

Minutes of: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 22 September 2022

Present: Councillor C Boles (in the Chair)
Councillors D Berry, C Boles, A Booth, U Farooq, N Frith,
J Lancaster, L McBriar, T Pilkington, J Rydeheard and
M Whitby
Helen Chadwick, Union Representative
Georgia Murphy, Youth Representative

Also in attendance: Councillor Bernstein, Conservative Group Leader
Linda Evans, Interim Director of Social Care Practice
Wendy Jackson, Service Lead
Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead (Education Services)
Linda Clegg, Observer
Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services

Public Attendance: Three members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Isobel Booler, Janet Iyseyko and Amanda Nellist.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are noted above.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2022 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor McBriar sought assurances that Michael Kemp and Ms Harrison had met following the last meeting. Councillor Smith confirmed they had.

Councillor McBriar asked for an update on the response timescales from Children's Services. In response Councillor Smith advised progress has been made and statistics have improved. A response will be obtained from Michael Kemp and circulated to members.

Councillor Boles raised that the Social Worker visit has now taken place and members can provide updates under item 7, Social Care Recruitment.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Pages 7 - 8)

There were three members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

Ms Delaney asked that previous questions to the Committee regarding the continuum of care for disabled children and their families and if the 'tell us once' approach exists in Bury. In addition, the question asked to the Committee this evening was; why are Education Health and Care Plans being written and amended by Parents to be made legally compliant and why do they lack specificity when written by case workers?

In response Jeanette Richards, Executive Director, Children and Young People confirmed that they are in a process in relation to her personal circumstances and will be happy to continue working with her in relation to her personal circumstances. In response to the Education, Health and Care Plans there should be a collective endeavour of coming together between parents and partners. As this is new news Jeanette Richards assured Ms Delaney, she will take this back to the team for discussion and will report back to the Committee.

The next question was from Ms Hampson: I am asking this question on behalf of myself and many other parents. Why are these meetings not accessible for people with disabilities, vulnerable people, working parents and other people? It should be accessible to everyone in Bury whether it's virtual, online or face to face to include participation by everybody as all parents' voices are not being heard, and also young people and children wish to have their voice heard and we intend to bring them at the next meeting.

In response Councillor Smith advised that Georgia Murphy is the Youth Cabinet Representative for the Committee, and the meetings are live streamed to provide access for those who may not be able to attend the meeting in person. Councillor Smith also confirmed young people's voice are also heard at many statutory Council Committee meetings. Councillor Boles, Chair of the Committee advised that a representative from the Foster Carers Association will be attending the next Committee to provide input. In addition, Councillor Boles provided an offer to Ms Hampson that if residents would like to email him directly regarding matters to be raised at the Committee they can do so, and he would be happy for one person to attend and represent a group of people if they are unable to attend in person so their lived experience is discussed.

Ms McCauley was the third member of the public to ask a question. My Childs Education, Health and Care Plan has not been annually reviewed for four years. This is four years of no provision, professional input amongst lots of other things missing. Can you please inform me why; how many others in our Borough are out of statutory time frames and where is the ongoing care for disabled people and their families?

In response Councillor Smith advised she will source the exact number; however, work is being done to improve timescales by taking on new caseworkers and improving training. Councillor Smith advised she will contact Ms McCauley outside of the meeting to resolve any concerns she may have.

6 MEMBER QUESTIONS

Notice had been received of 1 question. The Chair, Councillor Boles advised that a copy of the question and response will be made available on the Council Web Site.

Questioner	Topic	Responding
Councillor Bernstein	Ofsted monitoring visit	Councillor Smith

7 IMPROVEMENT PLAN, DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION VISIT AND THE OFSTED MONITORING VISIT

Linda Evans, Interim Director of Social Care Practice provided an overview of the progress on the Children’s Services Improvement Plan that was put in place in response to the findings of the Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services that was carried out by Ofsted between 25 October 2021 to 5 November 2021 and judged services to be Inadequate. The Inspection report was published on 17 December 2021. In addition, Linda Evans provided an update on the progress review of Bury Children’s Services from the Department for Education that took place on 25 May and 26 May 2022 and the Ofsted Monitoring visit that took place on the 21 and 22 June 2022.

Progress of the Children’s services Improvement Plan will continue to be monitored at the monthly Children’s Improvement Board chaired by an Independent Chair, Linda Clegg.

Linda Evans advised that findings from the Ofsted Monitoring visit that took place on 21 and 22 June 2022 have been considered in the improvement plan and a further Ofsted monitoring visit is expected in October 2022. The focus of the visit will be child protection planning, children subject to Public Law Outline and the impact of managers and leaders.

Councillor McBriar asked what plans are in place to improve our arrangements when children transfer from one social care team to another. In response Linda Evans advised there are arrangements in place on how we manage children’s transfers and what needs improving is communication to ensure the child and families experience is a positive one. In addition, questions were asked regarding the delays young people transferring to adult social care were facing. The Committee were advised that a review is underway.

The Committee sought assurances on what has been done to improve staff knowledge of our vision for Children’s Services. In response Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People assured the Committee that communications and engagement for the department has been improved through email briefings, team engagement sessions, and ensuring a copy of the infographic of the Improvement Plan around the buildings.

A member of the Committee questioned the current caseload figures for social workers currently. In response Linda Evans advised there is a constant focus on recruitment and retention of Social Workers. Whilst the aspiration of caseloads for Bury per Social Worker would be 15, as of today some social workers loads are too high with the highest being 32. In response two additional agency social workers will be starting to reduce this figure.

In response to a question regarding the LGA Peer Review, Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People assured the Committee the Peer Review will take place towards the end of the year and once results are available, they will be made available to the Committee.

Helen Chadwick, Union Representative questioned if the Council plan to provide forward-facing staff at 3 Knowsley Place. In response Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People advised the message to the public is that the service is open to

the public to visit in person, this includes the Victoria Children's Centre and New Kershaw Centre have reception staff.

Councillor Pilkington questioned the relationship with the Police in relation to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Improvement Plan. In response Councillor Smith stated the service is running and has received good reviews from Ofsted. In addition, Jeanette Richards, Executive Director stated that governance arrangements have improved but like many Public Services there are resourcing issues for the teams. In assurance to the Committee Jeanette Richards advised that she meets monthly with the Divisional Commander.

In summary Councillor Boles asked, following the DfE Review which states Political Leaders are not getting involved in operational decisions and distinguishing their role in relation to the Scrutiny and Challenge, what does this now mean in day-to-day practice. In response Councillor Smith advised she sees her role as Cabinet Member for Children and Young People as a dual role for strategic political leadership. Jeanette Richards, Executive Director advised that the upcoming LGA will focus on Corporate Parenting duties.

8 SOCIAL CARE RECRUITMENT

Lynne Ridsdale, Deputy Chief Executive attended to provide an overview of the Social Care Recruitment Report and an overview of recruitment activity in relation to Children & Young People Social Care. At a national, regional and local level, there are challenges for employers in securing sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced qualified social workers to undertake a range of roles within Children's Social Care.

In addition, Councillor Boles asked if members of the Committee wished to share feedback following the visit to Bury's Social Workers that took place on 07th September 2022, Councillor Whitby, Georgia Murphy, and Helen Chadwick attended the visit. Feedback from the session was:

1. Social workers shared a view that administration support would be beneficial
2. Staffing for Social Workers is not a Bury issue and an issue around the stigma associated with the role of a Social Worker
3. The role of a Social Worker should be shown more to young people when considering education, job prospects or Apprenticeship options
4. The negative perception some children and young people have about Social Workers could be addressed through improved education via PSHE lessons in school and through bringing in a Social Worker to explain their role.

It was agreed that:

1. The Committee will organise a re-visit the Social Workers

9 ATTAINMENT HEADLINE OUTCOMES 2022 (PROVISIONAL)

On behalf of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Boles, Chair took the opportunity to congratulate those who have recently undertaken their exams this year and the teachers involved.

Wendy Jackson, Service Lead - Quality Standards and Performance provided an overview of the report. Wendy advised it is the first year since 2019 that our Primary School aged children

have been assessed and there were no changes to the testing regime this year. Primary attainment results will not be published nationally but they are available to schools, and they are currently provisional. In addition, secondary schools and colleges returned to the formal examination period following the use of Centre Assessed Grades in 2020 and Teacher Assessed Grades in 2021.

In 2022, 63% of Bury's children, attending schools in private, voluntary and independent settings, reached a good level of development. This is 2% below national and is 8% below that of 2019. However, it should be noted that in that period changes had been made to the Early Years and direct comparison should not be made. Bury's 'dip' is in line with Greater Manchester (GM) but 1% greater than national, which 'dipped' by 7%.

The Chair then opened up to questions from the Committee and the following areas were discussed:

- The cost-of-living crisis and how this may impact on attendance and attainment results.
- Children's reasons for missing school and the increase in children missing school due to emotionally based school avoidance.
- Schools adopting reception practice for some students in Year One as they are not quite ready due to the impact of the pandemic.
- The importance of the CLAS Team in supporting Children where English is an additional language.
- That girls have performed lower than the national average and that this is an area that needs looking into.

10 FOSTERING SUFFICIENCY

Linda Evans, Interim Director of Social Care Practice, provided an overview of the report. Linda wanted to highlight the amazing work of foster carers and the work they do. Foster carers offer children and young people a safe, loving, and nurturing home when they cannot live with their birth families.

As of 1st September 2022, Bury Council looked after 362 children and young people of which 237 (67%) are cared for by foster carers. A lower percentage of children and young people are cared for in foster placements in Bury when compared to our Statistical Neighbours, 68% and England average, 71%. Work is ongoing to increase the number of children and young people being cared for by foster carers.

Councillor Boles, Chair of the Committee took the opportunity to highlight that a similar report will be coming to the next Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and a representative from the Foster Carers Association will be invited to that meeting. In addition, Councillor Boles recommended that members review the Independent Review into Children's Social Care Report in advance of the meeting.

Discussions took place regarding the confidence Bury Council had to recruit the additional foster carers needed. In response Linda Evans, Interim Director of Social Care Practice advised that communication and recruitment strategies are being reviewed.

Councillor Rydeheard requested further information regarding the Mocking Bird Model that has been adopted by Stockport Council. In response Jeanette Richards advised this will be included in the report coming to the next Committee meeting.

Councillor Farooq echoed support for the work foster carers do and the marketing that currently exists.

In summary Councillor Boles sought assurances that the recruitment drive and support work to improve the number of Social Workers is also mirrored for Foster Carers.

11 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR C BOLES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 10:00 pm)



SUBJECT: Clarification around the writing of Education Health and Care Plans

CONTACT OFFICERS: Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills
Michael Kemp Strategic Lead for SEND and Inclusion

The matter was raised at the September Scrutiny Panel around the issue of parents writing their own Education Health and Care Plans

Background / Context

The SEND Code of Practice provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations and applies to England. It relates to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people.

Central within the code of practice are the principles around participation and co-production. It states within the code of practice that the Local Authorities **must** ensure that children, their parents, and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision. It also firmly embeds person centred planning and co-production/collaborative working.

Our Position

Here in Bury we are absolutely committed as part of our recovery pathway to embed the values as set out in the code of practice including those around collaborative working.

The process of writing an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) should be a collaborative process and within the pathway, as set out in the code of practice, there are key points where the draft plan is to be given to the family to review and comment on and for their suggested amendments to be incorporated.

Bury Council's revised approach is where appropriate we will sit alongside parents and write the plan together in real time as that is seen as good practice. These joint meetings are call co-production meetings.

The first two sections of the EHCP itself focus on a description of the child / young person in terms of what they are good at , what their aspirations are as well as the area that they need help and support with. These section are rightly very much informed by parents , carers and those who know that child. Often parents are keen to set out what they would like to see in this section and this is welcomed and encouraged. It is of note that the Council for Disabled Children's training that they delivered here in Bury in September spent a lot of

time on ensuring that parents / carers / child / young person voice was captured within the EHCP itself sharing a range of tools and approaches to support this.

We are committed to embedding collaborative working within the EHCP team and therefore we have recently adopted, as one of the key questions within our case file audit is whether the parent/care/ young person felt included within the process and whether their views are represented. We also know that within the Local SEND area inspection process there will be a focus on the level of collaborative working with parents which happen when we develop the EHCP.

Where there is disagreement around the Education Health Care plan which cannot be resolved through active case work and the matter ends up at the tribunal stage. The LA is required to trigger what is call "The working Document". This is a copy of the Education Health Care Plan onto which we then record the areas of disagreement and then as each element is resolved, we are required to strike through and amend the plan using very specific agreed colours and fonts. The Work Document will then be passed between the parent and or the advocate and the Local Authority. The aim is that we are seeking to narrow down the issues not resolved prior to the Tribunal hearing itself.

We are clear that our aim is that EHCP plans are written in a person-centred way and that there should be a co-production meeting to support this.

There is no absolute rule as to the degree of the parents' contribution and it is right that we are flexible around this, so that where a parents requests that an advocate has a role in the writing of a plan, this should be accommodated. The code of practice does allow for a range of approaches although it is clear that the EHC Plan needs to relate to clear evidence of need and be supported by relevant documentation.

In Bury, there has been a loss of trust and confidence due the historical issues within the service it is important as we seek to rebuild that trust that the writing of the EHC Plan is done in co-production with parents.