

AGENDA FOR

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



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**To: All Members of Children and Young People Scrutiny
Committee**

Councillors : D Berry, C Boles, A Booth, S Donnelly,
U Farooq, N Frith, J Lancaster, L McBriar, T Pilkington,
J Rydeheard and M Whitby

Dear Member/Colleague

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Thursday, 2 February 2023
Place:	Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bury, BL9 0SW
Time:	7.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 MINUTES *(Pages 3 - 10)*

Minutes from the meeting held on 24th November 2022 are attached for approval.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A period of 30 minutes has been set aside for members of the public to ask questions on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

5 MEMBER QUESTIONS

A period of up to 15 minutes will be allocated for questions and supplementary questions from members of the Council who are not members of the committee. This period may be varied at the discretion of the chair.

6 ASSURANCE REPORT ON CAMHS SERVICE AND LINKS BETWEEN HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES *(Pages 11 - 22)*

Presentation attached. Jane Case, Programme Manager (Bury), NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care to present at the meeting.

7 SCHOOL SYSTEM REPORT INCLUDING AN UPDATE ON THE LEVELLING UP FUNDING *(Pages 23 - 30)*

Report from Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet member for Children and Education Services attached.

8 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE *(Pages 31 - 34)*

Report from the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attached.

9 URGENT BUSINESS

Minutes of: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2022

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Thorpe, Deputy Cabinet Member Children and
Young People, Councillor Quinn, Deputy Cabinet Member
Children and Young People, Councillor Bernstein, Conservative
Group Leader, Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children
and Young People, Isobel Booter, Director of Education and
Skills, Sandra Bruce, Assistant Director (Early Help and School
Readiness), Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead - Inclusion & Special
Educational Needs & Disabilities, Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead
(Education Services), Wendy Jackson, Service Lead - Quality
Standards & Performance (Secondary), Sean Walsh, Director
of Social Care Practice, Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and
Democratic Services, Bryan Holland, Foster Carers Association
Lorraine Boswell, Foster Carers Association and Chloe
Ashworth, Democratic Services

Public Attendance: 2 members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor U Farooq, Councillor Smith, Amanda Nellist and
Georgia Murphy

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 the 22nd September 2022 be approved
as a correct and accurate record.

Matters arising:

Councillor McBriar asked for an update on accessibility of the building. In response
Julie Gallagher, Democratic Services Manager advised the part has been ordered
for the lift and it should be up and running by January 2023. In addition, the seats
at the back of the Chamber are being removed and replaced with flip-up chairs to
provide an accessible space.

Councillor Rydeheard requested if a meeting had been arranged with Ms McCauley following the last meeting. Jeanette Richards, Executive Director advised that an update will be provided following the meeting

Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills informed the Committee that following the last meeting, at which a question was asked regarding Education, Health and Care Plans, a briefing note has been uploaded to the Council's website and a copy circulated to all members of the Committee.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

The first question was asked by Mr Hagen; My wife and I are foster carers and have been for over 20 years for Bury Council. Yesterday we renewed our contract with the foster team, not that we agreed with it, but because we believe in the children receiving the love, care and attention and the change to grow up as a decent human being; especially disabled children who need so much positive attention and some 24-hour care. They are special to carers and the carers are special to them. I was not going to mention money, but I must, the fee is 80 pence per hour, some carers get less. I am also concerned about foster carers who work for the Council but work privately and I just wonder why they refuse to work for Bury Council. We the present foster carers will not be here forever. The minimum wage will be going up soon as the Government stated to £10.40 per hour. My question today is, would you take a job with Bury Council for a 24-hour job at 80 pence per hour.

Councillor Boles thanked all who attended this evening and advised a training session has recently taken place that highlighted the importance of lived experience at Scrutiny.

Councillor Quinn, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised that we are aware of the essential roles you play and the financial issues currently and these will be addressed under the foster carer item later in the agenda. In addition, Linda Evans, Interim Director of Social Care Practice advised that Bury Council is a Foster Friendly Employer. Linda advised she will seek to find out how many employees of Bury Council are also foster carers. Councillor Thorpe, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People also advised the Corporate Parenting Board no has a standing item of Foster Carers and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on them at meetings.

Ms Delaney asked the next question; working in co-production with parents to inform plans is a separate issue to the one I raised. Education Health and Care Plans in Bury lack the specifics needed for young people and children to achieve good outcomes. Also, lack of specificity compromises the legal enforceability of the provision in the plan. A lack of specificity and you may risk not being able to enforce the provision in your child's Education Health and Care Plan under section 42.2 of the Children and Families act 2014. The existing case law and code of practice all support that Education Health and Care plans are required to be quantified and specific. Children and Young People should be central to this process, their views and that of their parents are of the highest importance but the specifics of a plan and the provision that support to quantify to make the plans to be legally compliant should not be left to parents. After all, if you do not know the legal documents that are there to protect you and your family you have no chance. Please can you inform us today how will this happen with limited permanent staff available on the SEND team?

Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills advised that improving the quality of Education Health and Care Plans has been a key piece of work that Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead -

Inclusion & Special Educational Needs & Disabilities is now leading. Regarding the enhanced Education Health and Care Plan Team you are quite right, some of those colleagues are on fixed term contracts as they are partly funded through the additional transformation monies. We are in the process of taking the second phase of the Children's Services restructure of which the Team are part of. Bury are currently an outlier in the amount of Education Health and Care assessments and requests that take place, in Bury there have been 1.6% of the population where there have been requests, 1.3% of the population where there have been assessments, in comparison in the Northwest it has been 0.6% so there is a noticeable difference. We are trying to work with parents to re-establish the trust that has broken down. Some of our plans and parents experience is that because some plans are so specific some schools are struggling to meet need. There is a consultation about increasing capacity and we are committed to improve the quality of the plans and EHCP Plan writing training with parents present from the DfE

5 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	Restructure	Councillor Quinn

Councillor Bernstein asked if the schedule of planned appointments can be provided.

6 FOSTER CARERS

Councillor Quinn, Deputy Cabinet Member firstly began by acknowledging the hard work of foster carers and the dedicated hard work they do.

Councillor Quinn provided an update on action taken to consider the financial support being offered to foster carers now and in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. The report also provided an update on the progress of a review of Bury's current fostering, fees, allowances, and incentives and how we compare to other Greater Manchester local authorities.

Brian and Lorraine attended from the Fostering Association to provide their views. Key points highlighted were:

- The £200 payment will help this month but will not stretch further.
- Fees have not changed much for 12 years
- Foster carers have stood the pandemic with no support
- Independent fostering agencies offer more money to foster Children
- Families who foster children need money to support the children to have the same as their peers
- Communication between services needs to improve
- We need to be involved in decision making to put forward personal views

Councillor Boles thanked Brian for his powerful contribution to the meeting and wished to move on to questions from the committee.

Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People advised the Local Authority does not compare itself with Independent Fostering Agencies. Children's Services Departments across the country have shared issues with placement sufficiency and escalating costs for high-cost placements which is the same in Bury. Bury's strategy must be to support

our own foster carers and increase our own fostering sufficiency, to provide our community with opportunities to become foster carers and to ensure we have the strongest influence as corporate parents over the care our looked after children receive. Our Fostering service has not been reviewed in many years which is why we are undergoing a restructure to compartmentalise to generate the best outcomes around recruitment, training and support.

Improvements are to be made; to support this one being specific leadership of the service which is within the restructure and includes the creation of a dedicated Head of Service to grow our resources and support our carers.

Discussions took place regarding foster carers dedication and hardwork especially in relation to the support they give to children with disabilities coming into care who need more support.

Discussions took place regarding Bury being one of eight Greater Manchester authorities who are exploring the possibility of the development of a Greater Manchester Enquiry Hub aimed at supporting foster carer recruitment.

Members asked if work could take place with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector to put together a holistic package to support foster carers over the Christmas period.

Members discussed the paper regarding financial support for foster carers and sought commitment that the recommendations are carried out at the soonest possible opportunity. Members were advised that the papers are being worked on then will be consulted on with Foster Carers, therefore the papers will be considered at January Cabinet.

It was agreed unanimously:

1. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that on receipt of a report regarding foster carer financial support they give consideration to whether any increased financial support should be backdated.

7 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People provided an overview of a letter which summarises the findings of the monitoring visit to Bury children's services on 12 and 13 October 2022. This was the second monitoring visit since the local authority was judged inadequate in November 2021.

Inspectors reviewed the progress made in the following areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection:

- Children in need.
- Children subject to a child protection plan.
- Pre-proceedings work.
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families.
- The local authority's own evaluation of the quality and impact of performance and practice

Discussions took place regarding social worker recruitment and retention. Whilst Ofsted stated after this visit no child was found to be unsafe so no significant safeguarding issues the high caseloads of social workers is an issue. This links to the focus on recruitment activities and we are currently considering additional business support to strengthen children's records and take certain tasks away from social workers.

Discussions took place regarding when improvements are expected to be visible. In response Jeanette Richards, Executive Director advised that there are currently 17,000 children open to the service and therefore reviewing all plans is not achievable. However, our audit activity is a representative sample, and this will continue monthly. It was also reported that there is now clarity of expectations and stronger expectations but there is more work to do to ensure every child has an improved plan. In addition, members were informed the journey to improvement is a three-year cycle when you receive an inadequate rating as it is acknowledged it will take time to deliver, but the Committee should expect quarterly updates that show improvement.

It was agreed that members are pleased with the progress set out in the letter and we will continue to focus on social workers recruitment and retention.

8 SCHOOL READINESS

Councillor Quinn, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced the School Readiness report. This report provides some detail of the council's duties linked to its early years delivery and how this supports children's readiness for school. Early years is defined as children from conception to age 5. School readiness is measured through assessment when children enter school at reception. The report provides information on the council duties for its early years population which contributes to children's readiness for school namely:

- Universal Offer
- Sufficiency
- Early Years Foundation Stage and school readiness

The report also provides some wider national context which members may wish to be sighted on and scrutinise over the next three years:

- The first 1001 days (Leadsom Review)
- The Family Hub agenda

Finally, the report provides some detail on the Bury picture including some of the issues for consideration for the council to meet requirements of its delivery of early years services and the impact on school readiness.

Discussions took place regarding the impact of the pandemic on the development of Children and their readiness to school. Alternatively, discussions also took place regarding schools' readiness for an increase in children who may have Special Educational Needs. In addition, the development of girls against boys and the gap between them.

A Member questioned why the opportunity to apply for funding was missed. In response Sandra Bruce, Assistant Director (Early Help and School Readiness) advised that we needed to demonstrate system maturity and we did not hold the level of data needed to access the funding. In addition, members were informed that Bury is very involved with the work of the GMCA and Bury is involved in a pilot scheme regarding data.

Councillor Boles thanked report authors and members for the questions and answers given.

9 ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSION REPORT

Councillor Thorpe, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People provided an overview of the latest published data for absence which includes all Bury schools and enables comparison with national averages covers the Autumn Term 2021 and Spring Term 2022. The data includes children and young people in Year 1 through to Year 11. The data does not

include figures for Bury's Pupil Referral Unit, Spring lane School, as these settings are not included in the national data set.

The 2021/2022 academic year was the first full year without school 'closures' due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During 'closures' schools remained open for vulnerable children and children of key workers. This report makes comparisons between absence Autumn 2021/ Spring 2022 and Autumn 2018/ Spring 2019 which was the last full year pre-pandemic.

It was highlighted that Members may wish to note that attendance figures for Bury schools overall are better than the national which reflects schools' hard work in delivering these figures. However, the fact remains that absence is too high and, initially, the collective focus needs to be on improving overall absence to pre-pandemic levels and reducing the number of children and young people that are classed as either persistently or severely absent. As governors in Bury schools, members may wish to ask if governing bodies they serve on have identified a lead governor for attendance; this is a recommendation in Bury's model attendance policy.

Discussions took place regarding improving attendance of SEND Children, in response members were advised we do have an emotional based pathway to support children and is supported by the educational psychologists.

In addition, Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills advised that school attendance must be seen as a whole Council approach and proposals on how this is done will be brought back to a future meeting.

A member raised that having low attendance because of contributing factors related to Education Health and Care Plans does not tell the full picture as in contrast some children will always want to attend school regardless. In response Isobel Booter, Director, advised that there is a detailed SEND Report that the Committee receives and upon completion of the next one a breakdown of attendance against SEND Need.

A member raised the impact following the pandemic and the impact of people taking holiday's previously cancelled due to the lockdown. Councillor Thorpe advised we do not have enough national data to compare currently but the impact of unauthorised absences is still yet to be seen in the data.

10 URGENT BUSINESS

Helen Chadwick, Union Representative raised a concern regarding CAMHS, and ask through Scrutiny how Health Communicates with Education, not only over CAMHS matters but other issues as well.

It was agreed:

An update on CAMHS and the communication between health and education to be brought to the next Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Members also wished to put on record their thanks to Councillor Thorpe and Councillor Quinn in deputising for Councillor Smith at this evening meeting.

COUNCILLOR C BOLES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.30 pm)

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SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Thursday 2 nd February 2023
SUBJECT:	The School-Led System and Levelling Up
REPORT FROM:	Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet member for Children and Education Services
CONTACT OFFICER:	Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead (Education Services)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Bury school system and our commitment and aim for all Bury's children to be safe, happy, healthy and lead successful lives through improving education outcomes.
- 1.2 Bury's school led system continues to evolve in response to changing local landscape, our children and changes in government policy.
- 1.3 The Local Authority has an agreed approach to the risk assessment of Bury schools with a remit to intervene in maintained schools that do not offer a good quality of education and a responsibility to work closely with schools that are at risk or require additional support. A preventative model of early intervention, rooted in local intelligence and evidence of impact, is at the heart of Bury's approach.
- 1.4 The responsibilities and decision making in relation to schools causing concern that exist between Local Authorities and the Regional Director are set out in the Schools Causing Concern guidance document which was revised in September 2022. The Regional Director has increasing powers of intervention for example in schools that have been judged to require improvement at more than one successive inspection.
- 1.5 Securing sustainable school improvement requires robust, accurate school self-evaluation underpinned by effective school leadership and governance. System-wide this is supported by collaborative working across schools to build capacity leading to a self-improving system.
- 1.6 In February 2022, the Government published its Levelling Up White Paper, setting out its ambitions for social and economic reform across the regions, and how these will be met by 2030. This was followed on the 28th March by a Schools White Paper, and subsequently, the Schools Bill was introduced to Parliament on 12th May 2022. The Bill set out the proposed changes to the statutory framework impacting on the role of local authorities, on schools, and on Trusts.

- 1.7 Just prior to Christmas 2022, the Government announced that the Schools Bill had been withdrawn from the parliamentary schedule and would not proceed at this time. Whilst some elements cannot be fully implemented without legislation, for example aspects relating to attendance and a register of those children and young people not in school, the Government's intent remains to deliver on the White Paper's wider ambitions.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Nationally, almost 80% of secondary schools and almost 40% of primary schools are academies. Whilst Bury mirrors this national picture with greater academisation in the secondary sector, Bury's percentages are 56% secondary academies and 30% primary academies.

Nationally there has been a growth of schools in multi academy trusts and the Government's ambition is for all school to be in strong trusts.

- 2.2 The teaching school hub programme has been designed to create a network of 87 centres of excellence for teacher training and development, focused on some of the best schools and multi-academy trusts in the country. Teaching school hubs now provide high-quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers. Bury's local hub is the Bolton, Bury and Rochdale Teaching School Hub which is led by Star Institute, the training and development arm of Star Academies. Bury leaders have been invited to apply to be Lead Associates and Associates for the local hub.
- 2.3 Regional Directors (RDs), on behalf of the Secretary State for Education, exercise oversight and accountability for the academy sector. RDs also have responsibility for the conversion of underperforming maintained schools to academies and deciding on sponsors. RDs make decisions about the support any school that meets the coasting definition may need. They also make recommendations in regard to free school applications and in regard to changes to existing multi academy trusts.
- 2.4 In relation to school improvement and outcomes, Local Authorities have powers of intervention in maintained schools where standards are unacceptably low, where there has been a breakdown in leadership or governance or where there are serious safeguarding concerns. Local Authorities have a duty to promote high standards of education.
- 2.5 The Schools Causing Concern Guidance October 2022 clarifies this duty and states:

'A local authority must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards. Beyond the above statutory duty, local authorities have considerable freedom as to how they deliver their statutory responsibilities. Local authorities should act as champions of high standards of education across maintained schools in their area, and in doing so should:

- *Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any maintained school that is underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress;*
- *Work closely with the relevant RD, diocese and other local partners to ensure maintained schools receive the support they need to improve;*

- *Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, proactively work with the relevant RD, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices, and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; and*
- *Encourage Good and Outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other maintained schools; and enable other maintained schools to access the support they need to improve.*

Should a local authority have any concerns about an academy's standards, leadership or governance, they should raise these directly with the relevant RD

- 2.6 The Department for Education used to provide Local Authorities with a School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant. In the financial year 2022/23 the grant was reduced to 50% and will cease from April 2023. However, from the 2022/23 financial year, local authorities have been permitted to de-delegate from maintained schools' budget shares to fund this core school improvement activity.
- 2.7 In setting out an agenda for strong leadership and governance of schools, the Government places significant emphasis on the role of Multi Academy Trusts to deliver this. The emerging view is that the Government would wish to see the consolidation of existing MATs, growing in size to provide sustainability, rather than supporting the establishment of new MATs. And, further, its focus would be on the growth of cross-phase Trusts. The DfE has also been developing its approach to 'Area Based Commissioning' which sets out how the DfE imagine the Trust landscape across a local area may look.

3.0 Area based commissioning

- 3.1** As the draft Schools Bill began its journey through the parliamentary process, further supplementary guidance was issued, and the DfE has also engaged with local authorities, Diocesan Bodies and Trusts, on some aspects of the proposals, most notably in relation to the approach to area-based commissioning.
- 3.2** The purpose of the area-based commissioning approach is to provide a sense of how the current trust landscape in a local area will evolve, through consolidation and growth of existing trusts, and identifying where new trusts may need to be established. This is in support of chapter 4 of the white paper that sets out the ambition that all schools will be working in a strong Trust by 2030 or will be working towards joining a strong Trust. This approach is designed to guide the process by which all schools will move into a strong Trust.
- 3.3** Despite the difficult passage through parliament that the Schools Bill has experienced, and the many and various changes at Governmental level in recent months, the DfE is still intending to progress its area-based commissioning approach, and it is expected that the publication of a 'Trust Development Statement' will confirm this.
- 3.4** In order to inform such an area-based approach, Bury LA has set out a number of principles in order to influence how the Trust landscape should develop. These are:
- Bringing our schools together to establish our schools as leaders of community;

- The importance of parental voice/community engagement;
- Working with existing Trusts with a presence in Bury;
- Developing local solutions where-ever possible, as opposed to seeking new national Trusts;
- Focusing on supporting strong Trusts to grow, supporting existing weaker or smaller Trusts – focus on sustainability and performance;
- Primary, secondary & special – achieving a balance;
- Ensuring no school is left behind;
- Providing a coherent blueprint for migration to Trusts;
- Supporting schools and Governing Bodies to take time to consider options.

4.0 Bury Council position on area based commissioning

4.1 Given the implications, and impact on the local authority and its role going forward, the Council would wish to set out its position, so as to inform its development, and its relationship with schools:

- To firmly establish itself as a champion to all children
- To work with school leaders, Governors, MAT CEOs and the Regional Directors office to shape the Bury school landscape focusing on consolidating and strengthening the MAT landscape whilst strengthening the identity of Bury schools, channelling the pride and commitment of the wider school system within Bury and having a shared vision for improving outcomes for all.
- To focus and strengthen its approach to core, statutory role aligning education statutory duties within the education directorate.
- To develop clear strategy and operational processes to strengthen approach to attendance as a whole; persistent absence; severe absence; Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education; reducing exclusions; developing a register for children not in school; and strengthening the safeguarding in education offer.
- To work with school leaders, Governors, and MAT CEOs to establish itself firmly as the leader of place, starting by working with schools leaders in Radcliffe to develop the Radcliffe People & Communities Plan as a pilot. The plan is progressing with Radcliffe headteachers leading, in groups, on specific activities utilising primary schools as the centres of their communities. In the secondary section, the three high schools serving the most Radcliffe residents, along with Spring Lane Pupil Referral Unit, are involved in a social prescribing pilot as part of the Greater Manchester wide #BeeWell project.
- To review its approach to all non-statutory education services and traded services with schools starting with services which are funded from the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant
- To develop an all-age skills strategy with clear curriculum pathways linked to the changing economic landscape in Bury.
- To reserve its position with regard to an establishment of a Bury LA sponsored MAT and whether this option is desirable, appropriate or necessary with the strong MATs operating within its family of schools.

5.0 School provision in Bury 2022/23

5.1 Currently Bury has 82 schools. The primary phase includes 65 schools, of which 46 are maintained schools; this comprises 19 community schools; 18 voluntary aided schools; 7 voluntary controlled schools along with 1 nursery school. In addition, there are 20 primary academies. The

secondary phase includes 13 schools, of which 8 are academies. Bury also has 4 special schools; 1 of these is an academy.

6.0 Ofsted outcomes

- 6.1 In December 2022, based on published reports, 73.6% of Bury pupils currently attend a school judged to be good or better by Ofsted; this is 13.9% below the national average. This is based on data that does not include special schools but does include historic grades for convertor academies. Our aspirations are that 100% of Bury's young people should have access to a good or better school. Ofsted judge that 89.8% of Bury's primary aged pupils attend a good or better school. This is 1.1% below the national average of 89.8%. This contrasts with 49.4% of young people attending a secondary school that is good or better. Nationally 83.1% of young people attend a secondary school that is good or better. This is a significant challenge to close this gap. It should be noted that a number of sponsored academies have yet to be inspected.
- 6.2 Since September 2022, one primary school and one secondary school had been inspected and reports published to be included in the figures in 6.1 above. It should be highlighted that the primary school, a sponsored academy is now judged to be a good school. Since December 2022, a further six primary schools and one secondary school have been inspected and five reports published; all of these reports rate the schools as good.

7.0 Pupil outcomes

- 7.1 An attainment report was taken to scrutiny in early autumn and an update report will follow later this term. In summary, primary outcomes at the expected standard are generally in line with national average. However, headline performance measures in the secondary phase are below national

8.0 The self-improving school system

- 8.1 The Local Authority has a crucial role in a self-improving school led system. In the context of a more autonomous and diverse school system Bury LA seeks to work within this context of greater autonomy in its strategic role as champion of children. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that all children in Bury schools have access to good quality education provision. This duty is for 0-19 year olds, up to 25 year olds for young people with special educational needs and/ or disabilities and for care leavers. Section 13A of the Education Act 1996 highlights the statutory role of local authorities in promoting high standards and the fulfilment of learning potential.
- 8.2 The self-improving school system is driven by the Education Improvement Toolkit. The purpose of the Toolkit is to outline Bury's collective approach to improving the quality of education for all pupils attending academies and maintained schools in Bury. As partners we share a common aim *"To drive improvements in education through partnership and collaboration so that all children and young people in Bury schools achieve their potential."*

- 8.3 This Toolkit is currently under review by Education Transformation Lead and the Quality Standards and Performance Team. This review aims to ensure that the system evolves in line with local need and that the intervention and support offered is bespoke, timely and effective. The revised system will allow Local Authority officers and the Education Improvement Partnership to use intelligence from a range of sources to facilitate and broker support packages based on need. These packages will be delivered on three levels: LA wide packages will be built around themes common to all schools and LA-wide priorities; thematic packages will be delivered to groups of schools with the same need; and individual packages will be delivered to schools on a 1:1 basis.

It is proposed that these packages of support will be designed and delivered by a range of providers including, but not limited to: mainstream schools, academies, collaborations, alliances, Quality Education Professionals, freelance advisers and training providers such as BEST Trust. Packages will be quality assured by the Quality Standards and Performance team and monitored by the Education Improvement Partnership to ensure quality, consistency and transparency within the new system. A robust agreement will ensure clarity around roles, remits, duration, financing and impact measures.

- 8.4 The Education Improvement Partnership reports to the Strategic Education Board chaired by the Director for Education and Skills which, in turn, reports to the Children's Strategic Partnership Board. The toolkit makes clear the role of partners within the governance model.

9.0 The role of Bury Council in supporting the self-improving school system

- 9.1 The Toolkit outlines the following activities in support of the self-improving school system:
- All schools within Bury will be entitled to a Quality Education Assurance visit during the autumn term, funded by the local authority and carried out by a suitably qualified external professional, Quality Education Professional, commissioned by Bury LA. The report from the visit will provide an objective view of:
 - The school's self-evaluation judgements against the Quality of Education and Leadership and Management aspects of Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework
 - The school's priorities for improvement
 - Actions that school leaders, including governing boards, should consider
 - Maintained schools in Categories of Support 3 and 4 will also receive a local authority funded quality education assurance visit in the spring and summer terms. Category of Support 1 and 2 schools will have the option to purchase a spring and summer visit as part of a traded offer.
 - Keeping in touch meetings with Multi Academy Trusts and Dioceses
 - Every school will have a named Quality Standards and Performance Officer as their link officer. In line with the principles of locality working, each of the three officers has been assigned to an early help locality.

10.0 The quality assurance process

- 10.1 Each Quality Education Assurance report is evaluated by a Quality Standards and Performance Officer to identify any immediate concerns or anomalies that need to be explored further. The content of the report is used, alongside other evidence, including inspection outcomes, changes in leadership and LA intelligence to inform a bespoke approach. Signposting, brokering and/or commission of support is in line with the LA's statutory role and the school's assigned Category of Support.
- 10.2 Quality Standards and Performance Officers quality assure the work of all the Quality Education Professionals through analysing reports and gathering feedback from schools.

11.0 Categories of support for Bury Schools

- 11.1 Schools fall into one of four categories, whose criteria is clearly outlined in the Toolkit. The categories are:
 - 1 – Universal
 - 2 – Early support (light touch) – the characteristics include elements of self-assessment
 - 3 – Targeted support (medium)
 - 4 – Intensive support (high)

The LA's universal offer to all schools is also outlined in the Toolkit

12.0 Conclusion

- 12.1 Bury Council is working within the context of an increasingly diverse and autonomous school system. However, we are confident that we know our schools well and this improved knowledge is leading to an improving proportion of good and better primary schools.
- 12.2 The current review of the self-improving system, described in the Toolkit, is timely in working with all stakeholders to re-shape the system so that it evolves with a clear focus on improved outcomes for all, with a particular focus on secondary as the educational landscape continues to evolve.

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SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	THURSDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2023
SUBJECT:	IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATES, INCLUDING DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION VISIT AND OFSTED MONITORING VISIT
REPORT FROM:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
CONTACT OFFICER:	JEANETTE RICHARDS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of 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 (ILACS) carried out by Ofsted between 25 October 2021 and 5 November 2021, which judged services to be inadequate.
- 1.2 To provide an update on external scrutiny designed to monitor the progress of our improvement, including a Department for Education (DfE) review that took place on 11th January 2023 and our second Ofsted Monitoring Visit which took place on 12th and 13th October 2022.

2.0 ISSUES

Children's Services Improvement Plan

- 2.1 The Children's Improvement Board has continued to meet monthly and is well-attended.
- 2.2 The Neglect Strategy has now been approved which will support the development of a partnership wide understanding of the 6 forms of neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to ensure we respond in the most effective way and ensure that the impact of cumulative harm is considered. The Strategy will be underpinned by an Implementation Plan, which will include learning and development sessions.
- 2.3 There is now only one vacancy within the senior leadership team which is that of Head of Service for the My Home team, with the recent round of recruitment being unsuccessful. However, Director of Social Care Practice Seán Walsh joined us in September 2022, Head of Service for Care & Support Michelle Hughes in November 2022 and Head of Service Sarah Dearden in January 2023. The team is further strengthened with the support of the Head of Service for Strategy, Assurance and Reform Robert Arrowsmith and Children's Improvement Manager Beth Speak, who both joined in November and have a clear remit to drive forward on improvement.
- 2.4 In January 2023, the Director of Social Care Practice and Head of Service for IRT travelled to South Africa as part of our international recruitment strategy. Interviews were held over 3 days and we made offers to 23 candidates who we believe will be assets to Bury. While we

are prepared for some candidates to withdraw we are hopeful that at least 20 candidates will join us in Bury, and are aiming for the first cohort to arrive in April. We are working with colleagues in HR and the Workforce Development Team to plan a robust induction and a targeted training and support offer to help these social workers convert their experience and skills to UK legislation and practice.

- 2.5 We are reviewing our approach to audit and performance and ensuring they are closely aligned to Ofsted recommendations (from both the ILACS of October/November 2021 and subsequent monitoring visits). A discussion on what performance indicators need to be presented took place in our most recent Improvement Board meeting (24th January 2023) and development activity continues. This is also informing our internal assurance mechanisms and how we hold ourselves to account.
- 2.6 Work has begun on the Family Safeguarding implementation: a Family Safeguarding Strategic Partnership Board was held on 6th January and meetings will be held monthly. An Operational Board will also be established which will be chaired by Director of Social Care Practice. The training programme has started, with a series of training sessions being delivered throughout the first half of the year. This is a blend of training provided by The Centre for Family Safeguarding Practice (Hertfordshire) and training on motivational interviewing, which is key to the model.
- 2.7 A Systems Working Group will be established within the Department to ensure that developments around our recording system (LCS) are aligned to improvement priorities and issues identified through audit and performance analysis. This group will be established in Spring 2023.
- 2.8 As reported previously to Committee, we have strengthened our Public Law Outline procedures and standards and have more effective tracking systems in place. The North West region is working together to develop practice following the recommendations set out in the Public Law Working Group, and there is peer review activity taking place as part of this work. Bury have been paired with Salford Council, and peers will be visiting Bury on 31st January, 1st and 2nd February to review practice (and Bury will be visiting Salford in March as part of reciprocal arrangements). The region will then use findings from all 23 peer reviews to identify themes and share learning on use of pre-proceedings.
- 2.9 A Strategic Lead from Manchester City Council completed a review on the Safeguarding Unit and the effectiveness of our practice. The review highlighted a number of areas for further development, which have formed the core of a new service improvement plan:
 - To strengthen identity, vision and profile of the team in understanding their accountability for children's progression in the system
 - Design a robust performance framework including voice and attendance of children in their reviews
 - Embed a Restorative Practice approach - facilitating progress through a new outcome resolution process, demonstrating the footprint and impact of their work on children's case electronic files and building relationships both within the service and with children and young people

Department for Education Review

- 2.10 The Department for Education (DfE) review scheduled for November was deferred due to an Ofsted Monitoring Visit, and instead took place on 11th January. This review was led Linda Clegg in her capacity as DfE Improvement Adviser, along with Regional Deputy Director Mark Taylor and Senior Case Lead Bec Taylor-Williams. The team met with front-line practitioners, Heads of Service and partners including colleagues from health, Police and the

Independent Chair of Bury Integrated Safeguarding Partnership (BISP). They explored leadership, workforce, performance and partnerships.

- 2.11 We received positive feedback in relation to staff morale and their enthusiasm and passion to get things to where they need to be. They reported that they can see that there has been lots of improvement activity and we have made good progress to date, and there was synergy between what they heard and saw on the day with discussions that have been taking place at Improvement Board. It was noted that we are one third into our improvement journey – 12 months in, it is clear lots of infrastructure work has been completed and there is evidence of a cultural reset. However there is still lots of work ahead and we must continue to press ahead with the same commitment and leadership, and be mindful of the risk of “improvement fatigue”.
- 2.12 The letter of findings is expected within the week and we will ensure is included in the next update to this Committee. However, we expect the following areas to be included in the letter as areas for development:
- continued focus upon workforce, ensuring we continue to consider all opportunities and options
 - data and QA, with a deeper analysis and understanding to support improvement activity and developing a shared partnership understanding of outcomes achieved for children and families, supported by outcomes based indicators
 - partnership working - embracing learning and development opportunities
 - communication strategy to ensure change is clearly communicated and understood
- 2.13 The DfE Improvement Adviser shared key messages with the Improvement Board on 24th January and as a result of the review findings, it has been agreed to review terms of reference for the board, including frequency of meetings and membership to ensure it is aligned to the ongoing priorities and the work that lies ahead.

Ofsted Monitoring Visit

- 2.14 Our second Ofsted Monitoring visit took place on 12 and 13 October 2022. The focus of the visit was children in need, children subject to a child protection plan, pre-proceedings work, the impact of leaders on social work practice and the local authority's own evaluation of the quality and impact of performance and practice.
- 2.15 A range of evidence was considered during the visit, including electronic records, performance management information, case file audits and other information provided by senior managers. In addition, inspectors spoke to a range of staff including social workers and managers.
- 2.16 Inspectors noted “pockets of improvement” which is supported by increased stability in the leadership team and strong political and corporate support. Social workers feel leaders have focus on improving services for children. There is also a more restorative approach, with better engagement and consultation.
- 2.17 High caseloads and too many changes of social workers are leading to inconsistent practice for too many children although positive and meaningful relationships were noted where there was a consistent social worker.
- 2.18 Inspectors noted regular attendance at core groups from key professionals from across the partnership which was supporting sound decision making, however they observed meetings were not always effective at holding partners to account where actions had not been completed.
- 2.19 Supervision is valued by social workers but is not yet sufficiently reflective, nor does it result in specific actions with clear timescales. The PSW is leading on a Supervision Development Plan which will include observations and increased sampling of supervisions to support managers in their development.

- 2.20 Refreshed approaches to quality assurance and performance are evident but not yet embedded. More work is needed to ensure that actions from audit support case direction and inform learning. As noted earlier in this report, the approach to audit and performance is being reviewed to ensure there are clear links with improvement activity, and that learning is more effectively understood both at child level but also in what that tells us in relation to workforce development areas for development. Links between improvement activity, QA and the work of the PSW are being strengthened.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Improvement Plan is being reviewed to ensure that it is clearly focused on the areas of development highlighted in Ofsted visits as well as other external scrutiny. There will be consultation with partners and staff on the refreshed plan to ensure everyone is clear as to their role. We will review the reporting of the Improvement Plan and consider summary reports that can be shared across the partnership to ensure effective communication in regard to our progress. We are also reviewing our internal infrastructure around service/improvement plans to ensure clear golden thread between plans.

List of Background Papers:

Ofsted Monitoring visit to Bury children's services - Report published on 17 December 2021.

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Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____