

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Monday, 13th November, 2023

Present:- **Councillors** Dine Romero, Liz Hardman, Alex Beaumont, Paul Crossley, Dave Harding, Lesley Mansell and Joanna Wright

Co-opted Non-Voting Members: Chris Batten and Kevin Burnett

Also in attendance: Mary Kearney-Knowles (Director of Children's Services and Education), Christopher Wilford (Education and Safeguarding Director), Ceri Williams (Policy Development & Scrutiny Officer), Paul Scott (Associate Director, Public Health), Sarah Watts (Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager), Richard Morgan (Education Business Manager) and Laura Ambler (Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB)

42 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

43 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty had sent her apologies to the Panel.

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Paul May declared an other interest as he is a non-executive Sirona board member.

46 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chair informed the Panel that the first meeting of the Knife Crime Task & Finish Group had been held and that their Terms of Reference had been approved. She said that they intended to work through some of the issues that had already been identified as quickly as possible.

She added that a meeting was also due to take place in the coming weeks between herself and the CEO of the B&NES, Swindon & Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, Sue Harriman.

The Chair spoke on behalf of the Panel to say that following a direct question relating to Charlton House at the previous meeting they believe that the response given was not as full as it could have been.

Councillor Liz Hardman questioned why the Panel had not been asked to take part in any pre-consultation work and why only a general answer had been given at the last meeting. She stated that she would like the Panel to be given a full explanation of the process at their December meeting.

Councillor Joanna Wright asked that the Panel formally write to the Cabinet Member for Adult Services to convey their disappointment and that they feel let down.

The Chair said that she would write to Councillor Born and explain that it would have been helpful for the Panel to have received information prior to the consultation commencing. She asked that a report on the process of the Single Member Decision re: Community Resource Centres: Proposals for Consultation be prepared for the December Panel meeting.

Councillor Lesley Mansell requested that the Equality Impact Assessment be included as an appendix to the report.

The Panel agreed with these proposals.

47 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

48 MINUTES: 9TH OCTOBER 2023

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

49 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Paul May addressed the Panel. He said that within his update he wanted to highlight some of the problems that were being faced by the service, in particular the increase in demand and complexity of issues being raised. A copy of the update will be attached to these minutes as an online appendix.

Kevin Burnett asked if the pressures were likely to lead to a deterioration in services.

Councillor May replied that currently, good and experienced staff were operating well under the pressures and said that he was meeting with them on a regular basis. He added that the numbers of children requiring Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) had doubled since just before the pandemic, but that the number of staff working in this area had remained the same. He said that agency staff were being used as and when required to alleviate some of the strain and that this work was being kept under close review.

Kevin Burnett asked what pressure, political or otherwise, could be applied to attempt to gain further funding for the service as a whole.

The Director of Children's Services & Education offered her assurance to the Panel that they have a well established staff leadership group in place. She said that the number of complex cases that had been presented to the service had risen and that steps were hopefully due to be taken to recruit additional staff where possible.

She said that lobbying for further funding has taken place with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Department for Education (DfE) relating to the increase in demand. She added that discussions have also been held with representatives of the South West Councils.

Councillor May said that pressure on Children's Services budgets was a national issue, but the DfE were attempting to help with their Safety Valve Scheme. He added that meetings have and will continue to take place with Lead Members from other councils to discuss the matter of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. He said that between age of 18 – 25 these young people remain the responsibility of the Council, but there is no direct funding available.

The Chair asked whether the Panel should consider having a future report on the subject of EHCPs.

Councillor May replied that he believed the Council was an outlier in terms of its EHCP work and would welcome the Panel receiving such a report.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding added that officers do pride themselves of the delivery of their services and as a team were committed to making improvements to the service.

Councillor Joanna Wright asked if any rewards or incentives could be put in place to add value to the roles of officers within the service to retain their employment or to attract further staff that may currently work for an agency.

Councillor May agreed that the Council needed to do what it could to keep the staff that they have. He added that he still felt that the Council was an employer that people want to work for.

The Director of Children's Services & Education said that over the past year the Council has reduced its use of agency staff.

The Chair asked has there been any work carried out to encourage agency staff to come and be employed by the Council on a full time basis.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that they have carried out some onboarding work with agency staff to discuss the possibility of full time employment and the general response has been that the Council cannot match the flexibility in hours and the rate of pay. She added that they were considering offering a higher rate of pay for some entry level positions.

She explained that similar discussions have also been held with Independent Foster Carers as to whether they could join the employment of the Council.

Councillor May said that he would take on board the points that had been raised and commented that the annual celebration of work event was always well received.

The Chair added that she would consider if any similar events could be held on behalf of the Mayor.

Kevin Burnett asked if the proposed savings were on track to be made.

Councillor May replied that they were.

Kevin Burnett asked if there would be enough funding in place for the announcements regarding Early Years Childcare.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that this would be a challenge, but that they welcome the initial funding and prospect of further. He added further information will be required on matters such as pay rates and provider costs.

Kevin Burnett asked if the bid from Children's Social Care to be part of the Sector-Led Improvement Programme would lead to more work for the staff involved.

Councillor May replied that it was recognised that benefits can be achieved by working with colleagues from other Local Authorities.

Councillor Paul Crossley asked if the Council could offer more flexible contracts to those prospective staff that would benefit from having them in place.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that they do offer a degree of flexibility within the current contracts and support requests for secondments etc. as much as possible.

Councillor Lesley Mansell commented that she was aware of similar issues relating to staff recruitment and retention within the NHS and asked what procedures are in place to talk to staff about their reasons for staying / leaving and whether any issues can be reduced.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that they are looking to increase staff number to attempt to reduce some of the pressures. She stated that risk assessments are carried out across the service and that exit interviews do take place. She added that in the main, leaving members of staff have said that has been due to the pressure of the role and not the processes that the Council have in place.

Councillor Liz Hardman said that she was always concerned when seeing the phrase 'efficiency savings', but hoped that this would lead to the right amount of resources being put in the most appropriate areas. She stated that the availability of Free School Meal Vouchers in school holidays was due to end in Easter 2024 and that she would like the Council to do all that it could to continue this much needed resource for as long as possible.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, thanked Councillor May for his update.

50 **B&NES, SWINDON & WILTSHIRE INTEGRATED CARE BOARD (BSW ICB) UPDATE**

The Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB addressed the Panel and highlighted the following areas from her update. A copy of the update will be attached to these minutes as an online appendix.

Sulis Elective Orthopaedic Centre (SEOC) Update

A planning application has been submitted to BaNES Council by the RUH for a new wing at Sulis Hospital in Peasedown St John. If approved, this will allow for an increased capacity at Sulis for non-emergency orthopaedic surgery.

Surgery would be protected from disruption and cancellations caused by surges in emergency hospital admissions because Sulis is not an acute hospital with an emergency department, and as such the SEOC will enhance the resilience of services into the future.

The SEOC would serve patients from the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) area, and beyond, from the whole of the South West region.

Dyson Cancer Centre

Work is also continuing at the hospital to build the new Dyson Cancer Centre which is now expected to welcome patients in spring 2024 rather than at the end of 2023.

Once open, the Dyson Cancer Centre will bring together the majority of the RUH's cancer services, including research, under one roof. It will provide oncology, chemotherapy and radiotherapy services and a 22-bed inpatient ward as well as a Macmillan Wellbeing Hub.

The centre will provide a nurturing and therapeutic environment, with a 'land, water, sky' theme, making extensive use of natural light and external spaces as well as the work of local artists and designers.

The £50m Dyson Cancer Centre is backed by over £40m in Government New Hospitals Programme funding and supported in part by a £4m donation from The James Dyson Foundation to create a cancer services hub for half a million people in the South West of England.

A further £1m was donated by the Medlock Charitable Trust, £1.5m by Macmillan Cancer Support and £5m was also raised by RUHX (formerly known as The Forever Friends Appeal), the official charity of the Trust, thanks to the kindness and compassion of thousands of supporters.

RUH - CQC inspection

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) report published in October on the RUH followed its focused inspection of aspects of Medical Care in July 2023.

The inspectors had many positive things to say about their visit, including particular praise for the 'outstanding programme' for international nurses and how managers and ward leaders were supported to make the wards a welcoming place to work.

The report however also reflected some areas requiring more attention resulting in a reduction of the rating of Medical Care Services at the RUH from 'good' to 'requires improvement'.

An action plan to address these is already well underway including improving storage space on wards, ensuring consistent completion of fluid chart documentation and a continuing focus on Healthcare Support Worker recruitment.

Integrated Community-Based Care Programme

The BSW Primary and Community Care Delivery Plan is seeking to redesign the way community-based health and care services operate. It supports the delivery of the ambitions set out in the BSW Together 'Integrated Care Strategy' and to drive forward the implementation of elements of the BSW Care Model.

The Integrated Community Based Care (ICBC) Programme is the method by which services will be procured in support of the ICP strategy and Primary and Community Care Delivery Plan.

The Programme lies at the heart of our aspiration to implement a greater focus on prevention and early intervention in our approach to supporting the health and well-being of the BSW population. The approach being undertaken aims to enable BSW to achieve fairer health outcomes for the whole population and to deliver excellent health and care services.

BaNES Integrated Care Alliance Winter Update

BaNES Integrated Care Alliance has developed a joint approach to delivering services and supporting citizens across BaNES during winter 2023/4. It will focus on maximising capacity through the following measures:

- Two virtual wards have been established in B&NES – step-up model to reduce avoidable admission provided by HCRG and step-down model provided by RUH to expedite discharge.
- Our step-up virtual ward includes access to diagnostics including imaging and rapid blood tests working in collaboration with the RUH. The team, which includes specialist nurses and paramedics, also provide IV medication at home.
- Funding confirmed to run PUSH (respiratory illness) clinics for children and young people in areas of known deprivation and prevalence – with the BaNES

GP federation BEMS. Start date Dec, 105 clinics between start and March 31st.

Kevin Burnett referred to the Integrated Care Programme and asked if any points of contact had been established, for example, was it to be a GP.

He also spoke in relation to Community Pharmacies and asked if this would lead to an increase in independent prescribers.

Furthermore, he asked if the technology was in place to link records between GPs, Pharmacies and Hospitals.

The Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB replied that she was not able to offer a full update at the present time as work relating to this was still ongoing. She added that it was about getting the care co-ordination right and making sure it is seamless. She stated that across the BSW footprint they were looking at a central care co-ordination approach.

Addressing the technology issues, she explained that a number of digital workstreams were being pursued, including Integrated Care Records.

She added that when the Community Pharmacies update is formally presented to the Panel that the Primary Care view is also addressed.

Councillor Liz Hardman welcomed the update regarding Community Pharmacies and asked how they are chosen and would every area of the Council have one.

The Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB replied that she would need to discuss this matter with colleagues and then respond to the Panel.

Councillor Joanna Wright informed the Panel that she had recently attend a further seminar on Dental Deserts and explained that there was a shortage in NHS Dentists due to the numbers that were retiring and working privately.

She stated that a large number of newly qualified dentists could not afford to work through the NHS due to their level of student debt and asked if there was anything the Council could do to help with this situation.

She said that due to the increasing age of patients there are now simply more teeth to look after.

She stated that she felt that the issue of Oral Care needs highlighting, especially for children.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that work is carried within school settings in terms of what level of cleaning needs to be done and the good types of food to eat. He added that work with specific groups of families was also ongoing. He offered to send the Panel further information in writing following the meeting.

Councillor Lesley Mansell asked for further information on the Community Wellbeing Hub.

The Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB replied that it is based in Peasedown St. John and also has a space within the Atrium at the RUH. She explained that the Hub provides a central place for people to access a range of services to improve their health and wellbeing.

She added that it is run in partnership with many local voluntary groups, including Age UK, Bath Mind and the Council. She explained that a range of services are offered from the Hub and include Housing Advice, Cost of Living Support and Access to Food.

The Chair said that it was a fantastic establishment to have in place for the Council and was able to provide a wide range of support to the public. She asked if a briefing note regarding the Hub could be circulated to the Panel in due course.

Kevin Burnett asked if the findings of the RUH CQC Inspection Report were of particular concern.

The Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB replied that they were aware of the issues that had been raised and were already addressing them.

Councillor Dave Harding asked if figures relating to dental hygiene could be included in a future report that comes to the Panel that issue.

Councillor Paul May commented that the Community Wellbeing Hub was a credit to all involved and said that the funding for it would be retained.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel thanked the Director of Place, B&NES, BSW ICB for her report.

51 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Education & Safeguarding stated that it had been a challenging year for the service and that improvements had been seen despite resources remaining an issue. He added that additional IRO's were being sought.

He explained that some placements for children and young people are still required to be out of area.

He stated that a positive relationship exists between the IRO's, Social Workers and their managers.

The Chair commented that the number of placements outside of the Local Authority had increased which results in young people not being near their relatives or the Council as their Corporate Parents.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that these decisions are not made by the IRO, it was their role to make sure the placements are suitable. He added that they were seeking to develop some in house provision.

The Director of Children's Services & Education added that a sufficiency statement is carried out annually and that it can be difficult to locally home young people with complex needs, but that they do try to keep a connection in place where possible.

Councillor Paul Crossley asked if the Council knew the whereabouts of all the young people that had left its care.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the Council now had a responsibility for them until the age of 25 and stated that they were currently in contact with all of those young people.

Councillor Crossley asked if Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children should be placed nearer to relatives or families that they know.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the Council is part of the Voluntary Dispersal Scheme and do challenge where appropriate to home young people near to relatives that are already in the country.

Councillor Paul May said that this was a known national issue and that funding becomes more of a pressure once the young person turns 18.

Councillor Crossley referred to section 14.1 of the report and asked why some 'Areas for development' were still marked as outstanding from 2019.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that this relates mainly to 'life story' work where feedback is gathered from children and the need for this to be more in depth where possible.

Councillor Crossley stated that he would like to see more realistic targets within future reports.

Councillor Paul May commented that the report could be given further scrutiny at the next Corporate Parent meeting.

Kevin Burnett asked if the IROs have a role with regard to Children in Care that offend / re-offend.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the IROs will review all Children in Care.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding added that their individual plans would be scrutinised by the IROs and that input would also be received from the Youth Offending Team.

Councillor Lesley Mansell commented that the last Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed in October 2020 and asked what actions had been taken as

part of this and when would it be reviewed / updated to include any changes relating to disability, ethnic minorities, LGBT and religion.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that he would ask for the EIA to be updated.

Councillor May said that it had been good to have the reminder of the Pledge to Children in Care at the May 2023 Council meeting.

Councillor Mansell said that the Pledge was quite broad on equalities and would expect LGBT to be included on future EIAs.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what the impact would be if the request for additional posts and funding were not achieved.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that the caseloads of current staff would need to be increased and that this would affect their ability to meet agreed timescales.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to;

- i) Note the growing pressures on the IRO service as a result of the increasing numbers of children being placed in the care of Bath and Northeast Somerset and the continued work and commitment of IROs to maintain contact with children in care, regularly reviewing the plans for these children to ensure their needs are being met.
- ii) Recognise and value the impact of the IRO role in providing scrutiny and at times, challenge when there are concerns that the needs of children are not being met or plans progressed.

52 BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COMMUNITY SAFETY & SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP (BCSSP) ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair commented that there were recommendations referred to in the report but she could not actually locate them.

Councillor Paul Crossley said that he endorsed the work of all staff involved in this area. He asked if the 'missing children' data in this report was recorded differently to the last report (IRO Annual Report).

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that this data was collected differently by Avon & Somerset Constabulary and concentrated on those under the age of 18.

Councillor Crossley stated that there was no place for any type of race hatred within our community.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the Council does work very closely with SARI (Stand Against Racism & Equality) on these issues and takes any such notification seriously.

Kevin Burnett asked if Operation Encompass was now fully in place across the Council.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that it was.

Kevin Burnett asked how many Domestic Homicide Reviews have been carried out.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that in the period covered by this report, the BCSSP has not completed any Domestic Homicide Reviews.

Kevin Burnett referred to safeguarding and asked if the new managing allegations protocol had had an impact on staff in schools and had any training taken place.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that multi-agency training opportunities have been available from the Police. He added that support and training was in place for schools from the LADO and supporting IROs.

Kevin Burnett asked if a review of how allegations are processed had been carried out and who is involved in that process.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that he would provide further information in writing to the Panel.

Councillor Dave Harding asked if there was a known reason for the increase in missing children or was it a case of better reporting in place.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the data used by the Police was rolling data and that the Council uses data across the financial year. She added that there were currently three children missing from care and that this was an improvement on the previous year.

She added that the repeated missing children were not in care and would be at home or within their community and would be receiving support from the Police alongside the Council.

She said there could be a combination of reasons as to why they are missing, including having fallen out with their parents, not wanting to live with extended family or being at risk of exploitation.

Councillor Dave Harding referred to page 52 of the agenda and asked if there was any lag in terms of the information relating to the Safeguarding Adult Reviews.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that she would relay that question to the Director of Adult Services for a response. She added that she was aware that the Practice Review Group meet on a monthly basis.

Councillor Joanna Wright commented that she was surprised that there was no reference in the report to online / cyber behaviour.

The Director of Children's Services & Education apologised for this omission and assured the Panel that this area of work is addressed.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the Annual Report and Executive Summary for the BCSSP.

53 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

Kevin Burnett referred to section 4.9 of the report and asked if there were any specific areas of complaints to the Children in Care Team.

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager replied that they were varied, but often about the number of placement movements over time or moves that they did not agree with.

Councillor Dave Harding praised the officers concerned for the compliments that had been received within the report.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

54 SCHOOL MEALS

The Chair commented that she would find it useful to have the information in the report broken down on a ward by ward basis.

The Education Business Manager replied that allocating the information to specific wards could be difficult and said that it would be more possible to do it school by school.

The Chair said that she felt the Council should do more / use different types of media to make parents aware that they are eligible to apply for Free School Meals.

The Education Business Manager replied that they do currently use a range of resources to raise awareness, such as local libraries, the One Big Database and the Council's Facebook page, but said they were willing to do more.

Kevin Burnett asked if there was a defined break even point for schools on this matter.

The Education Business Manager replied that this does really depend on the make up of the school and whether the provision is in house or sourced from an outside provider. He explained to the Panel that either cold or hot food constitutes provision and that all but one of the local schools were providing hot meals.

Kevin Burnett asked if there had been an increase in overall pupil numbers within schools.

The Education Business Manager replied that there had not and that the pupil population was currently stagnant. He added that there has been a reduction within the Reception year and an increase in other years.

He informed the Panel that the Schools Organisational Plan could be discussed by them at a future meeting.

Councillor Dave Harding referred to the Holiday Activity Programme that was held at the Chew Valley Rugby Club and asked how many young people had attended it.

The Education Business Manager replied that he would need to follow up with a response after the meeting.

Councillor Paul Crossley referred to subject of the School Meals Voucher Scheme and said that while the funding is guaranteed until Easter holidays 2024 it must continue beyond this date and called for the Cabinet Member to address this within the upcoming budget.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if many self-assessment audits were carried out within schools regarding food standards and is there any control over quality / provision.

The Education Business Manager replied that the standards are applied to all forms of food provided in school. He added that he was unsure of the numbers of self-assessments that had been carried out.

Councillor Joanna Wright commented that she would like to see the data for how many Free School Meals (FSM) there are per school and the take up of FSM Vouchers for the different areas of the Council in a future report. She also asked if the Holiday Activity Programmes were situated in the right areas.

The Chair replied by saying that the topic of Leisure could be discussed in more detail at a future Panel meeting.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the information within the report.

55 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item and noted the following items to be added to their workplan.

- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) Overview
- Community Resource Centres: Proposals for consultation

Kevin Burnett suggested that the Panel receive further information at a future meeting from 3SG on their current work.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to agree with these additions.

The meeting ended at 12.32 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services