

## Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 24 January 2024 at 4.30 pm in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm  
Concluded 7.34 pm

### Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP
Fricker Mohammed Thirkill Zaman Walsh (Alt)	Davies Pollard	Sunderland	Sajawal

### VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Joyce Simpson – Church Representative

Apologies: Shifa Simab

### Councillor Davies in the Chair

#### 41. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

#### 42. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings held 29 November 2023 and 20 December 2023 be signed as a correct record.

#### 43. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

#### 44. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### 45. SEND SERVICES - PROGRESS AGAINST THE WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) AND CORE SEND ACTIVITIES

The Strategic Director of Children's Services submitted a report (**Document "O"**) which provided an update on the progress towards the WSOA that followed the March 2022 SEND Area Inspection and core activities relating to support children with additional needs.

The report contained high level overview of progress within each of the 5 areas for improvement and added in benchmark data from other councils of similar size in supporting children with SEND. The 5 areas were as follows:

- Poor communication between stakeholders across education, health and care.
- The variable quality of Education Health and Care plans, including plans which do not fully describe the provision that children and young people with SEND need.
- The inconsistent delivery of the 0 to 19 health visiting, school nursing and specialist nursing services.
- Children and young people wait too long for assessments, treatment, and diagnosis. There is insufficient support for children and young people with SEND who are waiting for provision, services, diagnosis, or equipment.
- Education, health, and care services do not work together well. The arrangements for joint commissioning are underdeveloped.

Following the Officer's presentation, members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions. The details of these and the responses given are as below.

Members of the Committee sought further clarification on section 2.4.2 of the report relating to SEND assessments and demand. In response to this, the presenting officer reported that the service started from a very low base during the pandemic and had since worked extremely hard to improve on meeting the threshold for SEND. It was further reported that Bradford had a higher number of Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) than some neighbouring local authorities, but the service was working progressively to catch up with the national average as the aim was to have 70% of EHCPs deemed to meet the required quality mark in 2024.

Members asked if there were any issues with specialist places for children and young people. In response to this, it was reported that there had not been any major issues with specialist places as majority of the placements were local, there were around 6,500 children on the SEND plan and only 500 of the children were placed outside the local area and 110 children were placed in ultra cost placements.

Members asked for further clarity on section 2.6.7 of the report relating to initial assessments of children and young people. In response to this, the presenting

officer reported that the service has been working hard to address this issue, various avenues have been explored but, one of the programmes the service has worked with allowed nurses to work at the weekends and evenings to improve on Initial Health Assessments and by September 2024, 90% of children and young people will have received an Initial Health Assessment within 20 days after going into care.

A member of the Committee referred to section 2.4.2 of the report and said that the service was still under target, this led to pressure being felt by the schools. There were children attending schools with very high and complex needs who have not been assessed, as a result their needs were not met. In response, the presenting officer reported that the service has been open to conversations with schools, leading to good dialogue and regular progress meetings with a number of schools and as a result of this, 40% of the EHCPs were written within the timeframe.

Members were keen to understand if there was a dedicated key worker assigned to each child with an EHCP and if the child would be able to get a quick response to any queries. In response to this, it was reported that a key worker was allocated to the child, a plan was written and then reviewed to identify areas that may need amending. A SENCO was assigned to the child who would monitor the child's progress and the parent could also contact the case worker who had written the plan for the child. A case worker remained allocated to the child forever unless that case worker left the service. It was further reported that a range of professionals worked together to create the care plan.

A member of the Committee asked what support was available to parents with children with complex needs and or EHCPs to help them better understand their child's needs. In response, the presenting officer reported that the Barnardo's SENDiass offered advice and support around various topics relating to Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) for children and young people aged 0-25 living in the Bradford District and their families.

A member of the Committee asked if there were children in secondary schools that were still waiting to be assessed and requiring EHCP. In response to this, it was reported that yes, unfortunately there were children at secondary school still awaiting assessment and a care plan, however this was a national issue, and the service was working to address this.

Members of the Committee were keen to understand what support was available for children and their families that were waiting for an EHCP. In response, it was reported that there would be a live chat platform, which would be available to schools and parents where they could chase up progress of the care plan.

Members of the Committee were keen to understand how children with SEND would manage school transport and if there was any support available to them. In response it was reported that travelling alone would be a big step for SEND children and could prove challenging, therefore this was on the target plan list for the service. Case workers were working with schools to figure out a transition plan for pupils. The presenting officer advised that a report providing further information on this matter could be provided to the Committee at a later date. A member of the Committee raised concerns regarding low academic

achievement in Bradford. In response to the members concern, the officer assured that SEND pupils in Bradford were achieving above average in England for Maths and English, this was a great achievement as this had gone up from 3% to 6% and an increase of 2.2% on overall GCSE attainment.

A member of the Committee raised concerns about the number of pupils in secondary schools that were still waiting for an EHCP and added that voices of multi-agency partners was very important to gain more substantial information which would benefit the Committee. In response, the presenting officer said that the report included feedback from schools as they were key partners. The officer reported that the service took autism very seriously, there was a significantly high demand for assessments and care plans and the service was working very closely with schools to meet this demand. However, due to Covid19 pandemic, the wait had become longer. Members were assured that waiting times had improved and would continue to do so over time. It was further reported that, the service recognises that a diagnosis was very important, however, there were other resources available that could identify the additional needs of a child and address the educational requirements.

The presenting officer reported that Bradford was the 17<sup>th</sup> lowest funded local authority in the country and despite shortages, the Council was committed to providing high level of compliance and ensured that this level did not decline. It was reported that the national average cost per child was £32 but in Bradford it was £15, the SEND system in place was extremely good value for money. The presenting officer further reported that regular auditing of the plans was a core focus area for the Bradford Local Area in 2024. The new Designated Social Care Officer role in Bradford would be key in ensuring the quality of Social Care advice in Education, Health and Care plans improves for children with SEND.

***Resolved –***

***(1) That this Committee requests a report be presented in 12 months, relating to the progress of the Written Statement of Action, which also includes:***

- ***RAG, (Red, Amber, Green), rating;***
- ***SEND Improvement Plan;***
- ***SEND Youth Forum;***
- ***The New Local Offer;***
- ***Outcomes from the mapping exercise of SEND provision.***

***(2) That this Committee requests that interim updates, (that can be circulated electronically), regarding the evidence of impact measures listed in section 2.6.8 of the report on Wednesday 24 January 2024, are supplied to members of this Committee after each official monitoring visit.***

***To be actioned by – Strategic Director of Children’s Services***

(Niall Devlin – 01274 431356)

#### 46. **DRAFT ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT**

The Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a draft report (**Document "P"**) which contained the findings from the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Lead reported that Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously agreed to undertake a scrutiny review relating to Elective Home Education. The completion of this scrutiny had been delayed by the Covid19 pandemic and the subsequent membership changed to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

***Resolved –***

***That the Committee adopted the findings contained within the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review Report.***

***To be actioned by – Overview and Scrutiny Lead***

(Mustansir Butt – 07582 101597)

#### 47. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The report of the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "Q"**) included the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2023/24.

The work programme was briefly discussed and the Overview and Scrutiny Lead summarised what items would be considered at future meetings.

***Resolved –***

***That the Committee discussed and amended the work programme and requested that the following topics be included in the work programme:***

- 1. Child Sexual Exploitation;***
- 2. Outdoor Education Centres;***
- 3. Sufficiency of the sixth day provision;***
- 4. Annual report relating to permanent exclusions and suspensions.***

***To be actioned by: Overview and Scrutiny Lead***

(Mustansir Butt – 07582 101597)

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER