

**Minutes of:** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date of Meeting:** 30 June 2022

**Present:** Councillor C Boles (in the Chair)  
Councillors A Booth, S Donnelly, U Farooq, N Frith,  
J Lancaster, L McBriar, T Pilkington, J Rydeheard, M Smith and  
M Whitby.  
Helen Chadwick, Trade Union Representative

**Also in attendance:** Councillors R Bernstein, C Birchmore, L Smith and D Berry.  
Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young  
People  
Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for Inclusion and SEND  
Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills

**Public Attendance:** 1 member of the public was present at the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence:** Georgia Murphy, Youth Cabinet Representative and  
Amanda Nellist, Parent Governor (Primary).

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## **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence are listed above.

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Lancaster declared an interest as she is a Member of Bury together

All other declarations remain the same from the last municipal year.

## **3 MINUTES**

It was agreed:

1. The minutes from the meeting held on 17th March 2022 were agreed as a correct record.
2. The minutes from the meeting held on 23rd March 2022 were agreed as a correct record subject to adding Helen Chadwick, Trade Union Representative's attendance.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Lancaster requested she receives a response regarding the Fit and Fed Scheme and Defibrillators as this has been raised four times.

In response Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills advised the fit and fed information has been sent so this will be looked into. However, the defibrillator request is a longer piece of work as the service are working with local schools.

Councillor McBriar asked if the Inclusion Ambassador role has been filled yet, and if not what steps are being taken to fill the role. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised the role is now part of the Youth Participation Team and they are in the process of recruiting. Isobel advised she will report back on where in the process they are.

Councillor Rydeheard stated it was agreed that Jeanette Richards would provide an update to this committee on care leavers and housing. In response Councillor Smith advised that she requested this report went to the Corporate Parenting Board in September.

## **5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There was one member of the public in attendance at the meeting.

Ms Harrison presented the following question to the Committee regarding response times.

I am pleased that steps have taken place to make improvements, but I do have a concern. The improvements that have been communicated to me through parent engagement sessions seem to be gradual, long-term improvements. This is not helpful for families like mine who need better services now and I am sure it is not helpful for yourselves as the workload pressures you must have due to complaints because the services are lacking now. To put this into an example for you, I know there is a new team and new leadership but every reasonable request that has been asked over the past 10 weeks has ended with a complaint as the communication has remained poor. Even with the new team and leadership the support for my family and the out-of-borough school that my son attends has been poor. We have tried to arrange support for an urgent Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) review as there are concerns that my son's needs are not being met and we have not been supported in progressing this. We have left emails and phone messages that have not been actioned over the past ten weeks.

The question is why, with a new team and new leadership in place, why are the services still poor and what should be put in place to support families and schools who are experiencing immediate improvement needs.

In response Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People firstly apologised for the distress caused on her family and thanked her for recognising long term plans are in place. Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for Inclusion and SEND advised the current process is about trying to ensure our staff have the right empathy and attention to detail. He advised the service are currently offering monthly face to face drop-in sessions with Bury2gether that he attends, along with monthly webinars and surgeries. As the engagement is person centred there is a limited number of families who can be worked with in any day and therefore the speed is not as quick as the service would like.

The phone line the service has is covered and phone messages are attended to within the 24-hour deadline. The difficulty we have is sometimes families use workers direct lines and then this is where messages can get lost so we are trying to communicate a message to centralise contact made.

Councillor Boles, Chair asked if Ms Harrison has a supplementary question. In response Ms Harrison asked; I would remind you that I've not had a response

within 10 weeks. Do you think it's appropriate to revisit those time frames and make immediate improvement?

In response Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for Inclusion and SEND advised he is conscious that this meeting is a public forum and offered to meet outside the meeting with Ms Harrison to discuss specific issues and concerns. In addition, Councillor Smith advised, no we don't need to review the timescales, we need to meet them.

In conclusion Councillor Boles, Chair, thanked Ms Harrison for attending as whilst the Committee receive many reports it is also important to have the lived experience of parents and families too.

## 6 MEMBER QUESTION

Notice had been received of 1 question.

The Chair gave an undertaking that the questions and responses would be made available on the Council Web Site, following the meeting.

| Questioner     | Topic                  | Responding |
|----------------|------------------------|------------|
| Cllr Bernstein | Social Worker Casework | Cllr Smith |
| Cllr Birchmore | Achievement Gap        | Cllr Smith |

## 7 OVERVIEW ON SEND GREEN PAPER

Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills provided an overview of the SEND Green Paper. In February, the Government published its Levelling Up White Paper, setting out its ambitions for social and economic reform across the regions.

This was followed on the 28<sup>th</sup> March by a Schools White Paper, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> March by a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Green Paper. Subsequently, the Schools Bill was introduced to Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The Schools Bill sets out the proposed changes to the statutory framework impacting on the role of local authorities, on schools, and on Trusts.

Councillor Pilkington questioned where the extra funding will be prioritised; in response Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for Inclusion and SEND advised the service wants to move to a need's led service rather than a pathway to an Education Health and Care Plan. He stated that we must align what we are doing and need partners to look at how they offer their therapies.

Councillor Rydeheard asked how much investment Bury had received. In response Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills informed the Committee that the Capital investment through Project Safety Valve (PSV) was £3.47 million. In addition, the PSV agreement has 5 aspects which, if met the Department for Education (DfE) have agreed that additional funding. In 2020/2021 £6 million was received in 2021/2022 an additional £4 million was received and 2022/2023 £4 million. There is also additional money for transformation which will be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Whitby questioned if more Teachers need to be recruited to deliver on targets set withing the Green Paper. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised that inclusive education is essential for everyone to thrive. Nationally there is issues

with the recruitment of teachers that are out of our control at a local level but what can be done is to help current teachers understand inclusivity and inclusive education.

Isobel Booler advised the Committee that the Service is doing a launch event in October with offers around the graduated approach to inclusivity.

Councillor Boles, Chair of that Committee outlined that in Green Paper it documented that parents were not clear what to expect from a Local Authority. He asked what we can do to clearly explain the offer a Local Authority can provide. In response Michael Kemp, advised that within the document of a graduated response it provides an outline of what teachers, Schools and parents can expect from a Local Authority. Councillor Smith also advised members that newsletters are now circulated along with meetings and workshops Michael Kemp is running for parents.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor Smith and Isobel Booler be thanked for their update.
2. To continue to update on Project Safety Valve.
3. To continue to update on the development of Special Education Needs and Disabilities in Bury.

## **8            PROGRESS UPDATE ON SERVICE DELIVERY FOR EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS**

Isobel Booler, Director provided an overview of the service deliver for Education, Health and Care Plans. Advising Bury is committed to a programme of transformation and is determined to continue its work on co-production with parents to improve both outcomes and the experiences of children, young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families.

There is a service commitment to improve both the Education Health and Care Plan Assessment Process and the Review Process and to ensure that services work in a person-centred way. Although recent progress has been made regarding statutory compliance there is still much to do to improve the EHCP process starting with advice, though parental experience to the plan process and the review process.

Workforce priorities include continuing recruitment, up skilling, and stabilisation of the EHCP team to reduce reliance on agency staff.

The Chair then opened to questions from the Committee.

Councillor Lancaster questioned if there are any more up to date figures on figure 2g, as these only go up to February 2022. Isobel Booler advised that up-to date data can be circulated following the meeting.

Councillor Lancaster outlined that figure 2.3.8 states primary needs of SEND children in Bury and shows substantial anomalies in Bury to national figures; Councillor Lancaster asked if we as a Local Authority underdiagnose Autism and over diagnose Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Michael Kemp, responded by explaining part of the reason for this is there are different pathways for diagnosis, there are issues on diagnosing Autism as it is a complex process. We are currently reviewing the neurological pathway with the parent community. We have asked Schools to come back as this may be due to the way Schools document a Childs

needs in data form, for instance they may not go back and add the most significant record not just the primary diagnosis.

Councillor Lancaster, referred to the comment on Parents reporting 'gate keeping' services in Bury by third sector provides such as first point and family support services who are commissioned by CAMHS and Early Break; Councillor Lancaster asked when both contracts were last reviewed, when will the next review be, has there been any consultation on if parents find the services necessary and if Bury finds their services are necessary, will the contract go out to tender. In response Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for Inclusion and SEND advised that Commissioning Team in Health are the people who cover this, however Michael Kemp will be doing the contract monitoring with them on these services. 1<sup>st</sup> will take place on the 08<sup>th</sup> of July and then will be moving across to do the rest of them sequentially. Spoke to chair of parent forum who will be part of that contract monitoring going forward as want that lived experience there will be a requirement that reports submitted to us will cover compliments and complaints submitted by parents and carers.

Councillor McBriar referred to document pack page 53, point 2.3.6; he asked if we have Greater Manchester comparative rates to demonstrate Bury having higher rates of EHC Plans in Bury. In addition, there was a request made for the same on page 55 point 3.3.2 and the higher-than-average parental requests. In response Councillor Smith stated that we do not yet hold all comparative data as the deep dive is yet to be done. Michael Kemp advised that the service has began a deep dive audit to look at the theme of requests. He advised he is keen to analyse if those requests go through to an assessment and how to make the form more parent friendly. Michael advised the Committee that we do have access to a comparison site that shows Bury and Rochdale are higher for EHC Plans in the region, this is to be expected because of deprivation indicators.

Councillor Rydeheard requested that in future reports the Greater Manchester figures are included along with national figures for context. A question on Page 50 of the agenda pack (2.3.2) was asked by Councillor Rydeheard; what Bury anticipate the rate of requests for EHC Plans will continue at. In response Isobel Booter advised the previous 12% will increase; this year we are already seeing an increase on the last five months of 45% and the risk register is typically seeing increased demand from the effects of the COVID Pandemic.

A further question was asked regarding page 56, (3.8.1) the complaints dropping is welcome, but the Committee sought assurances that work is taking place to address the decisions and process. In response Councillor Smith advised that complaints about staff attitude have changed for the better so there is a demonstrated culture change with staff.

Helen Chadwick, Trade Union Representative sought assurances on three service areas which appear to lack capacity the impact of which may sometimes need to be picked up in classrooms: Education Psychology, CAMHS and private Nursery Provision. In response Councillor Smith advised that the Council has just commissioned a new service regarding Educational Psychologists to increase the staff. CAMHS we are not the commissioners as Children's Services.

Councillor Boles stated that we are now seeing improvement but asked when will our focus turn to monitoring implementation. Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills assured the committee that this piece of work is being done currently. The work is being completed in co-production with parents and advice with partners.

Councillor Smith questioned; with the 45% increase in care plans and idea to take people centred approach; if you have agency staff, how are they going to build a relationship with families. In response Michael Kemp, advised the permanent staff do face to face work and agency staff do the panel writing.

It was agreed:

1. To thank Councillor Smith, Isobel Booler and Michael Kemp for their update.

## **9 CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People Provided an overview of the report.

The Department for Education reported back:

1. that they had observed good quality of practice.
2. we have a highly engaged, motivated, loyal and committed workforce.
3. they could see improved morale and culture within the department.
4. there was a strengthened and visible leadership team, with staff reporting that they felt well supported.
5. Work is ongoing to strengthen our communication with staff.
6. There is still an over reliance on agency staff which is impacting on the quality of practice and the progression of plans for children and young people.
7. The DfE acknowledged that we need to continue our focus on the recruitment and retention of staff
8. There is further work to do to strengthen partnership working.

The committee then opened to questions:

Councillor Rydeheard sought assurances on the input the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board will have in the LGA Peer review. In response Jeanette Richards confirmed they will collaboratively engage with the groups to hear the child's voice at all stages through the process.

Cllr Whitby questioned the difficulties of recruitment and retention of social workers. In response Jeanette Richards advised the national context it is really challenging, and it is regularly discussed at Greater Manchester level. She informed the Committee this is an issue for Councils rated as outstanding and lower the rating it becomes more challenging. The independent review for Children's Services that has been recently published calls for the Government to influence the market and the Government will respond to the report in Autumn. In addition, local authorities across the Northwest have written to the child's minister for help.

In addition, Jeanette Richards took the opportunity to site the committee on the Ofsted visit that took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June. As an authority judged as inadequate, Ofsted will continue to undertake monitoring visits. They focus of areas of concerns and once they are satisfied, they will close their key line of enquiry on that topic.

The areas that were covered are:

1. The Multi Agency Hub, they reported significant improvements in the team coming together
2. Application of thresholds and decision making; they reported stronger decision making
3. Triaging: they felt more work is needed.
4. Referrals resulting in no further action and repeat referrals; they saw there is more work to do.
5. They looked at concerns out of hours team; they were pleased this had improved
6. Response to abuse concerns; they were pleased with the improvement here

7. The impact of leaders – they saw clear understanding of the vision, standards and practice.

We now wait to receive a letter on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022 which is not a published letter.

Members sought assurances on what we should expect to improve on before the next Ofsted visit. In response Councillor Smith advised improvements are expected

Members questioned why we failed in the areas documented in the report and sought assurances on what is being done to turn this around. In response Jeanette Richards advised that on occasion it was ensuring the right performance information was available; in addition, she informed the Committee that Bury Council is currently out to recruit to a senior role who will have the capacity to identify key issues and trends. A further reason for previous failure was capacity across partners to come together in a timely way this is being managed by understanding daily which key partners are available to meet within the 24-hour time frame.

It was agreed:

1. Jeanette Richards be thanked for her update.

**10 WORK PROGRAMME**

It was agreed this item will be taken outside of the meeting.

**11 URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**COUNCILLOR C BOLES**  
**Chair**

**(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.15 pm)**