

<b>Minutes of:</b>	<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 March 2023
<b>Present:</b>	Councillor C Boles (in the Chair) Councillors D Berry, A Booth, U Farooq, N Frith, J Lancaster, L McBriar, T Pilkington, J Rydeheard and M Whitby
Also in attendance:	Councillor E FitzGerald, Councillor L Smith (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Councillor S Thorpe (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) Isobel Booler Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People Helen Chadwick, Union Representative Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised
<b>Public Attendance:</b>	Four members of the public were present at the meeting.
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Georgia Murphy, Youth Representative Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead - Inclusion & Special Educational Needs & Disabilities.

**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 02<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

**4 MATTERS ARISING**

1. A member of the public asked a question regarding the number of SEND Tribunal Hearings in Bury, this has been uploaded to the website and sent directly to the member of the public.
2. Cllr Rydeheard requested dates of expected reinspection for sponsored academies from Isobel Booler this has been sent to him.

**5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions were received in advance of the meeting.

Questioner	Topic	Responding
Kiera Delaney	SEND Hub	Cllr L Smith
Question 2	School Transport	Cllr L Smith

## 6 MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

## 7 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People provide an update on the Improvement Plan for Children's Services.

The update focuses on Bury's third monitoring visit undertaken by Ofsted which took place from the 18<sup>th</sup> February to the 01<sup>st</sup> March 2023. We expect quarterly Monitoring Visits from Ofsted and the purpose of the visits is to offer support and challenge to our improvement journey and the requirements set out in the ILAX framework. The visit focuses on areas of practice that are found to be less than good. The focus of the visit was around early permanence planning for our children. In summary there were significant improvements identified but still much more to do.

Some strengths identified were:

- Pre-proceedings
- Children with care plans for adoption and timely matching of children to adoptive parents.

Social work practice assessments and planning was variable in quality although some improvements were noted.

A challenge identified was:

- Placement stability

The Council's self-evaluation was reflective of their findings which is reassuring. Members were informed that we expect to receive a letter from Ofsted in the next few days which will be published on the 04<sup>th</sup> April and will be brought back to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and young people added that scrutiny is important to check if the impact they are making is right. The Council is also prioritising placing children within their families to try and achieve better outcomes for children.

Councillor Boles opened to questions from members.

Councillor Whitby sought assurances on how improvement will be monitored to maintain improvements. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised we have brought in quality assurance mechanisms, key performance indicators and the Children's Improvement Board. Jeanette Richards added that there has been successful recruitment of a transformation manager to manage the quality assurance.

Councillor Boles questioned the timescales and progress of improvement. In response Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised we are likely at a 'requires improvement' rate currently and some of how we get to good and the improvement is

down to a workforce issue due to cultural and staff turn over issues. To get a 'good' Ofsted we would need another inspection which cannot be pre-empted, but we are aiming to be outstanding in our Children's services.

## **8 FOSTER CARERS UPDATE**

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee introduced the Foster Carers Update report and thanked members of the Committee for highlighting this matter. Councillor Smith advised the foster carers association have been involved in this to make sure the offer is correct. The report will be going to Cabinet on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and then out to recruitment.

Councillor Lancaster advised of an issue sharing the promoted Facebook posts on recruitment of Foster Carers. Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children and Young People noted this and will see if this can be amended.

Councillor Frith asked if are on target to increase the number of Bury approved Fostering households by at least 20 in 2023/2024. Jeanette Richards advised she will bring back to the committee where we are in relation to this target.

Councillor Berry sought some assurances on the payments to foster carers regarding clothing, comparison to the private sector and the correlation between the payments and the increase in foster carers. In response Jeanette Richards, Executive Director advised the clothing allowance is a set allowance for children who do not have basic clothing expected of a child that age. The payments to foster carers has been mapped against the market and we find ourselves in a favourable and competitive position such as proposing council tax relief.

Councillor Pilkington also asked about the mockingbird model which is hoped to be approved in March 2023. Jeanette Richards did advise there would be a requirement to bring in a manager before the foster carers are recruited but the experienced foster carers are interested in the offer.

Councillor Whitby thanked officers the report and the work that has taken place. Assurances were sought regarding the absence of a documented uplift in maintenance fees for 5–10-year-olds and were informed this is an error and will be circulated after the meeting. In addition, Councillor Whitby questioned about placements and members were assured that sometimes it is more suitable for children to be placed under other areas and local authorities.

Councillor Rydeheard asked what other support foster carers would appreciate along side the financial offer. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People assured members that it is viewed as a profession and money matters. In addition, support, networking, training, and development, short breaks, transition fees and retainer fees were important to the offer.

Councillor Boles questioned about the reports reference to commissioning a graphic designer. Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children and Young People advised that £10,000 has been awarded from Greater Manchester for our publicity campaign and this will be funded from that pot of money.

Councillor FitzGerald, Chair of Health Scrutiny asked for a view on how the nonfinancial support to foster carers supports their physical and mental health. Jeanette Richards, Executive Director advised members that this is in feedback with foster carers who have described the demand of the task. The role of the supervising social workers is to develop relationships with the foster carers and to reach out if they need support.

In summary Councillor Boles, Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee said how Foster Carers had been a key priority of the Committee and it has been powerful to have this as a regular item at the Committee.

## 9 SEND REPORT

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee provided a brief overview of the SEND update report. Members were then invited to ask questions.

Councillor McBriar questioned further regarding the SEND Hub as discussed under public questions earlier. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised that the Council has not applied for funding as there is not any available at the moment. The Government and DfE speak to the council regularly regarding the deficit which is currently at £20million so most conversations are surrounding reducing the deficit. Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised that Bury was part of a Greater Manchester wide short breaks hub approach and she will check the outcome of this with NHS colleagues.

Councillor McBriar asked for an update with regards to funding for specialist Schools. Members were advised that Bury Council was unsuccessful in the special free school application submitted. Bury was successful in the first and second wave for a secondary ASC specialist provision and a SEMH Secondary provision.

Councillor Pilkington questioned why the Council was unsuccessful on the third wave of the special free school application. Members were informed that the application was approvable it was an extremely competitive wave.

Councillor Whitby raised concerns around SEND provisions in the Borough and the consequential impact this is having on Teachers and SEND Co-ordinators in the Borough. Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised that Project Safety Valve is difficult and Bury is an outlier for how many applications it has for EHCP plans.

Councillor FitzGerald questioned what the graduated approach is and will it help children's mental health. In response members were advised that firstly there is consideration for what the universal offer is so schools are able to early identify and meet additional need much quicker. There is an online toolkit and shared understanding of what the available provision should be and what can be added to meet need. By ensuring early identification and mental health support at a much earlier stage it is supporting Children's mental health quicker.

Councillor Lancaster asked a query regarding an epilepsy nurse and ARFID services. Councillor Lancaster asked if staff could be up skilled, we could link in without Councils or other teams to offer an ARFID service. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised that the funding has been approved and recruitment will be taking place shortly. In addition the CAMHS pathway around eating disorders in need of review and will be discussed with CAMHS colleagues.

Helen Chadwick, Union Representative wished to raise a report she did following a visit to the Social Care team and one team she thought was working well was the Children with Disabilities Team and a good model for other teams.

In addition Helen Chadwick, Union Representative sought assurances on how an extension may impact of the roof of the building of Millwood Primary School. Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills the roof has be complex but the work is progressing and the School continues to work around the building.

Councillor Smith, advised that the key priority going forward for her would be children not in school as we have a duty to give children an education.

Councillor FitzGerald advised that she is at Greater Manchester Health Scrutiny on 08.03.23 is addressing the increase in children presenting mental health issues so will circulate the report on this.

## **10 ATTAINMENT UPDATE**

Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised the report provides an update on recent developments in regard to Special Educational needs and Disabilities provision in Bury and in particular the progress in regard to the Education Health and Care Plan process. It provides an overview of the data in regard to the growth of Education Health and Care Plan in Bury and also details the service improvements made in light of the growing number of Education Health and Care Plan requests.

Members were invited to ask questions.

Councillor Pilkington questioned what the challenges are and what learning can be done from schools that have performed well. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised that Math's is currently a key challenge and the school that has out preformed others has been leading on Math's.

Councillor Frith sought assurances on if the improvement journey before the pandemic. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised the Schools in Bury have been on an improvement journey for some time.

Councillor Boles questioned what working closely with schools in practice. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised it depends on the school. Each type of school has various ways of keeping in touch and quality assurance with the Local Authority.

## **11 URGENT BUSINESS**

As it was the last meeting of the municipal year Councillor Smith firstly wanted to place on record thanks to Councillor Boles as Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

In addition Councillor Boles, Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee wished to note that the Committee is powerful and this year we have put children and their outcomes at the forefront of questions.

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

**(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.45 pm)**