



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

Members of the Committee – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP
Fricker Mohammed Regan Thirkill Zaman	Davies Pollard	Sunderland	Sajawal

Alternates:

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP
Alipoor Berry Humphreys I Hussain Walsh	Birch Felstead	Naylor	Elahi

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Church Representative:

Joyce Simpson

Parent Governor Representatives:

Fauzia Raza

Parent Governor Representatives:

Shifa Simab

NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Teacher Secondary School Representative:

Tom Bright

Children's Social Care:

Dr Samina Karim

Notes:

- This agenda can be made available in Braille, large print or tape format on request by contacting the Agenda contact shown below.
- The taking of photographs, filming and sound recording of the meeting is allowed except if Councillors vote to exclude the public to discuss confidential matters covered by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. **Recording activity should be respectful to the conduct of the meeting and behaviour that disrupts the meeting (such as oral commentary) will not be permitted. Anyone attending the meeting who wishes to record or film the meeting's proceedings is advised to liaise with the Agenda Contact who will provide guidance and ensure that any necessary arrangements are in place.** Those present who are invited to make spoken contributions to the meeting should be aware that they may be filmed or sound recorded.
- **Members of the public are respectfully reminded that this is a meeting that is being held in public NOT a public meeting. The attendance of the public to observe the proceedings is welcome.**
- If any further information is required about any item on this agenda, please contact the officer named at the foot of that agenda item.

From:

To:

Asif Ibrahim

Director of Legal and Governance

Agenda Contact: Kav Amrez / Louis Kingdom

Phone: 07929 070288/07890 416570

E-Mail: kanwal.Amrez2@bradford.gov.uk/louis.kingdom@bradford.gov.uk

A. PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

The Director of Legal and Governance will report the names of alternate Members who are attending the meeting in place of appointed Members.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

(Members Code of Conduct – Part 4A of the Constitution)

To receive disclosures of interests from members and co-opted members on matters to be considered at the meeting. The disclosure must include the nature of the interest.

An interest must also be disclosed in the meeting when it becomes apparent to the member during the meeting.

Notes:

- (1) *Members must consider their interests, and act according to the following:*

Type of Interest	You must:
<i>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests</i>	<i>Disclose the interest; not participate in the discussion or vote; and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation.</i>
<i>Other Registrable Interests (Directly Related)</i> OR <i>Non-Registrable Interests (Directly Related)</i>	<i>Disclose the interest; speak on the item <u>only if</u> the public are also allowed to speak but otherwise not participate in the discussion or vote; and leave the meeting <u>unless</u> you have a dispensation.</i>
<i>Other Registrable Interests (Affects)</i> OR <i>Non-Registrable Interests (Affects)</i>	<i>Disclose the interest; remain in the meeting, participate and vote <u>unless</u> the matter affects the financial interest or well-being</i>

(a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of a majority of inhabitants of the affected ward, and

(b) a reasonable member of the public

knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest; in which case speak on the item only if the public are also allowed to speak but otherwise not do not participate in the discussion or vote; and leave the meeting unless you have a dispensation.

- (2) *Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to the Member concerned or their spouse/partner.*
- (3) *Members in arrears of Council Tax by more than two months must not vote in decisions on, or which might affect, budget calculations, and must disclose at the meeting that this restriction applies to them. A failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence under section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.*
- (4) *Officers must disclose interests in accordance with Council Standing Order 44.*

3. MINUTES

Recommended –

That the minutes of the meetings held on 29 November 2023 and 20 December 2023 be signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

(Kav Amrez / Louis Kingdom – 07929 070228 / 07890 416570)

4. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

(Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 3B of the Constitution)

Reports and background papers for agenda items may be inspected by contacting the person shown after each agenda item. Certain reports and background papers may be restricted.

Any request to remove the restriction on a report or background paper should be made to the relevant Strategic Director or Assistant Director whose name is shown on the front page of the report.

If that request is refused, there is a right of appeal to this meeting.

Please contact the officer shown below in advance of the meeting if you wish to appeal.

(Kav Amrez / Louis Kingdom – 07929 070228 / 07890 416570)

5. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Any referrals that have been made to this Committee up to and including the date of publication of this agenda will be reported at the meeting.

B. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES

6. SEND SERVICES - PROGRESS AGAINST THE WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) AND CORE SEND ACTIVITIES 1 - 18

The Strategic Director of Children's Services will submit a report (**Document "O"**) which provides 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.

Recommended –

That the contents of the report be noted.

(Niall Devlin – 01274 431356)

7. DRAFT ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT 19 - 42

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

Recommended –

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopts the findings contained within the Draft Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review Report.

(Mustansir Butt – 01274 432574)

8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 43 - 52

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

Recommended –

(1) That members consider and comment on the areas of work included in the work programme.

- (2) That members consider any detailed scrutiny reviews that they may wish to conduct.**

(Mustansir Butt – 01274 432574)

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



Report of the Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 24th January 2024

O

Subject:

SEND Services - Progress Against the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and core SEND activities.

Summary statement:

This paper provides 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.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The WSOA is intended to ensure that all the education and health services better understand our communities. Through co-production, we will actively engage with our communities to help people participate in decision-making processes. The Local Area is committed to improve the services we provide and to enable more people to take part in the District's activities.

The actions in the WSOA aim to design, commission and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of people and communities. The communication strategy provides information about services in a range of accessible formats so that people know what services are available to support them and how to access them.

Marium Haque
Strategic Director of Children's Services

Report Contact: Niall Devlin
Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion
Phone: (01274) 431356
E-mail: niall.devlin@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Children & Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In March 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Bradford. The inspection judged the effectiveness of the district in implementing the disability and special education needs reforms, as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.
- 1.2 On 8th June 2022, the inspection report for Bradford district was published. In accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015; His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required because of five areas of significant weakness in the local area's practice. On the 21st of October 2022, Ofsted agreed that the proposed Written Statement of Action was sufficient. The first monitoring visit was on the 6th of January 2023.
- 1.3 Since the last update to Overview and Scrutiny, there have been three monitoring visits by the Department for Education Lead advisor and representatives from NHS England. These visits took place in January, May and October 2023.
- 1.4 The progress being made on the Written Statement of Action is published on the Local Offer. The latest report from October 2023 visit was published in November 2023. [Bradford Local Offer | Bradford local area SEND Inspection - WSOA](#)

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following Local Area SEND Inspection, the WSOA explains how we plan to improve the following areas of significant weakness;
 - 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.
- 2.2 The report will provide a high-level overview of progress within each of the 5 areas for improvement and also adds in benchmark data from other councils of similar size in supporting children with SEND.

2.3 **Written Statement 1 -Poor communication between stakeholders across education, health and care.**

2.3.1 **Progress on key actions**

Over the last 12 months, the completion of a number of key elements contained within Written Statement of Action one were finalised and launched. These have been agreed as completed by the Local Area partnership and colleagues from the Department for Education and NHS England. Activities completed in 2023 include;

- There is a wider involvement of partners in key decision-making roles, such as the chairing of workstreams relating to SEND. All of the core partnership and improvement boards are now chaired, or vice chaired by a partner agency or parent carer.
- The Local Area has coproduced and signed off a Stakeholder and engagement plan across the Bradford district. The Local Area also has agreed a new charter with parents setting out timeframes for contact with SEND Services, clarifying our core service standards. [PowerPoint Presentation \(bradford.gov.uk\)](#)
- A new Strategic Plan Sufficiency of Specialist Places for Children and young People in Bradford is being published in early 2024 setting out special school places across Bradford.
- The new SEND young people's engagement forum for children and young people, bradstarz launched in 2023. This new forum has been coproduced with young people to support them in the coproduction of SEND services in Bradford. [Bradford Local Offer | Bradford District SEND Youth Voice \(Brad Starz\)](#)
- The new Local Offer website that was co-produced with parent/ carers and professionals soft launched in November 2023. Our new Local Offer acts as our core library of information and resources for children, families and professionals. [Bradford Local Offer](#)

2.3.2 **Key Next Steps**

- Publication of the SEND Local Area Improvement Plan in the late Spring 2024.
- Embedding of the Parents Charter and reporting on progress against the KPI's set out in the Charter.
- Embedding the new SEND Youth Forum across Bradford.
- Continuing to update the new Local Offer in 2024.

2.4 **Written Statement 2 -The variable quality of EHC plans, including plans which do not fully describe the provision that children and young people with SEND need.**

2.4.1 **Progress on key actions**

To support the improvements needed to improve the quality of plans, a new staffing structure was designed to support greater emphasis on the quality of Education, Health and Care plans in Bradford. The completion of consultations with core partners was completed in late 2022 on its suitability. Staff directly impacted by the restructure, were assimilated to new roles in early 2023.

Initial recruitment to roles took place in Spring 2023. Further rounds of recruitment have been required and in some case work roles are still being recruited too in early 2024. Nationally, there are key shortages in staffing for SEND Services due to the professional skill set required and levels of experience needed to undertake some roles.

The new Annual Review portal that was developed with schools and colleges launched in October 2023. This is supporting partners with a streamlined way of providing Annual Review documents and reports to the SEND Teams to update Education, Health and Care Plans.

The Quality Assurance framework to support improvements to Education Health and Care plans, was launched alongside the recruitment of the SEND Auditing team last summer.

Overall, the majority of the infrastructural changes that are required have been completed in the last year and include;

- Six of the eight Annual reviewing officer posts are in post. A further round of recruitment in December 2023 has secured the remaining two staff to the structure. These staff are due to join later in the Spring before easter this year.
- All five of the Complex and Vulnerable Posts have now been recruited to and two of the post holders are now in post. The remaining post holders are due to start over two periods in February and May 2024.
- Additional case work officer posts have been advertised due to staff turnover. Further recruitment took place in December 2023 and these new staff will join in the Spring of 2024.
- The Designated Social Care Officer (DCSO) has been appointed to and is currently clearing pre-employment checks. The three Social Care Assessor roles are due to be recruited in the Spring of 2024.
- A new 0-25 integrated Assessment Manager role was recruited and started in December 2023. A new Head of Integrated Assessment and Psychology is being recruited to in the Spring of 2024 alongside a new Deputy Manager for

SEND Integrated Assessment.

- Both SEND Auditor posts were recruited in the Summer of 2023 and joined in the Autumn of 2023 and are utilising the new Quality Assurance framework using a programmed forward plan of auditing.
- The SEND Tribunals Officer and Complaints coordinator joined the Council in Summer 2023.
- The launch of new Annual Review portal to support Schools and colleges took place in Autumn 2023.
- The new Quality Assurance Framework launched in the Autumn of 2023 and is being utilised by partners as well as the Council across the Bradford Local Area.

2.4.2 Evidence of impact / demand pressures

The recruitment and ongoing support to the new structure is critical in ensuring that the overall quality of EHC Plans improves in Bradford, in line with substantial demand being placed on the service.

In 2023, Bradford saw the highest rate of requests for an Education, Health and Care Plan on record, in line with our neighbours and other Local Authorities across England. In 2023, **2,218** requests were made by schools, parents and young people for an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is a substantial increase from **1,078** in 2021 and **1,463** in 2022.

Bradford continues to prioritise ensuring that Education, Health and Care plans are issued to children and families within 20 weeks. Last year compared to other Core Cities and all 151 Local Areas, Bradford Issued **79%** of all plans within 20 weeks compared to **49%** of all Core Cities and Local areas nationally.

As of January 2024, Bradford supports **6,454** children with an Education Health and Care Plan. This number has risen over the last three years from **3,441** in 2019. In line with England averages, the numbers of children with a plan is rising year on year. Currently, **4%** of children in Bradford have an Education Health and Care plan slightly below the England average of **4.4%**.

Regular auditing of our plans is a core focus area for the Bradford Local Area in 2024. The new Designated Social Care Officer role in Bradford will be key in ensuring the quality of Social Care advice in Education, Health and Care plans improves for children with SEND.

We are aiming to have **70%** of our Education Health and Care Plans deemed to meet the required quality mark in 2024. Auditing scores for plans in the last quarter of 2023 show improvement in some areas with a range of scores for EHC plans being graded between **55%** and **80%** currently.

We have placed an emphasis on supporting the increased rise in the numbers of

Annual Reviews being undertaken in Bradford.

100% of our phased transfers were completed in 2023 for children in transitional years and for those young people moving to a college placement. The new portal will help to ensure annual review processes are as efficient as possible and will support a rise in the completion of Annual Reviews being completed on time.

2.4.3 Key next steps

- Onboarding of remaining Annual Reviewing Officer roles.
- Onboarding of SEN Caseworker roles.
- Launch of the new Designated Social Care Officer role and assessor's role working with new Social Care Trust leaders.
- Embedding of the Quality Assurance Framework across Local Area to improve quality of Education, Health and Care Plans.
- Maintaining an above England compliance rate for the issuing of Education, Health and Care Plans within 20 weeks.

2.5 Written Statement 3 - The inconsistent delivery of the 0 to 19 health visiting, school nursing and specialist nursing services.

2.5.1 Progress on key actions

The Local Area has committed to having the right foundations in place, to ensure we can support the wider health and care system to identify our children's needs with SEND earlier and in a more consistent manner.

Large scale changes within these services over the last 12 months, are delivering improvements in the delivery of 0-19 health services for children. Key areas completed in the last 12 months include;

- Bradford District Childrens Foundation Trust (BDCFT) has implemented plans using additional investment from the Local Authority to establish new teams and ways of working within the Health Visiting service. These plans are streamlining services and improving the proportion of women receiving routine antenatal contacts, alongside children receiving the routine 2- and 2-and-a-half-year-old checks.
- The Health Visiting & School Nursing Service have developed pathways to ensure that families are receiving a consistent service and are signposted or referred appropriately to specialist services.
- Bradford District Childrens Foundation Trust and Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust have strengthened their delivery of audiology and vision screening, respectively, at school entry, so that hearing and vision impairments are identified and addressed earlier in children across our schools.
- Service providers have enhanced the current training offer to schools, parents

and carers, and other professionals/ services to ensure that health needs of children and young people are met consistently. The Sussex Tool is being used to support these efforts and pilots in mainstream schools has been completed. The revised training offer has now been published by both School Nursing services and also Bradford Teaching Hospitals Trust

- Start for Life SEND training was completed with a wide range of Family Hub staff in June & July 2023.

2.5.3 Evidence of impact

- **67.2%** of women received an antenatal contact from the new service in Quarter 1 reporting up from **34%** at the time of the SEND inspection and above the target set for the year of **55%**.
- **91.5%** of children receiving a 2-2.5-year check were assessed using Ages and Stages Questionnaire against a target of **92%**. Performance has improved from the inspection where performance was **54.7%**.
- **90.6%** of eligible children received their audiology screening against a target of **90%** last year. Performance of this area has improved since the inspection where **66.4%** of children received this support following the Pandemic.
- **99.4%** of schools had taken up the offer of visual screening by the end of the academic year 2022/23, against a target of 100%. This has built throughout the academic year: in March 2023, screening had taken place in **54%** of schools.

2.5.4 Key next steps

- Continue to support the take up of antenatal reviews across Bradford.
- Continue work on 2 to 2½ year health visitor reviews towards the performance target.
- Continue to support audiology and vision screening in schools.
- Continue to support training and support in Family Hubs for the early identification of SEND.

2.6 **Written Statement 4 - 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.**

2.6.1 **Progress on support for children with Autism and ADHD**

Work across Bradford to support families waiting for assessments has been taking place, to support children and families with Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in line with the additional funding put in place.

Significant work has already been undertaken to improve assessment pathways; this includes developing a new GP led model for Initial Health Assessments and additional investment in review health assessments.

- Current service pathways are mapped, and all key stakeholders are aware of current service offer.
- Pathway efficiencies trialled in under 7yr old pathways for children.
- Electronic Digital Support Tool pilot in 14 schools being extended in Jan 2024 and includes 'digital advice bank' to support meeting needs earlier.
- Social prescribing for children & young people with Autism and Learning Disabilities are in place in some Primary Care areas across Bradford with expansions being discussed.
- Increase in offer to families waiting via BEAT has now been expanded to three groups with one group in Urdu.
- The Barnardo's care navigator is now in place on diagnostic pathways to increase support while waiting.

2.6.2 Progress in relation to Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

A review of the service offers across all key stakeholders to understand the current service pathway and provision for children and young people who require support, has now been completed. Other key areas of progress include;

- The referral process has now distributed across school nursing, social care and education.
- The new directory of children & young people's mental wellbeing services provides a comprehensive resource on local services and how to access them.
- The guide for referrers leaflet has been produced with inclusion criteria for Specialist CAMHS and signposting information for wider services.
- New duty team recruited to and functioning in CAMHS.
- New systems in place with Early Help signposting for those both redirected and awaiting CAMHS interventions.

2.6.3 Progress in around Speech & Language (SLT) services

A review of the service offer understanding the current service pathways for children & young people who require support with their speech language and communication needs has been completed. Other areas of progress in speech and language have included;

- Speech and Language referral criteria and new websites launched for both NHS Trusts across Bradford.
- Bradford District Childrens Foundation Trust speech and language therapy referral criteria was launched across Bradford.
- Talking Bradford which outlines Speech, Language & Communication Support was launched in the Autumn of 2023.

2.6.4 Progress on Wheelchair and Specialist Equipment

This work area has seen the review of pathways, including commissioning and funding arrangements in relation to the provision of wheelchairs and specialist equipment.

- The pathway from identifying that a child or young person has a need for specialist equipment, through the assessment process to the ordering and delivery of the equipment has been mapped.
- Improved access to specialist equipment is ongoing and on track to meet key performance indicators.

2.6.5 Progress on the Dynamic Support Register

- The Dynamic Support Register has now gone live and is embedded in operational practices.
- Fortnightly panels taking place with tri-party and multidisciplinary representation now in place.
- Governance reporting, data oversight and monitoring metrics and reporting are now being provided to Health Leadership Groups.

2.6.6 Annual Health Checks for Children and Young People aged 14-25

A review of the Annual Health Review pathway across all key stakeholders to understand the current process and pathway for children and young people who are eligible for an Annual Review has been completed.

- Current service pathway is mapped and all key stakeholders are aware of the current service pathway for Annual Health Checks.
- Easy read leaflets for children and young people and families have been developed and are on the Local Offer pages.

2.6.7 Initial Health Assessments / Review Health Assessments (IHA/RHA's)

A review of the Initial Health Assessments & Review Health Assessments pathway across all key stakeholders to understand the current process and pathway for children and young people was completed to support the take up of IHA's in Bradford. Activities completed in this area include;

- The current service pathway is mapped and all key stakeholders are aware of current service pathway for an IHA for a child who is looked after.
- A Children Looked After (CLA) Delivery Group continues to meet on a monthly basis to support IHA's in children.
- Standard Operating Procedures for consent are in place for both the Local Authority and also the health team's responsibilities.
- The Strategic Oversight group is planning to lead and support a quality improvement approach for key pathway processes.

2.6.8 Evidence of impact

Core performance measures are embedded in the latest Written statement of action and can be found on pages 70-72.

- **Autism / ADHD** - The Average length of wait in weeks between referral and

first appointment at the end of the reporting month in the last report is **31 weeks** compared to a target of **29 weeks**.

- **Autism / ADHD** - Longest wait in weeks between referral and first appointment in the last report was **90 weeks** compared to the target of **60 weeks**.
- **CAMHS** - By September 2023 **90%** of children and young people will wait no longer than 18 weeks between referral and commencement of treatment in CAMHS/ The performance in the last report was **85%** compared to the target of **90%**.
- **Speech and Language** - By June 2024, **90%** of children and young people will begin assessment by Speech Language Therapy services following referral for assessment. The performance in the last report was **54%** compared to the interim step target of **65%**.
- **Specialist Equipment**- By September 2024, **80%** of children and young people receive specialist equipment following referral for assessment. The performance in the last report was **75%** compared to the interim step target of **80%**.
- **Wheelchairs**- By June 2023 **80%** of children and young people receive a wheelchair following referral for assessment. The performance in the last report was **80%** meeting the target of **80%**.
- **Annual Health Checks** - For the year 2023/24, **80%** of children and young people aged 14-18 who are on the Learning Disabilities Register will receive an Annual Health Check. The performance in the last report was **66%** of children getting an Annual Health Check meeting the interim target of **70%**.
- **Initial Health Assessment** - By September 2024, **90%** of children and young people will receive an Initial Health Assessment within 20 working days after coming into care. The performance in the last report was **4%** of children getting an IHA compared to the interim step target this year of **70%**.

2.6.9 Key next steps

- Ongoing embedding of pathways and referral routes to improve access to services in line with directions under the Written Statement of Action.
- Improve access to services for families helping to reduce waiting times as set out in the Written Statement of Action.
- Embedding of access to Early Help services, information and advice for health services such as Speech and Language services.

2.7 Written Statement 5 -Education, health and care services do not work together well. The arrangements for joint commissioning are underdeveloped.

2.7.1 Progress on key actions

Detailed work around Joint Commissioning and working better together has been undertaken throughout 2023. The majority of the core actions in the plan have been completed and work to take this forward into delivery will be a priority in 2024.

- The Strategic Partnering Agreement (SPA) document has been reviewed and updated to reflect our ambition for working together in Bradford.
- The SEND Joint commissioning Governance Structure confirmed and recruitment to children's commissioner roles was undertaken in 2023.
- The approved Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Document published on the Local Offer website In May 2023 has been created to help support and shape future commissioning intentions.
- The Council's Childrens Commissioning Team have liaised with services across children to identify the current committed spend for SEND related activity.
- New commissions for SEND services have been drafted. The new SENDIASS service with an increased scope to support families has now launched in January 2024.

2.7.2 Key next steps

- To embed the new Strategic Partnership Agreements across Bradford in 2024.
- To support the development of a System Joint Commissioning Strategy which will align with the SEND specific Joint Commissioning Strategy in 2020/23. The system Joint Commissioning Strategy will outline our principles for joint commissioning and our approach to decommissioning.
- A Programme of SEND commissioning engagement and consultation will be developed through the work of the SEND Joint Commissioning Workstream.
- To Identify budgets aligned to SEND service provision to develop transparency and assurance in terms of spend across all areas in early 2024.
- To map SEND service provision and related budgets. This will be undertaken through the work of the SEND Joint Commissioning Workstream in 2024.
- To map jointly commissioned provision and aligned services. This will be used to undertake needs analysis to inform future commissioning intentions.
- A review of joint funding with health (S75) agreements to be undertaken through the SEND Joint Commissioning workstream to ensure agreements reflect our intention regarding the management of system resources for SEND service.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 None.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 The Local Authority's duties and functions in respect of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are contained in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 and the statutory Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs and Disability 2015. The requirements are too detailed to set out in this report but if a Local Authority does not comply with its statutory duties and functions in respect of children with SEND, it is at risk of being challenged in the Courts and Tribunals or by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Following a review of SEND services, under Regulation 3 of the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, the Chief Inspector of Schools (Ofsted) must (having regard in particular to the nature of the review) determine whether it is appropriate for a written statement of proposed action (WSOA) to be made.

Under Regulation 4 of the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, a written statement of proposed action (WSOA) must be sent to the Chief Inspector of Schools; any other person or body who conducted the review (to which the WSOA relates (in this case the Care Quality Commission) and the Secretary of State within 70 working days of receiving the joint area SEND inspection report.

The WSOA must state who it is proposed should take action and include a statement of the period within which the action is to be taken.

If a Local Area is making insufficient progress in addressing any of the areas of significant weakness identified by the Chief Inspector of Schools, the DfE will decide on the appropriate next steps. This may include the Secretary of State using their powers of intervention.

7.1 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.3 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Not applicable.

7.6 TRADE UNION

Not applicable.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The WSOA is intended to make significant differences in how children, young people with SEND and their families interact with services and having their needs met. This include:

- Families and professionals have a published group of service level agreements so they know what and when they can expect updates on their case. This will clarify the timeframes for families and professionals about queries, applications and updates on matters relating to next steps which are clear.
- Schools are sighted on sufficiency plans, so they understand what places are being built and when and to test through a survey to see if they are happy with the engagement and with the forward plan for places.
- Children and young people have an opportunity to co-produce the services of the future and to be given more opportunities to be involved in the democratic and co-productive elements more widely of services that support them.
- The new Local Offer will not contain out of date information and acts as personalised resource to help parents, carers, professionals and young people find what they need easily about services.
- Families and schools receive up to date plans that clearly articulate any material changes to an Education Health and Care plan that set out the support and provisions that are reflective of a child's needs and demonstrate their lived experiences.
- Families receive plain English descriptions of the support they are going to receive from social care and health that is practical in nature and focuses on supporting any health conditions and social care needs a child may have. This helps to support families to understand how and where they can access services that support their child's health and social care needs.

- Preparation for Adulthood outcomes will be included as early as possible to support a child and young person meet their potential. That support and services are wrapped around these objectives in the plan to help a young person transition into the most suitable education, employment or training opportunities.
- Education Health and Care plans will have greater value and meaning to both parents and professionals due to a child's plan accurately reflecting their journey and what support they need moving forward. This will help inform the size and shape of services that are needed to meet sufficiency needs of children individually and as a whole.
- More families will consistently get an antenatal visit pre-birth to provide information, advice and guidance to prospective parents. Families with additional needs will also be identified early and supported and/ or referred to other appropriate services.
- Health visitors post-birth will continue to support parents and more 2 and half year-old checks will be completed on time, providing improved opportunities for the early identification of needs so that parents are supported sooner where needed. Families will have a better experience (feeling involved and cared for) when liaising with school nursing, specialist school nursing and other specialist services as consistent pathways will enable smooth transitions and closer working between different services.
- Children across the Bradford district will receive the hearing and vision screening checks when they are in the reception class. This will help to identify children who may have a hearing or visual impairment earlier in their childhood, providing greater opportunity to support these groups of children meet their potential.
- The specialist nursing services will provide training to a wide range of schools, services and parent/carers.
- Families who go to the newly re-launched family hubs are supported by a range of professionals and early help staff. All practitioners will have the skills to assess and support families appropriately and signpost where appropriate. They identify a range of potential additional needs in children and refer these to the most appropriate pathways in the Early Years stage before the children are of school age. Families' needs are identified early, and appropriate support will be offered. Family will report they have good support.
- Children and young people will have timely assessment for suspected autism/ADHD, which will help children and young people understand themselves better and will also help their parent carers, families and other key people such as school and health care staff understand them better too.
- Children and young people will have timely assessment for children and young people's mental health needs, which is important so that children and young

people, their parent carers, families and other key people are aware of the emotional and mental health needs and difficulties that a child and young person may be experiencing.

- Children and young people will have timely assessment for children and young people's speech and language therapy, which is important so that children and young people, their parent carers, families and other key people such as schools are aware of the speech language and communication needs and difficulties that a child and young person may be experiencing.
- Children and Young People will receive the postural and mobility equipment that is needed in a timely way to maintain or optimise their physical functioning and enable participation in age-appropriate activities including family life, social events and education. Parent carers will have improved quality of life as appropriate supportive equipment in place. An efficient pathway for equipment provision releases therapist time to support families in use of equipment and the associated health and well-being gains.
- Annual Health Checks for Children and Young People aged 14-25 years who had a Learning Disability are important to help the young person to stay well. Having an Annual Health Check with the GP practice also helps the young person build relationships with staff at the practice and ensures that they start to know the people and the environment. If they are then unwell & need to visit the GP, the experience is less traumatic. It also helps people get the medications they need. Annual visits, also helps the GP practice identify family carers and ensure they are offered health checks and relevant vaccinations so that they themselves remain well and healthy.
- Children in Care will have timely Initial and Review Health Assessments, which is important to ensure that the health needs of children/young people in care are identified as soon as possible; this is so services can be offered to meet needs and enable children in care to achieve the best health and life outcomes.
- New arrangements will be in place to consider the whole needs of children and families. This puts children's commissions at the centre of our approaches to understand the needs of the population.
- Families who have specific needs will have those met ahead of them realising that these services are needed.
- Greater availability of services with reduced waiting times is provided in Bradford due to a mixture of aligned budgets, pooled budgets and agreements on commissioning and decommissioning needs for the District. These are clearly stated and signposting for services is shown on the Local Offer alongside the pathways to access these services.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

Not applicable.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None.

9. OPTIONS

Not applicable.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Overview and Scrutiny to note the contents of this report.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 – Sefl Evaluation November/ December 2023.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Not applicable.

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Report of the Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on Wednesday 24 January 2024

P

Subject:

Draft Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review Report

Summary statement:

The attached draft report contains the findings from the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

This scrutiny review seeks to be inclusive and responsive to people and communities who are educating their children at home.

Cllr Debbie Davies
Chair – Children’s Services Overview &
Scrutiny Committee

Report Contact: Mustansir Butt
Phone: 07582 101597
E-mail: Mustansir.butt@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The attached draft report contains the findings from the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a scrutiny review relating to Elective Home Education.
- 2.3 The completion of this scrutiny review has been delayed due to the COVID19 Pandemic and then subsequent membership changes to the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 During the course of the information gathering sessions for this scrutiny review, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee engaged widely with, parents who were educating their children at home, parents' groups, an education charity and officers from Bradford Council.

3. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 3.1 There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

5. LEGAL APPRAISAL

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6.2 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6.5 TRADE UNION

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

This Scrutiny Review focuses on children and Young People being educated at home, across the Districts wards.

6.7 AREA COMMITTEE LOCALITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

6.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This Scrutiny Review focuses on children and Young People being educated at home, across the District.

6.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

There were none arising from this Scrutiny Review.

7. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

8. OPTIONS

8.1 In considering how to progress this issue the Committee may wish to:

- adopt or amend the findings contained within the draft report.
- forward their recommendations to the Executive, Council and / or other appropriate bodies.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee adopts the findings contained within the Draft Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review Report.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review Report.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

DRAFT Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review

Wednesday 24 January 2024

Email: scrutiny@bradford.gov.uk
Twitter: Bfd_Scrutiny



Membership of the Childrens Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(Previous Committee)

Members

Cllr Geoff Winnard, (Chair).
Cllr Mike Pollard, (Deputy Chair).
Cllr Margaret Alipoor.
Cllr Julie Humphreys.
Cllr Ralph Berry.
Cllr Carol Thirkill.
Cllr Jeanette Sunderland.
Cllr Talat Sajawal.

Alternate Members

Cllr Kausar Mukhtar.
Cllr Andy Walsh.
Cllr Hazel Johnson.
Cllr Karen Regan.
Cllr Brendon Stubbs.
Cllr Noor Elahi.

Voting Co-Opted Members

Church Representative – Joyce Simpson.
Parent Governor Representatives – Fauzia Raza and Shifa Simab.

Non-Voting Co-Opted Members

Teacher Secondary School Representative – Tom Bright.
Children’s Social Care – Dr Samina Karim.

(Current Committee)

Members

Cllr Debbie Davies, (Chair).
Cllr Mike Pollard, (Deputy Chair).
Cllr Susan Fricker.
Cllr Nussrat Mohammed.
Cllr Karen Regan.
Cllr Carol Thirkill.
Cllr Amjad Zaman.
Cllr Jeanette Sunderland.
Cllr Talat Sajawal.

Alternate Members

Cllr Margert Alipoor.
Cllr Ralph Berry.
Cllr Julie Humphries.
Cllr Ibrar Hussain.
Cllr Andy Walsh.
Cllr Sally Birch.
Cllr Bob Felstead.
Cllr Aislin Naylor.
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Contact for Enquiries

Mustansir Butt
Overview and Scrutiny Lead
E-mail – mustansir.butt@bradford.gov.uk
Tel (01274) 432574

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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present this report of a review undertaken by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the issues and challenges around Elective Home Education and how this is being supported across the Bradford District. This review was delayed by Covid lockdowns and subsequently by the committee's heavy work programme which has to focus on children's social care services.

The Education Act 1996 requires that parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children are provided with a "sufficient full-time education appropriate to age and ability etc" "but this does not have to be in a mainstream school. Some parents elect to educate their children at home and decline the opportunity of a school place. Evidence suggests that the number of home educated children had increased post Covid. The rationale for deciding to "home school "is often connected to parental philosophy of education and we heard from some families who were clearly well equipped to provide appropriate education and were achieving good educational outcomes for their children.

Whilst local authorities do not have legal powers to monitor education at home they do have a responsibility to intervene if evidence suggests suitable education is not being provided at home. There are some concerns that under the current legal dispensation that this was difficult and they were unable to effectively ensure that suitable education was being provided in all circumstances.

However, the committee was particularly concerned that not all families being home schooled were necessarily doing it by choice and some felt forced into it because they were concerned that the special educational needs of their children could not be met satisfactorily by the mainstream Bradford School available to them. Some of these families clearly need additional support from Bradford Council

The committee was also concerned that some children may have slipped out of the school system after the Covid lockdowns and risk dropping out of the system altogether with potential safeguarding issues

The recommendations made in this report suggest ways Bradford Council can better support and engage with home schooling parents which should help to ensure that appropriate education is being provided. Secondly it addresses ways to improve the support and options available to those children with special educational needs who feel forced into home education. Some of this would link with the ongoing work to improve SEND services across the district.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their sustained commitment throughout this process, as well as officers who have supported the committee throughout this scrutiny review.

Cllr Geoff Winnard
Chair, Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
March 2023

I wish to thank former councillor Geoff Winnard for all his work leading on this Scrutiny Review. Having taken over as Chair earlier this year I'd like to add a few observations, as follows:

1. We need to respect parents/carers wishes in home educating their child/ren and support them to do so in any way possible including ensuring, in the case of their children who newly become home educated, that they are aware of any support networks and activities available specifically for home educated children.
2. We need to differentiate between children whose parents/carers have chosen to home educate them and those who are effectively forced to attempt to home educate because they have been unhappy with the school their child was allocated or their negative school experience.
3. There are genuine concerns about safeguarding of children who are not in school – could there be some expansion maybe from the Virtual School to ensure children are seen by a professional away from family to check on their welfare and educational development and support provided accordingly.

I would like to thank those parents and carers who participated in our review along with councillors who have taken the time to learn more about elective home education, and with particular thanks to Officers for facilitating the sessions and gathering information.

Cllr Debbie Davies
Chair, Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
December 2023

Executive Summary

The four information gathering sessions undertaken as part of this Scrutiny Review focused on the seven key areas for improvement, in accordance with the Terms of Reference, adopted by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Specifically, the committee resolved to undertake a scrutiny review into Elective Home Education:

The key lines of enquiry for this scrutiny review are to:

- Explore the proportion of home schooled children who are home schooled, because the child has not been allocated the preferred school place;
- Explore the approach where parents consider that their child will receive a better education at home, rather than school;
- Explore the proportion of children, who have been moved on by the school, into "Elective Home Education";
- Review the safeguarding of children, who are outside the normal school system;
- Explore and consider the impact of COVID19 on school lockdown, as parents also choose to home educate their children.
- Evaluate the arrangements in place to support parents whose children are undertaking Elective Home Education.
- Considering the Special Education needs requirements of children in Elective Home Education.

As a result of the review, this Committee has made recommendations for consideration. These are contained (a) within the body of the report and (b) summarised at the end for ease of reference.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a programme of scrutiny reviews relating to Children's Services.

One of the agreed scrutiny reviews relates to Elective Home Education.

The completion of this scrutiny review has been delayed due to the COVID19 Pandemic and then subsequent membership changes to the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

During the course of the information gathering sessions for this scrutiny review, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee engaged widely with, parents who were educating their children at home, parents' groups, an education charity and officers from Bradford Council.

Key Aims and Scrutiny Process

The key aims of this stage in the scrutiny review are as outlined on the previous page.

Members have received and gathered a range of information from a number of different sources, including:

- relevant documents;
- relevant data;
- written submissions from, or meetings with, interested parties.

Context

Despite the term 'compulsory school age', education does not have to be undertaken through attendance at school, even though parents usually request a state-funded school place and the local authority is obliged to find one - or make alternative arrangements for education of their child. Parents not the state are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age are properly educated.

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority other than at a school, for example for children who are too ill to attend school.

There is no legislation that deals with home education as a specific approach. However, Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Elective home education is a form of ‘education otherwise than at school’ and this piece of legislation is the basis for the obligations of parents. It is also the starting point for local authorities’ involvement.

Local Context

Information from officers in Bradford Council’s Children’s Services, shows below the number of children across the district over the last five years, in Elective Home Education.

Table 1 - Number of children recorded as Elective Home Educated by academic year.

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Open 1 st September.	463	510	443	626	596
Total over the year.	776	730	975	1011	785 (to 23/02/23)

Whilst the number of children recorded as Elective Home Educated at any one time has generally, steadily increased, significant churn is seen in the number of children who become Elective Home Educated or end a period of Elective Home Educated in any one year.

As an example, in the course of the academic year 2021/2022, from the table above it can be seen that 385 children began to be home educated, either by becoming statutory school age, moving to the district, being identified as potentially Children Missing Education or by being removed from a school roll. In the same year 414 children ended being Electively Home Educated, either by becoming no longer compulsory school age, by leaving the district or returning to a school roll.

Information provided by officers in Bradford Councils Children’s Services highlighted that:

- The number of children home schooled because they missed out on their school of choice, was 21 children.
- It was also learned that the number of children, who have been moved on by the school, into “Elective Home Education”, was nil.
- Furthermore, 40 children who are being home educated have an Educational and Health Care Plan.

Moreover, parents are not required to give a reason, so in the cases of 489 children we have no recorded reason as to why their children are being educated at home.

At its meeting on Thursday 9 November 2023, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Bradford Council’s Second Quarter Financial Position Statement. Within this, Bradford Council’s Risk Register was also included.

Elective Home Education was identified as an area of risk within the Risk Register and highlighted that in September 2020, there were 484 children recorded as being Elective

Home Educated. This number increased over the following three months to more than 800.

Chapter 2 – Key Findings

This section presents the findings of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of Elective Home Education.

It was clear from consultations with parents who had decided to home educate their children, that the benefits of home educating were evident to them. Parents could meet in small groups of different aged children, whilst also learning from older role models and learn to care and nurture for younger children. As well as this, children can also learn at their own pace.

Members heard that the home education community around Yorkshire is popular and one that is rich in activities, with parents willing to make things happen for their children. There are numerous activities in Bradford, such as home education specific sessions at sports venues, social meet-up groups, ad hoc park meets, art lessons, nature group, hiking group, Lego group and a book group. Parents also travelled out of the district to attend other groups in the local area, such as board game groups, trampolining, gaming, coding and cookery. There are also home education specific days at museums and attractions such as The Deep and Eureka, and many parents organise ‘school trip’-type visits where groups of home educated children attended as though they were a school class.

The key findings will be considered under the recurring issues that have arisen during this scrutiny review and have centred upon:

- More effective communication with Bradford Council and the Elective Home Education community and awareness raising;
- Greater understanding amongst schools in the District, in relation to Special Educational Needs;
- Support to parents and families who choose to home educate their children.

Communication and Awareness Raising

A consistent theme that was raised throughout the information gathering session with parents of those children who were being educated at home, centred upon the communication with Bradford Council’s Children’s Services. For instance, some parents stated that officers from Bradford Council had never been to visit and check how their child was being educated at home, although, of course, it could be noted that there is a cohort of home educators that believes such visits can amount to unwarranted interference.

Parents also felt that the letters sent to them from Bradford Council’s Children’s Services, could be written in a friendlier and supportive manner, as well as letters being addressed to them by name, rather than ‘parent /carer’.

Parents were also of the view that Bradford Council’s Children’s Services expected parents to respond very quickly to their written communications, otherwise the letters were escalated very quickly. Subsequently, parents felt that they should have more time to respond to such correspondence, as by the nature of their choice to home educate their children, parents were, “time poor”.

During the information gathering sessions for this scrutiny review, officers from Bradford Council's Children's Services informed members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee that they did proactively contact parents whose children were being educated at home, through a questionnaire to parents.

Some parents also stated that there needed to be greater awareness of home education, for other professionals, such as in the field of health. In particular, it was felt that health professionals who do not understand home education, were of the view that home educated children stayed at home all the time and did not interact with the community. Subsequently, parents felt that such health professionals needed to learn about what home education is and how well it works for so many families.

A unanimous view amongst parents was that Bradford Council's Children's Services needed to build better trust through effective communication, with the Elective Home Education community.

Special Educational Needs

During the information gathering process for this scrutiny review, members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee also heard that some parents decided to home educate their children, as their perception was that schools did not meet the Special Educational Needs of their children. Consequently, parents decided not to send their children to school and home educated instead. Furthermore, members also heard that in some cases, children had been refused an Educational Health and Care Plan on grounds on which the parents couldn't agree and consequently, they didn't want to send their children to school. This was seen as a last resort by parents who felt that, they had no choice but to educate their children at home.

Parents also felt that schools are unwilling to make reasonable adjustments to assist them, thus forcing children to attend school. This was causing serious mental health problems for children.

There was consensus amongst parents here that an improved understanding of what Special Educational Needs are, was required, along with focused training being provided to Special Educational Needs Coordinators and teachers, which they thought would greatly improve the support being provided to children with conditions such as autism and dyslexia.

Support to Parents

Furthermore, there was strong consensus amongst parents who were educating their children at home that they were perceived as not teaching their children properly. However, parents were more than happy and expressed their desire to work with the Bradford Council's Children's Services.

Parents also indicated that they chose to educate their children at home as it gave them a sense of pride and joy. As well as this, it allowed their children to learn about

current affairs easily and in real time, for instance in relation to the cost of living, getting involved in the community and environment by exploring, arrange visits to museums and learning about topics such as Suffragettes. In summary, parents were keen to make this a more personal educational experience for their children.

Nevertheless, parents were in consensus that they would welcome support from Bradford Councils Children's Services, to assist them further in educating their children at home. Such improvement as requested by parents related to:

- Having a policy for Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) in Bradford, as parents educating their children at home, highlighted this an area of concern. Parents felt that they should be involved in the development of such a policy and more importantly, this would allow families to make informed educational decisions;
- To have educational subscriptions that are part of a package that children can use. For instance, a child in school may have access to "times table rock stars", "spelling shed", numbers etc through a school subscription and it would be extremely beneficial for a child being educated at home, to have access to such learning materials.
- Providing an educational resources library.
- Funding for taking GCSEs exams and an exam centre for home educated young people that is based in the Bradford district, as well as an acknowledgement from the Elective Home Education staff in Bradford Council's Children's Services, that young people may not wish to take all GCSEs at once in the manner in which young people attending school do. There was a view amongst parents that children educated at home should be allowed to take exams across a period of years if they wished.
- Realistic deadlines for the submission of annual reports.

Parents were of the view that Bradford Council's Children's Services should be supporting parents and children in providing the best educational opportunities for their children, irrespective of the modality in which it is delivered. However, during the information gathering process, it was heard that parents who were educating their children at home, were experiencing negative attitudes from education officers and healthcare professionals, especially relating to insinuations of safeguarding concerns and a level of scrutiny which is not applied to parents who choose to send their children to school.

Members also engaged with parents' groups and education charities in the areas of elective home education. One such organisation was the Education Otherwise Charity, who promote and support parents who educate their children at home. Representatives from the Education Trustee charity informed members of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that they would like to offer free training to Bradford Council staff in relation to Elective Home Education.

Chapter 3 – Concluding Remarks

Throughout the course of this Scrutiny Review, Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee members have sought to take a balanced approach in its deliberations relating to this Scrutiny Review and aimed to ensure that this report encompasses the views and concerns of all interested parties.

The recommendations, if implemented, will further improve the approach that Bradford Council has in supporting parents who educate their children at home.

Bradford Council’s Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will monitor future progress against these Scrutiny Review recommendations.

Recommendation 1

That, in the light of significantly increased incidence of persistent non-attendance at schools since the COVID pandemic, the Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Council’s Director of Children’s Services requests that the DfE reinforce, in guidance to local authorities supported by any necessary legislative change, the requirement to exercise their statutory duty to assure themselves that education is suitable and meets all of the educational needs, of children being educated at home. They should regard the move to home education as a trigger to conduct a review and satisfy themselves that the education provided at home, still constitutes a suitable education. The statement should then be revised accordingly to set out that the parent has made their own arrangements under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Recommendation 2

Bradford Council’s Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a report back in 12 months, which monitors the progress against all the recommendation contained within this Scrutiny Review.

Chapter 4 – Summary of Scrutiny Review Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That, in the light of significantly increased incidence of persistent non-attendance at schools since the COVID pandemic, the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Council's Director of Children's Services requests that the DfE reinforce, in guidance to local authorities supported by any necessary legislative change, the requirement to exercise their statutory duty to assure themselves that education is suitable and meets all of the educational needs, of children being educated at home. They should regard the move to home education as a trigger to conduct a review and satisfy themselves that the education provided at home, still constitutes a suitable education. The statement should then be revised accordingly to set out that the parent has made their own arrangements under section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Recommendation 2

Bradford Council's Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a report back in 12 months, which monitors the progress against all the recommendation contained within this Scrutiny Review.

**City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Elective Home Education - Scrutiny Review

Terms of Reference

See Part 3E paragraphs 2.1 to 2.11 of the Constitution of the Council.

Background

At its meeting on Wednesday 9 October 2019, Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a programme of scrutiny reviews relating to Children's Services.

One of the agreed scrutiny reviews relates to including Elective Home Education.

Protecting Children's legal right to Education was discussed at the Council meeting on Tuesday 15 October 2019 and the comments and views raised by members will be taken into consideration during the course of this Scrutiny Review.

Context

Elective Home Education

Despite the term 'compulsory school age', education does not have to be undertaken through attendance at school, even though parents usually request a state-funded school place and the local authority is obliged to find one - or make alternative arrangements for education of your child. Parents not the state are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age are properly educated.

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority other than at a school, for example for children who are too ill to attend school.

There is no legislation that deals with home education as a specific approach. However, Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable -

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Elective home education is a form of 'education otherwise than at school' and this piece

of legislation is the basis for the obligations of parents. It is also the starting point for local authorities' involvement.

Key Lines of Enquiry

The key lines of enquiry for this scrutiny review are to:

- Explore the proportion of home schooled children who are home schooled, because the child has not been allocated the preferred school place;
- Explore the approach where parents consider that their child will receive a better education at home, rather than school;
- Explore the proportion of children, which have been moved on by the school, into "Elective Home Education"; Review the safeguarding of children, who are outside the normal school system;
- Explore and consider the impact of COVID19 on school lockdown, as parents also choose to home educate their children.
- Evaluate the arrangements in place to support parents whose children are undertaking Elective Home Education.
- Consider the Special Education needs requirements of children in Elective Home Education.

Methodology

The committee will receive and consider a variety of evidence/information provided by a range of interested parties. The Committee may adopt one or more of the following methods to collect evidence/information:

- relevant documents;
- relevant data;
- written submissions from, or meetings with interested parties;
- interview key and relevant personnel;
- undertake relevant visits.

Indicative list of interested parties

An indicative list of interested parties is provided below. This is not definitive or exclusive and can be developed as the scrutiny progresses.

Organisation / Department	Contact
Bradford Council Executive Portfolio Holder.	Cllr Imran Khan.
Bradford Council.	Marium Haque – Children's Services. Sue Lowndes – Children's Services. Danielle Wilson – Children's Services. Rachel Phillips – Children's Services. Joanne Gleeson – Legal. Darren Minto – Safeguarding. Jane Booth – Safeguarding.
Local/Regional/National Organisations.	Police.

Organisation / Department	Contact
	Parents.

Indicative Timetable

Date	Milestone
Wednesday 15 January 2020.	DRAFT Terms of Reference to be presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – for discussion and approval.
Wednesday 12 February 2020, Committee room 1, City Hall, 4.30pm.	Information gathering session – Setting the scene: Mark Douglas; Marium Haque; Mark Griffen; Legal.
Wednesday 18 March 2020, Committee room 1, City Hall, 5.00pm – was cancelled due to the first COVID19 pandemic lockdown.	Information gathering session – safeguarding of children, who are outside the normal school system and engagement with Schools.
Tuesday 24 February 2021, Remote Virtual Session, 4.40pm.	Information gathering session – Setting the scene, (Mark Douglas, Marium Haque, Sue Lowndes, Danielle Wilson and Rachel Phillips – Children's Services).
Wednesday 31 March 2021, Remote Virtual Session, 4.30pm.	Information gathering session – Safeguarding.
Wednesday 2 November 2022, Remote Virtual Session, 4.30pm.	Information gathering session – Parents.
Wednesday 24 January 2024..	Draft Scrutiny Review findings and recommendations to be presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

First Informal Information Gathering Session - Thursday 12 February 2020, City Hall, Bradford

- Cllr Mike Gibbons, (Chair, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Mike Pollard, (Deputy Chair, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Sinead Engel, (Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr David Ward, (Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Fauzia Raza, (Voting Co-opted Member).
- Mark Douglas, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Marium Haque, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Mark Griffen, (Safeguarding, Bradford Council).
- Joanne Gleeson, (Legal Services, Bradford Council).

Re-convening this scrutiny review, as a result of the COVID19 Pandemic

Second Informal Information Gathering Session – Wednesday 24 February 2021, Remote Virtual Session

- Cllr Geoff Winnard, (Chair, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Mike Pollard, (Deputy Chair, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Julie Humphries, (Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr David Ward, (Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Ruth Wood, (Alternate Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Fauzia Raza, (Voting Co-opted Member).
- Joyce Simpson, (Voting Co-opted Member).
- Marium Haque, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Danielle Wilson, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Niall Devlin, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Sue Lowndes, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).

Third Informal Information Gathering Session – Wednesday 31 March 2021, Remote Virtual Session

- Cllr Geoff Winnard, (Chair, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Mike Pollard, (Deputy Chair, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr David Ward, (Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Julie Humphries, (Member, Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Marium Haque, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Niall Devlin, (Children's Services, Bradford Council).
- Jane Booth, (Safeguarding, Bradford Council).
- Darren Minton, (Safeguarding, Bradford Council).
- Fauzia Raza, (Voting Co-opted Member).

- Joyce Simpson, (Voting Co-opted Member).

Third Informal Information Gathering Session – Wednesday 2 November 2022,
Remote Virtual Session

- Cllr Geoff Winnard, (Chair, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Mike Pollard, (Deputy Chair, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Jeanette Sunderland, (Member, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Margaret AliPoor, (Member, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Julie Humphries, (Member, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Andy Walsh, (Alternate Member, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Cllr Bob Felstead, (Alternate Member, Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee).
- Shifa Simab, (Co-opted Member).
- Thomas Bright, (Co-opted Member).
- Parents of Elective Home Educated Students.



Report of the Chair of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Wednesday 24 January 2024

Q

Subject:

Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme 2023/24

Summary statement:

This report includes the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2023/24.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Community Cohesion and Equalities related issues are part of the work remit for this Committee.

Cllr Debbie Davies
Chair – Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio:
Children and Families

Report Contact: Mustansir Butt
Overview and Scrutiny Lead
Phone: (01274) 432574
E-mail: mustansir.butt@bradford.gov.uk

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children’s Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report includes the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2023/24, which is attached as appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 Also attached as appendix 2 to this report is a list of unscheduled topics for 2023/24.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council constitution requires all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to produce a work programme.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the responsibility for "the strategies, plans, policies, functions and services directly relevant to the corporate priority about services to children and young people." (Council Constitution, Part 2, 6.3.1).
- 3.2 Best practice published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that "work programming should be a continuous process". It is important to review work programmes, so that important or urgent issues that arise during the year are able to be scrutinised. Furthermore, at a time of limited resources, it should also be possible to remove areas of work which have become less relevant or timely. For this reason, it is proposed that the Committee's work programme be regularly reviewed by members of the committee throughout the municipal year.
- 3.3 The work programme as agreed by the Committee will form the basis for the Committee's work during the year, but will be amended as issues arise during the year.
- 3.4 This Committee is currently finalising the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Review.
- 3.5 At its meeting on Tuesday 15 March 2022, the Executive, during their discussions relating to supporting children and their families to thrive post pandemic, recommended that the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertake a scrutiny review into Child Poverty across the District. The Committee is currently undertaking this Scrutiny Review.
- 3.6 The Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on Wednesday 1 February 2023, agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review into persistent absence across schools in the Bradford District.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 None.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 None.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 None.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.2 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None.

7.5 TRADE UNION

None.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Work of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee has ward implications, but this depends on that nature of the topic.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

This will be a key area of work for the Committee.

7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. OPTIONS

- 9.1 The Committee may choose to add to or amend the topics included in the 2023-24 work programme for the committee.
- 9.2 Members may wish to consider any detailed scrutiny reviews that it may wish to conduct.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That members consider and comment on the areas of work included in the work programme.
- 10.2 That members consider any detailed scrutiny reviews that they may wish to conduct.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix One – 2023-24 Work Programme for the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix Two – Unscheduled Topics.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Council Constitution.
2022-23 Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

Democratic Services - Overview and Scrutiny

Childrens Services O&S Committee

Scrutiny Lead: Mustansir Butt tel - 43 2574

Work Programme

Agenda Items	Description	Report Author	Comments
Wednesday, 12th July 2023 at City Hall, Bradford. Chair's briefing 22/06/23. Report deadline 29/06/23.			
1) Appointment of Co-opted members.	Voting Co-opted Members - Joyce Simpson, (Church Representative), Paret Governor Representative Fauzai Raza & Shifa Simab. Non Voting C-opted Members - Teacher Secondary School Representative Tom Bright, Children's Social Care - Dr Samina Karim.	Mustansir Butt.	
2) Draft Childrens 2023-24 Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme.	The proposed areas of work to be considered in this muncipal year.	Mustansir Butt.	
Wednesday, 27th September 2023 at City Hall, Bradford. Chair's briefing 06/09/23. Report deadline 14/09/23.			
1) Monitoring the Children's Services Improvement Plan.	Report to also include performance data.	Marium Haque/Picklu Roychoudhary/Charlotte Ramsden.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 1 March 2023.
2) Work Programme.	There is s a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to priortise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	
Wednesday, 4th October 2023 at Remote Virtual Meeting.			
1) Child Poverty Scrutiny Review.	Remote informal information gathering session with the volumtary sector and and Bradford Council Officers.	Mustansir Butt.	Council resolution.
Wednesday, 18th October 2023 at City Hall, Bradford. Chair's briefing 27/09/23. Report deadline 05/10/23.			
1) Bradford District Children and Young People Plan.	The Plan be presented to the Committee prior to it being finalised. To also include details of priorities and outcomes.	Niall Devlin/Jenny Cryer/Kate Welsh/Helen Johnston.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 15 March 2023.

Childrens Services O&S Committee

Scrutiny Lead: Mustansir Butt tel - 43 2574

Work Programme

Agenda Items	Description	Report Author	Comments
Wednesday, 18th October 2023 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 27/09/23. Report deadline 05/10/23.			
2) Work Programme.	There is s a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to priotise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	
Monday, 20th November 2023 at Unknown.			
1) Child Poverty Scrutiny Review.	Informal information gathering session with young people.	Mustansir Butt.	
Wednesday, 22nd November 2023 at Unknown.			
1) Child Poverty Scrutiny Review	Informal information gathering session with young children and their families.	Mustansir Butt.	
Wednesday, 29th November 2023 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 08/11/23. Report deadline 16/11/23.			
1) National Review Action Plan.	Progress against the review recommendations, together with examples of some positive outcomes.	Darren Minton/Marium Haque/Michelle Turner/Ruth Terry/Richard Padwell/Charlotte Ramsden	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 30 June 2022. Been deferred on two occassions at the request of Officers.
2) Health Services to looked after Children and care leavers. December 2022.	The Annual Report to also include: Details of the progress against the Action Plan; the Children's Health Assessments being undertaken; Percentage of Children's Health Assessments being done within Statutory guidelines.	Phillipa Hubbard/Cath Murray/James Drury/Juliet Outcomes of	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendaion from Kitchen/Karen Dawber. Wednesday 14
3) Sufficiency Strategy, to also include in-house Fostering Service and Adoptions.	Progress against the strategy and the recommendations contained within it.	Marium Haque/Charlottle Ramsden/Picklu Roychoudhary.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 15 March 2023.

Childrens Services O&S Committee

Scrutiny Lead: Mustansir Butt tel - 43 2574

Work Programme

Agenda Items	Description	Report Author	Comments
Wednesday, 29th November 2023 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 08/11/23. Report deadline 16/11/23.			
4) Supporting Families Programme.		Charlotte Ramsden/Cath Dew/Andrew Edwards.	Member Request.
5) Young Carers.	To also include measures of performance and details of outcomes and improvements delivered.	Charlotte Ramsden/Cath Dew.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 23 March 2022.
6) Work Programme.	There is s a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to priortise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	
Wednesday, 20th December 2023 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 30/11/23. Report deadline 07/12/23.			
1) Raising Attainment Strategy.	Demonstate key outcomes.	Marium Haque/Sue Lowndes.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 1 February 2023.
2) Holiday Activity and Food Programme.		Sharon Sanders.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 27 September 2023.
3) Home School Transport.		Michelle Pickles.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 27 September 2023.
Wednesday, 24th January 2024 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 04/01/24. Report deadline 11/01/24.			
1) SEND Services.	This Committee requests that a further progress report be presented in 12 months, which also includes the deatiled Action Plan, RAG rating and the full Written Statement of Action.	Marium Haque/Niall Devlin.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendations from Wednesday 18 January 2023.
2) Draft Scrutiny Review Report - Elective Home Education.	Key findings and recommendations from the scrutiny review.	Mustansir Butt.	
3) Work Programme.	There is s a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to priortise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	

Childrens Services O&S Committee

Scrutiny Lead: Mustansir Butt tel - 43 2574

Work Programme

Agenda Items	Description	Report Author	Comments
Wednesday, 7th February 2024 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 17/01/24. Report deadline 25/01/24.			
1) Monitoring the Children's Services Improvement Plan.	To also include the Ofsted Monitoring Visit.	Marium Haque/Charlotte Ramsden.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 18 January 2023.
2) Audit findings relating to the quality of Social Work Practice.		Charlotte Ramsden/Amandip Johal.	
3) Work Programme.	There is s a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to priotise and manage the work.	Mustansir Butt.	
Wednesday, 13th March 2024 at City Hall, Bradford.			
Chair's briefing 21/02/24. Report deadline 29/02/24.			
1) Mental Health issues relating to Children's Social Care.	Report to focus on the Written Statement of Action and the Action Plan to support the delivery of this and outcomes delivered. Findings and recommendations from the Deep Dive Review, to also be included.	Ali Jan Haider/David Sims/Christina Hollaway/Kristain Farnell.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee from Wednesday 15 February 2023.
2) Findings from the review into children's health assessment caseloads.		Michelle Holgate/Dawn Lee.	Deferred from Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Wednesday 15 February 2023.
3) Educational Standards - Early Years to Key Stage 4.	To scope the report with the Chair, Deputy Chair and Overview & Scrutiny Lead.	Marium Haque/Sue Lowndes.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 15 February 2024.
4) Work Programme,	There is s a need to regularly review the work programme, in order to priotise and manage the work.		

Democratic Services - Overview and Scrutiny

Scrutiny Committees Forward Plan

Unscheduled Items

Childrens Services O&S Committee

Agenda item	Item description	Author	Comments
1	Child Poverty Scrutiny Review.	Mustansir Butt.	Council resolution from Tuesday 15 March 2022.
2	Scrutiny Review into persistent absence across schools in the Bradford District.	Mustansir Butt.	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation from Wednesday 1 February 2023.

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