and exceeded but focus was on the red and amber areas where targets were not being met. Officers explained that although targets were not met in some areas, improvements had been made. For example, the percentage of Agency Social Workers has reduced significantly since last quarter. The Board heard that additional residential homes were being established which would help work towards reaching targets in relation to placing looked after children. And in terms of a permanence plan being recorded at the second review for looked after children, officers explained that it is difficult to reflect action taken in the figures due to delays in the courts agreeing permanence.

In response to Member queries, officers stated that they were confident that they would reach the target for Agency Social Workers. Oldham has recently recruited 25 Social Worker apprentices and this in addition to the Greater Manchester pledge to cap agency rates make 20% target achievable.

Members raised concerns about the level of consistency that could be achieved for young people with the current number of agency Social Workers in Oldham. Officers reassured them that

agency staff received the same onboarding training as permanent staff. They are subject to regular supervision and monitoring and face the same level of scrutiny and accountability as permanent staff. Agency staff are also required to adhere to standard handover procedures to ensure a smooth transition.

**RESOLVED** that, the Corporate Performance Report was noted by the Scrutiny Board.

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## **LADO ANNUAL REPORT**

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report was delivered to the Scrutiny Board by Oldham's LADO and LADO Manager. The report provided the Board with an overview of the number and types of allegations received in the year 23/24 with detail on specific categories of abuse, source of referrals, and referral outcomes.

The Report indicates that over the years the understanding of the role of the LADO both locally and nationally has increased, and this is reflected in the steady rise of referrals. The significant increase in referrals since 2020 is linked to several factors:

- Several complex cases that have multiple lines of enquiry and have generated multiple referrals.
- An increase in non-recent allegations of abuse.
- In September 2020 the Department for Education included a fourth threshold for referral to LADO within Working Together guidance and KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe In Education). This significantly increased the number of contacts to LADO regarding unsuitability.
- Increase in the number of parents/members of the public reporting concerns directly to Ofsted and or LADO service

Members queried the capacity of LADO to deal with significant rises in referrals. Officers confirmed that a second LADO was appointed last year to provide additional support and allowed the service to continue to respond to referrals in a timely manner.

Members heard that the increase in referrals was due to better awareness of the LADO, but also a result of historic referrals being made due to issues being covered in the news and being brought to light. Members queried whether a breakdown of recent and historic allegations could be provided. Officers explained that they are awaiting a national definition of what exactly what constitutes an allegation being considered 'Historic' and once this has been agreed upon, these figures can be provided.

In response to members questioning, LADO Officers confirmed that contact could be made through various means including phone, email and the website. All contact is logged, even when

there is no further action on a referral, so a record is available in the instance of malicious allegations. In some cases, the referral is logged under an institution rather than an individual so that patterns can be identified.

Members queried what safeguarding training the LADO provide to other agencies. Officers confirmed that whole staff training is provided from a school perspective and additional training is provided to recruiting officers and via other agencies such as Grassroots.

Members noted the annual allegation figures provided in the report, but questioned whether it was possible for a more detailed breakdown to be provided which would include the allegation rating on the 1-5 tier system. Officers explained that this would be difficult to do on an annual basis as cases often span several years, but a 5-10 year breakdown could be provided to capture the additional detail required. LADO officers are to return to a future Scrutiny Board meeting to provide this additional information with analysis over several years.

**RESOLVED** that,

1. the LADO and LADO Manager are to return to a future meeting with additional analysis on data over a larger period.
2. the Scrutiny Board note the LADO Annual Report.

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## **COMPLEX SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

The Scrutiny Board received the Complex Safeguarding Report from the Assistant Director of Childrens Social Work Services. The report outlines the different strands of the work the Complex Safeguarding Hub undertakes, and the outcomes achieved over the period of July 2023 – June 2024.

The Board heard of some of the key achievements of The Complex Safeguarding Hub;

- They have continued to provide training and advice in respect of Child Exploitation to schools and colleges across the borough.
- The effectiveness of the complex safeguarding hub and response to missing children and young people has recently been highlighted and commended in the Ofsted Inspection in May 2024.
- There are 106 crimes currently open and have been 39 arrests in relation to Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Investigations, with the investigations into these crimes ongoing.
- As part of disruption in relation to Exploitation the Complex Safeguarding Police team have issued 36 Child Abduction Warnings.

The Board heard of some of the work being done in protection and prevention and to ensure prosecutions and were provided with some case studies to demonstrate positive outcomes.

The Scrutiny Board heard the Key Priorities of the Complex Safeguarding Hub for 2024/25:

- Continue to take robust and early action to share intelligence and challenge the operations of perpetrators of exploitation ensuring we maximise the use of all agencies and the legal powers available to us to disrupt the behaviours.
- To support the development of more in-depth analysis of local trends and themes to continue to inform and drive targeted service delivery.
- To support the implementation of the adolescent safeguarding framework.
- Implementation of a contextual safeguarding approach – this will include an audit of processes, procedures, and forms to ensure that context is robustly considered and rooted in our practice; as well as practically implementing the approach.
- Strengthen the prevention offer for CSE, CCE and serious youth violence across the partnership.
- Complex and contextual safeguarding to continue to be offered within the OSCB training offer, alongside training continuing to be offered within schools, colleges, faith sector, residential homes and wider partners.
- Quality of return home interviews to be improved, with the implementation of a quality assurance framework around these.

In response to Member queries, Officers confirmed that the Complex Safeguarding Hub work with any young person up to the age of 18 years, or up to the age of 25 years for any young adult currently open to the After Care Service for Oldham.

Members questioned what sort of action would be taken when a young person was willingly staying at known but unsafe address. Officers explained that they have a weekly meeting to discuss situations like this and task and finish groups have been created. Where the young person is high risk, the police will respond. Police will also respond in other cases where reasonable enquiries have been made.

**RESOLVED** that, the Complex Safeguarding Report was noted by the Scrutiny Board.

- 10            **RESOLVED** that, the Key Decision Document be noted.  
**RULE 13 AND 14**  
N/A
- 11            **WORK PROGRAMME**  
**RESOLVED** that, the Work Programme be noted.



The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.08pm.