

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

23 AUGUST 2016

QUESTION 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor J Williams to ask the Chair of the Committee:

Education Health & Care Plans

Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans help our teens with special educational needs and disabilities transition into further education after leaving secondary school. The July 28th edition of the Reading Chronicle reported that of the 67 teens the Council should have provided with an EHC plan, none had one in place by the March deadline. Was this accurate, and if so, why was this fact, the reasons for the failure, and the plans in place to correct it, not reported to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee in July?

REPLY by the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee (Councillor McElligott):

There was not a report on this to the July ACE as it was not on the agenda for discussion. NEETs has been on the agenda for Lead Member Briefing.

The new post 16 procedures introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Reforms, are still being embedded in RBC and as with a number of other Local Areas we are working hard to ensure that all Reading students receive a completed EHC plan naming their September education provision by the end of the Summer term. In Reading we are developing processes to ensure that next year all post 16 education provision will be named in each young person's' EHC plan by March 31st.

The new EHC Planning process requires much closer consultation between the family, student, the host school and prospective college placement and places a new responsibility on the LA to seek agreement from all parties prior to naming the provision on the EHC Plan. Although the timescales have not been met, we have been working very closely with each young person, their parents and carers.

Out of the 67 young people who required the completion of the EHC Plan, for post 16 provision by March 2016 51 have been completed. The delay in the remaining 16 is caused by pupils either not confirming their wishes for September or decisions being held until examination results have been published.

In Reading, we believe the new reforms are in the best interests of young people, their parents and carers as it places them at the heart of the planning process.

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QUESTION 2 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor J Williams to ask the Chair of the Committee:

Frequency of ACE Committee Meetings

The 2016-19 Corporate Plan and Budget lists that spending on 'Education and Children's Services' and 'Adult Social Care' combined represents over two thirds of the Annual Budget at 69%. In 2016-17 this will be over £80 million pounds. And yet the ACE committee only meets four times a year. (I understand from the last meeting that this is really only three, because a future meeting is dedicated solely to Education, but there are four in the calendar.) We are here for a special addition to that calendar, but are quarterly meetings appropriate for a Committee with such wide ranging and financially significant responsibilities?

REPLY by the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee (Councillor McElligott):

Thank you Councillor Williams for your question, which raises an issue I have been discussing with officers. You are quite right that the Committee oversees services that constitute a large proportion of the Council's expenditure. The complexity of our services does not necessarily require that we meet more frequently, so long as officers are working within the strategic delivery and policy framework set by the Council and Committees. We operate an efficient system of governance and decision-making, based on appropriate levels of delegation and assurance.

With four ordinary meetings each year, we already meet more frequently than both the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee and the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. However, I will keep this matter under review as we begin planning the meetings timetable for the next municipal year.