

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 20 OCTOBER 2021**

Present: Councillors James (Chair), Ballsdon, Carnell, Ennis, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Pearce, Robinson, D Singh, Sokale, Terry and R Williams.

Apologies: Councillors David Absolom and Hoskin.

(Councillor White was unable to attend in person, so attended and contributed remotely via Microsoft Teams, but did not vote on any of the items, in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972)

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ballsdon declared a personal interest in item 16 on the basis that she was Chair of Governors at the Avenue School.

Councillor Ennis declared a personal interest in item 20 on the basis that his mother-in-law was receiving support from the Council's Adult Social Care Service.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

- Health and Wellbeing Board - 19 March and 16 July 2021

14. READING YOUTH COUNCIL

The Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), submitted a report providing an update on how the Youth Council operated in Reading, an overview of how the Youth Council was run and the various roles and responsibilities of different positions within the Youth Council. A copy of the Reading Youth Council Constitution 2020-2023 was appended to the report.

The report explained that the Youth Council were seeking endorsement to promote further the Youth Council across the Borough. The Youth Council Constitution would inform future recruitment, to ensure a wide representation of young people. The Constitution was a three year working document and future reviews would coincide with the planned changes of leadership in the Youth Council.

The Deputy Chair and a member of the Youth Council were present at the meeting answered questions and addressed the Committee. They explained that the work of the Youth Council had been reduced due to the pandemic and although meetings had taken place online engagement with members had been a struggle. Holding online meetings had impacted on membership as virtual meetings were not popular and a campaign was underway to recruit new members. The application process would recommence in February 2022. Three campaigns were being worked on: plastic waste and the environment, mental

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health and transforming education. A campaign on knife crime had taken place previously and a report had been published with Thames Valley Police.

The Chair thanked the members of the Youth Council for attending the meeting and told them that they would be welcome at future meetings of the Committee and any other Council meetings.

Resolved - That the updated Youth Council Constitution and planned recruitment campaigns across Reading schools be endorsed.

15. PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS INTO EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

The Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, Brighter Futures for Children, submitted a report on services that were being provided by Leaving Care, the Virtual School and the Elevate Team within Brighter Futures for Children to children looked after and care leavers and provided an overview of the current picture of children looked after and care leavers aged 16 to 25 years old who had engaged in positive outcomes in education, employment and training (EET). A copy of the report by Brighter Futures for Children was appended to the report.

The report explained that there had been much focus on providing more robust and targeted support to young people in the local authority's care to prevent them becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or to support them to stop being NEET. The aim was to offer a range of training opportunities that combined qualifications with work experience. Communication and support were being expanded so that young people knew about the options and choices outside of college or school to enable them to achieve qualifications and experiences. Communication and local opportunities were being promoted to encourage and enable social workers, leaving care advisers, placement providers and foster carers, support staff to promote actively local provision to young people. Learning and Training providers needed to be accountable in ensuring that good quality provision was delivered to young people, ensuring that they successfully achieved sustained, positive outcomes.

There was also a growing number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who were in need of support with their career planning and further help to fast track them onto ESOL programmes. Work was being carried out with further education providers and other employability programmes to encourage them to support these young people's future career aspirations and progression.

Young people sometimes moved placements, so it was important that there was a more advanced EET plan to support them moving placements and still need transition support to their new EET placement. There had also been a positive and continued take-up of care leavers going to university and the future focus was to increase these numbers. To support this, programmes such as 'Study Higher', a partnership of higher education institutions and further education colleges would be offered alongside university mentoring programmes as well as raising awareness and targeting secondary school students and promoting university open days and alternative Post 16 provision.

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The report explained that another key focus was identifying the reasons for the drop-out rates from Further Education. A Post 16 networking group was being started to support these young people which would bring together a network of partners to work together to offer opportunities to young people. The aim was to have a pan Reading approach to reduce NEET numbers, prevent young people from falling into NEET and promote alternative and vocational pathways to employment or training.

Re-engagement opportunities were promoted to young people who were not ready to access work or formal training due to a history of illness, mental health issues, complex Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) needs and substance misuse and unstable/unsupportive living circumstances. LAS Mindset had been commissioned to offer mentoring and one to one personal gym training and Starting Point matched mentors who focused on young people's confidence and self-esteem offering them social and skills building sessions. Social Workers could also make referrals to the Virtual School Emotional Health and Wellbeing Triage Support Group.

Having a criminal record was a significant barrier and limited access to EET opportunities and Elevate had a careers coach based at the Youth Offending Service (YOS) who worked with YOS officers to engage young people, children looked after and care leavers into EET. Pregnancy/parental responsibility for most young people meant that they were not available for work by their own choice or circumstances, Leaving Care advisors referred young parents who were career planning or ready to work into the Elevate service for advice and support.

Children looked after and care leaver who had been placed out of the Borough did not have consistent support as many other local authorities had very limited NEET services which often excluded care leavers. Elevate researched the local provision for young people who needed more 'hands on support' and aimed to continue to offer a virtual information and guidance session to each young person. Work had also started with Resume Foundation whose job coaches could support young people virtually into EET.

Clare Martin, Post 16 Team Manager, Elevate, attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the participation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training. The presentation explained that EET numbers were increasing but, as at 30 June 2021 Care Leaver data had shown that there was 100% engagement in EET and 0% NEET or not known. Data for children looked after had shown that 82.9% were engaged in EET, 17.1% were registered as NEET (six young people), and 0% were not known. Performance for EET was higher both nationally and in the south east but for NEET was lower both nationally and in the south east. With regard to apprenticeships, Clare explained that they were growing and that one of the areas that was being investigated was supported apprenticeships and not starting them at level 2 but at a lower level.

Resolved - That having considered what more the Council might do to provide opportunities for the young people of Reading in relation to training and work, the report be noted.

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16. REVIEW OF THE ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND

Further to Minute 20 of the 20 January 2021 meeting and Minute 8 of the previous meeting, the Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, Brighter Futures for Children, submitted a report on the admission arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

The report stated that the impact of the revised Holy Brook policy was that there was a greater understanding of processes and communication between BFfC and the school and with other local authorities who requested places at the school. A Senior Case Officer now attended every admissions panel and co-administrated this with the school.

The Avenue School admissions process had not been revised as it was an Academy. Communication between the SEND Team and the school was very frequent and open, the admissions arrangements were transparent and not a cause for concern.

Cranbury Alternative Provision and Hamilton Special School admissions policies had not been reviewed as they were academies. However, the SEND Team Manager had reviewed the procedures and communications regarding the consultation process for admissions to both schools. The impact of this was that the SEND Team were receiving more timely responses to consultations and applications.

The Service Level Agreements for all Resourced Bases, specialist units attached to a mainstream school, were being reviewed and the new admissions process had been written and agreed for Resourced Bases. Although not a formal document, it made the consultation and admission process clear and headteachers had said that it was very helpful to have a step by step guide. Admissions Panels for Resourced Bases were held every six weeks, each new term, and were attended by headteachers and chaired by the SEND Team Manager.

The report explained that the building of the Oak Tree School in Wokingham, a project led by Wokingham Borough Council and the DfE, and for which the Council and BFfC were key stakeholders, had been delayed, having been due to open in September 2022. On-going conversations were being had by all parties around a revised date which was dependent on the requirement, or not, to re-procure the contractor building the school. If procurement was not necessary, the school could be open from September 2023, although the DfE would not commit to this date, and if it was necessary to re-procure the contractor then this would delay the opening beyond 2023. Contingency plans were being worked on particularly for the cohort of children who were to be placed at the school from September 2022.

A new SEND consultation letter had been drafted that explained the purpose of consultations to schools, to seek an indicative view as to whether the school could meet the child's needs and to inform SEND Panel decision making about applications and placements. This had resolved the issue of schools inviting parents to meetings and visits prematurely and raising expectations before a placement had been agreed in principle by the SEND EHC Panel. Finally, SLAs would be reviewed by the BFfC Commissioning Team in conjunction with the SEND Team to ensure parity and compliance with commissioning policy.

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Resolved - That the progress following a review of SEND admissions policies and arrangements be noted.

(Councillor Ballsdon declared a personal interest in the above item. Nature of interest, Councillor Ballsdon was the Chair of Governors at the Avenue School)

17. SEND STRATEGY AND INSPECTION UPDATE

The Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, Brighter Futures for Children, submitted a report providing a brief update on the SEND Strategy and presenting a copy of the letter from Ofsted following a recent inspection. A copy of the SEND Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1, a copy of the Inspection Letter from Ofsted was attached at Appendix 2 and a copy of the Reading Area SEND Inspection Presentation was attached to the report at Appendix 3.

The report explained that there had been considerable work carried out on developing the next version of the SEND Strategy which now needed to be finalised and agreed for 2022-2027. The recommendations of the local area inspection that had taken place in June 2021 had been included in the updated Strategy. Two more strands had been added to the five existing ones in response to the inspection so there were now seven focused areas of work in the next version of the strategy, as follows:

- Strand 1: Improving communication;
- Strand 2: Early Intervention through to specialist provision;
- Strand 3: Consistent approaches to emotional wellbeing;
- Strand 4: Preparing for adulthood;
- Strand 5: Support for families/short breaks;
- Strand 6: Capital and school places;
- Strand 7: Revenue and funding.

The joint local area inspection of SEND had been conducted by Ofsted and the CQC in June 2021 and had concluded that arrangements were sufficiently robust and effective so that no actions of written statement were required. There had been a very positive response to the inspection outcome and findings from stakeholders and whilst being confident about what had been achieved BFfC were continuing to focus on key areas that needed to be strengthened. The actions had been outlined under the strands and would be overseen through the SEND Strategy Group.

In response to a question about problems getting children and young people seen by CAMHS Deborah Glassbrook, Executive Director of Children's Services - Education, Early Help and Social Care, Brighter Futures for Children, told the Committee that the local area were very mindful of the fact that it was important for children and young people to be assessed as soon as possible and this had been identified as an issue with the CCG who had been allocated over £1m to help in this area.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

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18. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Executive Director of Social Care and Health submitted a report which would form the Council's submission to the Berkshire West Annual Report 2020/21 and would be incorporated with partners contributions with the approved action plan. The Council's Safeguarding Performance Data was attached to the report in Appendix A and the Council's Safeguarding Achievements were set out in Appendix B.

The report explained that the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) had to lead adult safeguarding arrangements across its authority and oversee and coordinate the effectiveness of the safeguarding work of its member and partner agencies. The overarching purpose of a SAB was to safeguard adults with health and social care needs and it did this by assuring itself that local safeguarding arrangements were in place, as defined by the Care Act 2014 and statutory guidance. The Berkshire West Annual Report 2020/21, when it was approved by the SAB, would detail what it aimed to achieve on behalf of the residents of Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham during 2020/21. This was both as a partnership and through the work of its participating partners. It provided a picture of who was safeguarded across the area, in what circumstances and why and outlined the role and values of the SAB, its ongoing work and future priorities.

A summary of the Council's Safeguarding Performance Data was set out in the report and included the following:

- In 2020/21 31% of safeguarding concerns (493) had led to a section 42 enquiry, a reduction compared to 2019/20 and comparable with authorities across West Berkshire;
- In 2020/21 56% (244) of section 42 enquiries that had been reported had related to older people over 65 years old;
- More women were subject to a safeguarding enquiry than men, as in previous years, but the gap had narrowed to only 4%;
- 80% of section 42 enquiries were for individuals whose ethnicity was White. There had been an increase to 20% in section 42 enquiries for individuals whose ethnicity was Mixed, Asian, Black or other. This continued to be the focus of work for all partners in view of the demographic profile of Reading;
- As in previous years the most common type of abuse for concluded section 42 enquiries were for Neglect and Acts of Omission. This was followed by Financial or Material abuse, Physical abuse and Psychological abuse;
- As in previous years the most common locations where the alleged abuse took place were a person's own home and a care home.

The report stated that a major achievement for Adult Social care had been to secure funding of £58,030 from the Social Impact Voluntary and Community Grant to develop a hoarding pathway. The grant would be used to develop a multi-agency hoarding and self-neglect procedure and pathway. The reason for applying for the grant had been based on activity data that had been collected during the Covid-19 pandemic that had identified individuals who needed help to address their hoarding and self-neglect were reported when their situation had often become acute. It was expected that the funding for the project would be targeted at:

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- Promoting independence and support of a group of people who had often refused support and were hard to engage;
- Increase access to services to support mental wellbeing, reduce social isolation and stigma;
- Increase access to community and health services;
- Prevent crisis and hospital admissions through preventative work;
- Enabling people to stay healthy and active in their community and at home.

Finally, the report set out the aspirations for 2021/22 which would be as follows:

- To continue to seek assurance that all agencies were clear about their obligations to deliver adult safeguarding activity which prevented abuse, crime, neglect, self-neglect and exploitation;
- To continue to seek assurance that agency obligations were supported by clear processes which directly supported the West Berkshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as a model of good practice;
- Work would be carried out with each other and collaboratively to maximise multi-agency practice to reduce risk and improve lives;
- Public awareness would be raised about and for adults at risk, what could be done to help, how communities could raise concerns and how the work of the Board was vital for planning, assurance, oversight, transparency and accountability;
- Ensure that the voices of adults at risk were sought, heard. Listened to and acted upon and that engagement took place with local communities ensuring the service was transparent about what it was saying it was going to do and how it would be measured.

The Committee discussed the report and asked that an update report on the work that had been carried out in respect of hoarding be submitted to the summer 2022 meeting.

With regard to providing support for individuals whose ethnicity was Mixed, Asian, Black or other Seona Douglas, Executive Director of Social Care and Health, explained that a new member of staff had been employed recently and was carrying out a review of safeguarding and this issue including, the issue around language and what was available on the Council's website. Work had also been carried out with the voluntary sector to reach these communities.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted as the Council's contribution to the Berkshire West Safeguarding Board Annual Report**
- (2) That an update report on the work that had been carried out in respect of hoarding be submitted to the summer 2022 meeting.**

19. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 20 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

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20. EXTRA CARE SHELTERED HOUSING - CARE AND SUPPORT TENDER

The Executive Director of Social Care and Health submitted a report that explored and made recommendations regarding the Council's options for commissioning Extra Care support upon the expiry of a number of contracts.

Resolved -

- (1) That procurement be progressed to procure two Extra Care support contracts (for 141 units and 229 units respectively) to go live on 1 June 2022, with a maximum total cost as set out in the report, each contract to be for the term of 3 years with the option to extend for up to a further 3 years;**
- (2) That the additional maximum spend across the three years be noted;**
- (3) That the Executive Director Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, be granted delegated authority to enter into a contract with the two successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided, at the stage of contract award (close of Q4 2021/2022) at an hourly rate range as set out in paragraph 10.2 of the report, which would be permitted for bidders in year one of the contract to ensure that the contract remained within budget (accounting for inflation) and a higher weighting would be given to price as opposed to quality to ensure that rates were competitive within this range;**
- (4) That the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for Extra Care to a wider range of service users, which could include younger adults and people with mental health needs and/or a learning disability in consultation with the relevant Housing Provider be approved.**

(Councillor Ennis declared a personal interest in the above item. Nature of interest, Councillor Ennis's mother-in-law was receiving support from the Council's Adult Social Care Service)

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.11 pm).