

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 1
November 2022

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: A Burrow, Y Clements, B Donnelly, S Gethen, D Gibbin (Chairman), J Hamilton, A Mackenzie, L McCarthy, A Rebeiro, J Tildesley, B Groom, S Freeman and S Golby

Officers: James Hughes, Pete Campbell, Delyth Berni, Ioana Payne, Ben Fegghi, Ann Pearson and Diane Rhoden.

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTING INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Cllr L McCarthy declared an interest to the Chairman.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting were received as an accurate record and approved.

4. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no questions or deputations received.

5. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ALTERNATIVE AND SPECIALIST PROVISION IN SOLIHULL

Ann Pearson, Team Leader – School Places Planning, presented the report.

Questions were as follows:

- Cllr J Tildesley – On p.20 2.2 it is mentioned we have submitted a further Special Free School Bid. Where would we be looking at placing the school and how would it be set up?
 - Ann Pearson – The bid went in just before the half term for the school which would offer another 150 places. There is a lot of feasibility work going on at the moment around finding suitable land. Setting up the new school would take 4-5 years, so we need to have plans to meet demand in the interim which are underway. But for every 1 child we send to external provision we can fund 2 in our own provision so there is a clear benefit to this in tackling overspending.
- Cllr J Hamilton – Do we have the numbers for those who are not attending mainstream or special schools?
 - Ann Pearson – I don't have them to hand but I can provide a written response.
ACTION: Ann Pearson to provide the numbers of children who are not attending mainstream schools.
- Do you know the number of children who have been excluded since the start of the new school year?

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- Ann Pearson – I don't have those to hand but would be happy to get a written response to you.
ACTION: Ann Pearson to provide the numbers of children who have been excluded since the start of the new school year.
- Cllr L McCarthy – What is being done to support those who can't access education but do not want to come off roll?
 - Ann Pearson – There is a new service focusing on inclusion and they are now working to get to understand the detail of each child's circumstances and how they can support them to access the education that is right for them.
- Cllr L McCarthy – There have been cases that I have encountered where the Council has worked with a family to help a child access the right education, but it hasn't worked. It used to be that the child could then access a personal budget to support with accessing online resources via a private provider. Is this still the case?
 - Ann Pearson – I would have to seek clarification on that and come back to you.
ACTION: Ann Pearson to seek clarification and provide a written response to Cllr L McCarthy.
- Stephanie Freeman – On p.32 Refresh is mentioned. How many children have been supported by Refresh so far? How many children are there currently? As these placements are part time how much time are children actually spending at Refresh? What has been the outcomes for children that have been supported by refresh so far?
 - Ann Pearson – I will provide a written response.
ACTION: Ann Pearson to seek clarification and provide a written response to Stephanie Freeman.
- Stephanie Freeman – There are some gaps in provision from reading the Draft Alternative Provision Commissioning Strategy.
 - Ann Pearson – These are points we would really welcome in the consultation, and I would encourage you to feed them back into that piece of work.
- Cllr S Gethen – On p.19 Action 1 – Can I seek clarity that this wouldn't include those families that have elected to home educate their children?
 - Ann Pearson – This is only for on roll children.
- Cllr S Gethen – Does the Council fully grasp that some children just can't go into school? Is there more that the Council can do to work more cohesively with parents to provide better support for them at home and work to identify the right provision for those who feel they are being 'forced' into home schooling because the system isn't working for them as it is but do want to send their children into education provision.
 - Cllr D Gibbin – I think that a meeting with someone in the home education department to discuss some of the issues that have been raised tonight would be useful.
ACTION: James Hughes to facilitate meeting with interested members and an officer from the Home Education Department.
 - Ann Pearson – I think on the second point the work of the new inclusion service should be picking up on this and working with those families to work through the barriers stopping the parents sending their children into provision where they want to but currently feel they can't.
- Cllr Y Clements – On p.20 2.1 the point highlights how early intervention really is key in helping address issues before they escalate. When is the Council going to be doing more early intervention work?

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- Ann Pearson – There is a lot of work ongoing within the Council to look at our early intervention offer as we recognise the impact this can have both on children and the costs to the Council.
- Cllr Y Clements – On p.22 point 8 in the table – Would out of borough children still be able to apply for a specialist place?
 - Ann Pearson – Yes, they would as we can't discriminate on the basis of location.
- Sajida Golby – For the figures in 1.7 how many are NEET?
 - Ann Pearson - Those figures are relating to children on roll.
- Sajida Golby – How many are actually accessing/attending college or other FE institutions?
 - Ann Pearson – That is more of an attendance question, and I would need to follow up on that.
ACTION: Ann Pearson to provide attendance figures.
- Cllr A Mackenzie – I think we must recognise the massive amount of change and disruption children have gone through in the last 2/3 years and the impact that this has had. On 1.2 it talks about supporting mainstream schools – does this mean that support looks like more teaching assistants going into schools to support children?
 - Ann Pearson – One of the pieces of work that is going on at the moment is the strategy for inclusive education in the 0-25 service and that is working with schools to look at what the barriers are and how they can overcome them. There is a toolkit being developed so schools can audit how well they are working with families so there will be a range of measures for each child depending on where they are on their journey.
- Cllr D Gibbin – What happens if the bid to the Department for Education isn't successful?
 - Ann Pearson – There are lots of plans being looked at so that we have as many options as possible and we will be looking at doing everything possible to support children.
- Cllr D Gibbin – When will we know if the bid has been successful?
 - Ann Pearson – We should know by Spring 2023.

Decision Recommended

To note the ongoing work being undertaken to develop specialist and alternative provision places in Solihull.

RESOLVED:

The committee unanimously agreed to note the ongoing work being undertaken to develop specialist and alternative provision places in Solihull.

6. FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL - UPDATE ON THE LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Diane Rhoden, Director of Nursing – Safeguarding and Quality, introduced the report which focussed on the local recommendations and actions taken only.

Questions were as follows:

- Cllr D Gibbin – On 1.2 is it fair to say that the funding of the LSCP board is fair and equitable for all partners?

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- Diane Rhoden – This is something that the business board is looking at and reviewing.
- Cllr D Gibbin – In terms of the violence reduction partnership work – the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership has been established for a while now since its formation violent crime has continued to rise quite heavily. Is it achieving its goals?
 - Diane Rhoden – With respect I don't think I can answer that question.
- Cllr D Gibbin – Is the street triage service still running?
 - Diane Rhoden – Yes, it is.
- Stephanie Freeman – On p.43 1.13.3(b) it talks about staff being complaint with their level 3 safeguarding training by the end of June 2022. Has this been completed?
 - Diane Rhoden - Yes, all staff are now complaint with their training.
- Stephanie Freeman – On p.43 1.14(c) there is talk of the SOLAR monthly triage calls. What does this actually involve? From experience in the work, I do it is not the case that these calls aren't happening. Are these calls just for those under safeguarding or is it everybody?
 - Diane Rhoden – So my understanding is that it isn't just for children under safeguarding it should be for everyone, but I will have to come back to you as I will have to contact Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust and ask them to provide an update.
ACTION: Diane Rhoden to contact BSMHFT for an update and circulate it.
- Cllr A Mackenzie – Do you now have confidence that all partners are sharing information with one another?
 - Diane Rhoden – I can never be 100% confident but there has been a real positive change and improvement. This has been driven by how we have laid out the MASH with all the partners in the same place, so it is easier to get up and walk over to another agency and share the information. I am more convinced than before that proper information sharing is taking place.
- Cllr A Mackenzie – Do all the partners turn up willingly and contribute?
 - Diane Rhoden – Yes in the MASH I am confident they do – but there is work to be done elsewhere to improve relationships.
- Cllr L McCarthy – What happens when a call has been made and is deemed to be malicious?
 - Delyth Berni – That information is recorded and triangulated to partners. However, if there was to be a 2nd call from the same person that would be treated as a new call and explored and investigated again with fresh eyes and wouldn't be written off straight away as a malicious call.
- Cllr J Tildesley – There has been the announcement of Sir Alan Wood being appointed as our commissioner – what does this mean for the service?
 - Pete Campbell – We have a meeting with Sir Alan W/C 14th November after OFSTED have left us and we will be working with him to support the improvement journey.
 - Cllr D Gibbin – It would be good for the board to arrange a meeting with Sir Alan to discuss his role and thoughts so that we can support his work too.
ACTION: James Hughes to facilitate meeting between Sir Alan and the CSESSB.
- Cllr A Burrows – Are you confident that the CAMHS service is delivering what it should be?

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- Diane Rhoden – I have been assured that the service is doing what should be done.
- Sajida Golby – What work is being done to engage with the 3rd sector around thresholds?
 - Diane Rhoden – The Task and Finish Group are multiagency and need the input from Childrens Services from the practice perspective to make sure we have the processes right first. But there is always more we can do to reach out to the 3rd sector and hear their perspectives.
- Cllr A Rebeiro – On p.39 1.6.1(a) Do Adult Health and Social Care share data into the Childrens Services if something was flagged with them and the person had a child?
 - Diane Rhoden – Health do feed into conversations we have and of course hold information that could be relevant to a child. This would be more of an internal SMBC matter though so I would pass over to Delyth.
 - Delyth Berni – There is a connected route between the departments, but we are looking at how we can shift to a whole family approach and the models of service that work for this approach. This will develop over time, but I am confident that the 'shoots' are there for a better connected route between the departments.
- Cllr Alan Rebeiro – Is it an automatic sharing of information when a referral is made in Adults?
 - Delyth Berni – I would need to look at what the formal connectivity is now and come back to you.
ACTION: Delyth Berni to provide what connectivity routes/procedures are in place and circulate.

Decision Recommended

For assurance that the work around the National Panel recommendations is ongoing and being monitored via the CSPR subgroup of the LSCP.

Cllr D Gibbin asked members if they would be happy to amend the decision to 'The board unanimously notes the report of the CSPR subgroup of the LSCP.' The board agreed.

RESOLVED:

The Board unanimously notes the report of the CSPR subgroup of the LSCP.

7. CHILDRENS SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/JTAI UPDATE

Ben Fegghi and Pete Campbell introduced the report. Ben Fegghi drew attention to the fact that the CSESSB had requested two reports; one into the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and one on the Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull Plan (IOfCiSP). The plan presented to the board this evening is an amalgamation of the JTAI actions, IOfCiSP and the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and this is why it was one item.

Questions were as follows:

- Cllr J Tildesley – Theme 1 (1.8) I have done some research on the salaries we are advertising for Social Workers compared to other local authorities. Should we be doing more to make ourselves more competitive?
 - Iona Payne – We have been doing work on benchmarking our salaries compared to the other 14 local authorities that are local to the West Midlands to make sure we remain competitive. However, the feedback

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we are getting is that it isn't all about the money – social workers want to feel supported by senior staff and have manageable caseloads so we are looking to do all we can to make Solihull an attractive place to work.

- Cllr L McCarthy – On p.55 1.9, p62 3.5 and p.63 2.14 the action owners is the AD for Highways & Environment – is that correct?
 - Ben Fegghi – Yes that is correct – although it may seem odd the actions mainly relate to governance issues and at the time the Chief Executive had asked the AD to help out due to capacity. It is my understanding though that these actions will be migrated back to the Childrens Services DLT in time.
- Councillor A Rebeiro – My first question relates to p.58 2.16 'Children are involved in the oversight of and activities relating to Childrens Social Care'. The action is to appoint an officer and develop a team of Childrens champions. I thought we had this well underway?
 - Iona Payne – We do have the OVOS service which is supported by 2 participation officers. At the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, we looked at how we can take forward Childrens Champions across all departments in the Council.
- Cllr A Rebeiro – On p.59 2.21 the improvement need, and action are the exact same wording. Why is this?
 - Ben Fegghi – We can look at amending the wording to make it clear what the action is from the need.
- Cllr Y Clements – Are we looking at how we could utilise apprenticeships to help staffing in the sector?
 - Pete Campbell – I don't have the detail of what the Council is doing in regard to apprentices yet but there is a lot of work going on nationally to introduce people to the industry. Some of the initial feedback we have had from OFSTED inspectors relates to the protected first year in industry for newly qualified social workers and OFSTED has been positive about how we support them. The issue we have as a sector at the moment across all areas of Local Government is the transition of permanent staff working as agency staff.
- Cllr Y Clements – Can we do more to survey the agency staff we are using on why they made the move and what the attraction is to them?
 - Pete Campbell – Yes we can look at doing this if it isn't already being done.
- Cllr D Gibbin – Can the plan be published on the LSCP website with live up to date timescales and completions?
 - Pete Campbell – We can look into doing this – we may need to amend it to make it more manageable to read and understand.

Decision Recommended

The Board is asked to note the below matters for consideration regarding the Improvement Plan and JTAI Statement of Action, which is attached in Appendix A.

RESOLVED:

The Board unanimously noted the below matters for consideration regarding the Improvement Plan and JTAI Statement of Action, which is attached in Appendix A.

The meeting ended at 8.16 pm