

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

Date of Meeting: 13 November 2025

Present: Councillor C Boles (in the Chair)
Councillors A Arif, D Berry, S Haroon, M Hayes, K Hussain,
J Lancaster and L Ryder

Also in attendance: Councillor S Arif
Ben Dunne, Director of Education and Skills
Rachel Everitt, Elections Manager
Jeanette Richards – Executive Director, Children & Young People
Tracey Staines, Head of Youth Justice and Complex Safeguarding
CYP Representative

Public Attendance: 7 Members of the public attended the meeting

Apologies for Absence: Councillor U Farooq, Councillor E FitzGerald and Councillor J Grimshaw

CYP.77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are noted above.

CYP.78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CYP.79 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 16 September 2025 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

CYP.80 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were received in advance of the meeting.

The following questions were asked at the meeting

Kiera Delaney explained that in the Department for Education and NHS England Stocktake Letter to Bury Council (July 2025), the local area was recognised for making structural improvements, but the letter also made clear that further work is needed to strengthen data reporting and oversight including how the Council monitors the delivery of EOTAS and AP packages and demonstrates the actual impact of its actions.

Stocktake Letter, July 2025, p. 3–4 — “It remains essential to enhance data reporting capabilities”

The Ofsted SEND Inspection Report (February 2024) found inconsistent recording and monitoring of annual reviews and highlighted weaknesses in the timeliness of support and data accuracy.

Ofsted Local Area SEND Inspection Report, Feb 2024, p. 6–7 — “Leaders do not have reliable oversight of”

The Bury SEND Partnership Self-Evaluation and Annual Engagement document (October 2025) notes that, while the local area has “taken purposeful and effective action,” there is “still more to do to ensure every child, young person and their families receives the support they need, when they need it.”

That same report confirms 69 children are currently placed in Alternative Provision, though it does not specify how many are receiving a full-time, suitable education.

Kiera asked:

1. What is the current verified data, as of November 2025, showing:

- How many children and young people with EHC Plans are not receiving their full Section F provision;
- How many with EOTAS named have their full package implemented and regularly monitored;
- Of the 69 children in Alternative Provision, how many receive a full-time, suitable education; and
- The percentage of annual reviews completed within statutory timescales, and amended plans issued within 12 weeks of the review meeting?

2. Given that the DfE requires councils to demonstrate impact rather than planning, when will Bury publish verified evidence of measurable improvement — not just new structures or processes — showing that every child with an EHC Plan, including those educated otherwise than at school, is receiving their legal provision in full and on time?

Finally, I'd note that I raised a similar question in March 2025 regarding the Council's reported 97% compliance rate for EHCP assessments completed within 20 weeks, but no written response or supporting data has yet been provided.

Will the Committee ensure that both that information and the data requested tonight are published in full, so that members and the public can see the actual evidence of improvement?

The Executive Director Children and Young People explained that work was ongoing to ensure that data was collected accurately and was fully transparent. The Minutes of the Send Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB) meetings are published. Progress has been made to move to a position where we are collating the data alongside the key priority areas for full transparency.

Progress has been made behind the scenes to share data out in a way that is underscored and aligned to our key priorities.

With regards to the child-by-child specific data requested, the information will be provided in a direct response.

The Executive Director referred to the question asked at the meeting of the Committee in March 2025 and made assurance that the response would be provided.

- Kiran Hampson referred to fortnightly review meetings that were being held for parents of children awaiting tribunals. Kiran asked how many meetings were held, what was the purpose of the meetings, is there the opportunity for the Local Authority to agree changes to section 59 before the tribunal and if so what circumstances would lead to that outcome.
- Kiran also referred to new staff that were now in place and asked what steps had been taken to ensure that they were genuinely child focussed and empathetic and passionate in their approach to both children parents.

The Executive Director explained that she would ensure that a response was sent directly in relation to the question of fortnightly meetings.

With regards to the issue of challenges around communication, trust and confidence in was explained that this was at the centre of what the service was trying to achieve. There is still work to do to ensure that there is timely communication back to parents. Work is ongoing about how best to respond, and the service are looking to implement a multi-agency triage team that will be available to respond to requests in a more timely way. There is more to do in improving communication and in relation to ensuring that the workforce is child centred.

It was also explained that if there is recruitment to any positions from team manager or above, young people are part of that recruitment process.

The Executive Director also explained the role of the Change Maker group of young people who are working alongside the service to hold it to account and that this has been hugely impactful.

There was still a lot of work to undertake, and it was recognised that the service needs to do better but hopefully improvement were being seen.

- Sarah Morris referred to the recent 'Every Pair tells a Story' Protest that had been held nationally on 3rd November and which she had attended outside Bury Town Hall. A question had been raised at the meeting of Council on 13 November asking when the council will investigate all of the families that are being failed. The answer had been that 'we are improving'. Sarah asked when the families would be investigated.

The Director of Early Years stated that too many children were being let down, and this was not good enough, things were improving but not at a fast enough pace. It would not be possible to refer to each case by case but a strategic plan was in place and work was being done to improve the system going forward.

Jacqueline Daley explained that she had submitted a complaint regarding Children's Services which had taken 9 months to be dealt with which was passed the deadline for complaints.

It was explained that some complaints were more difficult to respond to due to the nature of the complaint and the complexity of the nature of the complaint.

The service have been reviewing systems and processes recently within children's services and working in partnership with the complaints team, and we've now established and much more robust tracking mechanism across those complaints. This is helping the Council to better understand our response and ensuring that as far as possible, we are keeping on track.

CYP.81 MEMBER QUESTIONS

Councillor Shahbaz Arif referred to a post that he had seen on social media regarding a child with ADHD that had been out of school for a period of time and asked what the Council was doing to make sure that SEND children who were out of school were found suitable support and education.

The Director of Early Years explained that EOTAS were in place for when children were not in a mainstream setting and the team that worked with children in this situation aimed to get them back into mainstream as soon as possible. There were children that were out of mainstream, but the team were committed to work with all young people across Bury.

CYP.82 YOUTH JUSTICE REPORT

Tracey Staines, Head of Youth Justice and Complex Safeguarding presented a report setting out the Youth Justice Business Plan 2025- 2026.

Bury and Rochdale Youth Justice Service amalgamated in 2014, and the partnership board is chaired by the Director of Bury Children's Services, with the Assistant Director of Rochdale Children's Services as co-chair. Strategically and operationally partners are drawn from both boroughs.

Bury retained responsibility for the Youth Justice Prevention element following the merge. There are close links and working relationships between the two services to ensure that we are identifying need at the earliest opportunity. One of our key priority areas is early identification of young people who may be at risk of offending, to intervene early and reduce the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice service.

The Youth Justice Plan 2025/2026 was agreed by the Youth Justice Board in July 2025, and sets out the priorities for this financial year, in addition to the proposed outcomes for children and young people open to the service.

Issues covered in the business plan include:

- a. the need for a Bury town centre base for the service,
- b. higher numbers of children in Bury's care open to the service
- c. higher numbers of Bury children with EHCPs and identified SEND being worked with by the Youth Justice Service
- d. the disproportionality of some ethnic groups within the cohort of young people supported by the service

The Business plan notes performance against national key performance measures, with the number of first time entrants falling and the reoffending rate and custody rate being lower than the regional or GM average in Bury and Rochdale.

The plan also notes key risks, which include:

- a. Inconsistent attendance at the Partnership Board, with a change in governance structure being implemented to address this issue
- b. Differential access to expert additional resource as part of the Youth Justice offer, with Bury children not having access to a dedicated CAMHs practitioner, or a Educational Attendance specialist, or a Speech and Language Therapist

c. The absence of a seconded probation officer for children moving between children and adult youth justice services.

Six priority areas for 2025/26 are identified within the plan:

- a. Governance & Leadership
 - b. Prevention and Diversion
 - c. Remand, Custody and Resettlement
 - d. Victims and Restorative Justice
 - e. Serious Violence and Harmful Sexual Behaviour
 - f. Quality Assurance and Workforce Development
- and these broadly map to the inspection framework for Youth Justice Services.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Ayesha Arif referred to the number of BME young people referred to and working with the Youth Justice Team and asked how the team could assure that staff working with these young people were representative of and sensitive to their needs.

It was confirmed that the workforce was culturally representative of the young people it supported. One of the concerns that was beyond the teams' control was disproportionality at the referral source before they reach youth justice. The workforce are trained and have completed all of the cultural, relevant training in relation to biodiversity and how to support meeting the needs of the child throughout their time with the Youth Justice Team. The supervision framework has been developed to ensure that the young person is talked to in a reflective way, looking at social graces and intersectionality and agree through supervision how to work with the child and their family to ensure that it is meaningful more impactful and respectful.

- Councillor Hayes referred to the significant disparity between the provisions in Bury and in Rochdale, in particular the fact that there was no purpose built centre in Bury for young people to attend to meet professionals and secondly, there's a disparity in terms of the number of professionals in Rochdale when compared to the number in Bury, Bury is depleted in comparison to Rochdale.
- The YP representative also referred to the lack of a facility for young people to go to in Bury, and that this was currently under review and asked for an update on this, including how much would it cost, how long will it take and whether a location had been identified.

Tracey explained that in terms of the disparity between staff, the issue had been raised at the Youth Justice Partnership Board and was explained that it was with regards to partners as opposed to the Justice staff themselves.

The aspiration was to have a walk-in centre that can be accessed without an appointment as part of a family hub. Colleagues within the BGI directorate were currently looking at different options. The cost and timescales were currently unknown due to the question of location still being considered.

Tracey explained that the expertise that we already have in the service was utilised with regards to the place and space, staff were promoted to go and see children at home and to also take them out to different places. Whilst there might not be a location and building currently, the young people were seen at locations they were comfortable with.

- Councillor Boles referred to the numbers of young people that were being supported by the YJB who were in the NEET category and asked why it was felt that a sub group should look at the issue. He also asked whether any consultation work had been done with the young people themselves as to why they were not in education, employment or training?

Tracey explained that the figures refer to 'suitable' education or employment which reflects 25 hours or more which could mean that some young people are in employment, education or training but for less than 25 hours a week which makes the figures misleading. A survey/consultation hasn't been undertaken but it was explained that the team hold regular reviews with the young people to get their views on where they are best suited in relation to activities and education

Jeanette explained that the subgroup decision was reached through discussion across the partnership and to look at working with the young people to look at the current offer and how the partnership were working together and what could be done differently. The relationships between the young people at the youth justice practitioners was very strong due to the small number of young people and the high level of support they received.

It was agreed:

1. That the contents of the report be supported for onward submission to Cabinet.
2. That an update in relation to the dedicated purpose built centre be brought back to a future meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
3. That a dialogue is opened with young people using the Youth Justice Service who are classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) to gather their input on the barriers preventing them from engaging in employment, education, or training.

CYP.83 SEND - RELATING TO OFSTED SELF EVALUATION

Ben Dunne Director of Education and Skills presented a report which had been produced following Bury's local area SEND services Inspection by the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted. The inspection team identified widespread, systemic failings in services and highlighted the challenge that the service need to do more to improve the outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs.

The inspection identified 6 priority actions which Bury Council and NHS Greater Manchester ICB are jointly responsible for, along with 3 areas for improvement. As a result of the inspection outcome, the local authority has been issued with an

Improvement Notice and will be subject to monitoring visits followed by a re-inspection in approximately 18 months.

As a result of the inspection outcome, the Bury local area has produced a Priority Action Plan, which is locally being referred to as the Priority Impact Plan (PIP).

The PIP has been co-produced with stakeholders, including parents and carers and is the strategic plan for SEND, setting out what needs to be delivered in the next 18-24 months with key milestones and key performance indicators. The plan is published on the Bury SEND Local Offer.

Support for the delivery of the Priority Impact Plan has been supported through additional investment by the council and the ICB – this will support the programme management and governance but also address some of the critical deficits identified in the report. The level of investment secured is approximately £450,000 a year.

Bury Council has also applied for Intervention Support Fund (ISF), which is a targeted grant provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to support local authorities in England that are under formal intervention to bolster resources and further support the implementation of the Priority Impact Plan (PIP). A response to the grant application is currently awaited and further information, should this be granted at the next Scrutiny Committee.

The report set out the following information:

- Governance Arrangements
- Monitoring Arrangements
- SEND Service Launch, embedding 'Deep Dive' activities

The conclusion of the report was that the Local Area SEND Partnership is continuing in its commitment to improving services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The SIAB has received assurance that we are progressing, in accordance with the commitments set out in the Local Area SEND Priority Impact Plan. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done, and it is essential that we maintain a consistent pace and ensure that we capture the impact for our children, young people and their families and that this is sustained throughout

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Lancaster referred to changes to ADHD/Autism assessments due to start in January that she had been made aware of for through Bury Together in relation to CAHMS assessments for children assessed to have moderate or severe mental health conditions. Concerns had been raised that some children may not meet the assessment criteria and will not get as assessment for ADHD/autism via the NHS.

Jeanette Richards explained that Bury Together are key strategic partners. The issue has been discussed at the SIAB where it was agreed that more detailed

information did need to be presented back to the community. It was recognised that changes bring additional uncertainty and Children's Services will be looking to provide assurance.

- Councillor Haroon referred to feedback from parents in relation to the Local Offer and asked how it had been received.

Jeanette reported that the level of feedback had improved.

Jeanette also explained that funding for Beebot AI technology had been secured to help create a more intuitive local offer that would be more widely available to those with additional needs. The council would be moving to consulting with families that would use it which would support the procurement, designing and building a system.

Ben Dunne explained that the need was to move from a system that was adversarial to one that was supportive in nature and also looking at how the family hubs are used to engage directly with families.

It was also explained that access and communication with families in formats other than digital was a priority and making sure that all information was available across many formats.

- Councillor Boles asked when the improvements would start to be seen.

Jeanette stated that improvements would hopefully start to be seen before the end of the year.

- Councillor Ryder referred to PIP5 relating to transitions and primary schools inputting this information and the fact that the 6into7 system was funded up to September 2026. She asked what would happen after that date.

Ben explained that the system had been well received and would be continued. Ben Explained that funding would be requested from the delegation through the schools' forum.

- Councillor Hayes referred to the intervention support fund and the outcome currently being awaited. He asked when the decision would come through how significant was it?

It was explained the council had made an application to the Department for Education for additional improvement monies through the intervention support fund. It had been a rigorous process. The Council had received the news in September that they had successfully secured £160,000 to support with improvement. The next steps would need to be planned. The funding will be used to improve communication with parents and carers, to pilot a multi-agency triage team and also improve data reporting. It was explained that the DfE would be looking for the demonstrative impact of the funding.

Jeanette also reported that a separate grant of £70,000 had been received and would be used to support on going co-production and consultation with the

changemaker group of young people who have lived experience of SEND. The group are coming forward with innovative ideas around how to improve SEND services.

Ben reported that the Education and Inclusion Strategy had been launched the previous week and was very well attended by headteachers and change of the changemakers who spoke to the headteachers directly and asked how they would support a younger version of him over the next ten years.

- Councillor Boles asked if there was confidence that the way the Local Offer was defined was the same across all departments and schools?

It was explained that there was still work to be done but the strategies around sharing information in all formats, the development of a video that will be widely circulated and the networks that are being developed with schools and senior leaders would help get the information to as many people and organisations as possible.

It was also explained that all of the SENCOs had been brought together at an event at the end of September and 95% of schools were represented

It was agreed:

1. That the update be noted
2. That Jeanette and Ben be thanked for their update

CYP.84 SOCIAL CARE REFORM UPDATE

The Executive Director of Children and Young People presented a report giving an overview of the Social Care Reforms and the approach to implementation in Bury.

Following publication of the independent review of children social care in May 2022, the government outlined a commitment to deliver transformational whole-system reform as set out in their 'Stable Homes, built on love' Strategy.

The social care reforms have four overarching outcomes:

- Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need.
- Children and young people are supported by their family network.
- Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes.
- Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.

The Policy Framework was set out within the report:

- May 2022 – publication of Josh Macalister's Independent Review of Children's Social Care
- February 2023 – publication of the Stable Homes, Built on Love Strategy, the Government's implementation strategy for improving social care.
- December 2023 – publication of four key publications, outlining the changes, actions and plans to support delivery of the strategy:
 - National kinship strategy 'Championing Kinship Care'
 - Children's Social Care National Framework

- Refreshed multi-agency statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
 - Digital and data strategy
- November 2024 - Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive policy paper published, which the Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill will put aspects of the reforms into law.
- December 2024 – Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill introduced into Parliament.
- March 2025 – Families First Partnership Programme Guide published setting out delivery expectations for safeguarding partners in England to support national rollout from April 2025.

It was explained that the Family First Partnership guidance was shared in April 2025 and set out the expectations to transform the whole system of help, support, and protection, requiring safeguarding partners to bring together targeted early help, child in need and multi-agency child protection into a seamless system, including services and workforces such as family support workers, social workers, and other highly-skilled, experienced, alternatively qualified practitioners. The intention is that children, young people and their families can receive the right level of support at the right time to meet their needs.

The three key delivery strands to the FFPP are:

- Family Help
- Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)
- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

Nationally, £523 million has been provided for the FFP Programme in 2025-26 and this will continue in each year of the Spending Review period (£523m each year from 2026-27 – 2028-29). This money will fund additional children's social care prevention services, and commitments in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to improve help and protection for children.

Bury has been allocated £900,000 for each of the next 3 years with an additional transformation grant of £127,000 to support transformation activity across the partnership. Spending of the grant is monitored through quarterly returns to DfE/MHCLG.

The DfE have outlined their expectation that 2025-26 is the year of transformation as local areas invest time and resource into local design in the first stage of the programme. In June, Bury submitted phase 1 delivery plans to the DfE setting out leads from the safeguarding partners and first stage plans for co-design and readiness planning. Phase 2 of the delivery plan must be submitted by 19th December 2025.

There have been two immersive partnership workshops, supported by our DfE Delivery Partner Mutual Ventures, to socialise the reforms and established a shared vision for local implementation. A planning workshop with the delegated safeguarding partners – Social Care, Health, Police & Education – has taken place to agree our approach to implementation. This has considered Bury's profile of need, geographical areas and strengths in the current system which are enablers to support pilot and implementation of the reforms.

Significant progress has already been made in relation to Family Group Decision Making which will be the first implementation strand in Bury. This will include the scaling up of the current team to provide Family Group Decision Making and Family Network Meetings earlier on in a family's journey through the system (Spring 2026).

The MACPT will be piloted followed by a Family Help team, allowing the opportunity to learn from each pilot before moving to full implementation.

The aim to pilot these from Spring 2026 as we work over coming weeks and months with partners to understand the pathways for children and families and consider how the pilots will be resourced and delivered. There are significant changes in this space, which will require a reconfiguration and restructure of services across the partnership (including children's social care) due to changes in how certain functions must be delivered and the changes in roles.

Once the learning from both pilots is fully understood more detailed plans can be developed for full implementation throughout 2026 and 2027.

Significant IT system changes are required to support the reforms, with DfE guidance to the system providers expected in November 2025. It is currently unclear what elements of the system will be required to be configured by the provider, versus what we will have to design and configure locally. System access will also need to be extended to partners to enable access to assessments and plans which will require development with dedicated resource.

Any redesign of service or delivery must involve staff, children and families (this is a national requirement) and other stakeholders to ensure the revised system reflects the views and needs of our borough. We have already begun to discuss the reforms with staff via engagement sessions and Extended Manager Meetings, and this will continue.

Councillor Southworth confirmed that this was long awaited and would be a big and a welcomed change.

- Councillor Boles referred to the Family First Partnership Programme and explained that he couldn't see any KPI's or measures of impact and asked if it was known when these would be available.

Jeanette explained that the information included in the papers was the first step. The measures of impact would likely be details of numbers, fewer children in with child protection plans, fewer children becoming looked after or if they are within kinship care.

It was explained that ideally there would be a shorter period of engagement as delivery is more impactful and a reduction of repeat demand.

Jeanette explained that an outcome framework would be created to monitor and this will be included in the plan.

- Councillor Boles asked that a briefing note showing how success would be measured is provided at the next meeting.

- Councillor Haroon referred to potential barriers to success and asked how these would be overcome.

Jeanette explained that there would be a sequence of potential challenges in relation to implementation of change, high volumes of demand across the system and also the funding envelope which was £900,000 for 3 years and that may not be enough. It would be tough work but the workforce would be fully supported and joint working across the board will also support the challenges.

- Councillor Berry asked if this was a welcomed change and if there would be any negative impact?

Jeanette reported that many aspects were welcomed, keeping families together, addressing parental issues and worries, kinship arrangements. There were worries around supporting practitioners and the need to make sure that they have the skills set and that management is appropriate. It was explained that this is why the pilot approach to monitor impact and bring learning into the process would be valuable. It would be a significant change over 3 years so will be incremental.

- Councillor Lancaster asked how staffing and recruitment was looking now.

It was explained that there was still some work to do with regards to SEND. Early Help and Social Care was in a much better place than it had been with regards to Managers and Senior leaders, the use of agency staff had reduced which was positive for both the workforce and the families.

It was agreed:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That a briefing note showing how success will be measured in relation to the implementation of the reforms is brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

CYP.85 CHILDRENS SERVICES COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Elections Manager presented a report setting out the Children's Social Care Complaints for years 22/23, 23/24 & 24/25

The Annual Complaints Reports have been produced in accordance with 24(D) & 26 of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and statutory guidance for the Department for Education, Getting the best from complaints to update Members in respect of complaints to Children's Social Care Services.

The reports look at the period March 2022 – March 2023 and March 2023 – March 2024 and will allow Members to see the extent and complexity of Children's Social Care Service's span of activity and to receive information relating to the quality of the services delivered.

- Councillor Hayes referred to repeat and vexatious complaints and asked how many there were.

It was explained that the figure changed year on year. Repeat complaints do take up a lot of time and impacts on the IG team and the Children's Services Team particularly in relation to FOIs and SARs as people use different channels to submit them including the Council, Councillors and MPs.

All complaints are logged as individual complaints and if a complainant then adds more issues to the complaint this could then be classed as a new complaint and would start at stage 1 in order to investigate. A complainant could have several complaints open at once being dealt with at different stages of the process.

- Councillor Boles asked what learning was taken from complaints and whether this would improve outcomes.

It was explained that the responsible manager would be required to identify any learning that can be taken from the complaints and share this with their teams.

Headlines from the complaints team are shared back across Children's Services, across Education and across Social Care. Information is also translated back into workforce development planning and the relevant teams and also sits alongside the wider improvement plan.

There are key areas linked to complaints which are learning points including expectations and communication and what skills can be utilised to communicate better with customers.

- The YP representative asked if there was a strategy in place to reduce complaints.

It was explained that complaints provide important feedback and learning. The relevant teams will take the opportunity to have a face to face conversation at the first point that the complaint is made to be able to review the situation.

- Councillor Berry referred to the silent protest that had been held nationally to raise awareness for children with SEND and the fact that this could be seen as a complaint. He asked if a response would be sent in relation to this.

Jeannette reported that a response was being prepared in relation to the protest and this would be sent through the Communications Team.

It was agreed:

That the contents of the report be noted

CYP.86 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business raised at the meeting.

COUNCILLOR C BOLES

Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm)