

Minutes of: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 13 March 2025

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

Also in attendance: Jeannette Richards Executive Director for Children's
Will Blandamer Executive Director for Health and Adult Care
Wendy Young Head of Service SEND
Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver (Bury District Commander)

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor S Haroon

50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are noted above.

51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

52 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd Feb 2025 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

53 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following questions were received in advance of the meeting and responses circulated:

1. How can one afford to pay an interim thousands of pounds, for Social care when parents like myself cannot even get a suitable care package to support the grandchild that I raise.

Recruitment into social care roles is a national and local issue. Sometimes, we need to employ interims in order to continue to deliver services to our children, families and carers, demand for services means that we cannot afford to have a gap in the teams. We share your frustration at the premium cost of such appointments and would prefer a permanent substantive postholder, we continue to revise our approach to the recruitment and retention of staff, including signing up to the Greater Manchester pledge which imposes pay caps on a number of roles in social care.

As you may know, the government's new Child's Wellbeing and Schools bill clearly recognises the important role of kinship carers and seeks to improve the support available across the country and recognise the centrality of wider family in long-term care arrangements for

children and young people. I strongly endorse this approach, and we will be seeking to move to match up to new national standards as soon as we practically can do so.

2. **Current Challenges:** The increasing number of SEN children who are being moved out of mainstream schools, despite the push for inclusion, and the lack of immediate access to appropriate provisions. Is this being monitored to see which schools are repeatedly struggling to be inclusive environments.
3. **Potential Solutions:** What actions are being taken to ensure mainstream schools are better equipped to support SEN children, including potential funding, training, or policy adjustments. Will this include those schools that have joined academies ?

This issue is of great concern to many families, and I believe a thorough discussion on the steps being taken to address it will be valuable. Considering the shortage of specialist placements this is an area of concern to many families.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response
Yes, it is something that we monitor and we know that there is a variety of approaches in schools. We also know that there is a substantial move into special schools at the point of primary to secondary transfer.

However, it is important to note that while it is true that Bury does have a relatively high number of children with EHCPs outside of mainstream settings (or maintained special schools), it is equally important to acknowledge that Bury's Primary and Secondary schools have a larger number of children with EHCPs than is typical elsewhere. These two facts are two of the defining features of Bury's local SEND system.

For many years, the balance of local specialist SEND provision has not been right. The number of places in special schools was insufficient and there was a gap in provision between mainstream school classes or special schools, with little in between those two options. This has led to children not always being educated in the most suitable provision.

In the past year, we have begun to develop more specialist provision – a new special school and an increase in the number of mainstream schools with resourced provision to provide more support for those children that need it. We have detailed plans to continue this process, with two further special schools agreed with the DfE and further resourced provision and SEN Units in mainstream schools. We also continue to provide support and training for children and schools irrespective of whether a school is an academy. In common with all other local areas, most of the funding to meet the needs of children with SEND is provided to schools directly. In Bury the total budgeted amount to be spent on SEND in 2024/25 in Bury was £56.6 million, of which £46 million (81% of the total sum) is given directly to schools and providers, £4.6 million (8%) is spent on Home to School Transport; £730,000 (1%) is provided in Direct Payments to parents and carers, £4.5 million (8%) is spent on services for schools, children and parents, including SEN Support and Inclusion services, Advice services, the Education Psychology Service; and £1.2 million is spent on administering the SEND processes (EHCP assessment and reviewing).

We are in the process of transforming the local system to better support children with SEND. We recognise that there is still a distance to travel

Kiera Delaney asked, responses will be sent direct.

I heard in the last meeting that 92% of ehcps were completed currently in the 20 week statutory timeframe, I may have misheard from up here in the clouds, which is another reason why the live stream is so beneficial, and I am happy to be corrected, but could you break that figure down for me specifically in relation to

How many Ehcp applications for 2022- now

How many were no/yes to assessment

How many of those who received a no to assess went on to mediation or appeal.

How many of those who had a yes to assessment went on to receive an ehcp? Did those who didn't get a plan go on to mediation or appeal?

How many of those who went to appeal or mediation received an ehcp?

What is the timeframe for children receiving a plan if their parents have had to go to mediation or appeal?

How much was spent specifically on barristers to represent the LA at tribunal over those years?

Happy for the years to be broken down into months if the changes and improvements are more recent and not measurable over those timeframes.

Kiran Hampson Asked, response will be sent direct.

In the panel meetings related to SEND and CWD team why are minutes and written feedback regarding decisions made by the SEND team and the attendee list not shared with the community, and how can outcomes be better communicated to all stakeholders and families the minutes should not be have to done through a SAR request

54 MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

55 SEND UPDATE

Councillor Lucy Smith, the cabinet member for children and young people, provided an overview of the report, detailing the actions that had been promised. Wendy Young Head of Service for SEND mentioned that after two monitoring periods over six months, the next stocktake is planned for July.

This will involve deep dive monitoring through the Priority Impact Plan (PIP) and local area partnerships to facilitate local discussions. The report aims to combine and theme various areas to provide more accurate support while waiting, and to better understand the impact of the plan on children and families.

Councillor Ryder expressed satisfaction with the dedication and hard work evident from the outset of the letter, and inquired about the confidence in meeting the steps and receiving positive feedback. Councillor Smith responded confidently, acknowledging the challenges and outlining the next steps, hoping to see the impact and address future challenges.

Wendy emphasized that as the journey continues, the Priority Impact Plan identifies how well the team has worked and the ongoing impact, suggesting that actions may need to be adjusted. She highlighted the challenges around the SEND improvement journey and measuring impact.

Will Blandamer Executive Director for Health and Adult Care discussed the NHS contribution, noting progress but also significant waiting times for children's ADHD services, which are challenging and subject to national issues. Jeanette Richards Executive Director for Children's Services added that recognising the scale of challenges is crucial, and everything needs to be organised effectively across the wider area.

Councillor Bernstein inquired about staffing challenges and the risk they pose to the plan. Councillor Smith acknowledged staffing as a risk, noting difficulties in achieving the right results and challenges in supporting schools through a graduated approach.

Councillor Bernstein asked if there is enough proactive effort in retaining staff and looking creatively at ways to keep them. Councillor Smith admitted difficulties within partnerships and emphasized the need to attract and retain staff, particularly in the SEND team. Wendy Young added that while there hasn't been a huge turnover, there are complex casework and high-volume positions that are difficult to recruit for. She stressed the importance of investing in training and development for new and existing staff to align with knowledge and skills.

Councillor Boles focused on measuring impacts and challenges, questioning how to scrutinize effectively and ensure the voice and lived experience of children are captured. An action was noted to gather feedback from children on the impact of SEND items directly.

Councillor Fitzgerald mentioned a positive letter from the Department for Education (DFE) and inquired about the nature of EHCP plans. Wendy Young noted an increase in numbers and emphasized the importance of ensuring recovery areas and improving numbers through part-time timetables and narrative amendments.

Councillor Fitzgerald followed up on parental preferences, noting sufficiency issues and statutory deadlines that may have changed due to consultation delays. The Committee was provided with assurances of challenges and the importance of child feedback in parental reports.

It was agreed:

- The report and letter from the DFE be noted

56

SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver, the district commander for Bury, delivered a comprehensive presentation on complex safeguarding in Bury. With nearly two decades of policing experience, she has developed a thorough approach to safeguarding and child protection. Her extensive background includes roles in vulnerability and partnership, serving as GMP's Director of Intelligence, and working as a child sexual exploitation expert for the College of Policing.

Chief Superintendent Oliver's strategic priorities focus on several critical areas: child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery involving children, and online abuse. Additionally, she addresses serious abuse, knife crime, organized criminality, and domestic abuse, recognizing these as significant concerns within the community.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Bury is a key component of the safeguarding strategy. This hub consists of 34 members from various agencies, including police, health, and children's services. The team is co-located within the police building, which facilitates collaboration and ensures a coordinated response to complex safeguarding issues.

The Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership oversees these priorities, ensuring effective collaboration among agencies. Regular audits and sub-group meetings are conducted to maintain governance and oversight, helping to monitor the response and impact across the multi-agency partnership.

Daily communication within the MASH team ensures that all aspects of safeguarding are covered. This routine interaction keeps everyone informed and aligned with the strategic priorities.

Councillor Berry raised concerns about drug-related child exploitation. Chief Superintendent Oliver clarified that this issue is linked within the broader category of child exploitation

offenses. Sensitive cases, such as live investigations, are handled by the force's major child exploitation team.

Councillor Bernstein inquired about the status of these investigations, and it was noted that updates are provided once the investigations are no longer live.

Chief Superintendent Oliver highlighted her dedication to creating a secure and equitable environment for both the community and her team. She regularly conducts internal surveys to ensure her staff feels appreciated and empowered to share their ideas.

Moreover, she collaborates closely with faith and community leaders to safeguard the well-being of minority communities. Her commitment to protecting children and vulnerable individuals in Bury is reflected in her strategic approach and emphasis on multi-agency cooperation.

It Was Agreed:

- Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver be thanked for her presentation and attendance at the meeting
- The presentation be noted

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YOUTH JUSTICE - GMP CHILD FIRST POLICING STRATEGY

Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver discussed the framework for child-centred policing in Greater Manchester Police (GMP), emphasizing the importance of addressing the needs and rights of young people within the justice system. The approach is structured around nine key pillars, including district representation, stop and search, custody, violence reduction, missing persons, training, community engagement, prevention and engagement, and the command structure involving gold, silver, and bronze levels of leadership. Stephanie Parker holds the Bronze command role, while Kirsty Oliver is in the Silver command position. These roles are crucial in ensuring that all districts within GMP adhere to the nine pillars of child-centred policing.

One significant initiative discussed was the Out of Court (OOC) disposals, which aims to change the approach to child arrests. The new policy requires immediate approval for any child arrest, ensuring that the decision is appropriate and justified at the moment. This initiative has successfully reduced the number of children in custody by 25%, highlighting the effectiveness of the new approach. The Youth Voice Panel is an essential part of GMP's strategy, providing young people with a platform to express their views and influence policing policies. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Youth Voice Panel is scheduled to convene in April this year, further emphasizing the commitment to involving young people in decision-making processes.

Kirsty Oliver provided statistics on the number of children brought into custody, noting that 153 children were detained, including those from outside Bury. This data underscores the need for continued efforts to reduce the number of children entering the justice system. Jeanette Richards discussed the Youth Justice Partnership's focus on preventing exploitation and supporting young people within Bury's youth services. The partnership aims to intervene early and provide resources to divert young people from criminal activities.

Several councillors raised important questions and concerns during the meeting. Councillor Fitzgerald questioned whether GMP has the right pool of personnel to effectively implement child-centred policing. Councillor McBriar inquired about the level of parental buy-in and

support for the initiatives. Councillor Berry asked if there are enough officers to meet the demands of child-centred policing.

Councillor Smith emphasized the need for more safe places for young people to prevent exploitation and provide supportive environments. Councillor Boles discussed creative solutions to address the problems faced by children, highlighting the importance of feeling safe and supported. Councillor Marsden inquired about the progress of Onside Youth Zones, and Councillor Smith responded that the initiative is not going ahead. Instead, resources will be directed towards outreach efforts to provide support across the borough.

Kirsty Oliver highlighted the need for officers to receive training on how to communicate effectively with children. She noted that while Bury officers are empathetic, they require confidence and skills to handle situations involving young people. Councillor Ryder suggested engaging with primary schools to educate students about social media, given that many have mobile phones by Year 6. Councillor Haroon raised the issue of engaging with BAME children, and Kirsty Oliver mentioned a recent event across the Scrutiny panel on stop and search, indicating a willingness to address these concerns. Areeba Malik discussed the work being done by youth services in primary schools and the potential for collaboration with GMP.

Jeanette Richards discussed the role of the education system in supporting expelled students, with plans to routinely communicate with these young people and provide necessary support.

It Was Agreed:

- Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver be thanked for her presentation and attendance at the meeting
- The presentation be noted

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URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR C BOLES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.00 pm)