

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor Thompson to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health:

Remedicare Education

I am deeply concerned that a provider commissioned by Brighter Futures for Children to take care of our children with Special Educational Needs should have employed, and even had as a director, someone who was charged and found guilty of smuggling drugs into prisons. I appreciate that the Council is looking into the issue in response to a formal complaint, so there are limitations on what can be said at this stage. However, I would be grateful of assurances that the following issues are included in the investigation in response to the complaint or a subsequent investigation:

- 1) Information sharing within the Council, including between Officers and Councillors, and with the neighbouring authority in Wokingham, given that Remedicare say they informed Wokingham's Local Authority Designated Officer of the charges made against their employee.
- 2) The degree to which parents are aware of the role of Remedicare: it would not be unreasonable for parents to think that an organisation calling itself Remedicare Education is a school, but it appears that it does not provide sufficient hours of education to qualify as a school.

REPLY by Councillor Eden (Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health):

I confirm that I and senior officers at the council are treating this matter with the utmost seriousness.

Senior officers have fully acknowledged the concerns being raised, both in relation to the commissioning of the placements provided at Remedicare, and the circumstances relating to the employment by this provider of a person who was subsequently the subject of a criminal investigation. They are the subject of a formal complaint to the Council, alongside an ongoing investigation by the regulator.

I have been told that the council has received assurance from Remedicare that current safe employment practices are being complied with and a full file audit check against this is being undertaken by officers tomorrow. Further monitoring and investigation is in place.

I am not able to comment on this further whilst investigations are underway, but I can confirm that information sharing and the understanding of parents regarding the role of Remedicare in providing education will be covered in the council's investigations.

Alternative Provision provides support for young people who need help out of school when they can't access school for a wide variety of reasons. I have seen close to home how much difference good alternative provision can make, but as you rightly

say Alternative Providers are not schools and it's important that we get this right for those young people.

Parents are being kept informed by council officers and if families have any concerns they are of course welcome to contact me too.

My priority in this is as ever the safeguarding and best education for Reading's children.