

AGENDA FOR

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Contact: Chloe Ashworth
Direct Line: 0161 253 5130
E-mail: C.Ashworth@bury.gov.uk
Web Site: www.bury.gov.uk

**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:	Tuesday, 7 March 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 - 8)*

Minutes from the meeting held on 02nd February 2023 are attached for approval.

4 MATTERS ARISING

5 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.

6 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.

7 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Verbal update to be provided from Jeanette Richards, Executive Director of Children and Young People

8 FOSTER CARERS UPDATE *(Pages 9 - 16)*

Report from Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

9 SEND REPORT *(Pages 17 - 24)*

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

10 ATTAINMENT UPDATE

Verbal Update from Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills.

11 URGENT BUSINESS

Minutes of:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	2 February 2023
Present:	Councillor C Boles (in the Chair) Councillors A Booth, U Farooq, N Frith, L McBriar, T Pilkington and J Rydeheard
Also in attendance:	Councillor E FitzGerald and Councillor T Tariq (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health, and Wellbeing) Will Blandamer, Sean Walsh, Isobel Booter, Jane Case, Jacqui Dennis and Chloe Ashworth.
Public Attendance:	Two members of the public were present at the meeting.
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor D Berry, Councillor J Lancaster, Richards and Councillor M Whitby, Councillor E FitzGerald, Jeanette Richards and Helen Chadwick

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are noted above.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Pilkington, declared an interest with CAMHS as he has a child registered with an EHCP within the authority.

3 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 24th November 2022 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

Matters arising:

1. At the last meeting a recommendation on "Foster Carer Professional Fees, Maintenance Allowances and Incentives" was put forward for Cabinet on 11th January 2023, this has since been moved to 15th March.
2. An update on CAMHS be brought to the next Committee and this is on the agenda.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Notice had been received of 2 questions.

Questioner	Topic	Responding
Ms. Sarah Garbett	EHC Email account	Councillor Smith
Mr. Clarence	CAMHS	Jane Case

In addition, two members of the public attended, and one member of the public asked a question.

Ms Delaney attended and asked the following question.

As the success rate of local authority tribunals was recently documented to be around 3.7% does this go against your duty to support and identify needs of the most vulnerable. Instead, often forcing unrepresented parents to tribunal for review following EHC needs assessment is detrimental to many and could be considered negligent of your duties. To establish trust with parents and carers would it not be better to avoid the stress of tribunal in the first place?

In response Councillor Smith apologised and advised that she understands tribunals can be very stressful. Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised, the service has worked quickly to work in co-production with parents and have seen that since bringing in the parent voice there is a significant reduction in tribunals. Isobel advised that Bury Council currently has two historic tribunals and have not had any new tribunal requests for six months. As a service Bury is delighted with the progress following the establishment of the new team. Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead, Inclusion & Special Educational Needs & Disabilities advised because of learning from tribunals he has commissioned an officer to do an audit screening of all tribunals over the last three years, reasons why and the outcomes. Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead, advised once this work is complete, he will feed it back into the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

5 MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

6 ASSURANCE REPORT ON CAMHS SERVICE AND LINKS BETWEEN HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing began by introducing the item on Children and Young Peoples Mental Health in Bury and the link between Children's and Health services. Councillor Tariq highlighted multiple joint working practices between health and Children's services including joint portfolio meetings.

Will Blandamer, Executive Director for Adult Care and Health and Deputy Place Based Lead provided an overview of his role, the work he supports regarding CAMHS and the work on health and children's services working together. He advised that he jointly Chairs the Children's Strategic Partnership meeting with Jeanette Richards, Executive Director of Children and Young People, routinely attends the Children's Improvement Board to support the delivery of the Improvement Plan and a partner on the Bury Children's Safeguarding Board.

Will Blandamer, Executive Director for Adult Care and Health and Deputy Place Based Lead also passed on notes submitted in advance by Councillor FitzGerald, Chair of Health Scrutiny Committee. He advised Councillor FitzGerald wished to highlight that the Health Scrutiny Committee has had multiple opportunities to review Children's services in the context of the review of NHS Services. Health Scrutiny ensures a focus on children and young people and currently have two sub committees that both focus on children and young people. Councillor

FitzGerald also wished for it to be noted that she will be attending the next Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Jane Case, Programme Manager, NHS Greater Manchester provided an overview of the presentation submitted within the agenda pack.

Councillor Boles thanked officers and Councillor Tariq for their updates and opened to questions.

Councillor McBriar asked what approach Stockport Council are taking to have their reduction in waiting times. Jane Case, Programme Manager advised they have significantly invested in their service. Part of Bury's plan is to get early help in by ensuring triage is done correctly, needs are met, and children are on the right pathway to begin with.

Councillor Frith questioned how quickly the levelling up investment will take to make an impact. In response Jane Case, Programme Manager advised work has now been done with Pennine and now needs to be taken to a Greater Manchester level, however recruitment is an issue and there is a shortage of staff.

Councillor Rydeheard asked where the mental health support team currently covers. In response Jane Case, Programme Manager advised the team covers 32% of our schools in Bury who will then move on to other schools. Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing advised this is typical of all Greater Manchester authorities and is the standard process.

Georgia Murphy, Youth Cabinet representative asked questions about children and young people receiving support, reducing waiting times and how schools without the support are being helped. Jane Case Programme Manager advised referrals can go through at any time and then cases are triaged. The Committee were informed that support for Schools who are not included currently is still available. An initiative around mental health practitioners is being considered for additional support to work with children and young people via self-referral and drop-in services.

Councillor Pilkington raised questions surrounding the petition "Stop children and adolescent mental health services denying support for autistic kids" and asked how much we can influence the support of the services for Bury residents. He also asked what support is available for mental health for an autistic child and if CAMHS now offers this. He welcomed the language used by Jane Case, Programme Manager regarding neurodevelopmental pathways but highlighted that CAMHS website does refer to autism and ADHD as a problem. In response Jane Case, Programme Manager advised work is currently undergoing to see how much in our gift from commissioning level however she assured members she wants to build up the therapeutic level and there is also a need for psychological therapies for children with autism. She confirmed there is work taking place on the wider language used as part of the SEND agenda. Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead advised there is an autism in schools project to bring together the parent community, schools, health and social care to shape how we deliver services in school, and there are plans to grow this provision. Work is happening on the assessments process which is to support children and families whilst they are working on an intervention or diagnosis, by adding in early help. Councillor Pilkington finished by adding; can neurodivergent children be part of the decision making and conversations.

Councillor Farooq questioned what an appropriate waiting time is for CAMHS and what is our aim. In response Jane Case, Programme manager advised that there are national guidelines, but no Greater Manchester team are meeting these guidelines, she did advise a meeting is soon taking place to discuss what our aspirational target should be and this will be provided once decided.

Councillor Boles questioned how the improvements documented will continue; in response Jane Case, Programme Manager advised work will continue to take place and regular contact will be maintained. Michael Kemp Strategic Lead advised work is taking place to create transformation and a legacy between both services.

In conclusion Councillor Boles, Chair praised good growing relationships between children's and health services and thanked all for their attendance and contributions.

7 SCHOOL SYSTEM REPORT INCLUDING AN UPDATE ON THE LEVELLING UP FUNDING

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People provided an overview of the School System Report. The report provided an update on the Bury school system and the commitment and aim for all Bury's children to be safe, happy, healthy and lead successful lives through improving education outcomes.

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.

Councillor Smith then opened up to questions from Committee members.

Councillor Rydeheard asked questions regarding school clusters and if we know when sponsored academies will have their inspections. In response Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised that there are clusters that are being reintroduced on a strength and geographical base. Isobel Booler Director of Education and Skills advised she can calculate the dates of expected reinspection following the meeting.

Cllr McBriar stated over 50% of students in Bury are not at a good or better school, he asked how we are trying to narrow the gap to the national average. In response Councillor Smith advised the schools are no longer with the remit of grant-maintained Schools so it is more difficult to influence. Isobel Booler, Director for Education and Skills advised the directorate focuses on the statutory function around attendance, SEND and providing good quality advice polices to its schools including quality assurance you can ensure an improving performance of schools.

Councillor Frith asked a question regarding the recording and communication to parents to have their say in performance. In response members were advised by Councillor Thorpe, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised leadership in schools is critical and if they have good leadership, they are likely to be a good school.

Councillor Frith asked about when Skills Strategy will be implemented. Councillor Smith advised the register of children who are not in attendance in school is being worked on and being centrally recorded. Councillor Smith also advised the skills strategy is within the leader's portfolio. Isobel Booler, Executive Director for Education and Skills advised that a Skills lead has been appointed and will be leading on the all age strategy.

Georgia Murphy, Youth Cabinet Representative asked what influence the teacher's opinions on reasons for failures are given. In response Councillor Smith advised the teachers role is important and they provide a leadership role.

Councillor Boles as Chair of the Committee thanked members for their contributions.

8 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People provided an update on the Improvement Plan. Members were provided with 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.

Members were advised a letter from the Department for Education was received moments before the meeting but from first look it was positive and as expected.

Councillor McBriar, wished to welcome and commend the recruitment of the candidates from South Africa who will work in Bury. However, he asked how many positions are yet to be filled. Sean Walsh Director of Social Care Practice advised 23 have been recruited and their experience is vast. We expect around 20 as not all may come to fruition. With the recruitment of these prospective staff members Bury Council could half their agency recruitment rate. Councillor Farooq asked if this initiative can be explored to improve our whole workforce. In response Sean Walsh, Director of Social Care Practice advised we need to wait to see if this is still successful in the upcoming years, and if so, there is no reason this can be used again if it is the best way to recruit.

Councillor McBriar asked what the average Social Worker case load is currently. Sean Walsh Director of Social Care Practice advised the average is around 18, however the figure is subjective as some staff do not work full time, so the reality is the highest is around 25 and the mean is around 20 so the trajectory is coming down.

Councillor Boles asked about advertising costs and if they will be reviewed following alternative methods used. In response Sean Walsh, Director of Social Care Practice advised all methods of recruitment and advertisement is being reviewed constantly. The social media footprint is being worked on and is a relatively cost-effective option currently.

Members asked if they receive a copy of the letter received from the Department for Education.

Councillor Boles thanked everyone for their attendance.

COUNCILLOR C BOLES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.07 pm and ended at 8.50 pm)

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Public Questions March Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

1. As you all know I am a long-standing advocate for children with SEND and their families. In December 2021 I asked Isobel to open a SEND Hub for families to help them navigate the complex systems and processes that are widely experienced, with the support of those services that could help. Despite the threats of the former health secretary, which are very concerning to me, can we have a commitment from the leaders of Bury Council that a SEND Hub will be created for the families in our area and when can this be implemented.

Response Councillor Smith advised that we require extra money from Government to be able to deliver this; however, we do have the Parent and Carer Hub which we have supported to open as opposed to a Hub. Alongside this offer we do have sessions where the public can attend and speak to a Council Officer directly regarding your individual cases. Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills advised that conversations regarding a Hub did happen around a local offer hub and a SEND hub, and there were two different meanings of what a SEND Hub was. Current offers to parents are the Bury2gether local offer hub, short breaks and SEND. We would be open to exploring and having conversations, but we would need to find funding streams. – Kiera Delaney

2. The question relates to my daughter who attends a SEND School and travels with a Local Authority Escort who also works at the same school. I made a complaint regarding this matter which resulted in a safeguarding investigation and my complaint was upheld. As a result, the staff member was required to do their safeguarding and GDPR training. The staff member was placed back on transport following the investigation. As a result my child has not been to school in over 10 weeks, as a parent working full time I am having to work from home with a six year old. The local authority have not provided any alternative provision during this time and neither have they provided alternative transport to the school. I have started pre-court action and intend to pursue this until I receive acceptable action, whilst this has been ongoing the school have advised they cannot meet my daughters needs and wish to change her EHCP. However, her EHCP should not be changed to meet needs of a School, setting, building or staff. Instead, the child should be placed in a school which is able to deliver the provision set out in section F of her EHCP. I've been advised by the Local Authority to look at alternative specialist placements, but they have then had discussions with the original school and suggest she can return. We are now confused as no proposals have been made to resolve the transport issue either. I want to know how long I should keep waiting, should I quit my job to stay at home with my child like hundreds of parents throughout Bury. I now have a six-year-old who refused to leave the house and is scared of going back to that school yet the Local Authority is pushing her to go back to a place where everyday she is feeling traumatised. My daughter has a right to education and the longer she is left at home the longer she is refusing to leave the house. I feel over the last 18 months I have had nothing but issues with the SEND team and have been subjected to my daughters data being breached and leaked and a whistle-blower that targeted me across social media and now safeguarding issue and what will be done to resolve this.

**Due to safeguarding the names of the mother and child have been removed from the webcast and minutes.

Response – Councillor Smith advised she will speak outside of the meeting with the member of the public regarding the personal matters raised and investigate the matter. Jeanette Richards added that we are in a process and have accepted apologies from Michael Kemp, and as we are in the process it is not appropriate to discuss the matters you have set out, but Jeanette wanted to provide assurances to the member of the public and the Committee is that conversations will take place outside of this meeting.

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 7th March 2023

SUBJECT: Foster Carer Revised Offer

REPORT FROM: Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

CONTACT OFFICER: Jeanette Richards, Executive Director of Children's Services

1. Background

- 1.1. At Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 22 September 2022, Children's Services were asked to provide an update on the financial support being offered to foster carers now and also in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. As already acknowledged, there remains an ongoing national crisis in terms of Foster Carer recruitment and retention and placement sufficiency for children and young people needing to be placed within Foster families. The covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns had a significant impact upon Foster Carer recruitment for all Local Authorities' and Independent Fostering Agencies. The Council has experienced an increase in the number of children coming into care.
- 1.2. Due to an increase in our CLA cohort, we have significant demand pressures upon placements and the availability of Foster care placements within the Borough. As a result, too many children are being placed outside the Borough in Independent Foster Agency or residential placements, which are costly and increase spend against the agency budget. When we look at trends via the Greater Manchester dashboard (a tool for sharing data across the authorities) we can see patterns of decline in enquiries and approvals from the start of the Covid pandemic. We have a clear need now to repair that impact and significantly increase the number of Bury approved Foster Carers and Supported Lodging Hosts to increase the availability of homes within the Borough, primarily to meet the needs of our children in care and care leavers, but also to use more cost-effective placements, rather than external high cost 'specialist' placements.
- 1.3. As a good corporate parent to looked after children we need to ensure that wherever possible and safe to do so children looked after can continue to live in Bury as their hometown and stay connected to their family and friend network and their wider community. When children cannot remain in the care of their own families, we need to ensure that we have sufficient Foster homes and supported lodging hosts in the Borough to meet their needs. We have a priority to increase the number of Bury approved Fostering households by at least 20 in 2023/2024.

1.4. This report provides an update as to what changes are being proposed in order to retain our current Foster Carer cohort, as well as significantly increasing our carer recruitment activity. We want Bury to have an attractive offer for prospective carers which competes with other authorities and IFA's. This update for scrutiny panel will offer information about the professional fees and maintenance allowances paid to Bury approved Foster Carers; as well as the range of incentives being proposed to strengthen our current carer offer. There will also be an overview of our recruitment strategy and updated information regarding our ongoing work with the Foster Carer Association, an independent group representative of the wider Foster Carer voice.

2. Foster Carer Fees

2.1. Maintenance allowances were uplifted by 2.3% this year, backdated to the start of this financial year which Carers report has had little impact on Foster Carers experiencing challenges with the cost-of-living crisis. Some Bury Foster Carers are reporting that they will be unable to continue Fostering if professional fees and maintenance allowances are not uplifted. Some have told us they are making enquiries with Independent Fostering Agencies where professional fees and maintenance allowances are higher than those being offered by Bury. By improving our professional fees, maintenance allowances and incentives to Foster Carers on an invest to save approach, we will attract more prospective Foster Carers to Bury, retain the skilled and experienced Carers we have, increase our overall placement sufficiency and choice, keep our children and young people in their familiar locality and school and reduce our spend on more costly Independent Fostering Agency and residential placements.

2.2. Currently, we are experiencing significant challenges in delivering on our Placement Sufficiency duty. Bury has several challenging contributory factors to address in order to meet our key objectives around placement sufficiency. This includes acknowledging our current Foster Carer offer is not competitive enough in the current market and that this will impact on our ability to recruit and retain Foster Carers. Introducing payments for skills to professional fees enable us to ensure foster Carers are remunerated for their knowledge, skills and experience and places continuous professional development as central to our offer will support recruitment and retention strategies.

2.3. Bury approved foster Carers receive professional fees and maintenance allowance in relation to each child they care for, the rates for the professional fees have not been reviewed for over 10 years. We also provide holiday allowance, birthday and Christmas payments, initial clothing payments and mileage (45 pence per mile). The minimum government recommended uplift of 2.3% for 2022-2023 was applied to maintenance allowances, the last increase prior to this was awarded and implemented in January 2019. We have worked closely with Greater Manchester Fostering Leads, Greater Manchester Combined Authorities and Placements Northwest to explore this area. Whilst Bury are not the lowest paying authority but we are not competitive with higher paying neighbouring authorities. Therefore, we have proposed the following uplifts which will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023.

2.4. The following table shows the current fees and the proposed lift for both professional and maintenance fee.

Child's Age	Current Professional fee	Proposed uplift			
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4

					<i>Mockingbird fees – see Table 4.3</i>
0-4yrs		n/a	£132	£135	
5-10yrs		n/a	£150	£155	
0-10yrs	£130	n/a			
10-15yrs		n/a	£170	£190	
16yrs +		n/a	£198	£222	
11-17yrs	£140	n/a			

2.5. The Maintenance Fee illustrates:

Child's Age	Maintenance fee 2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023 <i>(inc Government Min 2.3% uplift already implemented)</i>	Proposed further uplift <i>(to narrow the gap with GM LA's)</i>
0-4yrs	£138	£141	£148
5-10yrs	£152	£156	£156
11-15yrs	£173	£177	£230
16yrs +	£202	£207	£237

2.6. The following table illustrates the combined professional and maintenance allowances if proposals are accepted

Child's Age	4-year-old	10-year-old	14-year-old	16years +
Bury current	£268	£282	£313	£342
Highest GM	£285	£311	£419	£458
Lowest GM	£135	£149	£177	£215
GM Ranking	2nd	4th	5th	5th
Bury proposed	£280 Level 2 £283 Level 3	£306 Level 2 £311 Level 3	£400 Level 2 £420 Level 3	£435 Level 2 £459 Level 3
Bury proposed GM ranking	2nd Level 3	1st Level 3	1 st Level 3	1 st Level 3

2.7. We are also proposing uplifts to Birthday, festival, holiday, clothing and graduation allowances. The coloured column represents the uplifts proposed. To the left of it is current allowances.

Age	Birthday		Festival		Holiday		Initial Clothing	Graduation
0-4yrs	£70.50	£150	£141	£200	£352.50	£400	Initial Clothing	£100
5-10yrs	£78.00	£180	£156	£225	£390	£450	(currently determined	£150
11-15yrs	£88.50	£210	£177	£250	£442.50	£475	needs	£200
16yrs +	£103.50	£250	£207	£300	£517.50	£550	led	£250
18yrs +	-	£300 -18 th & 21 st	-	-	-	-	basis)	£100

		Birthday							
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3. Revised Carer offer

- 3.1. We are proposing a range of incentives to strengthen our current offer to Foster Carers that will bring us in line with our neighboring local authorities and make us more competitive with Independent Fostering Agencies prospectively and who approved Foster Carers can choose to register with. The report makes proposals on what our Foster Carer offer needs to look like to retain our current Foster Carer cohort and to attract prospective Carers to Bury Council. Recent enquiries, assisted by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority dataset evidence that other local authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies have a wider range of incentives than Bury currently offers.
- 3.2. Council Tax reduction. To encourage new Foster Carers and Supported Lodging hosts and to help retain existing Foster Carers/Supported Lodging Carers within the Borough, it is recommended that the Council Tax Section 13A Discount Policy be amended to provide 50% discretionary council tax discount for all Bury approved mainstream Foster Carers. This discount would not apply to Foster Carers approved with Independent Fostering Agencies. By adopting a Council tax reduction or Bury approved Foster Carers and supported lodgings hosts this will assist us as a council to provide a package of support and rewards that is consistent with the offers made by other local authority's and independent Foster agencies when recruiting.
- 3.3. Adjustment fee This would include a discretionary payment equivalent to the Foster Carer Professional Fee for two weeks agreed by Head of Service at the end of a challenging placement, when a long-term placement comes to an unexpected end, a difficult disruption, or at a time of bereavement for example, to offer some time and space to the Carers without worrying about having no income from Fostering. This also prevents 'burn out' and reduces the pressure Carers experience to immediately accept a new placement when they are simply not ready.
- 3.4. Short breaks offer. Most Independent Fostering Agencies offer their approved Foster Carers an annual 'respite allowance' which we would only view as a 'short break' rather than 'respite'. This will be 7 days for which they are paid but the child or young person stays with a different Foster carer. Whilst we do not routinely advocate the use of short breaks as we would want our child or young person to be fully included in family life, we also acknowledge that some Carers and young people genuinely need this space from one another for the placement to be sustained in the long term. We propose we offer our approved Foster Carers the option of 7 nights paid short breaks per year, where if they do not use it, they do not lose it but could be paid instead at a particular point in the year.
- 3.5. Retainer fee this would be a strong incentive offer to help conversions from enquiry to application to alleviate the worry of Carers being able to financially manage if there was a gap in between placements. Not all Carers would need a retainer as our demand for placements is so high, but it would be a welcomed incentive and certainly contribute increased conversions if this were in place. We would like to propose a minimum retainer fee linked to the day rate equivalent of the Professional Fee for 4 weeks maximum per year per Fostering household.
- 3.6. PAMS Assist/ Silver Cloud We wish to continue the employee benefit scheme extended to Foster Carers which covers emotional / wellbeing support as well as

financial and legal advice. This low cost service but is a robust accessible form of support. Carers have fed back that they like knowing it is there and see this as an additional support for them as Foster Carers. Mental Health support offers following the Covid Pandemic has been reassuring for them.

- 3.7. Blue Light Card. This is a discount service for the emergency services, NHS, social care sector and armed forces, providing members with thousands of discounts online and on the high street. Blue Light card holders can download an App and access a huge range of discounts for the family. The cost of this benefit is £5 fee payable every three years, the service would consider this a positive “add-on” incentive which adds to the retention offer at little cost.
- 3.8. Max Cards. The Max Card is the UK’s leading discount card for cared for and looked after children. Families can use their Max Card at venues across the UK to get free or discounted admission. Bury Council already purchases the Max card for our children and young people. We propose this continues annually as part of the carer offer.

4. Mockingbird Model

4.1 The evidence-based Fostering model called ‘The Mockingbird model’ originally developed by the Fostering Network is being widely used by authorities across England. The Mockingbird model will support us to offer some of our more traumatized children and young people homes with highly skilled and experienced Carers, further reducing the need for high cost specialist IFA and residential placements for some children, supporting placement sufficiency and efficient use of Council resources. Taken from the DfE Evaluation Report (September 2020) ‘*The Mockingbird programme aims to replicate the support available through an extended family network. It creates a constellation of 6 to 10 satellite fostering families who are supported by 1 hub home that is operated by an experienced foster carer, offering planned and emergency sleepovers, advice, training and peer support. The Mockingbird programme worked to meet the need for continuity and support for children and young people in care and for additional support for foster carers.*

4.2 If Cabinet agrees the proposals in March, the first phase of Mockingbird will be immediately rolled out. Starting with a Mockingbird Project Lead from Fostering Network training the service staff and a plan being formulated for the first constellation. We hope to have our first constellation up and running by the end of the year.

4.3 The table illustrated below sets out our combined professional fees and maintenance allowances for Level 4 for Mockingbird specialist fostering Carers, bands are based on the Individual needs of the child placed and the Carers experience and skills.

	0-4 yrs.	5-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	16yrs plus
Level 4 band A	£594.49	£594.49	£594.49	£594.49
Level 4 band B	£605.12	£605.12	£605.12	£605.12
Level 4	£615.74	£615.74	£615.74	£615.74

band C				
Level 4 band D	£626.34	£626.34	£626.34	£626.34
Level 4 band E	£636.96	£636.96	£636.96	£636.96

The Hub Carer is paid £33,121 per annum, the equivalent of Level 4, Band E 16yrs plus.

5. Recruitment Strategy

- 5.1. We have revised our Recruitment Strategy to incorporate not only more enhanced recruitment activity, but also other work streams which will enhance our overall recruitment and placement sufficiency duty. In 2022-2023 we had various recruitment and marketing campaigns (in house) which included; Boosted posts on Facebook, and google ad word campaign, Targeted events; Bury Pride, Mental health awareness week, Foster Care Fortnight theme, Jubilee celebration event , Armed Forces Community Event, Sons & Daughters month, Advert on Hits Radio in collaboration with 10 GM LA's, Drop in events, Webinars, Information stands in the community, Branded Foster with Bury banners displayed on park railings around Bury, A collaborative Fostering Campaign – theme “Keep siblings together”, Fostering World Cup challenge, Adverts on 2 x digital LED display boards in Bury Town Centre.
- 5.2. In 2023-2024 we will benefit from a refreshed strategy as well as participating in a GM wide digital marketing campaign to benefit all 10 GM authorities. Our new strategy will include; Increasing our Carer Ambassadors with GM funds; more in house marketing activity throughout the year plus additional marketing activity from GM Ambassadors leading to an overall increase in enquiries, Embedding Fostering Network Mockingbird Programme and create ‘step down’ placements for at least 2-3 young people; explore developing our own Parent and Child approved carers so we have in house sufficiency; An ongoing schedule of recruitment webinars (with neighbouring localities) Various press releases and support for campaigns including Foster Care Fortnight, Sons and Daughters month and Pride with a focus on recruiting LGBTQ+ foster carers. Hits radio advertising (across GM) Drop-in and community events; Incentive based activities for foster carers and children. Targeted digital marketing tools. Carefully placed outdoor media. Targeted / geographical community engagement. Targeted approaches via specific employment settings. Diary of regular posts on the Council (fostering specific and corporate) social platforms (such as promoting the monthly webinars) to help reach a wider audience. Focussed motivational Messages including: *Let's change lives together – Foster with Bury. Foster carers change lives. Providing safe local homes for local children. Offering a local child a loving home and a brighter future. Helping to make young people's dreams come true. No two children are the same, that's why there are different kinds of fostering placements. Age, marital status and sexual orientation are never a barrier to becoming a foster carer. Could you change a child's life?* Use current intelligence.
- 5.3. Further recruitment strategy approaches include: using data intelligence and targeting 45+ age groups whom are most likely to be motivated to foster; reviewing

and refreshing the Foster with Bury website narrative to ensure visitors can quickly understand the Bury local offer and feel motivated by it; Creating embedded videos and podcasts, case studies/blogs; developing a Secure 'login' area for approved carers to access training, newsletters, event info etc. Build in the 'Let's Do It!' branding - *Let's change lives together*.

- 5.4. Commission a graphic designer to build feedback into new brand concepts/options for testing, approval and roll out. New branding to be reflected across all service collateral i.e., website, social media and digital/printed materials. Maximising the output of committed spend and existing resources: Building on the existing schedule of community engagement we will create a branded newsletter template to keep existing foster carers updated and ensure they feel valued and motivated.

6. Foster Care Association

- 6.1. In Bury, we have a strong Foster Carer Association who act as the voice of the wider Foster Carer Group. In previous years (pre 2020), the Association have not felt included in wider service developments and felt there was a 'them' and 'us' culture. The Association Representatives and Service Lead/Managers now work closely together to ensure there is as much involvement as possible in-service developments. The Association have been very positive about our new working relationship. Forums are held twice a year for Foster Carers and Senior Leaders. Between these times the Association meet on a regular basis and often ask Senior Managers to join them for part of their meeting which works well.
- 6.2. Jeanette Richards and Annette Hope last met with the Association on 17th February to provide updates about the progress of the revised foster carer offer and what this would look like. The Association were satisfied the revised offer was appropriate and were very positive about the working together relationship between senior staff and themselves.
- 6.3. The Association also are becoming involved in other service development areas, for example updating the Foster Carer Handbook in a working group with Staff. The Association agree that there are exciting changes afloat which they embrace being part of.

7. Action Taken and Conclusion

- The report for Cabinet has been completed and will be presented in March 2023.
- We are working closely with the Association whom are fully up to date with the revised offer and further developments to enhance recruitment and retention. They met with Jeanette Richards and Annette Hope recently for more detailed updates of the revised offer and remain enthusiastic about future working together.
- We provided all fostering families and supported lodgings providers with a £200 cost of living payment in December 2022.
- We have increased mileage rates for carers
- We have consulted with Fostering Network about purchasing and implementing Mockingbird services
- We have revised our Recruitment Strategy
- We are participating in the wider digital marketing campaign with GMCA to increase carer enquiries.

The department are acutely aware of the impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on foster caring families who are caring for our children. We acknowledge we urgently need to strengthen our support to foster carers and will be able to provide a further update following our report to Cabinet.

List of Background Papers/Information:-

Foster Talk Cost of Living Report 2022 [FosterTalk-Cost-of-Living-Report-2022.pdf](#)

State of the Nation Foster Care 2021, [State of the Nation's Foster Care 2021 | The Fostering Network](#)

Independent Review of Children's Social Care; Josh Macalister 2022 [Final Report - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](#)

Contact Details:-

Sean Walsh (Director of Social Care Practice) S.walsh@bury.gov.uk

Jeanette Richards (Executive Director) J.Richards@bury.gov.uk

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 7th March 2023

SUBJECT: Update on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

REPORT FROM: Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet member for Children and Education Services

CONTACT OFFICER: Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills
Michael Kemp, Strategic Lead for SEND

1.0 Background

1.1 Bury Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are committed to ensuring that all of our children are safe, have the best start in life, fulfil their potential, and are independent; this commitment extends to all, including our children with a disability and/or learning need.

1.2 Local area leaders from health, social care and education have acknowledged the challenges faced by Bury in implementing the SEND Local Area reforms. Bury as a local area is committed to a programme of transformation and is determined to work in co-production with parents to improve both outcomes and experiences of children, young people with SEND and their families.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This report provides an update on recent developments in regard to Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision in Bury and in particular the progress in regard to the Education Health and Care Plan process.

2.2 It provides an overview of the data in regard to the growth of Education Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) in Bury and also details the service improvements made in light of the growing number of Education Health and Care Plan requests.

2.3 There continues to be significant progress made regarding improving the EHC process and developing our work with parents to continue to deliver an improved SEND service in Bury at pace. The team has remained stable and this has enabled a greater focus on quality and co-production. Weekly reporting allows for better understanding of the trajectory of demand to plan resources more effectively to deliver quality plans in a timely manner. The team have mapped out work and robust tracking has ensured improved compliance.

2.4 However, the improved systems have been matched by a high level of increased demand for EHCP assessments. There were 589 EHCP assessment requests in 2022

which is a 23.1% increase on the number of requests in 2021 (477) and following a 28.9% increase in requests the year previously with 370 requests in 2020.

2.5 It is important to note that the improved QA at panel ensures that all EHCPs are appropriate. However, it needs to be acknowledged that although the Graduated Approach has been launched there is a lot of work to do to embed this across our school system and we are committed to working through our newly launched SENCo network to raise the level of need met at SEN support.

2.6 The Graduated Approach is key to managing demand and ensuring need is identified earlier and met appropriately through SEN support. The full roll out started in January as has the revised SENCO network offer. Evidence of the use of the graduated response is now required for the referral to Inclusion board and for a school’s request for an EHCP. However, it will take some time before we will see the impact on the number of new EHCP requests.

2.7 We recognise that Bury has historically been under-provided with its own specialist provision, with only two Special Schools, both of which have been expanded significantly in recent years. Therefore, we have placed a high priority on increasing our specialist SEND capacity, both with new Special Schools and with new Resourced Provisions.

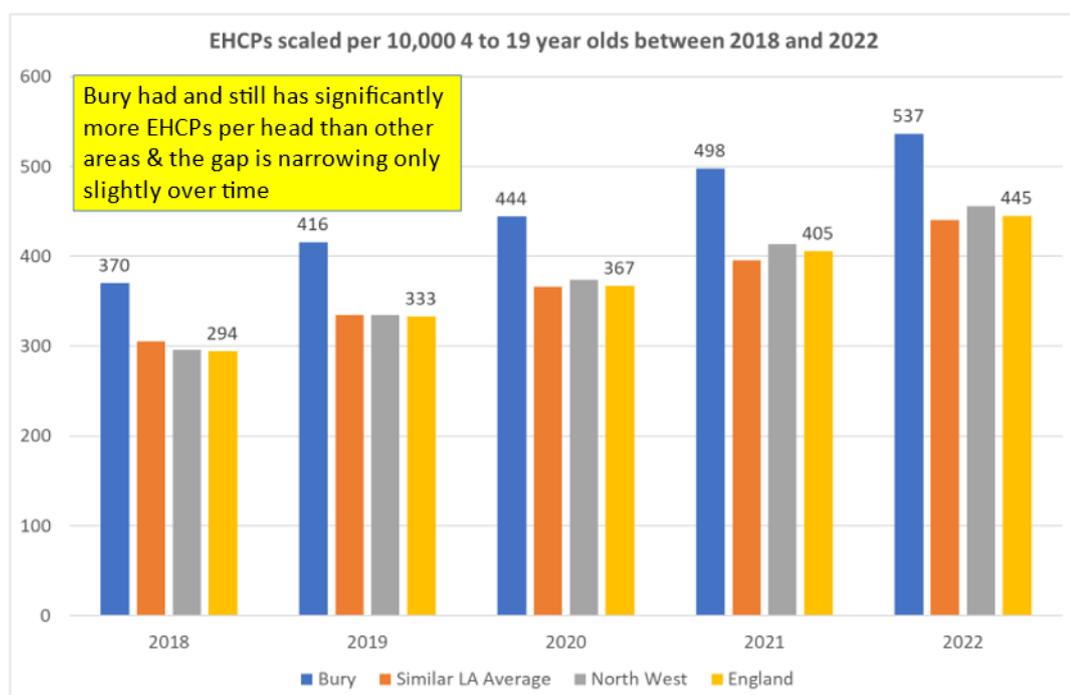
3.0 Current Data

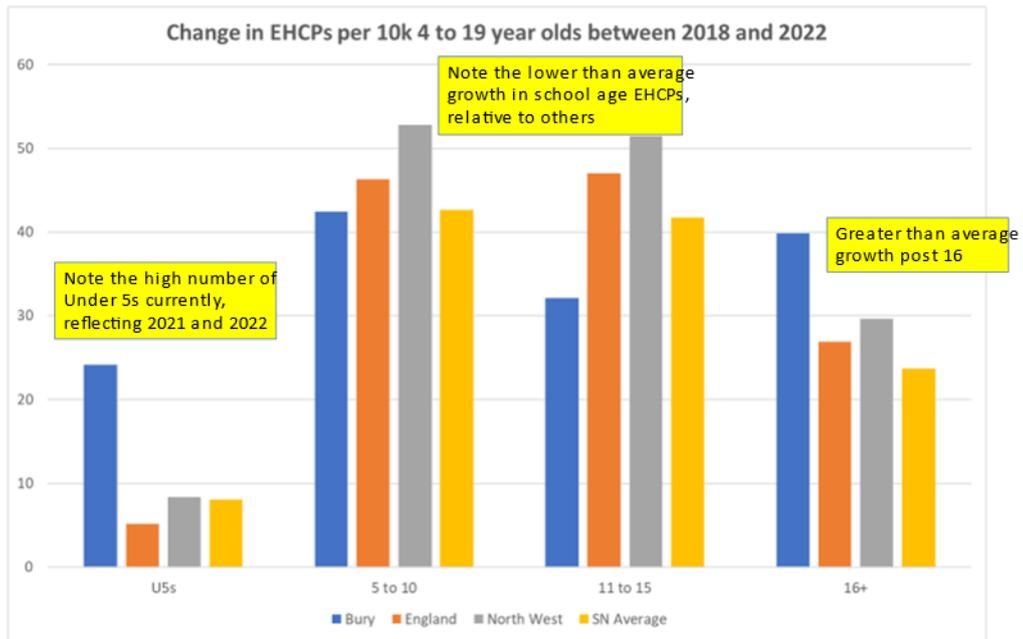
3.1 Bury continues to have a higher proportion of children and young people with Education health and Care Plans than other areas. Currently Bury has 5% of children and young people in its school population with EHCPs compared to 4.1% nationally.

3.2 The following tables reflect the EHCP prevalence and growth. The commentary is included in the tables for ease.

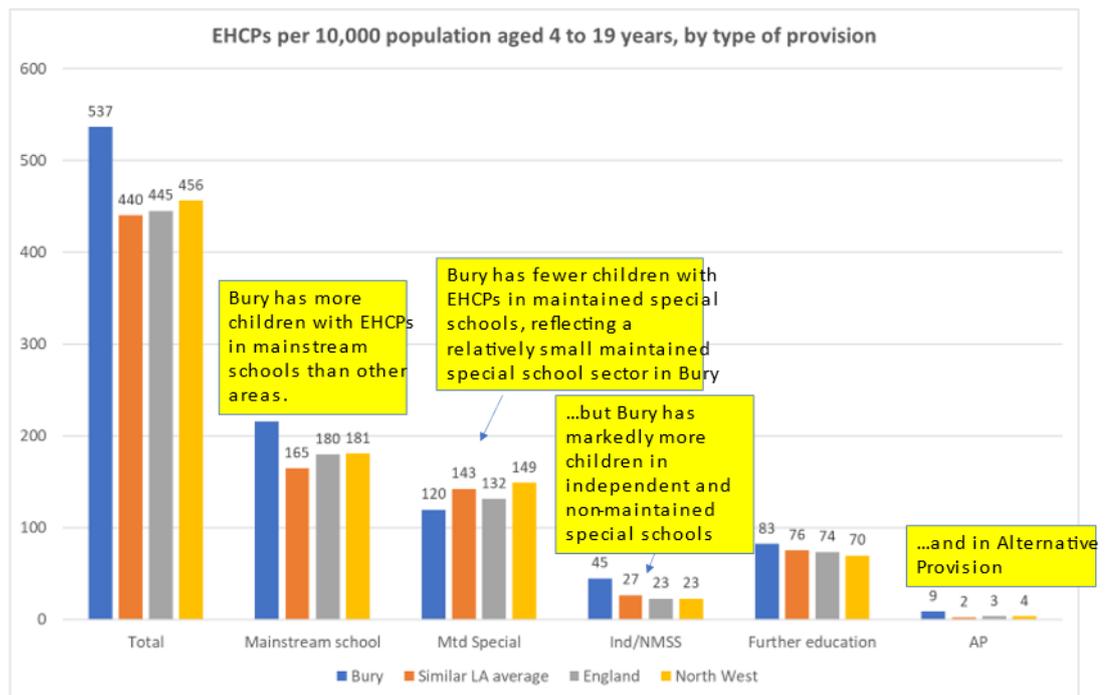
3.3 EHCP Prevalence and Growth

Comparative Analysis of the SEN2 National Data Return – scaled per head of population





3.4 Education Health and Care provision



3.5 SEN support

This is a key priority for our focus as this impacts on the pressure on EHC plans. The embedding of the Graduated Approach will support greater consistency of our schools in regard to SEN support provision.

**Comparative Growth in identified SEND over the last 5 years
– Change in SEN Support rate per 10,000, split by Primary Need change since 2018**

	Primary		Secondary	
	Bury	England	Bury	England
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	36	19	17	48
Hearing Impairment	1	-1	7	3
Moderate Learning Difficulty	-100	-58	34	0
Multi- Sensory Impairment	-4	0	2	2
Other Difficulty/Disability	15	-8	-13	3
Physical Disability	-5	-2	4	5
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	0	0	2	0
No specialist assessment of type of need	34	6	-29	12
Severe Learning Difficulty	-10	-1	-4	-1
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	69	21	88	90
Specific Learning Difficulty	-82	1	-81	29
Speech, Language and Communications needs	65	70	23	39
Visual Impairment	5	0	13	3
Total	25	48	62	233

The relative number of children supported at SEN support in schools has risen, particularly in secondary schools nationally.

In Primary there has been a shift away from the primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulty, towards Speech, Language and Communication and this is a national feature.

Locally, we have seen a shift away from Specific Learning Difficult as well. We have seen significant growth in SEMH – greater than national.

In Secondary, Bury has seen nothing like the national expansion in SEN support, with only support for SEMH keeping pace with the national increase. The difference between the national pattern and that evident in aggregate in Bury's schools is apparent across most other primary needs.

4.0 Progress in regard to SEND Improvements

4.1 Service Improvements

Since September EHCPs have remained stable which has allowed us to continue to develop the team. This can be measured by the fact that all the case workers are now writing new EHCP plans. We have also started to reduce, on a phased basis, our dependence on the use of agency staff.

4.2 Staffing

The Education Directorate restructure was agreed at Cabinet in December 2022. If approved, following consultation, this will enable us to make permanent the additional posts; this equates to one Senior Caseworker, one Quality Assurance officer and 5 Assistant Caseworkers. This will support the team to meet demands in relation to the duties around annual reviews. There will also be a focus on out of area placements and contract monitoring by one extra senior and two additional case workers. Our aim is to support effective and proactive casework by bringing caseloads to under 300.

4.3 Current activity

The team has mapped out the work required to enable the current phased transfers to be completed within required timescales and with amended plans in place. This work is being tracked to support compliance and management grip. This also means that the work on annual reviews going forward will be easier.

Dedicated worker time has been established around the post 16/cease to maintain for this year. All letters have been sent out and we have established that there are 100 plans that need to be reviewed and considered for ceasing. This work has been ringfenced to ensure

that work is completed within the required timeframe. Linked to this, we have got the admission panels in place for our special schools as well as establishing bimonthly complex cases/stuck cases meeting for the primary spherical school and then for secondary.

The Monday morning performance clinic is now an established meeting. The data report has become a live data tool. This means that progress on compliance can be seen in live time and any stuck cases can be reviewed and additional action taken where appropriate. Monthly reporting on case activity links into overall progress and support an improved experience for our parents.

From the end of December 2022, we introduced, as part of the EHCP assessment process, a telephone call to families where they gave consent to gather information about the child for section A. This will also establish the key outcomes for the child which will feed into the request for advice.

Work commences with the EHC team on their agreed standards/charter. This will become our commitment to parents/carers/children and young people.

4.4 Timeliness

In 2022 we received 589 requests for an EHC assessment. To put this into context, the amount of work that the team are managing now, when compared to data on previous years, is as follows:

Total	
2016	174
2017	272
2018	267
2019	336
2020	370
2021	477

With this increase, we need to be mindful that as of 1st January 2023 we had 199 active cases going through the 20-week process, with the highest pressures in the assessment and final issuing stages. This causes stress when seeking to get final plans out within 20 weeks, meaning a potential fall in 20-week percentages despite improved performance and consistent accumulative figures over the year.

It is important to note that the team's performance on the 6 & 16 week is now strong and well embedded which is why we are confident that our performance at the 20 will improve going forward once we are able to unlock capacity in terms of placements.

Despite the team level of activity in terms of the percentage issued within 20-week frame, we reported an accumulative figure of 53% over the 2022 year. This is up from previous year's figures of 34% (2021) and 27% (2020). When we have audited the case files, the key factors to overstepping the deadline are the lack of provision and late advice.

Attention is being given to these cases as we understand the impact of this in terms of

lived experience. The three cases that have been waiting the longest were because the parent did not agree with the plan and were seeking additional assessments.

4.5 Advice update

Social Care advice has been an area requiring development. We now have agreement for an additional post to undertake an overview assessment conversation with all requests for children/young people who do not have an active social worker. This enables us to screen better for a full assessment. The post is under recruitment and will sit within the CWD Short Break team.

There are now weekly slots in Social Care 'Teaching Tuesdays' with a focus on SEND. We have already completed sessions on Social Care advice, role and timescale, DSR and DOLs. We have also held a session with Social Work Managers and developed a flow chart setting out the advice pathway and timeline.

4.6 Quality assuring plans

All new plans are now quality assessed by the Manager and Seniors.

4.7 Panel update

Within the last three months we have seen an increase in attendance at the EHCP panel by Heads and SENCO's.

4.8 Transition

There is a multi-agency task and finish group looking at transition for our looked after population (these pathways are not as established as those within SEND). We have also restarted our bi-monthly meeting with Elmsbank Secondary Special School to support effective transition.

Within the reporting period, the outcome of the work undertaken by Ernst and Young to review our transition pathways and to create options for a 14-25 service was reported back. We have now commenced the project work to develop the recommendations for a 14-25 shared service.

4.9 Collaborative working

We have jointly developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bury2Gether, NHS and the Local Authority. We have also increased the level of collaborative working on task and finish groups, for example: short breaks, transport, local offer and transition.

Parent engagement sessions continue as reported previously.

4.10 Graduated Approach (All age)

Full roll out started in January 2023 and sits alongside the redesign of the SENCO network. SENCO's have undertaken a review of the offer and have set out an ask in which we have:

New SENCO network offer has been developed over the Autumn term in partnership with SENCO and OAK Acadamy. The new offer is:

- LA information session and case discussion – termly minimum.
- Direct learning session – on a themed basis.

- Coaching and outreach offer.
- Roll out and embedding of the graduated response is now underway, with:
- Presentation to SENCO network meeting has taken place in January
- Intensive Graduated Response training scheduled for February.

5.0 Next steps:

- 5.1 Bury as a Local Area is committed to SEND transformation and continued progress to ensure improved experience and outcomes for our children and young people with identified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families.
- 5.2 Commence the roll out of the graduated response training
- 5.3 To work with the Council for Disabled Children to co-produce an outcomes framework against our ambitions for all children with SEND to be happy, healthy, safe, successful and independent
- 5.4 Complete the embedding of the outcome conversation with parents. This information will feed into the request for advice request
- 5.5 To review thw Local Area SEND Action plan to ensure that all priorities are considered with parents and young peoples

List of Background Papers:-

Cabinet Report, March 2021: Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit Recovery

Contact Details:-

Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills
i.booler@bury.gov.uk

Executive Director sign off Date: 23/8/21

JET Meeting Date:24/8/21

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