

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March
2022**

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: M Gough (Chairman), M Allen, S Ashraf MBE, M Brain, Y Clements, D Gibbin, J Hamilton, A Mackenzie (Vice-Chairman), N Moses and J Tildesley and Co-opted Member S Freeman.

The following Members joined the meeting remotely:
Councillors L McCarthy, A Rebeiro and Parent Governor S Golby

Officers: Dr Angela Brady - Deputy Chief Medical Officer, BSol CCG
Carol McCauley – Senior Strategic Commissioner Mental Health, BSol CCG
Tim Browne – Interim Director of Children's Services
Pali Obhi - Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Blunt submitted her apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTING INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were submitted.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2022 were presented. The Chairman explained that the minutes needed to be amended, to show that Councillor Ashraf MBE, not Councillor Wilson, was in attendance.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2022 be held as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of the amendment detailed above.

5. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAMS (MHST) IN SOLIHULL

The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer presented the report, which provided an overview of Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) in schools and wider mental health support provided to the Solihull education system by both Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (BSOL CCG) and Solihull MBC.

Members raised a number of queries and observations which, in summary, included the following:

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March 2022

- Members highlighted the significant increase in demand for mental support since the start of the pandemic and queried the feedback from children, young people and schools in regards to the MHSTs.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health confirmed the feedback on the MHSTs had been positive – schools had welcomed the specialist support available, especially for pupils experiencing anxiety returning to and being at school. School staff also welcomed the support, whilst working during the peaks of Covid-19. It was also detailed how the MHSTs adapted their support, according to the individual needs of the children and young people at the schools. The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health also detailed the differences in service provision, whereby Solar included provision for children and young people with higher clinical need, whilst the MHSTs were for pupils with mild to moderate needs and helped support earlier interventions.
- Members questioned the waiting room app referred to in the report. Members also queried the ongoing provision of Kooth in the Borough, the online counselling and support service.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health explained the waiting room app was an umbrella website that was funded by a range of partners. It was explained how it brought together a wide range of resources, including a general directory, self-help and welfare advice. It was also detailed how use of Kooth services had peaked at the height of the pandemic – commissioners were now focusing on future service provision, to ensure young people had a range of options to seek help. It was noted how feedback from service users of Kooth had been positive.
- Members queried the support in place for children, young people and schools not covered by an MHST provision.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health explained the Whole System Mental Health Support in place, whereby schools could seek access to a range of services to support their pupil's mental health and wellbeing. It was noted this included school nurses, the Community Educational Psychology Service (CEPS) and the Inclusion Service.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health detailed that, to increase mental health capacity overall, NHS England had increased funding to Solar. It was emphasised how the recruitment and retention of staff was a significant challenge to all mental health providers. In response, they had looked at innovative approaches to the creation of new jobs roles, whereby they established new posts that were developmental.
- Members flagged up that the report detailed how providers were working with local forums to ensure more decisions about mental health services in the Borough were made collaboratively – they queried whether this included experts by experience.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health explained how, as part of the governance and oversight arrangements, all of this work was reported to the Solihull Children and Young People (CYP) Local Transformation Board. It was confirmed this included parent carers, as experts by experience. The Senior Strategic Commissioner also

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March 2022

explained the role of the Solihull Emotional and Mental Health Steering Group, which again included experts by experience.

- Members detailed how many families in the North of the Borough may be accessing support in Birmingham and queried the cross-border collaboration and working.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health detailed how the Birmingham and Solihull MHST teams held joint meetings, as well as joint training sessions, which included a focus on children and young people receiving cross-border support. It was also noted how there was cross-border work on staffing arrangements.
- Members highlighted how the report stated that NHS England advised how 1 in 8 five to nineteen year olds had a least one mental disorder, when assessed in 2017. They queried the diagnostic arrangements in place for this, including for children and young people who may be neuro-diverse.
- The Deputy Chief Medical Officer explained how the diagnosis of mental health conditions was a constantly evolving field. She detailed how, as commissioners, they looked to ensure providers took into account the latest evidence and liaised closely with the providers who supported neurodevelopmental conditions.
- Members highlighted how the report stated the new Integrated Care System and its partners were committed to supporting communities to tackle health inequalities – they queried the arrangements in place for this.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health explained how, as a provider, when they considered inequalities, they looked to ensure they had all the latest data and intelligence, to understand the experiences of different communities. As part of this, they identified which communities had poorer health outcomes – this information was used to inform future commissioning of services and support. It was explained how this included the use of Mental Health Services data sets, which brought together a wide range of information recorded on clinical systems, as part of patient care.
- Members highlighted how the report detailed that the latest Public Health England 2020 Child Health report found that the numbers of Solihull School pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs they could expect to see would be 1,027 (2.6%) seeking support. It was noted this data was due to be updated on 1st March 2022 – it was agreed for this data to be circulated to the Board.
- A Member detailed feedback they had received on how the Solar website could be difficult to navigate.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health explained how the website was being reviewed by the Children and Young People Mental Health Transformation Board. It was emphasised how Solar's current focus was upon staffing and recruitment; however, an update note on the website could be circulated to the Board, when available.
- Members welcomed how the premise of MHST 2 was to reach the most vulnerable children and young people, including those from groups of

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March 2022

protected characteristics, including BAME, SEND, those who identify as LGBTQ+ and those from faith-based communities. They queried how the team would have the capacity, training and resources to meet this extensive range of need.

- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health emphasised how these MHSTs were part of a whole system approach, including linking with other mental health support services, as required. It was also detailed how the MHSTs were an additional, rather than a replacement or diagnostic service. The Senior Strategic Commissioner also detailed how, as these teams developed, they could build specialisms, where there could be flexibility around how this support was shared across schools. It was also agreed how a whole system approach was essential, whereby children and young peoples' mental health wasn't an issue exclusively for the Health Sector and schools, instead it was everyone's concern.
- Members highlighted how the report stated that the new Integrated Care System for Birmingham and Solihull was committed to new ways of organisations working together. It was queried whether this included voluntary sector organisations.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health confirmed the voluntary and community sector was a crucial partner in providing mental health and wellbeing support across the Borough. She detailed the links between schools, the voluntary sector and health, to help offer children and young people support.
- Members highlighted, as a potential further area for scrutiny, the ongoing mental health support for families who have had to leave Afghanistan or Ukraine. They queried how this was being focused upon by the Mental Health Local Transformation Plan Board, alongside other partners, including the Council.
- The Senior Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health detailed how, along with partners, they considered the needs of children and young people who had sought asylum in the Borough, either as part of a family or as an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC). It was emphasised how, for many of these children and young people, it may take time for the mental health impact to manifest. The Senior Strategic Commissioner detailed the work undertaken with partners, including GPs, Paediatricians and Social Workers, to help identify the necessary support mechanisms.
- Members requested for the mental health support for children and young people who were seeking or had been granted asylum in the Borough to be considered as future work planning.

RESOLVED

The Children's Services, Education and Skills Scrutiny Board:

- (i) Noted the integrated approach to support education providers in Solihull to improve pupils' mental health and wellbeing, the importance of the delivery of the whole school approach;

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March 2022

- (ii) Noted the ongoing system approach to ensure aligned resources to meet the increased demand for support for pupils and parents/carers at the earliest point of need; and
- (iii) Noted the ongoing system work to provide a coherent model of support for the school workforce.
- (iv) Agreed for the latest Public Health England data (1st March 2022) on the number of Solihull School pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs seeking support to be shared with the Board.
- (v) Agreed for the Board to receive a further update on the work being undertaken to develop the Solar website.

6. PROGRESS ON THE DELIVERY OF THE ALL-AGE EXPLOITATION REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOLIHULL

The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager presented the report, which updated the Board on the progress of the delivery of the All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy through the oversight provided by the Exploitation Reduction Board and Exploitation Reduction Delivery Group with respect to supporting children and young people who were victims of or at risk of becoming victims of exploitation.

Members raised the following points and observations:

- Members noted how the update on the work of the Solihull Exploitation Panel (SHEP) identified the themes that had been considered for adults at risk of being exploited. They queried what themes had been considered for children and young people.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained that the themes considered included county lines and criminality, as well as sexual exploitation and criminality. There had also been focus upon the issue of cuckooing, where people looked to take over the home of a vulnerable young person or adult, to facilitate exploitation.
- A Member raised a number of questions covering a range of topics – this included the ongoing development of data sets and the engagement and work undertaken with the voluntary and community sector. It was agreed for a written response to be provided to the Councillor, following the meeting.
- Members noted how the report outlined links with schools to raise awareness of the risk of exploitation – they queried how this took into account children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership provided a range of training modules, including upon exploitation awareness, and it was confirmed schools, and other agencies who supported children and young people with additional needs, accessed this. It was also detailed how local community and voluntary sector organisations, such as Urban Heard, as well as other agencies, provided relevant training and

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March 2022

guidance to schools. The Interim Director of Children's Services explained how they looked to link with the expertise of the special school staff, who knew how to communicate and engage with children and young people with additional needs.

- A Member raised a number of queries, covering a range of subjects – including what information and data may be available in regards to children and young people at risk of forced marriage, as well as those at risk of online grooming in the Borough.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how these queries required a wider partner, multi-agency response – including from partners who supported vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation. It was agreed for these points to be shared with all the relevant partners and for a response to be shared.
- Members queried how Electively Home Educating (EHE) families could access advice and support.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how they looked to share communications, such as those included in the agenda pack, to help the local community, including parents and carers, understand how to access support if they had concerns any child may be at risk of exploitation. The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager confirmed she would link with colleagues at the Council, as well as partners across the region, in regards to the engagement with EHE families.
- Members noted the report made reference to 'Youth' and queried the age bracket this covered.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how the Strategy took account of the statutory duties the Council delivered to different groups of children and young people up to the age of 25. It was also noted that a focus of the Strategy was upon supporting children and young people, as required, as they made the transition into adulthood.
- Members detailed how national evidence demonstrated that children and young people from deprived areas could be at greater risk of exploitation – they queried what information was available locally, in order to understand trends across the Borough.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how they analysed referrals from across the Borough, in order to identify potential hotspot areas for exploitation. It was confirmed an update on this could be circulated to the Board.
- A Member queried the return home interviews held following episodes of children and young people going missing. They also stressed the need for parents and carers to understand the importance of reporting when a child or young person goes missing, including for short periods of time.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how the delivery of these return home interviews was currently being reviewed, to take into account the findings of the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection. She also detailed how they were engaging the charity Mind Of My Own, to develop support that helped children and young

CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD - 3 March 2022

people communicate their views in a way that suited them. She also emphasised how the importance of engaging parents and carers in regards to this service was recognised.

- A Councillor raised queries regarding the National Referral Mechanism devolved decision making pilot. It was noted the panel aimed to make timely, quality decisions by a range of trained safeguarding partners, as appropriate. The Councillor flagged up how, to date, the devolved panel had made 57 decisions, including reasonable and conclusive grounds decisions – they requested further information on this.
- The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how the NRM devolved pilot had been introduced by the Home Office in 2021 and Solihull was one of the participating areas. It was explained how the pilot enabled a range of safeguarding partners, including the local authority, police and health representatives, to determine whether children and young people who may have committed an offence had been subject to exploitation. It was also anticipated the Home Office would publish its findings, following the conclusion of the pilot.
- A Councillor also queried whether it was possible to identify how many arrests and prosecutions had been made as a result of the All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy. The Exploitation, Missing and Youth Justice Service Manager explained how these queries would need to be raised with partner agencies and a response would be circulated in due course.
- Members raised the issue of children and young people living in homes of multiple occupation (HMOs) – they queried how many children lived in HMOs across the Borough. It was confirmed the latest information available on this would be circulated to the Board.

RESOLVED

The Children's Services, Education and Skills Scrutiny Board noted the progress and supported the work undertaken by the by Children's Services and partners to deliver against the priorities outlined in the All-Age Exploitation Reduction Strategy.

End time of meeting: 21:20.