

Public Questions:

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 04/11/2021

Question 1:

My question refers to the SEND HAF funding; please can the Cabinet member confirm - how much scrutiny has been given to the SEND HAF Funding including the number of children in attendance, those that had multiple spaces and what efforts were made to include children with SEND that parents/carers weren't members of Bury2gether?

Emmajane Michael-Okocha

- *HAF was new to Bury this year; we worked with the VCFA to encourage local organisations operating in local communities to provide provision for as many of our FSM children as possible, and for as many of them to be inclusive as possible. This was advertised through Bury Council and the VCFA*
- *We provided a number of provisions with additional funding for a SENCO to ensure they were able to open their provision to as many SEND Children as possible*
- *Local Organisations (including Bury2Gether) completed a grant application form which was scrutinised by members of the HAF Steering Group, which included the VCFA and the Children's Services Commissioning Team to ensure scrutiny.*
- *In order to advertise all available provision to eligible children, we developed a leaflet of all activities which was sent to all parents of FSM children (using the current list of children eligible for FSM)*
- *Data in respect of all HAF activity has been submitted to the DfE*

Question 2:

When the child's voice is supposed to be central to their care and support why does the CWDT think it is necessary to remove an early help worker because of process, ignoring the children's wishes. Why does the continuum of care for a child with disabilities not favour consistency?

Kiera Delaney

Thank you for your question. I am in complete agreement that consistency for children, young people and their families is very important. We do not remove Early help workers from cases, but on occasion EH workers demonstrate that their work has identified unmet need and it may appear that a child or young people meet the threshold for CWD involvement. When this occurs the decision as to whether we support by consulting with the family and EH worker or whether we supersede the Early Help worker to enable the family to benefit from our support is made in discussion with the family themselves. We have examples of families we are supporting who wish to remain with the EH worker and families who have requested an assessment from CWD.

Question 3:

My question is in the report about school place projections are there none for SEN specialist school places needed?

Deb Hirst

The paper presented to the Scrutiny Committee on pupil place planning responds to the statutory duty on the Council in respect of mainstream school places, and the important role of the Council in managing the sufficiency of high quality school places, and taking appropriate action to ensure sustainability where the demand for places is in decline.

The provision of specialist school places is subject to different statutory duties, and the demand for places, and the manner in which the Council ensures the sufficiency of places differs to the arrangements for mainstream places.

Through the work that the Council is doing in respect of Project Safety Valve, which was the subject of a report to Scrutiny at its last meeting, plans are being developed to increase capacity of specialist provision.

Further details about this will be provided when an update on SEND is provided to Scrutiny at a future meeting.

Question 4:

Was the HAF funding for SEND children provided through Bury2gether effectively spent considering the cost of the activities, how many places

were available, how many individual children accessed these places, how many children accessed multiple places, were all children eligible for free school meals and how was this eligibility checked?

Dawn Airey

- *Just prior to the summer holidays, the DFE confirmed that we were able to use some of the HAF Funding to support children with additional needs, rather than those eligible for FSMs.*
- *Bury2Gether made an application which reflected the HAF eligibility of an activity and food.*
- *Due to data protection, we do not have the names of individual children who attended all HAF Sessions, but now that HAF Funding has been confirmed for future years, the Council are looking at a centralised booking and reporting system which will provide this level of detail.*

Question 5:

What is Bury Council's eligibility criteria for a disabled child to have a child in need assessment carried out?

Where is this eligibility criteria document published? (so as to be publicly available to councillors and public alike)

Catherine Black

Thank you for your enquiry. The document explaining access to support on the Children With Disabilities team can be found on the council website. I enclose the link below. It may be helpful to clarify that the accessibility of this document, where it is found and how the contents are presented are matters being considered within the scope of several working groups. I can confirm that members from Bury2gether attend these forums to ensure that such documents are co produced.

<https://www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11365>

As there are two questions in relation to this, we will review the eligibility criteria in co-production with Bury2gether and add it to the forward plan.