

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 12 October 2022 in Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.40 pm
Concluded 7.00 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Berry Humphreys Shafiq Thirkill	Winnard Pollard	J Sunderland

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

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

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER

Secondary School Representative – Tom Bright

COUNCILLOR WINNARD IN THE CHAIR

21. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

Apologies: Councillors Alipoor and Sajawal

22. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency, the following Members declared an interest in the item relating to SEND Services Update:

- Councillor Winnard was the Chair of Aware Charity;
- Councillor Pollard was a Governor of a Special Provision School;
- Councillor Berry's wife was employed by an early health organisation; and,
- Parent Governor Representative, Fauzia Raza was a SEND Governor at a primary school.

ACTION: Director of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

23. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

24. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the committee.

25. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

In late 2021 and early 2022, the Secretary of State for Education issued a statutory direction to Bradford Council. This required the Council to work with a central Government appointed Commissioner to set up a Trust to deliver Children's Services in the District.

In the past year, the Council and the Commissioner have worked with local partners to review and strengthen our improvement work. One area of concern, highlighted by the Commissioner, was the overly complex nature of the previous improvement plan. As such the Council and the Commissioner have worked with partners on the Improvement Board and have agreed to a revised Improvement Plan. This sets out, how the district will work together to improve the lives of local children and families and the services that work with them.

To ensure Overview and Scrutiny have proper oversight of the implementation of the plan, it is proposed that officers provide:

- Regular reporting of the Improvement Plan scorecard in line with Overview and Scrutiny timetable.
- Exception reporting of other issues as required.

This approach provided the Overview and Scrutiny with full information and enabled it to assess progress and scrutinise the effectiveness of the plan and the Improvement Board. The report of the Strategic director of Children's Services (**Document "H"**) was submitted.

Following a synopsis of the report, a discussion took place on the subject of the Improvement Plan being one sided and it entailed a lack of policy development. Information towards the level of support for scrutiny and the expectation of committee members was not substantive enough. The Improvement Board needed to be a more participating process and therefore:

Resolved –

- (1) This Committee requests that the new and detailed improvement plan be presented to the Committee in November 2022.**

- (2) **The Committee requests that the outcomes delivered for the Children’s Services Improvement Plan, from September 2021 to March 2022, also be presented to the Committee in November 2022.**

ACTION: Strategic Director, Children’s Services

26. SEND SERVICES UPDATE

The report of the Strategic Director of Children’s Services (**Document “I”**) provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committees with an update on the SEND Inspection and activities relating SEND in the Bradford Local Area.

Strategic Manager Integrated Assessment, Transformation and Compliance Manager was in attendance and gave a synopsis of the report.

Following a summary of the report, a question and answer session ensued:

- For the purpose of clarity, what was the final deadline for further actions to be returned?
 - 21 September 2022;
- In relation to concerns, what issues had arisen during the inspection?
 - Most new plans were sufficient as opposed to some historical plans due to lack of updates in accordance with child SEND needs;
- Had multi-lingual factors being addressed?
 - In order to address this matter, a recruitment exercise had been undertaken to appoint Assessment Team officers who focused on multi-lingual approaches. In addition, the team was dedicated in working closely with Health Officers in order to put across quality health advice that everyone clearly understood;
- What was the narrative of paragraph 2.18 on page 25 contained within the report?
 - That numbers had decreased over the last 12 months. This was in partly due to the narrowing and increase in the numbers of children who received an EHCP. This is also partly due to the Pandemic and a reduced throughput of new requests for SEN Support;
- It seemed that there were thresholds being set at different levels which were not accurate?
 - This concept was a central direction that came directly from the DFE;
- In regards to paragraph 2.21 on page 26 contained within the report, which services did not have representation?
 - Ofsted met with families and professionals to discuss the hubs and found that the access to services within the hubs was too variable. This was partly due to the pandemic and some limited access to services;
- Due to the disruption caused by the impact of Covid, what is being addressed to assist children who have missed significant language development?
 - Public Health colleagues were looking at various means to best address this concern;

- What was the impact on children who had hearing difficulties and were unable to have implants?
 - It was recognised from an audiology point of view that to take no action was not good enough. Therefore, Public Health team was investing heavily to improve this area of treatment services;
- Local Authority schools were under immense stress with SEND and the fact that a significant level of transitions were continuous. It was also understood that occasionally children with complex needs were not accompanied with vital information on their needs. Hence, what was the standard ECHP turnaround time?
 - Bradford Authority was at the bottom end of 2019 league table for issuing ECHP Plans however the authority's performance had improved in 2020. Statistically, the authority was above the national average. Conversely, if a new arrival in the country then the assessment process would begin with a home visit to establish whether a child would need to be fast tracked. Every child in Bradford was supported;
- What if it is established that a child struggled from depression and anxiety issues then how was such conditions in children assisted?
 - there was a recognition of mental illness and services were delivered according to availability. During this process, the authority worked in consultation with colleagues across the CCG;
- What provision was in place to assist children who were unable to attend school due to a disability?
 - Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 placed a duty on Local Authority's to make suitable alternative education for children of statutory school age who could not attend school because of an illness, exclusion or any other reason;
- In response to a child being excluded, then entering a Pupil Referral Unit, was any assessment undertaken to establish whether there were issues relating to behaviour?
 - An assessment was carried out to check whether a child had ADHD symptoms;
- What was the number of permanent staff with this service?
 - In the region of 40+ full time officers that were employed directly by the authority;
- Following assessment, how long were parents expected to wait before being diagnosed?
 - 31 weeks. However, the authority had been using an external organisation to reduce the length of time. On a significant change, it was important to recognise that service was in confident place as a partnership working arrangement with other organisation; and,
- Further to the report explaining that health colleagues were aware that the assessment compliance rates for completion within 20 days were not being achieved and a steering group had been established to address this, how confident was the service in meeting the 20 days' assessment compliance?
 - To date, in the region of 80% of children had been assessed within the expected timeframe. The service was endeavoured to meet national compliance, however, the occasional process with professionals such as Consultant Paediatricians assessed with

comprehensive developmental evaluations entailed a lengthy process.

During the latter part of the discussion, a member turned the committee's attention to the number of children who were not enrol in schools and therefore spending time aimlessly at unsafe locations without the knowledge of parents'. This was also the result of an increasing number of suspensions. It was paramount that the service equally turns its focus on undertaking a big piece of work to address this topic for the purpose of the wellbeing of young children.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance at the meeting.

Resolved –

This Committee requests that the progress against the Written Statements of Action, (WSOA), Improvement Plan, be presented to this Committee at its meeting on Wednesday 18 January 2023.

ACTION: Strategic Director, Children's Services

27. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The report of the Chair of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee (**Document "J"**) included the Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2022/23.

Resolved –

Members discussed and amended the work programme.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

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.