

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 19 MARCH 2025

Present: Councillor Mpofu-Coles (Chair);
Councillors Lanzoni (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Cresswell, Davies, Gittings, Griffith, Keane, McEwan, McGoldrick and Nikulina
Apologies: Councillors O'Connell and DP Singh

Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted and celebrated that it had been World Social Work Day on 18 March 2025 and Women's History Month was also taking place in March 2025 with International Women's Day on 8 March 2025.

37. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decisions agreed at the ACE Committee meeting on 15 January 2025 were noted.

38. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

39. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The minutes of the following meeting were received:

Health and Wellbeing Board - 11 October 2024

40. SUSPENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the Task and Finish Group that was established to support work being undertaken to improve schools suspensions and exclusions. The Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference were attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

At its meeting on 15 January 2025 the Committee received an update on the rates of suspensions and exclusions in Reading schools. The update confirmed the next steps being taken to support efforts to reduce the improved position regarding school exclusions, the position regarding suspensions and the actions being taken to reduce school suspension rates in Reading, in particular:

- An invitation to the Chief Executives of priority Trusts to attend ACE Committee to share their plans to promote school inclusion and to reduce suspensions from schools.

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- The establishment of an ACE Task and Finish group to consider what other actions could be taken to reduce suspensions from schools

The Committee were informed that the Task and Finish Group had met on two occasions to scope and plan the focus of the Group. It was noted that the Group would like to investigate best practice, where practice was working well, learning from others and learning from the school community. The Group would be visiting schools and would aim to engage other partners such as Thames Valley Police. It was noted that the Group had already been on two site visits to John Madejski Academy and were due to visit The Wren.

Simon Uttley, Headteacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School, and Co-Chair of the Reading Education Partnership Board; and David Littlemore, Headteacher of Kings Academy Prospect, and Chair of the Reading Schools and Colleges Leaders Forum, were present at the meeting for the item and addressed the Committee and answered questions on their experience of suspensions, exclusions and best practice. The main points noted were:

- Reading Council was a collaborative authority and school leaders worked together.
- Work was being undertaken to seek better solutions and opportunities so that no child was left behind.
- Headteachers worked in partnership in the interests of children and young people.
- Persistent behaviour and physical behaviour affected young people in different ways.
- Working with families, keeping a social contact and having positive relationships with families were important.
- There was a need for additional high quality learning provision for young people that headteachers wanted to be involved in.
- Key drivers were in place to tackle the number of suspensions and these had been reduced.
- Persistent disruptive behaviours were seen every day in schools and support was needed for schools.
- There was a lack of alternative provision and it was suggested that an independent alternative provision would help bring down suspension figures.
- Main stream education was not always the right path for some students which culminated in suspensions.
- Consideration could be given to good practice in other local authorities.
- The alternative education provision should be run by professionals to support students and to help work on behaviours and provide support for special educational needs.

Brian Grady, Director of Education, Brighter Futures for Children, explained that a key priority in the SEND Strategy was around commissioning regarding a local alternative education provision in the borough.

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It was noted that the Chief Executive of the Greenshaw Learning Trust, who were the new trust host for John Madejski Academy would be attending the next meeting.

The Committee asked a number of questions and the following points were noted:

- Headteachers would want to help co-create the alternative provision to provide quality of education over quantity and local accountability.
- There was a balance of supporting children and parents, and providing a duty of care for children that found themselves in trouble.
- Schools provided alternative educational provisions and pathways to avoid suspensions within school.
- A specialist provision would be to provide full time education with core subjects and more vocational subjects.
- The school standards report, that would be considered at the next ACE committee, would identify work being undertaken to consider disproportionality and trying to reduce inequality in the education system.

The members of the Task and Finish Group provided updates and comments on their visits to JMA, the positive experiences at the visits and the changes that were being made to improve education and standards at the school.

The Chair thanked Simon Uttley and David Littlemore for attending the meeting and welcomed them to attend a future meeting to provide future updates.

Resolved -

- (1) That the establishment of a Task and Finish Group regarding suspensions from schools be noted.
- (2) That the updates from the Task and Finish Group and local school Multi Academy Trusts on their plans to promote school inclusion and to reduce suspensions be noted.

41. SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from Rachael Smart, Clinical Lead Nurse, Florey Clinic, Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust on the integrated sexual health service in Reading.

The presentation outlined the scope of services provided by the Florey Clinic, a Level 3 Sexual Health Service based at 21a Craven Road, Reading, with satellite services across the community. The clinic offered Genitourinary Medicine (GUM), contraception, HIV care, and psychosexual counselling.

The presentation included the following points:

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- Trends in STI Diagnoses (2019-2023): Data from national and local sources showed varying rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis across the South East, with a focus on young people aged 15-24.
- Youth Engagement: The clinic had seen a consistent increase in STI testing among under-25s, with internal data showing high testing rates and volumes, particularly among Reading residents.
- Outreach and Innovation: The “Let’s Get to Zero” Bus Project was launched to support the national goal of ending HIV transmission by 2030. The project delivered 24 outreach events, testing 175 individuals—77% of whom were new to the clinic. The campaign was supported by social media and received regional media coverage.
- Future Plans: The clinic aimed to improve public health outcomes by increasing testing uptake, raising awareness of HIV prevention goals, and expanding outreach and digital engagement.

The Committee thanked Rachael for the information and requested that a future update report be provided in a years time.

Resolved - That a future report/presentation be provided to the Committee in 12 months.

Final Comment

(Members of the Committee thanked the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and Education Committee for her contribution over the years.)

(The meeting closed at 8.04 pm)