

Minutes of: HUMAN RESOURCES AND APPEALS PANEL

Date of Meeting: 29 January 2021

Present: Councillor T Rafiq (in the Chair)
Councillors R Caserta and T Holt

Also in attendance: Julian Kramer, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Jane Harrison, Interim Send Children and Young People's Lead
Julie Gallagher, Democratic Services

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence:

HRA.498 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

HRA.499 EDUCATION SERVICES - SEN SERVICE

Jane Harrison, Interim Send Children and Young People's Lead presented a report outlining the proposed changes to the Special Education Needs service in Bury. Following the Children and Families Act (CFA) 2014 local authorities were charged with implementing the SEND reforms, though which new arrangements were required to support children and young people 0-25 years with SEND.

The SEN Service is responsible for undertaking these statutory functions on behalf of the local authority. Bury has seen a year on year increase in demand for statutory EHC (Educational Health and Care) needs assessments and the issuing of EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans). Whilst this increase has also been seen on a national basis, Bury is an outlier in the number of EHCPs issued, and we issue more EHCPs when compared to other local authorities.

Bury SEND was inspected by Ofsted/CQC in June 2017 and received a written statement of action. The quality of EHCPs was one of the issues raised and the local authority needs to ensure that there is sufficient capacity with staff who have the necessary skills. Up until April of this year, the local authority outsourced the writing of EHCPs to an external provider. All EHCPs are now written in house and completed by SEN Caseworkers/Senior Caseworkers.

There is significant pressure on the SEN service and the current composition of the SEN team does not provide capacity where it is needed most. A shift in staff resources is required to strengthen the capacity of SEN Caseworkers and business support functions to enable the service to carry out the statutory functions more efficiently and effectively.

Whilst the proposed restructure will make modest savings at the outset of £3,186, it is predicted that through the increase in SEN Caseworker capacity, savings to the High Needs budget in the longer term will be made through:
Reducing the volume of complaints and First Tier Tribunals.

- Active casework
- de-escalating cases which result in out of borough placements.
- Active casework to enable Annual Reviews of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to focus on the outcomes achieved – ensuring that EHCPs are ceased at the appropriate time.
- Improved systems and decision making, supporting early intervention and the graduated response in schools and settings, thereby reducing the unnecessary over reliance on EHCPs/High Needs funding.

Members discussed the proposals and sort assurance in quality standards, customer satisfaction, casework load, working more effectively as multi disciplinary teams and increased training.

It was agreed:

That the Human Resources and Appeals Panel supports the proposed restructure of the team to enable it to function in a leaner, more efficient and effective way.

COUNCILLOR T RAFIQ
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 10.30 am and ended at 10.55 am)