

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

15 OCTOBER 2025

QUESTION 1

Peter Evans to ask the Chair of the Committee:

SEND Placements in Reading

Can the Council explain how it came to place, or allow the placement of, vulnerable children - including my son - in an unregistered alternative provision, which was being run by an individual who, at the time, was charged with crimes, under investigation by SOCA for serious criminal activity, and has since been convicted ?

What safeguarding checks, if any, were conducted prior to such a placement ?

Is the Council still using this placement? And what steps has the Council taken since to review other similar placements and ensure that no other children are currently at risk ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee

I invite Councillor Eden, the Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Councillor Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health:

This response has been amended from the written version published at ACE Committee on Oct 15th 2025 as it contained inaccurate information. This amended response acknowledges that the alternative provision was commissioned by Brighter Futures for Children, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, and not the school. The Council apologises for this error.

We have been made aware of an alternative provision provider on our approved list, based in another local authority area who did not notify Reading of a criminal investigation involving a member of staff being in progress. This matter is being investigated with the provider at present to ensure that Reading Borough Council receives prompt notifications in future. No safeguarding incidents for any child have been identified as a result of the failure to notify the local authority in this instance.

Local authorities use a variety of strategies and different providers to fulfil their education responsibilities, including the provision of suitable education for young people otherwise than at school – commonly known as Alternative

Provision. Alternative provision (AP) is defined as education outside of school arranged by LAs or schools. It can range from pupil referral units and further education colleges to voluntary, charitable, or private sector projects. Some APs also may not have a physical site, such as tuition agencies.

Alternative Provision is not regulated by Ofsted. In Reading we have in place a mechanism for reviewing and monitoring Alternative Provision to ensure it is delivering the education needed for Reading children. Reading completes due diligence checks before placing children with an Alternative Provision. Checks include requesting confirmation of safeguarding policies and procedures; safer recruitment policies and procedures; confirmation that all staff are DBS checked. We also undertake monitoring checks to review compliance with required policies and procedures, including safer recruitment practices, and quality of education.

To help reduce the risks of a failure to notify the LA of any similar situation in future, review meetings will be held with this provider, a reminder of the requirements to notify the LA will be circulated to all Alternative Provision providers, and the annual approved list submissions from providers will ask more explicitly about current or pending investigations.