

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 16 OCTOBER 2024**

Present: Councillor Mpofu-Coles (Chair);

Councillors Lanzoni (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Cresswell, Davies,
Gittings, Griffith, Keane, McEwan, McGoldrick, Nikulina, O'Connell
and Woodward

In attendance: Councillors Naz and DP Singh

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

13. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair noted and celebrated that it had been International Day of Older People on the 1 October 2024 and October was also Black History Month.

At the invitation of the Chair, Julia Waters addressed the Committee members to give a response to the Independent Learning Review report that had been considered at the Committee meeting on 22 July 2024. Members of the Committee spoke to give their condolences and to pay tribute to Ruth Perry who had been the Headteacher of Caversham Primary School.

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The minutes of the following meeting were received:

- Health and Wellbeing Board – 12 July 2024

16. CARE LEAVERS' OFFER

The Committee received a report on the updated Care Leavers Offer which set out the services available to Care Leavers in one document. The Care Leavers information pack was available at Appendix 1 to the report.

The report explained that the Local Authority had a duty to provide a clear published offer for Care Leavers. Reading (Brighter Futures for Children's) Care Leavers' Offer had been updated, following a review in March 2023, undertaken by Mark Riddell MBE, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers and a subsequent Ofsted inspection in May 2024. The Care Leavers' Offer combined all the services on offer to Care Leavers, inclusive of financial support, in one document.

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The Care leavers' Offer sets out the eligibility for services and the detailed offer to Care leavers. The offer covered several domains, inclusive of: Health, education, training & employment, living arrangements (accommodation), money and finances, practical and life skills, culture and identity, leisure activities and emotional development and wellbeing. It also detailed services available to support with any legal or immigration issues.

The Committee noted that the Care Leavers information was provided as a version for young people and a version for officers who were directly involved in the care and planning for young people. An advocacy service was available for the young people to represent their views if required. It was also noted that the offer was available to support Care Leavers up to age 25.

Resolved – That the Care Leavers' Offer be noted.

17. CORE 20 PLUS DENTAL REPORT - HEALTHWATCH

The Committee received a report from Healthwatch Reading regarding a project exploring the oral health of children aged under ten years in Reading's Norcot, Church and Southcote wards. Tariq Gomma, Engagement Officer and Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Lead Officer, Healthwatch, provided a presentation. Saadia Mohamed addressed the meeting on her involvement in the project as a Community Connector in South Reading and on her experiences as a parent of a child with additional needs of managing children's oral health.

The report explained that an oral health survey in 2022 had found that 32% of 5 year olds in Reading had one or more untreated decayed teeth (higher than the 29% national average) and Reading did not currently have an oral health strategy in place.

The CORE20PLUS5 was an NHS England approach to reduce health inequalities of adults, children and young people of the most deprived 20% of the population across the UK, in 5 focus areas. For children and young people, the 5 (Plus5) focus areas were asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, oral health and mental health. National data highlighted that health outcomes were worst for children and young people living in the most deprived areas in the UK with 1 in 11 children and young people facing severe health outcomes.

As part of the CORE20PLUS5 Connectors Programme, involving BOB ICB, Healthwatch Reading, Healthwatch Oxfordshire and Healthwatch Buckinghamshire, a project had been developed to work towards reducing the health inequalities in oral health for children and young people in locally deprived areas. In Reading, a project had been organised using Healthwatch's Engagement Officers and five Community Connectors to understand the experiences of families in three of the most deprived areas of Reading: Norcot, Church and Southcote (who came from different ethnic backgrounds and had a child/children under ten) of dental care for their children during the past two years. The findings could then contribute to a Reading oral health strategy.

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The report gave details of how the project had been organised and set out its findings, in the following areas:

- Caring for children's teeth
- Children with additional needs
- Access to dental services
- How parents/carers learned how to look after children's teeth
- Oral care at home – what works and the challenges
- Experience at the dentist
- Parents/Carers notes and recommendations

The report also included family case studies and set out recommendations, how the project had made a difference and key learning points. It listed the next steps, including:

- Supporting and advising Reading Borough Council Public Health on the production of an oral health strategy for all residents of all ages across Reading.
- Sharing the findings with the families that had participated in the project and inviting them in 6 months' time to a focus group to discuss what was happening with their child/children's oral health since their interviews.
- Presenting the findings to Reading's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee) and the Reading Integration Board.
- As the project was part of the wider CORE20PLUS5 Connectors Programme, with Healthwatch Buckinghamshire and Healthwatch Oxfordshire also completing projects in their areas, collaborating on a joint report about all the projects and findings. The joint report would then be presented to the BOB ICB Health Inequalities Board.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

18. DENTISTRY UPDATE - BOB ICB

The Committee received a progress report from Hugh O'Keefe, Senior Programme Manager, Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental, Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB), on NHS dental services in Reading.

The report explained that previous updates had been provided to the Adult Social Care, Children's and Education Committee on 18 October 2023 agenda item 7, and 20 March 2024 agenda item 7, particularly in terms of recover from the coronavirus pandemic. The current report provided an update in terms of access to primary care dental services and the actions being taken to address challenges.

The following points were noted:

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- The rate of recovery had improved in the Reading area, with 50% of patients attending an NHS dental practice since February 2022 until the end of September 2024.
- There had been improvements in contract delivery with 94.3% in 2023-24, Reading had the highest level of delivery amongst the 8 local authorities in BOB. It was noted that eight practices had over performed with more than 100% of the commissioned activity.
- The ICB worked with local practices to re-commission activity to replace Castle Hill Dental practice. The Inspire Dental Practice and University Dental Centre had taken up additional activity which increased the number of Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) to 114,524, this was now at pre-pandemic levels.
- Changes had been made nationally to the dental contract as part of implementing the Dental Contract Recovery Plan and the ICB had also implemented local initiatives to support increased contract delivery and patient access.
- Access to primary care dentistry was important particularly around understanding how the system worked and to help support patients with limited knowledge of the system.
- It was noted that a third of patients that accessed dentistry were children.
- Local initiatives included reviewing the Flexible Commissioning service to test strengthening the focus on children's oral health improvement. This would involve a collaboration with local partners. It was noted that there had been a low take up of the service in Berkshire West.
- Nationally there were plans to implement oral health and eye checks in schools for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in 2025.
- The ICB had submitted a successful application to take part in a national pilot regarding Cardiovascular Disease Prevention – Hypertension case finding in dental practices. Two practices in Reading had signed up to the scheme.
- Access to NHS dental services had been recovering with Reading recovery higher than other parts of the ICB and South-East. The ICB would continue to work with key stakeholders to seek to maintain improvements in access and commission services that improve oral health.

It was requested at the next update further details be provided on local initiatives taking place in the Reading area and it was noted that further funding was needed to make improvements.

It was noted that over delivery allowed for practices to create capacity however resourcing and understanding housing growth would help the ICB with service planning.

It was requested that data regarding patients accessing dental services in the Reading area be made available.

It was also requested if a pathway forward and targeted action could be provided to increase local access to NHS dentistry.

It was noted that there were challenges taking dental services into a non-dental setting due to regulation issues, however there were some domiciliary services within community dental

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services for urgent cases. Work was being undertaken with two care homes in Oxfordshire to establish if needs and pathways could be determined to provide dental services in these areas.

The Committee discussed the report and presentation and thanked Hugh for the information.

Resolved – That a further presentation/report be submitted to the Committee in six months and to include data specific to the Reading area.

19. ACCESS TO GP LED SERVICES IN BERKSHIRE WEST - HEALTHWATCH REPORT

The Committee received a report and presentation from Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Healthwatch Reading, providing results of a project to get local views of the new ways of working introduced at GP practices and the impact on accessing GP-led services.

The report explained that the project was a collaboration between Berkshire West Healthwatch, Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham. The report provided specific data for the Reading area.

The objectives of the project were to support GP surgeries to improve their communication with the public, raise public awareness about other pathways for support and increase understanding of the new ways of working, and to increase appropriate access to services and reduce complaints.

There were 185 participants with ages ranging from 18 to 80+ years. Participants were offered an online survey, and focus groups were undertaken with 58 participants to share experiences, issues and concerns. The focus groups took place in different areas across the Reading area. It was noted that 38% of the online survey respondents came from various ethnic backgrounds. The aim was to have people from different communities and age groups participating by using a diverse team to communicate with the community effectively.

The key findings included that there was difficulty in accessing GP services with appointment shortages, long waiting times on the phone, phone messaging was unclear, patients were unable to see the GP of choice, issues for carers accessing appointments due to care needs, transport costs and having to use digital forms rather than being able to book an appointment in person.

It was noted that further investigation could be undertaken to consider non-attendance of appointments and the cost and impact of this on GP services. It was also noted that technology had increased during the covid pandemic however, these changes had been undertaken at a fast rate and the public needed time and support to adjust to these changes. Patients required clear communication and consistency regarding the new ways of working to enable to use the services effectively. There had also been no consultation regarding changes with the public. Healthwatch requested that all partner organisations

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worked together to improve communication and GP services for the community. It was suggested that digital cafes at libraries would help the public with the new technology and that this should be encouraged.

It was noted that Healthwatch Reading held quarterly meetings with primary care teams and any feedback would be shared to signpost issues. The next step would be for Healthwatch to provide an impact statement to the Integrated Care Board. It was noted that to change the system that was now in place would be a challenge, the aim would be to educate the community with the new ways of working.

It was suggested that confidentiality regarding access to personal data be considered and a representative from PALS or Public Health be invited to discuss the matter.

The Committee discussed the report and thanked Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, for the informative report and presentation.

Resolved –

That the report be noted and a representative of PALS be invited to the next meeting regarding access to patient personal data and confidentiality.

20. NEW DIRECTIONS COLLEGE UPDATE

The Principal and Adult Learning and Skills Manager for New Directions, Lisa Welch, submitted a report that set out the key activities and outcomes delivered by New Directions College, the Council's Adult and Community Education service, covering the period between June 2023 to July 2024.

The report provided an update on the work of the college and highlighted the college's core service offer, funding arrangements, key performance and achievement figures, emerging developments, wider community and business partnerships, as well as learner feedback and satisfaction survey results.

The report explained that the college was performing around the national achievement rate of 82.6%, which was a decline of 5% from 91.41% in 21-22. This was a result of an increase in learner volumes at entry and level 1, mainly English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and skills for life learners, who due to their circumstances as some being refugees and or asylum seekers were subject to dispersal orders and unable to continue their learning.

The Committee heard that the college continued to respond to meeting the learning needs of an increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers in Reading. Notably, Ukrainian and Afghan, but also increasingly supporting the large number of Hong Kong nationals. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learner numbers for 2022-23 were 671 which was a significant increase from the 271 in 2020. The College had been successful in securing additional funding from South East Strategic Partnership for Migration to establish and chair a Reading ESOL Provider Network Group. The aim would be to work

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collaboratively to support the high demand for provision as well as a mechanism to share best practice, support the use of shared resources where appropriate and to seek to secure additional funding when opportunities arise. Members of the group included Reading Community Learning Centre, WEA, The English Language Centre, Activate Learning, and Palladium who have the Home Office contract in Berkshire to deliver employment support to Refugees.

It was noted that '*Multiply*', the programme to help adult improve their numeracy skills, had grown from strength to strength throughout 2022-23 and was recognised by the Department for Education for its outstanding partnership approach with the NHS, and other local authorities and high-quality delivery. The College was now focused on securing the legacy of the programme, which ends in March 2025, by continuing the partnerships that had been established and building new provision to meet the needs of adults and employers.

The Committee thanked Lisa Welch for the report and the team at New Directions for their hard work.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

21. REFRESHED PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD (PFA) POLICY

The Committee received a report on the refreshed Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Policy. The report explained that the Policy had been implemented in 2019 and outlined the ways in which Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) and RBC'S Adult Social Care (ASC) services ensured that young people and their families have the appropriate support as they move into adulthood with no gaps in the delivery of services.

The re refreshed policy encompassed the ways in which joint working between BFFC and ASC has evolved to better-support young people.

The policy has been refreshed to:

- reflect changes in team structures;
- reflect the timeframes in which joint working between BFFC and ASC is expected to be completed;
- reflect changes to roles and responsibilities.

It has also been amended in line with feedback received during a public consultation that took place from 19 April to 18 May 2024 on the draft refresh.

In response to feedback from the consultation the policy was amended as follows:

- Acronyms had been removed and/or clarified throughout the document, so that it was clear which services are being referred to.
- Clarified that the young person's voice, and that of their families and carers, were built into every stage of the assessment and care planning process; and that this

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was the vehicle for their needs and goals to be heard (and to inform) the transitions planning process.

- Clarified how any identified care needs (especially those which may require services that do not currently exist, or that are hard to procure) would be shared with commissioning teams in order to aid the development of any required services.
- Clarified that there were no situations in which care and support would cease, or cease to be funded, in the event that the necessary steps within the transitions process had not been completed on time. When transitions from BFFC to ASC occur, the associated funding for meeting a young person's care and support needs transfers from BFFC to ASC.
- In Quarter 2 (2024/2025), the new Head of Service for LDA would also update the flowchart currently contained in the Policy in order to better explain the transitions pathways, where they can go for help and advice, and the route between services. This would also be added to the SEND and Family Information Service website. Alongside this, the RBC website would be reviewed and updated to include more information around the transitions process.

It was noted that progress on the Policy would be reported back to a future committee.

The Committee discussed the Policy, and it was requested that consideration be given to the age of young people and when they are not eligible for services. It was noted that the aim of the policy would be to support parents and young people earlier in the process.

Resolved – That the revised Preparing for Adulthood Policy be adopted.

22. COMMUNITIES AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE MARKET POSITION STATEMENT

The Committee received a report which introduced the Market Position Statement 2024 – 2027. The Statement was for the People of Reading, as well as existing or potential care Providers in Reading, to help them understand the Council's demographics, current position and future direction for Adult Social Care in achieving the vision of "Supporting the Life that Matters to You". The Market Position Statement was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The report explained that the Market Position Statement included information on the Council's strategic and financial context, the Council's priorities for Adult Social Care and ambitions for working with Providers, and information on local needs and demand for services across different service user groups. It provided detail on the care and support market for different types of service (residential and nursing care, for example), including the current provision of care and support, trends that are informed by data and service user feedback, and the future direction of travel. Where the detail was available, this included any commissioning intentions that the Council (on its own or in partnership with health or other local authorities) would take forward.

Engagement sessions were undertaken throughout the year with providers to discuss the care market in Reading, gaps in the markets, quality of care and how this was monitored by

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the Council. Discussions were also held with carers and people with lived experience to evaluate how the Council was performing, what could be improved, what people want from Council services and how to support people better.

There would be continued opportunities for further engagement with people with lived experience, Providers and the wider public, which would allow the document to be updated over the next few years. The Market Position Statement was driven and underpinned by a robust understanding of the wishes and needs of the local population.

Resolved – That the Market Position Statement attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted and endorsed.

23. READING YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024-2025

The Committee received a report on the Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025. The report explained that the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and a condition of the Youth Justice Board Grant, had placed a duty on the Local Authority to produce an annual Plan. The Plan had been produced and signed off by the Youth Justice Partnership through the Youth Justice Management Board, which was independently chaired. The plan reported the performance of Youth Justice Service (previously the Youth Offending Service) for 2023/2024 against the national and statistical family comparators in the period. The Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 described the Youth Justice Service and partners' performance against the national indicators, namely, reducing First Time Entrants (FTE's) into the criminal justice system, reducing reoffending and reducing the number of young people going to custody. The Plan also provided further analysis about safeguarding, managing the risk of harm to others and other local performance indicators.

The annual Plan identified the following areas as priorities for 2024-2025:

- Reducing first time entrants into the criminal justice system
- Reducing reoffending
- Reducing the use of custody
- Addressing disproportionality within the justice system
- Reducing the impact of serious youth violence
- Embedding Child First and Identity Development Practice as the practice model across the partnership
- Improving outcomes for victims of youth crime

During the discussion it was noted that an audit in Restorative Justice was being undertaken to recognise the importance of the work and as part of the routine schedule of audits. Regarding a query on Stop and Search analysis, it was noted that an audit had been taken to a recent Board meeting and following this positive practice had been developed, data on this would be shared if required. It was reported that a Disproportionality Action Plan was an agenda item for the Board and work was being undertaken on this matter. It was also reported that work was being undertaken to tackle Serious Youth Violence which

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included Act Now, a knife crime initiative to fund youth workers to provide an operational positive impact.

It was requested that specific data on Global Majority groups and which ethnic groups were proportionally affected be provided to help understand the issues.

Resolved – That the content of the Reading Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 be noted.

24. SUNNYSIDE NURSERY

The Committee received a report to consult on the closure of Sunnyside Nursery, a small nursery attached to Sun Street Children's Centre which was currently empty.

The report explained that Sunnyside at Sun Street Children's Centre was a Brighter Futures for Children operated nursery that had been established since 2021 to accommodate up to eight two year old children. Funding was solely through Government funding for two year old children and the nursery only received funding if children were on roll. It was noted that from September 2024 there were no children currently attending.

The report explained that the Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2023-2024 concluded that there were currently sufficient childcare places for all under-fives where there was a demand and this included funded early education and paid spaces. The Sufficiency Assessment examined likely future patterns of demand accounting for changing birth rates and any planned new housing developments.

The Assessment identified that there were sufficient places in the East area of Reading. From March 2023, East Reading had seen a net increase of 305 places. There had been 429 new places created through expansion and opening of new Private, Voluntary and Independent sector places; with some reductions of provision, totalling 124 places, through the closure of Private, Voluntary and Independent sector places. Further provision was opening in 2025, which would increase the total places locally. Therefore the loss of the 8 places from Sunnyside Nursery was not expected to impact on sufficiency of local childcare places for families.

The consultation would last for the statutory prescribed 30 days, allowing a final decision to be made within two weeks from the end of the consultation.

Resolved –

- (1) That the consultation on formal closure of Sunnyside Nursery be agreed.**
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services be delegated to consult on the closure of Sunnyside Nursery.**
- (3) That the Director of Children's Services in Consultation with the Lead Councillor for Children's Services be delegated to decide on the future of the nursery based on the outcomes of the consultation.**

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**Exclusion of Public and Press
Resolved –**

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 25 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

25. PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The Committee received a report on steps being taken by Brighter Futures for Children Ltd to improve the sufficiency of placements for children and young people and the successful use of family environments.

Resolved – That the report and the steps being taken by Brighter Futures for Children Ltd to improve the sufficiency of placements for children and young people be noted.

(The meeting closed at 9.40 pm)