

Minutes of: **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 17 March 2022

Present: Councillor S Wright (in the Chair)
Councillors C Boles, S Butler, P Cropper, J Lancaster,
T Pilkington, D Quinn, K Thomas and M Whitby

Also in attendance: Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills
Councillor Bernstein, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children and Young People
Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills
Paul Cooke, Interim Assistant Director of Learning
Jane Case, Bury CCG
Cath Atherden, Service Manager
Youth Cabinet Representative, Georgia Murphy
Union Representative, Helen Chadwick
Alyson Malach, Chair of Governors, Chesham Primary School

Public Attendance: Two members of the public was present at the meeting.

**Apologies for
Absence:** Councillor L McBriar

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are noted above.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lancaster declared an interest as she is a member of Buy2gether
Councillor Pilkington declared an interest as he has two children who attend Schools; one who is SEND registered and attends within the Local Authority. He also declared an interest in relation to Greater Manchester level as works for Manchester Foundation Trust, Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.
Councillor Wright declared an interest as his wife works within the Local Authority with a Child who is registered as having SEND.

3 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2022 be approved subject to Councillor Boles Declaration of Interest being added.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Wright, Chair took the opportunity to thank all Committee Members for their input over the last year.

Councillor Wright, Chair advised that the updated action log was sent to members prior to the Committee.

Councillor Lancaster asked for a response to her two previous requests regarding the fit and fed scheme and defibrillators be responded to. Paul Cooke Strategic Lead for Education Services advise this update will be ready in the new municipal year and that he will ask Sandra Bruce prepares an update to the Committee on the fit and fed scheme.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Pages 7 - 10)

Notice had been received of 1 public question. The Chair gave an undertaking that the questions and responses would be made available on the Council Web Site, following the meeting.

Questioner	Topic	Responding
Catherine Black	Children with Disabilities Team	Cllr Tariq

In addition there was one member of the public in attendance at the meeting.

Ms Delaney presented the following question to the Committee.

Last week my son was told he would need an amputation of his left foot. This is a direct result of a lack of action and direct failings of this Council. I would like to know what you as Leaders plan to do under your duty of care to address the needs on my Child due to the lack of response I have received from yourselves on this matter so far.

In response Councillor Tariq, advised that the issues raised are new to him and he asked if the issues raised can be taken away and be addressed by the end of tomorrow with Jeanette Richards and Isobel Booler.

In addition, the Chair offered the member of the public the opportunity to ask a further question.

In response Ms Delaney asked the Committee the following question:

What are you going to do to ensure joined up working happens going forward?

In response Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Skills agreed that services do require improvement and not yet delivering for families and young people in the Borough. Some of the changes that need to take place are requiring significant culture changes. There is now additional capacity that has been brought in as there has previously been gaps. In addition, we have recently sent out to ask parents for feedback on our services along with engaging with local schools.

Alyson Malach, Chair of Governors for Chesham School asked the Committee what training happens and what the impact has been how to meet needs of diverse communities within the Borough. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills advised that she has been involved in co-production workshops to hear the views of stakeholders, families, and community groups. Councillor Tariq thanked Alyson for the question and confirmed he constantly challenges practices. The confirmed that work is co-produced and confirmed he will take the comments back regarding SEND practices and engagement to improve services going forward when looking at our public sector equality duty.

6 MEMBER QUESTION (Pages 11 - 12)

Notice had been received of 1 question. The Chair gave an undertaking that the questions and responses would be made available on the Council Web Site, following the meeting.

Questioner	Topic	Responding
Cllr Bernstein	Recruitment	Cllr Tariq

7 UPDATE REPORT ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND)

Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Skills set out the report which provides an update following the detailed Annual Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) submitted at the Children and Young Persons' Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 7th September 2021.

Bury Council and Clinical Commissioning Group 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.

This report sets out a mid-year summary of actions and progress across the SEND provision. A comprehensive SEND annual report will be provided again in the Autumn. A summary of the quarterly update on the Project Safety Valve programme which was submitted to the Department for Education on 1st March 2022 is detailed in Appendix I.

A copy of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Report had been circulated to Members ahead of the meeting and in considering the report and the Cabinet Member's statement the following comments and issues were raised:

Requests were made for an update on timescales; In response Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills advised systemic change is required surrounding SEND and this is improving the experiences of families within the Borough. As an example, Project Safety Valve is a longer-term goal and is looking at a period of 4/5 years to address challenges. However, the way in which we operate on the group will be more imminent. Discussions about the impact of the new Schools on the sufficiency of Project Safety Valve were asked. In response Paul Cooke, Interim Assistant Director of Learning advised plans are in place to support sufficiency especially around the two additional Special Needs School's which should help needs more effectively and locally. The indicative plan has been devised and will be rolled out over the next 12 months.

Further areas on discussion took place regarding health matters within the report. Questions consisted of the following areas:

Commissioning of services for matters such as ADHD and Autism; in response Jane Case, Bury CCG advised following the pandemic waiting lists have increase, there is a Greater Manchester Group looking at improvements and on a Bury level there is a consideration to reviewing the pathways. Jane Case, Bury CCG also confirmed any changes to outsourcing will be shared with Committee members.

Questions were asked regarding the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). In response members were informed that MASH is the 'front door' so all referrals come through that pathway; however pathways behind the MASH has been reviewed to be more efficient.

Additional questions regarding the CAMHS service review and contract length were requested. In response the Committee were advised that the Pennine contract is a block contract and is not up for consideration of a review.

The Committee sought assurances on the Speech Language and Therapy waiting lists. In response Jane Case, Bury CCG advised the impact of COVID has secured additional resources to assist with waiting lists and the service is being reviewed to look at joint commissioning options.

The representative from the Trade Union wished to note the importance of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) and sees this as useful but the suggested any need for consultants is of concern. In response Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills assured the Committee that pulling expertise in and working to root all workforce within Bury.

Jane Case, Bury CCG left the meeting at 19.30.

Cath Atherden, Service Manager gave the Committee assurance that Schools are being supported to be more inclusive.

The Committee questioned how many Social Workers Bury currently has. In response Jeanette Richards advised that across the whole of Children's Services we have 156 Social workers, in relation to the Children with Disability Team we have 7 and 3 Family Support Workers. A priority is joining up the system to meet the needs of Children. Councillor Bernstein, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny was asked if he wished to add to the questions received so far. In response he asked how Bury Council's total of Social Workers benchmark against our statistical neighbour Authorities. The Committee were informed we do require more Social Workers and we are reducing caseloads to recognise that the officers need time to develop relationships to support proactive change. Councillor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children and Young advised that whilst recruitment is essential so is retention and understanding Social Worker's needs.

Discussions regarding Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) took place. In response Isobel Booler advised we hold many plans which must be reviewed annually, and the shrinking workforce does cause issues. Assessment processes are being revised but following this the review process will take place.

Questions regarding the access to free places for up to two-year-olds took place, in particularly in the Prestwich area as this is relatively low. In response Isobel Booler advised that it is part of some targeted work, and to provide the Committee with information following the meeting regarding the specific work that is being done currently.

Questions took place regarding the SEND report and the third sector contractors. Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills requested that this concern be taken outside of this Committee and look at any concerns raised.

It was suggested that the item 'update report on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) be extended and to defer the following item on the 'Children and Young People Improvement Plan Update'.

The Committee sought assurances on the types of Schools that will be available. In response Paul Cooke Interim Director advised that the new School due for completion in 2023 will specifically look to cater to the needs of Children who are high achievers but find the current school provision difficult due to many varying reasons. Isobel Booter, Director of Education and Skills admitted that language is certainly an area for development. The Committee were assured the Inclusion Ambassador post is being re-recruited to and will sit within the Youth Participation Team with a specific SEND focus.

Alyson from Chesham School posed questions and statements to the Committee regarding reasonable adjustments, accessibility, seeking disclosure, accessibility, and analysis of staffing equality characteristics.

Councillor Tariq thanked the Chair, Councillor Wright for his leadership of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and to highlight this Committee is relatively new and that he has really valued the Committee input and praised that Committee Members for the work over the last year.

It was agreed:

1. That the following item be deferred to allow for an extension within the current item
2. Isobel Booter to discuss concerns raised by Councillor Lancaster outside of the Committee.

8 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

As agreed under the previous agenda item this matter will be discussed on Wednesday 23rd March 2022.

9 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR S WRIGHT
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 9.00 pm)

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Public Questions

Catherine Black:

Given that the Children with Disabilities Team at any given point have a caseload of around 160 children based on their threshold criteria. If we say that there are 5724 disabled children and young people in the borough, based on the 2014 census data in the short breaks statement (link to documents provided in Nov 2021), so roughly only 3% of disabled children in Bury can access this service. What are the policies and procedures, that the LA use for the remaining 97% of disabled children in Bury?

Can the LA provide to myself and the councillors present here, as representatives of the disabled children and young people in Bury, a copy of the policy for what happens when those families of disabled children request help from Children's Social Care and do not meet the threshold criteria from the Disabled Children's Social Care Team?

I am requesting a blank copy/ies of the document/s used, so as to understand the type of assessment carried out, and the expertise of the person carrying out such an assessment, along with an accompanying set of support notes/checklist used by the social care team.

Response

The Children With Disabilities team currently carry a caseload of 250 children including the caseloads of both Family Support workers and Social Workers. The Local Authority would highlight that the number of children who can access this service is not dependent on the capacity of the team, but dependent on how many children and young people are eligible. The Children With Disabilities Team is a specialist team to assess and potentially provide services to children and young people with very complex and enduring disabilities.

We understand this means that some children who have additional needs or disabilities do not meet threshold for this service. For children, young people and families who fall into this category assessments can be undertaken by the following teams;

- Early Help Locality Teams
- Professionals and agencies already working with / involved with the family
- Initial Response Team

The policies and procedures mean that need is identified through an assessment and this may be the Child and Family assessment should IRT be undertaking the assessment, or the Story so Far assessment which supports the Early Help approach.

WE are committed in the co produced Local Area Action Plan to reviewing the pathways to access universal, targeted and specialist short breaks.

The early help teams are made up of family support workers, early years workers, adolescent support workers and early help social workers and the staff hold a variety of qualifications from degrees/diplomas in social work through to NVQs in youth work. Early Help is not a specific service but an approach across all partners. The Early Help Teams support professionals and families to come together through a team around the family plan, to broker the support required at a lower level of need. The teams do not seek to remain involved with families long term but to pathway to support that is available in the community and through other agencies already involved with the family. Early Help workers would complete Story So Far assessments which identifies the needs of the family and the child and they seek to support access to services. An example might be supporting access to DWP workers to ensure the right benefits are in place. They also carry out a short term interventions for example around parenting support or a specific piece of work with a young person who may have anxieties about school and they may do some 121 activities to build confidence and support. Workers are knowledgeable about services and resources in the community and can advise and support access to those services, this would include for young who are SEND.

Where it is determined that the family require a statutory response they would be referred either to the CWD team or the first response teams where a social worker would lead on completing the assessment and developing the support package

Following the revision of internal processes, where it is determined that the family require a statutory response they would be referred either to the CWD team or the first response teams where a social worker would lead on completing the assessment and developing the support package. As part of the Childrens services improvement journey we are reviewing our model of practice and the supporting documents. We can, outside of the council meeting, arrange for blank documents to be shared EDCS will progress this.

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Members Questions

Question One

Councillor Bernstein:

'Could Councillor Tariq outline what he thinks the delay in the appointment to the post of Assistant Director of Children's Social Care will have to the delivery of the Council's Children's Services delivery plan'?

Response:

Recruiting to this post is a priority but recruiting the right candidate with the right level of skills and ambition for the children and families of Bury is very important and with this in mind we are working closely with recruitment partners to progress this.

In the interim we continue to seek interim agency capacity and the EDCS has arranged for some interviews for later this week.

The strategic leadership team within Childrens services have worked together to ensure that there is continued focus on priority areas, which has been directly overseen by the EDCS and this activity is reported into the Improvement Board.

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