

Minutes of: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 17 September 2024

Present: Councillor C Boles (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, D Berry, U Farooq, E FitzGerald,
S Haroon, G Marsden, L McBriar, M Rahimov, L Ryder and
G Staples-Jones

Helen Chadwick (Union Representative) Areeba Malik (Youth Representative)

Also in attendance: Councillor L Smith (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Councillor T Tariq (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member, Health and Adult Care)
Will Blandamer (Executive Director Health and Adult Care)
Jeanette Richards (Executive Director Children and Young People) Stephen Holden (Director of Education & Skills)
Wendy Young (Head of Service, Department for Children & Young People) Janet Lloyd (Exclusions & Community Education Manager) Robert Arrowsmith (Head of Strategy, Assurance and Reform)

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence:

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th July 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record once a change was made to instruct that Cabinet have agreed to fund additions posts to deal with EHCP reports and these roles will be recruited to.

24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were received in advance of the meeting.

25 MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

26 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing attended the meeting and provided members of the committee with an update on the school attendance data. Councillor Smith also congratulated the co-opted member of the committee, Areeba Malik on her recent GCSE results.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People highlighted the report sets out the new requirements from the department for education on maintaining high levels of school attendance. The guidance is aimed at maintained schools, academies independent schools and local authorities.

Will Blandamer Executive Director for Health and Adult Care wished to highlight the following points to members:

- Senior GP in Bury has provided a webinar to support school attendance with an emphasis on trying to limit requests for sickness notes for children and will continue with this work
- Work is taking place with safeguarding professionals to understand the link between safeguarding and school attendance
- There is an initiative called Lamplight to support Lamplight which is a web-based platform that helps organisations to manage their safeguarding duties and record their work with children and young people.
- Bury has been working on an EBSA pathway to support children and young people who have a severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors, to support access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- There are universal offers for supporting mental health in schools also; school-based intervention services including speech and language therapy, the role of myHappyMind in schools and FortAlice domestic abuse charity

Jeanette Richards Executive Director for Children and Young People provided a brief overview of the following points to members:

- The document provided a clear overview of the new policies and procedures to be implemented including the importance of penalty notices for school absence
- The document supports the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, and it is felt that we are in a better position due to having clarity and more proactive offer

Councillor Tariq Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing wished to highlight how post covid the challenge between school attendance and the link with Health has increased. Councillor Tariq highlighted the following campaigns that are important for supporting school attendance:

- The children and young people's Mental Health coalition campaign which is jointly to provide a strong uniform voice to speak out about Children's mental health.
- Not In School national campaign

Councillor Boles opened up for question from members the following points were raised.

In response to a member question around the monitoring of independent schools, Members were informed by Janet Lloyd, Exclusions and Community Education Manager that independent schools are monitored and have contacted us for advice and support. Attendance

forums have taken place and are new to Bury, schools have been invited offered training and support.

In response to a member question regarding fines for parents who have more than one absence in a term, members were advised that the new guidance has been shared with schools with an emphasis on targeting persistent and severe absences with the support from Attendance Officers.

A member sought assurances on when impacts from the new policies and procedures will be visible. In response members were advised that attendance figures have improved and Bury is already above national average. Activity such as attendance campaigns on social media targeting parents is currently being done. A member highlighted the impact of reduced attendance since COVID. Members were assured that the Department for Education are pleased with the recent progress.

Discussions took place regarding the documented reason for a child or young person's absence, in response members were informed that Bury has a Section 19 Policy to support jointly with health professionals the child who is currently too poorly to attend school.

A member sought clarity regarding length of time for reported absences, members were assured continuous work is taking place with a maximum of six weeks.

It was agreed:

1. Members to be provided with details of the reason for absences in Secondary School Children and what is being done to work support these young people.
2. Members note the report.

27 SCHOOL RESULTS

Councillor Smith Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, attended the meeting and provided members of the committee with a verbal update on school results which is currently based on indicative results from unvalidated data which are subject to change. The full data will be available at the end of October 2024.

Available data for this year's exam results are as follows:

- Year 1 Phonics 79% passed
- Key Stage 2 SATs 62% Achieved expected performance in English and Maths
- GCSEs 42% of Bury children received a Grade: 5-9 in English and Maths
- 63% Children received a standard pass Grade: 4-9 in English and Maths
- Attainment rate 44%
- Colleges have reported positive A Level results

Assurances were sought on the Councils role in supporting Schools with their results, members were advised that the council doesn't have the rights to monitor and push for the results its more around supporting the schools to improve attainment of the results. Working on quality assurance and focusing on the schools that may not have the results expected.

It was agreed:

1. A further update to be brought to Committee once the results data is validated
2. Members note the verbal update.

28 VIRTUAL SCHOOL UPDATE

Councillor Smith Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attended the meeting and provided members of the committee with a verbal update on the Virtual School. Members were informed that we are currently in between school heads and current work that has taken place is:

- Validation of GCSE results
- Year 12s enrolled in employment or training
- Year 7s started at high schools, learning mentors checked in at the schools and are settled
- Reception children checked in
- Updated all designated teachers at schools
- Inter care children and young people peep plans are put into place
- Collaboration with Bury Send team
- Preparing current year 6 student applications for high school
- Preparing current year 11 students into further education
- Updated SEND register
- Recruitment of virtual school SEND lead
- Training courses delivered around virtual school
- Commissioned support for students
- Stephen Russel aspirational
- Catherine Hobday virtual Head Teacher appointed and due to start 23rd September 2024

Councillor Smith expressed her thanks to Gemma Parkes the previous virtual headteacher for all her hard work and dedication around the virtual school and wished her success in the future.

Councillor Boles reminded all members that the council provides a full training course around the virtual school, and advised members that the resources are there if support is required around this.

A member raised a question regarding acknowledgement of students for their results through the virtual school, members were assured that students are contacted around their achievements and a celebration has been held to celebrate them on their results. Validation is still being sought from the school and once this is gained students will be written to and cards will be sent out.

A member raised a question around the capacity of the virtual school, officers couldn't provide at the meeting but will be sent out along with being included in the virtual school annual report.

It was agreed that:

1. The new Virtual School Headteacher to attend a future scrutiny meeting to update
2. Virtual school structure to be provided to members
3. Members note the verbal update

29 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Smith Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attended the meeting and provided members of the committee with an update on the improvement plan. This included focusing on the ILACS framework along with providing an overview on the progress made to date on the Children's Improvement Plan, highlighting areas of progress in the last 6 months, providing an overview of current challenges and the areas of focus for the next 3-6 months. The report is organised into two parts the first focusing on the enablers of good practice; and the second considering practice improvement in key areas within Children's Services. Key points covered were:

- Quality assurance and performance
- Systems and support for workers
- Leadership
- Workforce
- Early help offers
- Family safeguarding
- Adolescent/ edge of care offer
- Fostering
- Support for care experienced adults

Members raised a question regarding health capacity and concerns being raised, and whether this has been resolved, discussions around this were had and members were assured that this has been improved. Jeanette Richards informed the committee that this concern is around MASH and the commitment from health professionals to give their expertise to help the children.

Discussion took place around audit findings on multi agency working and the reflection of the improved picture, cabinet member addressed the issue around the drop in outstanding results however the improvement of the good statistic, it was explained that although with the drop in outstanding it still decreased the inadequate results.

Members were assured around the issues of inadequate results, given the changes in new team leaders and managers there is a focus on training and development to address these issues. Also relating to the delay in the data due to open cases within social work. Given an expansion of the team it was addressed that team managers are looking to reduce workloads to.

A member question was raised around the size of the sampling within the report and to whether there were specific practitioners within the CAHMS team. Members were informed by Jeanette Richards Executive Director Children and Young People that the sample size was 45, and that there aren't dedicated practitioners within the CAHMS team specific to looked after children, however assurances were given that children's services are looking at how best to provide support to our looked after children, recent recruitment of a psychologist that has responsibility for family safeguarding offer focusing on wellbeing and mental health. Work is being delivered through the corporate parenting board to address this as it is a priority for the children who attend.

Councillor Bernstein asked a question regarding what changes will we make over the next 6 months to get people recruited within Bury. Cllr Smith discussed that the council may see a lift in our agency over next 6 months to fill the new teams. It has gone to recruitment children services communications officer. There has been a business case to bring HR support into children's Services not just the support of the corporate core.

Discussions were had around overseas recruiting, questions from this were was it worth doing officers advised that there were challenges to this due to changes within social work England along with the English language test, which was a key challenge by international colleagues, however the staff employed through the scheme have all stayed with the Council apart from one. There was a question around retention of the staff and whether they were obliged to stay, officers advised that they had a requirement to stay for 12 months but members were assured that there are no concerns that they will leave after this time as regular meetings take place and they are happy with their work.

It was brought up by a member that although the exercise provided its challenges overall it seems to be a success and that the service should be happy with what has been achieved through the exercise of overseas recruitment. Stating that it was worth doing overall.

It was agreed:

- The report be noted

30 SEND UPDATE

Councillor Smith Cabinet member for children and young people provided members with a verbal update on SEND, the update covered several aspects on how SEND is improving and changing and emphasised the importance of SEND being improved, the update focused on:

- Local area inspection
- Priority actions logged in action log
- Risk register
- Meeting with DFE health partners assured progress made
- Focusing on 4,5,6 in the ILACS framework
- Project safety valve
- Operational SEND delivery group established
- Deep dives resource provisions, band reviews and panels
- Recruitment of new capacity in the team has been agreed
- Core training and development plan for all staff
- Established duty line with SEND service to improve communication between parents and local authority
- Review of statutory panels with recommendations being implemented in following months
- Annual review recovery plan currently in development

Wendy Young Head of Improvement for SEND, advised members of the work that has been carried out over reviewing how SEND is delivered by the council ensuring that these have been necessary for improvement. A baseline assessment has been made given improvements that need to be done on the shorter- and longer-term projects.

A member question around who is responsible for the annual review of EHCPs, a response from officers was that this is the responsibility of the local authority, a follow up question around what monitoring is there in Bury around these and what processes are in place to ensure that EHCP plans aren't missed, Wendy Young responded that processes are in place to ensure there is an effective oversight of the plans and who has had an annual review, who hasn't and who is due for a review. Informed that currently in the process of migrating some historical use of systems, mainly the use of Excel spreadsheets moving onto a more effective liquid logic system. The committee was informed that this is a process and will take time hoping to be completed for the end of the calendar year. Assurance was provided that 50 percent of annual reviews of EHCPs were completed last year, along with around 22 percent completed within the statutory time frame.

Advised not enough staff at the moment to cover all annual reviews so priority is having to be taken over vulnerable and more complex cases, additional resources has been received to take on additional staff to be able to cope with the number of annual reviews currently awaiting completion. Identified first four phases of annual review recovery which will be in accordance with key stage transfers first phase to be completed. Ensuring that the plans are updated in enough time so that appeals can be made in appropriate time.

It was agreed:

- To bring back data around how many annual reviews of EHCP plans
- That the verbal update be noted by members

COUNCILLOR C BOLES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.20 pm)