

Question 1

Councillor Russell Bernstein

Could the Cabinet Member for Children's Services tell me what the current average casework levels for Social Worker within Children's Services is?

Answer 1

The proposed restructure and additional investment supports the commitment to achieve caseloads of 15; however at this time there are some social workers with higher caseloads than we would wish, given our focus upon relationship based practice.

The highest caseload is 38, the lowest caseload is 17 and the average caseload in our Initial Response Team (IRT) is 24.8.

We have faced permanent and agency recruitment challenges in this area of the service and continue to pursue strategies to achieve a skilled and stable workforce.

Councillor Bernstein asked a supplementary question.

Question 1.1 Supplementary

How long do you think it is going to take until we are in a position where we do reach the caseload of 15?

Answer 1.1 Supplementary

In response Councillor Smith advised the restructure paper will be going to Cabinet in July which means the recruitment part will then be triggered. Councillor Smith informed the Committee that the recruitment part is the difficult part as it is very competitive on salary and Bury's reliance on agency workers is currently high. In addition, Jeanette Richards, Executive Director for Children and Young People advised the Social Worker establishment requires growth to deliver on lower caseloads. We know since April 2022 we have 5 new employees in post and ten new employees currently going through the checking process to commence their employment. In addition, Jeanette advised the week before our monitoring visits we lost ten social workers as another authority offered them more money via an agency.

Question 2

Councillor Birchmore

According to the recently released Radcliffe – People and Communities Plan, Page 4: *“25.3% of Radcliffe pupils gained a 5+ in English and Maths at GCSE, lower than the national average of 43.2% and the rest of the borough at 39.8%”*

Irrelevant of the fact that I believe the figures are for a specific area of Radcliffe and not Radcliffe as a whole this is a very concerning difference in achievement especially when you consider that in some areas of Bury the figure is over 70%.

I am aware that there are plans for a new secondary school, however that is not planned to have first intake until 2024 which means we have Radcliffe pupils still going through the existing system for the next seven years.

What is the Council doing to ensure that the achievement gap is bridged in order to provide a more equal education for all young people in Bury?

Answer 2

In the absence of formal assessment at Key Stage 4 over the last two years, the data used to inform the Radcliffe People and Communities Plan are the latest figures available from public examinations taken in 2019.

Prior to the pandemic, the local authority had been working with the majority of Bury secondary schools on improving progress in mathematics given that this was identified as the subject that, if improved, would have the biggest impact on improving the combined figure for students leaving high school with a good pass (Grade 5 or above) in both English and mathematics.

In 2019 the LA worked with schools to implement a strategy, supported by an ex-Her Majesty's Inspector who led on mathematics for Ofsted, with links to the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics.

This strategy has increasingly focused on locality data and so will increasingly address some of the inequalities that we see across the borough.

The schools that admit the greatest number of Radcliffe resident pupils are The Derby, The Elton and Philips High. More recently we have been working with these three schools, together with Parrenthorn High on specific school-improvement activity.

In addition, the LA is working with the three secondary schools and Spring Lane School on a social prescription pilot linked to the outcome from the #BeeWell survey of young people. This pilot aims to support young people's wellbeing, through the identification of Wellbeing Champions, enabling the voice of Children and young people to be heard, and raising the aspirations of our young people which is key alongside the delivery of a quality curriculum to improve standards.

Councillor Birchmore asked a supplementary question.

Question 2.1 Supplementary

Going back to the Communities and People's Plan it does say that Pupils from Radcliffe are less likely to go to a school rated good or outstanding. I do have concerns as Radcliffe does not have a High School it does not have a catchment area. I have concerns because they do not have a catchment area, they go to schools that have less demand and sometimes pupils are having to travel outside of the Borough to go to school, and I wonder if anything can be done about that and to get pupils into more local schools?

Answer 2.1

We will be consulting on changes to Secondary Submissions and we are approaching the Multi Academy Trust as many of them follow the Council's own admission process. There is a time lag on school ratings as during the pandemic there was no inspections and therefore, we are awaiting some inspections.