

Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Date: Tuesday, 15th June, 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Banqueting Room - Guildhall, Bath

Councillors: Vic Pritchard, Michelle O'Doherty, Ruth Malloy, Mark Roper, Andy Wait, Paul May, Liz Hardman, Gerry Curran and Vacancy

Co-opted Voting Members: Gill Stobart

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

The Panel will have a pre-meeting at 9.30am



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NOTES:

1. Inspection of Papers: Papers are available for inspection as follows:
Council's website: <https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

2. Details of decisions taken at this meeting can be found in the minutes which will be circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime, details can be obtained by contacting as above.

3. Recording at Meetings:-

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 now allows filming and recording by anyone attending a meeting. This is not within the Council's control.

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To comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, we require the consent of parents or guardians before filming children or young people. For more information, please speak to the camera operator.

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4. Public Speaking at Meetings

The Council has a scheme to encourage the public to make their views known at meetings. They may make a statement relevant to what the meeting has power to do. They may also present a petition or a deputation on behalf of a group.

Advance notice is required not less than two full working days before the meeting. This means that for meetings held on Thursdays notice must be received in Democratic Services by 5.00pm the previous Monday.

Further details of the scheme can be found at:

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**Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel -
Tuesday, 15th June, 2021**

at 10.00 am in the Banqueting Room - Guildhall, Bath

A G E N D A

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair will draw attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out under Note 6.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting declarations of interest are received from Members in any of the agenda items under consideration at the meeting. Members are asked to indicate:

- (a) The agenda item number in which they have an interest to declare.
- (b) The nature of their interest.
- (c) Whether their interest is a **disclosable pecuniary interest** or an **other interest**,
(as defined in Part 2, A and B of the Code of Conduct and Rules for Registration of Interests)

Any Member who needs to clarify any matters relating to the declaration of interests is recommended to seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer or a member of his staff before the meeting to expedite dealing with the item during the meeting.

5. TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN
6. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

At the time of publication no notifications had been received.

7. 10.05AM MINUTES: 9TH MARCH 2021 (Pages 5 - 26)
8. 10.15AM CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member(s) will update the Panel on any relevant issues. Panel members may ask questions on the update provided.

9. 10.35AM BSW CCG UPDATE

The Panel will receive an update from the B&NES, Swindon & Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG) on current issues.

10. 10.55AM NARROWING THE EDUCATION GAP (Pages 27 - 40)

This report provides an update on activity to narrow the attainment gap of disadvantaged (pupil premium/FSM) pupils, included in the Education Updates report presented to Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) in November 2021.

11. 11.20AM EXPLOITATION (Pages 41 - 52)

The Panel have requested a report outlining information in relation to children or adults at risk of exploitation and information on multi-agency working which reduces and identifies the risk.

12. 11.45AM CORPORATE PARENTING (Pages 53 - 64)

This report will outline the effectiveness of the Local Authority in meeting their safeguarding responsibilities and progress of children in care and care leavers.

13. 12.10PM FOOD INSECURITY (Pages 65 - 110)

This report provides an update on the development and progress of the B&NES Fair Food Alliance (BFFA) which was previously known as the B&NES Food Poverty Steering Group on delivering the actions set out in the action plan.

14. 12.35PM ADOPTION WEST ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT (Pages 111 - 140)

The Panel is asked to consider the annual report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Adoption West.

15. 1.00PM DIRECTOR BRIEFINGS - ADULT SOCIAL CARE & CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

The Panel will receive an update on this item from the Directors of Adult Social Care & Children & Young People.

16. 1.10PM PANEL WORKPLAN (Pages 141 - 144)

This report presents the latest workplan for the Panel. Any suggestions for further items or amendments to the current programme will be logged and scheduled in consultation with the Panel's Chair and supporting officers.

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Mark Durnford who can be contacted on mark_durnford@bathnes.gov.uk, 01225 394458.

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 9th March, 2021

Present:- Councillors Vic Pritchard (Chair), Michelle O'Doherty (Vice-Chair), Jess David, Ruth Malloy, Mark Roper, Andy Wait, Paul May, Liz Hardman and Alison Born

Co-opted Members: Kevin Burnett and Chris Batten

Also in attendance: Lesley Hutchinson (Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning), Claire Thorogood (Head of Contracting & Performance), Christopher Wilford (Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding), Paul Scott (Assistant Director/ Public Health Consultant), Dr Bryn Bird (B&NES Locality Clinical Chair), Judith Westcott (Senior Commissioning Manager - Community Health & Care Services) and Simon Cook (New Hospital Programme Director)

Cabinet Member for Adult Services: Councillor Rob Appleyard

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Kevin Guy

69 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

70 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

David Williams (Co-opted Member) had sent his apologies to the Panel.

71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul May declared an other interest as he is a non-executive Sirona board member.

Councillor Alison Born declared an other interest as she is a board member of B&NES Carers Centre.

72 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

74 MINUTES - 19TH JANUARY 2021

The Chair asked if Councillor Ruth Malloy had received any further information relating to the 'Got Ya Back' river safety campaign and the #NeverOK Campaign mentioned in a previous meeting.

Councillor Malloy replied that she was aware that the request for the information had been followed up by the Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning via email, but had not yet received anything directly regarding the campaigns.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding said that neither he nor the Inclusive Communities Manager were aware of the campaigns mentioned.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that she would follow up the matter with Sian Walker-McAllister, B&NES CSSP Independent Chair directly.

The Chair asked if the Panel could be updated in respect of the Inclusion Expert.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions they were not able to return to work in schools. He said that there would be some remaining days that schools could use once restrictions begin to ease. He added that a report on their work will be received by the Council at some point in the future.

Kevin Burnett asked if an update could be provided on the Escalation Protocol.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that the Protocol was currently in draft form and due to be implemented in April.

The Chair asked if the Covid-19 vaccination programme had continued to progress well locally, particularly in terms of residents within Care Homes.

Councillor Rob Appleyard replied that it had.

Referring to Mental Health Services, the Chair asked if allocation date for the additional £10.3m from NHSE had been announced.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that a prioritisation process was ongoing after a substantial number of bids had been received.

Dr Bryn Bird, B&NES Locality Clinical Chair added that over 100 requests had been received.

The Chair asked for clarification on how work will be delivered in Early Years SEND when the vacant post is deleted.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that a different model has been devised for this work area over the past 18 months by

giving training to empower schools which has led to there being no need to fill the vacant post.

Kevin Burnett asked if any update could be given regarding SEND Advocacy.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that a contract for the service was yet to be agreed.

With those matters raised in mind, the Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record.

75 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Rob Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Adult Services addressed the Panel and said that he was happy to take questions on the submission he had provided to them.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that the Community Resource Centres and Extra Care Services had transferred on 1 October 2020 from Sirona to the Council and that the focus is now on reviewing staff salaries and terms and conditions. She asked if it was anticipated that there will be any job losses.

Councillor Appleyard replied that he was not aware that there were to be any job losses and said that he felt that the move enhances the position of the staff.

Kevin Burnett asked how people were identified to the Community Wellbeing Hub to receive emergency food parcels

Councillor Appleyard replied that it was a very complicated piece of work and that the Council were supplied with a list of residents who were considered to be vulnerable. He added that nearly 12,000 calls to the Hub had been received since last March and that everyone associated with its work should be immensely proud.

Councillor Jess David asked if the emergency food parcels would be a continuing service that could be provided.

Councillor Appleyard replied that if requests are received we will do all we can to help and that it was ongoing as far as he was concerned.

The Chair asked how this was to be funded.

Councillor Appleyard replied that it would be funded through the Hub and supplies from food banks which are currently well stocked by the people of B&NES.

He said that he was immensely grateful to the work and support of Lesley Hutchinson, Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning who was to leave the Council at the end of the week. He added that he would like to welcome Alison Elliott who will take over the role on an interim basis.

Councillor Kevin Guy, Cabinet Member for Children's Services addressed the Panel and said that he echoed the comments made by Councillor Appleyard and was happy to take questions on the submission he had provided to them.

Councillor Paul May commented that he supported the work identified with regard to the former Culverhay site to explore how post 16 vocational provision can be accommodated. He stated that he would like consideration to be given to the possibility of a separate Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel for Children's Services to be setup.

Councillor Guy replied that he would prefer it if a separate Panel could be arranged in the future.

Councillor Alison Born commented that she was also pleased to see the ongoing work in relation to Culverhay and asked if it was likely to return to be used as a school.

Councillor Guy replied that there were no plans for that, but he was pleased with the work surrounding the Alternative Learning Provision for children and young people in B&NES who have been excluded from school or are at risk of being excluded from school.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that 77 pupils had not been offered a place at any of their preferred Secondary Schools and have instead been offered a place at their next nearest school with a place available, which is known as a referral. She asked if the Panel could have a breakdown of these pupils and whether they are they from any particular primary schools or do they relate to any particular secondary schools. She also asked if most applicants were using all of their preferences or are those not being offered a preferred school choosing to identify a very limited number of schools.

Councillor Guy replied that the Admissions team do a great job to enable the majority of pupils to attend a school of their choice. He said that the families of pupils who have not received a place at their preferred school should consider making an appeal and that there is a recognised process for this to take place. He added that he would seek a response for the Panel on the figures requested.

Councillor Hardman asked what information the Council has about the provision of Free School Meals during the Easter holidays.

Councillor Guy replied that the Covid-19 Winter Grant had almost ran out and that they were seeking Government support for Free School Meals over Easter.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding added that he had discussed the matter with Education Business Manager and that they think that any surplus funds can be rolled into April.

Councillor Hardman commented that a recent report in the Guardian newspaper found that one in five UK schools has set up a foodbank and many more are giving ad hoc emergency food support to pupils and their families. She said that clearly this is unsustainable and a mark of the extreme poverty many families are facing. She

asked if it was known whether any schools in B&NES are offering this type of provision.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that he was not aware that any schools within B&NES had set up a Food Bank directly. He added that schools do support families on this issue and do signpost them to other agencies.

Kevin Burnett asked if they were aware of a potential issue relating to consent of flu vaccinations administered in schools by Virgin Care.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that he had followed up this issue with Virgin Care.

Councillor Paul May asked if any process was taking place to assure that our young people get fair exam results this year. He added that he would welcome a report on inclusion / attainment for the Panel.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding replied that teachers would be deciding directly on exam results this year following an announcement by the Government. He added that they were awaiting a decision from the DfE, but would be surprised if this year there was not a request for data to be collected.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for their updates on behalf of the Panel.

76 BSW CCG UPDATE

Dr Bryn Bird, B&NES Locality Clinical Chair addressed the Panel. A copy of the update can be found as an online appendix to these minutes, a summary of the update is set out below.

Covid-19 mass vaccination programme

Our Covid-19 vaccination programme has been making solid progress since we started offering the vaccine to the first priority groups at the end of last year.

As of 25 February, almost 265,000 vaccines have been given across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, which is the equivalent of vaccinating the entire population of Swindon and the surrounding areas.

We are currently around halfway through the process of vaccinating people in priority groups five and six (people aged over 65 and anyone aged between 16 and 64 with an underlying health condition) and this puts us on track to meet recent government targets.

People who were among some of the first to have the vaccine will begin receiving their second dose from the beginning of March. Health and social care workers will also begin to receive their second dose, and we are working closely with all provider organisation to ensure this happens as smoothly as possible.

The rate for people testing positive locally currently stands at 30 / 100,000.

Twenty cases were still present within the RUH but no new diagnosis had been admitted within the last 48 hours.

BSW Partnership Integrated Care System development

In February the government set out new proposals covering the development of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) which will have implications for the BSW Partnership Integrated Care System (ICS).

The proposals have been outlined in a new white paper entitled *Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all*.

Proposals in the white paper include:

- The creation of an ICS NHS statutory body and an ICS Health and Care Partnership which will place a duty to collaborate on organisations which are part of the Partnership
- Proposed reform to the procurement of NHS services in order to give commissioners greater flexibility in how they arrange services
- Place-based arrangements between local authorities, the NHS and between providers of health and care services will be at the core of integration. Legislation will not prescribe how these arrangements are put in place or what they need to involve – that will be left to local organisations to arrange.
- Legislation introduced to help address inequalities in public health outcomes and the need for government to act to help level up health across the country.

The BSW Partnership board is now looking at the implications of the proposals on how partners will work together over the coming months.

There has also been a concerted partnership approach to caring for a spike in the number of people receiving treatment in hospitals in Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire for Covid-19 during January and February. Partners did this by pooling resources and re-allocating staff so they could provide help where it was needed most.

Long Covid Service update

Over 128 patients across BSW have now been referred to a new service for people suffering from the effects of Long Covid.

The innovative new pilot service is available thanks to joint working by a number of health and care teams across BSW including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and respiratory nurses.

The service is designed to help people who still have symptoms related to a Covid infection after 12 weeks. The aim of the clinic is to identify what symptoms a person is experiencing and how this is affecting them on a day to day basis.

The service helps them find resources and treatments to manage these symptoms effectively. This new service has involved support from multiple partners and health and care teams from across BSW and will provide much needed help and support to a number of people.

Councillor Jess David asked if any further comment could be given regarding the ICS and giving commissioners greater flexibility of their services.

Dr Bird replied that the white paper would be elaborated over the coming year, but that the flexibility relates to where care can be delivered.

Councillor David asked if the Long Covid Service had a physical base.

Dr Bird replied that it was being led by Wiltshire Health & Care through a virtual hub.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked in respect of the ICS and the proposals in the White Paper if an explanation be given about place-based arrangements.

Dr Bird replied that he had no direct detail at this stage and would update the Panel as and when they are announced.

Councillor Paul May commented that a degree of care should be exercised moving forward with regard to the ICS, the contract that is in place currently with Virgin Care and any future possible statutory changes.

Dr Bird replied that Virgin Care are a very present part of these conversations and will need to evolve as we do. He added that integrated care will need to include mental health alongside physical health and that to understand the delivery of these services, discussions will be needed with both Primary & Secondary Care, the Voluntary Sector and the Community Sector.

Kevin Burnett asked if costs would be among the key benefits of the ICS.

Dr Bird replied that providing high cost services reactively in hospitals is not fit for purpose moving forward with the demographic changes that are likely over the next twenty years. He added that he expected the quality of care and quality of patient outcomes to be addressed as part of the new system, including increased opportunities for early intervention.

The Chair thanked Dr Bird for his update on behalf of the Panel.

77 VIRGIN CARE COMMISSIONER - SIX MONTH UPDATE REPORT

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning introduced this item to the Panel alongside the Head of Contracting & Performance, a summary is set out below.

COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Reablement Service and the delivery of reablement within B&NES. Following the release of the Hospital Discharge Guidance by the Department of Health and Social Care, all health and care systems were required to deliver the ambitions of Discharge to Assess (D2A) to ensure the safe and timely discharge of people who no longer needed to stay in hospital.

In response to the D2A requirements, it was agreed in B&NES that the Integrated Reablement Service would be the service that would support individuals being discharged on Pathway 1 (home with additional support).

This meant the Service would support all individuals who needed a new or increased package of care on discharge to be supported and assessed by the Service, prior to their long-term care needs being determined and arranged. In addition, the Service would be responsible for the case management of such individuals, including the administrative processes associated with this.

Due to this change, people who would have traditionally been discharged from hospital directly into a local authority/self-funded long-term package of care now have an assessment and support offer from Reablement for up to six weeks.

Performance

Performance and activity for the Reablement Service has been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

After an initial fall in referrals in April 2020, as services and services users were adapting to the national lockdown, the trend since then has been a significant increase. In the year to date to the end of January 2021, average monthly referrals are 7.9% higher than the 2019/20 average. In parallel, the number of discharges from the Service has seen an increase over the past year since January 2020.

While the number of people receiving a service per month has dropped compared to the 2019/20 average by 6.4%, the number of contacts has risen significantly, with 20.4% more contacts on average per month than the 2019/20 average. As a consequence, length of stay in the Service has increased above average levels for the three years prior to April 2020. While the monthly average in 2020/21 is 4.0% above the 2019/20 average, the shorter length of stay in the first quarter of 2020/21 is offsetting the high levels seen currently. To put this in context, the latest value for January 2021 is 24.2% above the 2019/20 average.

The peak caseload in November 2020, at 662 people, is 37.1% higher than the 2019/20 peak of 483 (January 2020). The latest data shows that the caseload is reducing but it remains high relative to previous years.

Despite the pressures on the Service, performance for the ASCOF measure (which reviews whether people remain in their usual place of residence 91 days after discharge into reablement from hospital) remains close (82.1%) to the targeted level of 85%.

Reablement Next Steps

For the Integrated Reablement Service there are a number of key milestones and priorities over the coming financial year (2021/22):

(Q1/Q2)

- Continue to support the COVID-19 response and recovery, with a review of long term D2A requirements as they become clear nationally

(Q1/Q2/Q3)

- Deliver the new reablement model and the transformation requirements for the service, with specific reference to Length of Stay and two-week review points

(Q3/Q4)

- Support the delivery of the Councils financial savings programme and aim of increasing independence and minimising the number of people needing long term funded care

(Q4)

- Support the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan requirements regarding access timelines for crisis response and reablement

Finance

During 2020-21, Virgin Care received a total income of approximately £56 million from the Council and BSWCCG for the delivery of the health care and social care services specified in the contract.

It should be noted that for Council funded services the contract does not permit for increases linked with inflation as this is a flat cash funding profile.

In 2018/2019 (year 2 of the contract term) the contract was £1.4 million overspent and in 2019/2020 (year 3 of the contract term) the overspend was £0.7million. The forecast for 2020/21 is an overspend of £0.3million, which demonstrates an improving trend for Virgin Care.

Both the Council and BSWCCG have supported the initial financing of the physical building housing the Community Wellbeing Hub and ongoing funding for 18 months has been identified from within existing Virgin Care and Council resources along with additional third-party funding.

Virgin Care have responded to the Council's financial position, as a result of COVID-19, through pro-active engagement on ways to appropriately reduce spend within the Council's purchasing budgets for 2020/21 and beyond. To date £1.2m has been identified as cost savings and/or cost avoidance from care and support packages or placements. Additionally, a business case to expand Virgin Care's Supported Living Service has been supported by the Council which will reduce out of area placements bring individuals back to B&NES and reducing expenditure in 2021-22.

Performance and Service Overview, Impact of COVID-19

Performance for the percentage of people waiting over six weeks for Diagnostic testing has been significantly challenged since the first wave of COVID-19, prior to which the 1% target was being achieved by Virgin Care. While performance saw some recovery as services reopened in summer 2020, since November 2020 the rate has been rising away from the national standard.

The main area of challenge over the winter has been Audiology performance (for both Adults and Children) but the Heart Failure service has returned 0% breaches during the past four months.

Innovation for Outpatients as a Result of COVID-19

Early work on a long term COVID-19 pathway by some allied Health Professionals in the Service, enabled BSW CCG to commence their services to support people with long COVID-19 as soon as this was identified.

Parkinson's Disease Nurse Feedback groups with service users have ran virtually.

Speech and Language Therapy are using video calls successfully to treat individuals especially in Nursing Homes.

Falls clinic are trialling video exercise classes with elderly people.

Children's Health Services

All services are operating within waiting time targets excepting Paediatric Audiology and Autism Assessments. Business continuity plans are in place, but have not yet been called upon, to maintain provision of priority services such as Children's Continuing Care. Children's Immunisation programme (non COVID-19) is continuing to be delivered with the support of schools – adolescent immunisations catch up programme in place.

Adult Social Care Services

- Social Care Assessments: Since the last report, the number of people waiting for assessment has increased over the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit there has been a reduction in January 2021. As previously reported, assessments have taken longer to complete during the pandemic,

with challenges such as social distancing requirements affecting the completion time. Where possible, assessments have been carried out virtually to mitigate this as far as possible.

- Occupational Therapist Health Assessments: The month-end waiting list for people requiring an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment continues to be low for people in the highest priority category (priority 1). The waiting list for Priority 2 cases remains high although it is on an improving trend since June 2020 but has again been impacted by people's COVID-19 concerns.
- Annual Social Care Reviews: Since October 2020, the trend in performance has started to improve gradually. The Council has agreed a prioritisation for reviews, priority 1. focus on those living out of the area and on level of need and priority 2. people with a "stable" care and support plan.
- Timeliness of Hospital Discharges: The focus of reporting on the timeliness of discharges has changed to the "criteria to reside". These criteria establish whether care in the acute setting is necessary; if the criteria are not met, the patient should be discharged to a less acute setting.

Contract Extension

The Virgin Care contract is a seven-year contract from 2017/18 to 2023/2024 with the option for the Council and BSW CCG to extend the contract term by three years, taking the contract term to 2026/2027. Virgin Care would need to be notified of the decision to extend or not to extend the contract by no later than March 2022. It is recognised that it is important to ensure that Virgin Care are notified of the final decision well in advance of the contractual deadline of March 2022.

The Panel is asked to note the contract extension is under consideration and will be notified when the Cabinet and BSW CCG have informed Virgin Care of their decision regarding this.

Conclusion

The report has focused on the areas Panel requested from its last update in September 2020. The next report will be in six months time and will give a detailed update on the workforce and service user feedback.

Kevin Burnett commented that he would welcome an updated statement on any key focus areas or areas of concern regarding the Virgin Care contract.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked which care homes were identified for additional Care Home Support Reablement Workers and how they were chosen.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that ten care homes had been identified but did not feel it was right to name them publicly. She added that they were chosen through staff availability and capability.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services added that there are ongoing meetings with homes to assess capacity to meet needs going forward.

Councillor Alison Born asked if there was confidence in the new model to deliver savings.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that a steering group has been put in place to monitor this and that it will be covered in the next update report.

Councillor Alison Born asked if the waiting time targets for Paediatric Audiology and Autism Assessments could be given to the Panel.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that she would ask for a response to be circulated to them.

Referring to section 4.1 of the report Councillor Jess David asked if stress was also a factor to consider alongside staff pressures and sickness.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that this would be picked up in more detail in the workforce report that was due to be submitted to the Panel in September 2021.

Jo Scammell, Virgin Care added that they do track staff absences due to Covid-19 and that this peaked in September 2020.

Councillor Andy Wait commented that with the 5th year of the contract approaching the balance was currently -£2.4m and asked if after 7 years a balanced scenario was expected. He also asked for more information on the proposed £1.2m of cost savings from care and support packages or placements.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that information on the proposed savings could be sent to the Panel. She added that a business case to expand Virgin Care's Supported Living Service has been supported by the Council which will reduce out of area placements, bring individuals back to B&NES and reducing expenditure in 2021-22.

Councillor Ruth Malloy asked if the next update report could include information on how to ensure consistency of practice and processes between the Locality Reablement Teams (Bath, Midsomer Norton and Keynsham).

Councillor Paul May asked if it was known whether Virgin Care wish to take up the offer to extend the contract.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning replied that there has been no indication that they do not want to continue to provide their services.

Councillor May wished to acknowledge and thank Virgin Care for all of their work during the pandemic.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report and identified the following areas of focus for the next update report.

- Workforce – particularly interested in sickness / morale
- Service user feedback
- Reablement – general update but also detail on monitoring the transformation; wanting to know what is happening in each of the different locations (MSN, Keynsham and Bath) and what the difference in practice is and how is this being unified.
- Finances – general and also more information on the £1.2 million gap and how this was managed.
- Case examples on service changes and how these have not impacted adversely on the service users and families whilst managing within the contract value bearing in mind council flat cash but not for CCG
- Performance section to focus on:
 - Criteria to reside if available, RTT, 6 week diagnostics, ASC reviews, OT assessments, care act assessments.

78 CARE HOME COMMISSIONING

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services introduced this report to the Panel, a summary is set out below.

The pressure of the Covid-19 pandemic has particularly dominated the work of the Integrated Adults Commissioning Team as we aim to provide and maintain services and support for some of the most vulnerable older people in our community.

Since June 2020 the team have been developing two Market Engagement Strategies. These strategies are designed to articulate and set a plan around the way the Integrated Commissioning team engages with the care market.

These Market Engagement Strategies will sit within a broader Commissioning Strategy which will encompass the work of all teams engaged in adult commissioning which will be developed as part of the wider teams that report to the Director for Adult Social Care and Commissioning.

Within the Market Engagement Strategies are commitments to take forward an annual market position statement.

Market Engagement Strategies

The two Market Engagement Strategies focus on home care and on care homes.

Both Strategies are working to three overarching aims:

- We have a clear joint strategy about how home care and care homes contractual and commissioning practice is to be developed in B&NES

- There is evidence of improved outcomes for people receiving home care and residents of homes
- The average price and the overall spend on home care and care homes are reduced

The Chair referred to section 4.3.6 of the report where it said that currently information on care packages held on Liquid Logic is not consistently recorded and asked what steps could be taken to rectify this.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that where possible only one point of data entry will be used moving forward to ensure the data set is consistent.

Councillor Alison Born commented that there appeared to be a focus on costs within the Home Care Engagement Strategy and asked if quality of care would also be considered.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that the aim of the strategy will be to make sure that we can deliver on quality, process and costs.

Councillor Born asked what types of Assistive Technology were being considered with regard to home care.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that it was currently an open agenda on this matter. She added that there had been a 24% increase in use within the last year and that the strategy would seek to enable those that can use it to do so.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if it could be explained how B&NES is in the bottom quartile of the continuing healthcare league table for the way we undertake assessments and in the top quartile of the Funding Nursing Care table.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that B&NES is an outlier in terms of the number of people who benefit from CHC funding and as part of a review we will look at why that is. She added that the review will also seek to make sure that the right provision is delivered in the right way to the right people and costed the right way.

Councillor Hardman asked if further explanation could be given as to why this demonstrates a significant potential in looking at the way we carry out CHC assessments to ensure that our services are funded from the right budget sources.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that people can be funded through a number of sources, they can be self-funded, funded through health (inc CHC) and they can be funded by the Council following an assessment. She added that the criteria of funding can also be subject to change depending on the circumstances of the individual concerned.

Councillor Hardman asked in respect of the two market engagement strategies, how will we achieve much improved outcomes with reduced costs.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that they will look to build on the partnership working to develop the services offered.

Kevin Burnett asked for any further comment on the monitoring of Care Home contracts.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that in a positive move they will look to develop the voice of service users in their monitoring.

Kevin Burnett asked if this will include hearing from their relatives.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Community Health & Care Services replied that it would and that the Council will work alongside the third sector to achieve this.

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

79 SUICIDE PREVENTION WORK

The Associate Director of Public Health introduced this item to the Panel, a summary is set out below.

There are evidence-based actions we can take to reduce the risk of suicide across our communities, for example amongst young people, men, people who self-harm and people known to mental health services.

The purpose of the action plan is to deliver co-ordinated suicide prevention action within B&NES. The plan will be used as a framework to guide strategic direction and priorities for the period of 2020-2023. This is a living document and will be overseen and reviewed by the Suicide Prevention Group, a multiagency group chaired by Public Health B&NES. It will be accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board and will report progress to the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) through the Practice Review Group.

Involving those with lived experience and supporting providers is critical when bringing about collective change in suicide prevention, highlighting key gaps and establishing new ways of working. Therefore, one of the key principles of this action plan is to collaborate and engage with people with lived experience over the duration of this action plan.

The scope of this action plan has been informed through consultation with stakeholders, local need, reviewing national and local evidence based recommendations. The plan considers a life course approach and ensures communities of all ages and backgrounds are reflected in the actions.

The action plan and its impact will be monitored by the Suicide Prevention Group on a quarterly basis. Organisations and working groups who have provided actions will be encouraged to consider how they monitor and evaluate their own progress. An annual event will be held each year to showcase learning, provide an update on the progress of the action plan implementation and evolve further thinking.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty asked if it was known why local self-harm hospital admission rates are higher than the England average.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that this data needs further analysis and possibly on a national level.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty asked how much effect it was felt that Covid-19 will impact on people's mental health.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that it is likely to directly impact people's feelings relating to isolation and anxiety and that in the longer term issues such as job loss, relationship breakdown and bereavement could be factors to consider.

Councillor Jess David asked if in recent years if the suicide rates in B&NES had increased. She also asked if the local universities were involved with the work of the Action Plan.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that the figures for the two previous years had been almost identical and had not seen an increase. He added that both universities were part of the Suicide Prevention Governance Group.

Kevin Burnett asked how could the information that three quarters of people who died were not in touch with secondary NHS mental health services, but many were in touch with their GP or another kind of health and care service in the months before their death be used going forward.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that additional training will be carried out to help GP's to try to reduce the stigma patients may have on discussing their mental health.

Councillor Alison Born commented on how important it is for people to have support at the time they need it and therefore hoped the helplines setup during the pandemic could continue.

Councillor Liz Hardman referred to section 2.4 of the table where it says 'Ensure B&NES partners are aware of financial well-being as a risk factor for suicide and facilitate appropriate linkages between partners'. She added that in section 2.8 it says 'Raise awareness of advice available on issues including debt, benefits, employment, housing, family and relationships etc' but this is only offered by Citizens Advice. In both cases she asked could more be done.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that Citizens Advice were highlighted in the plan as the lead agency and as such they have coordinating role.

Councillor Paul May commented that the plan possibly needed more of a Children & Young People focus and that organisations such as DHI (Developing Health & Independence), Mentoring Plus, Off The Record and BAPP (Bath Area Play Project) could be involved.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that he would take that proposal away and assess it with colleagues.

Councillor Mark Roper asked if enough resources were available to carry out the work in the Action Plan.

The Associate Director of Public Health replied that it is a strategic piece of work that is part of the business as usual for the team. He added that some additional resources are received through the year from NHS England.

Councillor Ruth Malloy called for more of a focus on preventative work given the fact that 10-24-year olds have more than double the rates of self-harm compared to older adults.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the refreshed B&NES Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

80 HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME 2 (HIP2) UPDATE

Simon Cook, Programme Director introduced this item to the Panel, a summary is set out below.

The project has had a change of name nationally and is now known as the New Hospital Programme rather than HIP2.

Progress since January

- Engagement plan ready for the Panel's comment today
- Clinical leaders appointed to lead the development with patients and the public
- Analysis underway of implications of new care model
- Met with Chair and Vice Chair for informal briefing

Strategic approach: proactive campaigns; three key phases in 2021

Phase 1: Launch and overarching broadcast comms

Phase 2: Purposeful engagement to develop new care model

Phase 3: Launch new care model and next stage of ongoing engagement

The Chair commented on the importance of the engagement programme and demonstrating that service users are on board with proposals.

Simon Cook replied that public engagement is a very important part of the programme. He added that where possible they will look to accelerate projects identified to take place between 2021-25.

Kevin Burnett asked if mental health was included within the Clinical Vision of the programme.

Simon Cook replied that it was.

Councillor Alison Born commented that the engagement programme would be a challenge to those that do not use technology and asked if that following this current lockdown some actual face to face meetings could be arranged. She added that she felt that more involvement from the public would be likely if the information supplied was light on jargon.

David Rose replied that they would be willing to attend Ward / Residents' meetings and that they intend to work with Age Concern on any paper based information that is produced.

The Chair asked when the engagement programme would physically start.

Simon Cook replied that it would commence next week, which is only two weeks prior to the pre-election period when it would cease until May 10th through to July for the main area of engagement.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note and approve the proposed engagement plan.

81 DIRECTOR BRIEFINGS - ADULT SOCIAL CARE & CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning addressed the Panel, a summary of her briefing is set out below and will be attached as an online appendix to these minutes.

Out of Hospital Discharge to Assess Arrangements

As of the 31st of March the national funding for the D2A (Discharge to Assess) process ceases. People who are discharged up to and on the 31st of March will continue to be supported for no longer than six weeks. However, those discharged on the 1st April will not and there is no indication of funding being available beyond that date. In the recent policy paper: *Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all* the government states that there will be a legal framework developed for a 'Discharge to Assess' model to replace the existing legal requirement for all assessments to take place prior to discharge. There is, however, no indication of whether there will be any funding provided to support these duties. The Council are, therefore, discussing with the CCG how this work can be progressed within current resources.

Specialist Mental Health Care and Support – proposed whole system procurement

The Specialist Commissioning Team have developed a revised strategic commissioning approach for specialist services for adults with complex mental ill health. The team have recommended a phased approach to procurement whereby they identify a partner (or more than 1) to work with to develop a consortium approach. The formation of a consortium is aspirational and will take longer than

other procurement methods such as block contracts and Frameworks on a sector-by-sector basis. However, this approach will mean the council will have a co-produced, flexible, adaptable and meaningful pathway of support for people and partners alike.

This procurement delivers on our statutory responsibilities which include the promotion of quality in the provision of services; is a key action in our draft strategic commissioning intentions; will ensure alignment with the transformation of community mental health services; and is a Council Commissioning Intention.

Mental Health White Paper – January 2021

In January 2021 the Government published the Mental Health White Paper - a set of proposals around changes to the Mental Health Act; it is intended to be a consultation document despite its 'White Paper' title.

The Mental Health Act was changed from the 1959 Mental Health Act in 1983 and despite some minor amendments in 2007 the White Paper is considered to be one of the most far reaching reforms of an Act that could be accused of not having kept up with the changing times particularly in regard to a person's rights and wishes. The principles of 1983 Act are acknowledged to be based on a paternalistic approach to the care and support of people with mental health needs. The White Paper is therefore an important step forward.

Consultation is due to end on the 14th April 2021 and Local Authorities, Mental Health Trusts and the Third Sector are currently working to formally respond. Parliamentary time has not been set aside to debate the proposals and the responses and the White Paper is not expected to become law until 2023/2024.

Consultation on Changes to Direct Payments

Direct Payments (DPs), are "monetary payments made to individuals who request to receive one to meet some or all of their eligible care and support needs." (Care Act 2014). These payments can be used to pay a Personal Assistant (PA), to support the DP recipient. PAs support DP service users to meet their unmet needs identified in their Care and Support Plan. Direct Payments provided by Children's Services are done so under The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000. On 22/02/21, there were 266 adults using DPs in B&NES.

The intention is to have standardised hourly rates and a new on-cost model across Children and Adult services. As this will constitute a change in policy and practice for B&NES, we will conduct a full 12 week public consultation. At the same time, we will consult on the introduction of pre-paid cards for DP users which is another initiative to improve the management and oversight of DPs. The timing of the consultation will depend on when the project management resource for introducing prepaid cards is in place – likely to be within the next 2 months.

Introduction of Operational Pressures Escalation Level (OPEL) System for Adult Social Care

The Directorate have developed and implemented an Operational Pressures Escalation Level (OPEL) status tool which helps us to review and identify the level of risk and pressure across adult social care. This has supported conversations with systems partners and enabled us to prepare for levels of escalation. The OPEL status framework is one that health partners use routinely.

The broad descriptions are shown in the box below. Each service within the Directorate updates their OPEL status weekly based on agreed criteria. We review our position on a weekly basis and across the Directorate we are currently declaring OPEL 2 and we report this into the Council and to the CCG to be shared on system partnership meetings.

OPEL Two – adult social care

The local adult social care system is starting to show signs of pressure. The local authority will need to take focused actions in support to organisations showing pressure to mitigate the need for further escalation. Enhanced co-ordination and communication will alert the whole system to take appropriate and timely actions to reduce the level of pressure as quickly as possible. The Adult social Care teams will proactively keep BSW, regional and national colleagues and partners informed of any pressures, with detail and frequency to be agreed with these organisations. Any additional support requirements should be agreed with SLT and would expect to stay within budget or met within available resources and reserves.

The Director of Adult Social Care, Complex and Specialist Commissioning confirmed that she is to leave the Council and introduced Alison Elliott to the Panel who has taken on the role Interim Director of Adult Social Care.

The Director of Education, Inclusion and Children's Safeguarding addressed the Panel on behalf of the Director for Children & Young People, a summary of her briefing is set out below and will be attached as an online appendix to these minutes.

Practice week

Children's Services held their first practice week the week beginning 25/01/2021 where we focussed on our work with Care Leavers. We were able to observe some really fantastic and inspiring practice with care experienced young people. Our Lead Member and Chief Executive took part.

Lockdown

During this lockdown, B&NES staff from social care and education have ensured that vulnerable children (Children with a social worker or EHCP) had access to an education placement if considered in their best interests. As a result, B&NES has had one of the highest school attendance rates of vulnerable children in the South West. This work has been complemented by our continued expansion of our Virtual School, which now supports children in need and children on a child protection plan.

All Children's Services colleagues continue to work hard to see all of children young people within statutory timescales despite the challenges of being in a third lockdown. We are working hard with other agencies to support schools re-opening next week.

Safeguarding outcomes

Children Social Care re-designed the safeguarding outcomes part of the service in June 2020. The service is currently finalising its evaluation report to consider the positives that this has brought to practice and outcomes for children and families.

Covid-19 – Return to school

As children now return to school, B&NES Children's Services and Public Health teams will continue to offer advice to support schools to manage Covid-19 and allay parental fears and anxieties about returning their children to school. The Education Psychology service will continue to provide on-line training and bespoke sessions on supporting children and staff's mental health.

The Chair thanked both Directors for their briefings on behalf of the Panel, welcomed Alison Elliott to the Council and wished Lesley Hutchinson the best of luck in her new role.

82 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel approved their workplan as printed.

The meeting ended at 1.50 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	Tuesday 15 th of June 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Narrowing the attainment gap	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Please list all the appendices here, clearly indicating any which are exempt and the reasons for exemption</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Language for Life</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Primary Empowerment Programme</p> <p>Appendix 3 – What Works Virtual School Pilot</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Closing the Gap</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report provides an update on activity to narrow the attainment gap of disadvantaged (pupil premium/FSM) pupils, included in the Education Updates report presented to Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) in November 2021. Covid 19 and the resulting school closures have dramatically changed the work context to support this cohort of children and young people, both in the data available to measure educational outcomes and in the delivery of projects. It is considered that now more than ever, this group of children and young people will need increased support and collaborative work to help them achieve as well as their peers

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 This report seeks to advise and reassure the panel that officers within the LA, alongside partners and schools, continue to work on projects and strategies to improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children and young people in B&NES. Whilst undoubtedly the pandemic will have impacted the education outcomes of all children and young people, recovering from Covid 19 provides opportunities to bring the work to support disadvantaged pupils into focus and

collaborate with partners. Examples of this work and emerging collaborations are provided in this report.

3 THE REPORT.

- 3.1 To support this report, members of the B&NES Schools Standards Board have shared early School and Trust level summaries of the impact of Covid 19 on pupils in B&NES. These summaries will be based on Teacher assessment of pupils when they have returned to schools.
- 3.2 There are common themes in these summaries. Pupils in the younger years, especially reception, year one and year two, are furthest away from where we would typically expect them to be. Trust leaders have also indicated that the impact on progress has been more significant for some disadvantaged pupils. Broadly, upper KS2 pupils are being reported as being on track to attain their targets set at the start of the academic year, though a drop in those reaching the higher standards has been reported. Pupil writing, alongside phonics, was considered the most significant challenge to deliver remotely and this is being reflected in the 'lost ground' compared to the other core subjects.
- 3.3 In Key Stage 3 and 4, schools report no discernible impact on progress, with indicators being slightly below where they had been in previous years. However, there is a general reporting of deterioration in behaviour in these year groups, particularly in year 7.
- 3.4 National studies do mirror some of this local intelligence. The Juniper Education report on the impact of Covid 19 has examined teacher assessments in more than 6000 primary schools. The report concludes that the number of children in Years 2 to 6 who were achieving at or above the standard expected for their age dropped by approximately one fifth between autumn 2019 and summer 2020. Additionally, fewer disadvantaged children had returned to working at expected levels than non-disadvantaged children after being back in school in autumn 2020.
- 3.5 PDS Panel is advised that due to Covid 19, examinations once again have been cancelled in primary schools and secondary examinations have been replaced by Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG's). This will again provide a challenge to assessing the attainment gap by using examination data. Locally we will need to find a consistent methodology of understanding the impact of Covid on our disadvantaged pupil cohort.
- 3.6 To tackle the lack of comparable area-wide examination data and to find a way to measure the progress of these young people, the B&NES School Standards Board has agreed to a project using the Education Endowment Foundations Families of Schools data. This project aims to engage all schools in B&NES to identify, support and track the progress of all pupil premium children over a period from September 2020 – September 2021. Further detail about this project is found in the Schools Standards Board update in the report section of this paper and the appendices.
- 3.7 Despite the additional challenges created by Covid 19, there is no reason to believe that the context of the gap in B&NES has not changed. The attainment gap in B&NES can be closed by improved results in specific locations in B&NES and by targeting support in the early years and at particular schools. As advised in the last report, Officers in the LA have been working alongside the St. Johns

Foundation to deliver strategies to target Early Years outcomes in specific locations and provide additional support to Primary Schools with the largest disadvantaged children population. This report provides further detail on these projects, the work of the B&NES Standards Board, post-Covid 19 support from the DFE to all schools and funding from the What Works Foundation to our Virtual School.

The St Johns Foundation Fund & Virtual School Pilot

3.10 There are two projects supported by the St. Johns Foundation that are targeted at improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children through the combined interventions of the St John's Foundation, early years settings, schools, the Local Authority and key partners from health and the voluntary sector. These two projects are:

- The Language for Life Project
- The Primary Empowerment Project

Detailed information on these projects are included in Appendix 1 & 2

As advised in the last paper to PDS in November 2020, the Virtual School has also been awarded funding from the What Works Foundation to expand the schools remit to support children in need and children on child protection plans. An update on this work is provided in Appendix 3.

B&NES Schools Standards Board

3.11 Schools within B&NES continue to liaise and communicate over Educational Standards through the Schools Standards Board. The Board continues to be chaired by the Local Authority and attended by the Regional Schools Commissioners office. Alongside addressing topics such as race equality, the Board is in the process of setting up a pilot project to target improvements in the disadvantaged gap across all schools in B&NES. Using research from the Education Endowment Foundation, it is proposed that the project will start in B&NES schools in September 2021.

A briefing of this project is attached in Appendix 4.

Department For Education Post Covid 19 Support

Catch up funding

3.12 All schools in B&NES have been provided with additional funding to target pupils with catch up education activities. This funding has also been supported by the DFE's role out of the National Tutoring Programme. This programme provides a range of accredited organisations that schools can purchase support from using catch-up funding.

Summer Schools

3.13 Secondary schools are also being encouraged to offer Summer School provision, specifically at the upcoming year seven cohort. Many of our schools in B&NES report that they are looking to make these arrangements for pupils in B&NES. Though mainly academic in outlook, the summer schools will also provide some

enrichment activities. More information on the summer school programmes can be found below

[Summer schools programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Holiday Activity Fund

- 3.14 The Department for Education (DfE) provides funding to local authorities to coordinate a programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities to eligible children during the 2021 Easter, Summer and Christmas Holidays. This is known as the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. These activities will be targeted at children eligible for free school meals. Locally, the B&NES Public Health team is leading the scheme's implementation. Published information on this DfE fund can be found here-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2021>

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Authority has a broad set of statutory responsibilities to ensure that it is able to deliver education support in a number of areas for all schools around vulnerable young people (SEND, Children Missing Education), supporting maintained schools (School Improvement services) and business functions that support all schools (Admissions and Transport)

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 This report is not requesting any resources or advising of any resourcing changes

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An EIA has not been completed for this report as this is an information providing paper. However, the reporting Director needs to consider equalities issues within the contents of these reports and how an EIA could add additional value to the content and recommendations

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 As this is an information only report and no decisions are being made over any changes in service delivery, it is considered that the recommendations in this paper will not adversely impact on climate change or the councils position of being pro-active on matters that affect climate change.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 No additional consultation has outside of the Service area has been completed for this information report.

Contact person	Chris Wilford – Director Education, Inclusion & Children's Safeguarding
Background papers	<i>Appendix 1,2,3 & 4</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

APPENDIX 1



LANGUAGE FOR LIFE
MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

1. The background of the project and why it is needed

"In our country today, where you start still too often determines where you finish"
Rt Hon Justine Greening, Unlocking Talent Fulfilling Potential, A plan for improving social mobility through education

In Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) we have a wide and persistent attainment gap between the educational outcomes for children in receipt of Free School Meals (Pupil Premium) and their peers. Outcomes for this cohort in B&NES are amongst the lowest of all Local Authorities in England. This pattern continues from the early years through to GCSE.

Despite significant work over the years, by many services working with children and families pre-birth to 5 years, this pattern is proving difficult to shift. In partnership with St John's Foundation, B&NES Early Years Service and Virgin Care's Speech Language and Communication Therapies plan a refreshed, area specific, multiagency early years approach.

The focus of this work will be the areas where the patterns of achievement for children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) are consistently poorer than that of their peers. The term 'school readiness' links to the Good Level of Development (GLD) measure at the end of the Reception year. Children need to reach at least the expected level in 12/17 Early Learning Goals to attain this measure. In B&NES 2019, only 46% of children in receipt of FSM achieved the GLD compared to 78% of all other children. Poorer outcomes in Reading and Writing particularly impact on the GLD and these rest upon strong foundations in speech, language and communication. National and local evidence shows that this pattern of underachievement is then highly likely to be set through all key stages.

Nationally, 55% of children from deprived backgrounds achieve all their learning goals at five compared to 73% of other children. That is why, in July 2018, the Secretary of State set out his ambition to halve this figure by 2028. Achieving this ambition will mean supporting parents to help their child's early language development, by building a coalition across society.

Our focus on communication and language is supported by recent research into five Local Authorities that have been successful in reducing the word gap between disadvantaged children and their peers (Closing the word gap: learning from five areas who have gained ground. Jean Gross CBE June 2020)

2. Key partners in the project



The multiagency project delivery will be led by the EYFS Service and the Speech and Language Therapy Service in partnership with St John's Foundation, and an external evaluation partner for the St John's Foundation Fund, ImpactEd.

2. A summary of the overall project and timescales

- Currently in the definition stage, the 2.5 year project will be focussed on two key areas, SW Bath and South Keynsham.
- It will link to the six of the seven infant/primary schools previously identified for a St John's Foundation funded Primary Empowerment Programme: Twerton Infants' and St Michael's Junior, Roundhill Primary, St Martin's Garden Primary, St Keyna Primary and Castle Primary. These schools have significant numbers of children in receipt of FSM and outcomes for some children are persistently low.
- St John's Foundation will fund a dedicated full-time early years speech and language therapist; purchase the Wellcomm early language toolkit for each setting and support for staffing backfill for 29 early years settings across the area and contribute to central management time.
- Nurseries, preschools and childminders that annually feed a significant proportion of their cohort into the six Primary Empowerment Programme schools, will be invited to join the project. This will embed the resources where they are most needed and enable the creation of two learning communities of settings.

4. Tool and evidence base

The **Wellcomm Communications and Language Toolkit** is an evidence based assessment and intervention programme designed for use by early years practitioners with no additional specialist skills needed. It operates a simple traffic light system which bands children into three categories: Green – no additional intervention needed, Amber – extra support and intervention needed within the setting, Red- extra support and intervention needed within the setting but referral to specialist services for further assessment recommended.

After assessment there are resources available so that immediate interventions can be put in place. These are a collection of play based activities known to be effective in meeting Speech, Language and Communication needs. Regular screening will monitor progress and number of children who move up the bands can be used to measure effectiveness of interventions.

5. Performance Indicators



6. Roles and responsibilities of project partners



7. Offer/ method:

- Roll out of one evidence based early language and communication tool by the Speech & Language Therapy (S<) service, to be embedded in all year groups in early years settings and used in transition to school.
- Use of the Early Years Hub as a multiagency point of information and communications for early years settings on this project
- Mentor and support all feeder early years settings through support from the EY Service.
- Build network of skilled sector communication leads to support ongoing sustainability.
- Build locality connections between settings and services to support transitions and regular clusters
- Phased roll out: learning from this pilot may be transferred to subsequent roll out phases in B&NES.

8. Launch

The partners involved will launch the information about this project in a timely and coordinated way through their separate channels.

The timescale for planning is tight and the S< joins the planning team on May 1st. Settings will be engaged in the coming months but have not yet been contacted so this information is currently not to be shared externally.

The launch is provisionally planned for July 6th and interested councillors are welcome to attend.

For further information please contact Julie Eden Early years Advisor 01225 394486

Appendix 2.



ST JOHN'S

FOUNDATION EST. 1174

Foundation Fund – Primary Empowerment Programme

Programme Brief

St John's Foundation

In February 2020 St John's launched a ten-year strategy focused on narrowing the Attainment Gap for Key Stage 2 children living in Bath and North East Somerset. Our manifesto states our funding will be directed into the following areas:

1. Nutritious food everyday
2. A Safe place outside of school
3. Professional behavioural support
4. Professional emotional support
5. Additional support with foundational reading
6. Additional support with foundational writing
7. Additional support with foundational oracy
8. Additional support with foundational mathematics

Primary Empowerment Programme Overview

Since the launch, notwithstanding the current pandemic, we started to engage with the seven primary schools in Bath and North East Somerset that have the highest number of lowest performing children. These schools represent c. 40% of the total Primary school PP population in B&NES, therefore, it was agreed working with these schools was a good place to start in addressing the attainment gap. The schools are:

	On Role Children	Pupil Premium
Castle Primary School, Keynsham	260	115
Roundhill Primary School, Southdown, Bath	250	120
St Keyna Primary School, Keynsham	236	74
St Martin's Garden Primary School, Odd Down, Bath	189	83
St Mary's School, Writhlington	142	45
St Michael's Junior Church School, Twerton, Bath	141	95
Twerton Infants School, Twerton Bath	130	76

The Head Teachers of these schools and their respective Multi-Academy Trust Chief Executives have all supported St John's focus to fund the additional support their disadvantaged children require within their schools. The Head Teachers' have been honest and worked with us to help us understand the pressures they are facing, which in turn has an impact on the children.

In December 2020 three clear options for the delivery of the Primary Empowerment Programme were presented to St John's Foundation Board of Trustees. These options were:

1. To match fund the current pupil premium each school is receiving
2. To identify delivery partners within the manifesto areas (No. 3 – 8)
3. To identify delivery partners and provide a cash uplift (50% of received pupil premium)

The Board unanimously agreed on option 2. The Trustees felt this was aligned with our manifesto and would provide assurance against St John's strategic direction.

Note: An Evaluation Partner (ImpactED) was appointed in December to ensure after the Board had agreed their decision, we were in the position to start work on building a framework and system to evaluate all aspects of the Foundation Fund and how together they deliver the vision of St John's strategy. The Foundation Fund encompasses:

- **Early Years Pilot Programme**
Language for Life, supporting speech and language development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- **Nutritious food everyday**
- **A Safe place outside of school**
- **Primary Empowerment Programme**
- **Crisis Fund**

Primary Empowerment Programme latest

We have now received 36 applications from national and local organisations wanting to work with our seven schools. The St John's team and headteachers will now go through a selection process deciding which of these organisations will become our 'delivery partners' and support our schools against our manifesto areas.

The partners will be chosen by the end of May providing the summer term for the partners to carry out the relevant needs based assessments with the schools for delivery to start from September 2021.

The partners will be contracted to work with the schools for three years (subject to yearly reporting requirements and progress made) with our evaluation partner ImpactED monitoring their work.

The aim is to expand this work beyond our seven schools, by using this pilot programme to understand what is most effective in supporting our schools and children.

APPENDIX 3

Virtual School – What Works Foundation Pilot

During the first lockdown in April 2020, the Virtual School temporarily extended their role to offer additional support for all children on CP and CIN plans. It was clear during this time that the children in the authority who were most vulnerable were those who sit just below the 'coming into care' criteria. The Virtual school worked closely alongside social care teams to first identify those who were most vulnerable. Alongside the risk assessments that schools completed, social care teams RAG rated all the children regarding their concerns around education. This information was all pulled together in a 'vulnerable children report'. This report enabled the local authority to identify which children on an individual level were in education and prioritise which children and schools needed additional support. The Virtual school took on the 100 children that were RAG rated as red onto their caseload for the six weeks of lockdown. Working alongside schools and social care, we offered support and guidance to get as many of this vulnerable cohort back into education. By the end of term 6, 88% of this identified cohort were back into education.

As an outcome of this work in August 2020, the Virtual School submitted a successful funding bid to support the continued expansion of the virtual school to the What Works for Children's Social care organisation. The aim is to put an advisory teacher in place to work alongside the social care teams to raise academic achievement for the most vulnerable children on CO and CIN plans. The pilot group consists of 70 children. The pilot mirrors the work that we do with CLA by putting bespoke education plans in place to reduce exclusions and raise attendance and academic progress. The funding enables each child to access £1000 to allow these plans to be delivered in school and access to additional EP support.

The pilot project has now been running for seven months. During the second national lockdown, the addition of the advisory teachers meant that all children on the project were closely monitored weekly to ensure that they were either accessing a school place or accessing online education. Our 'interim report' of the project in April shows the following benefits:

- Despite a national lockdown, average attendance increased in all key stages
- 55% (37 pupils) showed a green RAG rating impact of the intervention.
- For this term, 12% are making above expected progress and 52% of pupils are making expected progress.
- 16 pupils (24%) have shown an increase in academic attainment
- 14 pupils (21%) have increased their engagement with school or shown an increase in positive self-esteem
- For two pupils (3%), schools have reported a significant decrease in behaviour concerns

A full report of the impact of the pilot project will be available in July.

APPENDIX 4

Schools Standards Board Narrowing the Gap Project 2020 / 2021 – PDS Briefing

As you will all be very aware, Bath and North East Somerset Council has some of the highest outcomes in the South West. However, at all key stages the gap in performance of our pupils receiving Pupil Premium Funding is significantly larger than the national average. This has been an issue that has not improved over a number of years.

This year we would like to pilot a simple project that utilises Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) findings across as many schools and academies as possible within our Local Authority. We hope that every Multi Academy Trust, Single Academy Trust and Local Authority Maintained School will nominate a senior member of staff to lead this project.

The project is built around the Families of Schools data base used by EEF to calculate the average attainment for Disadvantaged Pupils in Reading, Writing and Mathematics Expected + at the end of KS2 and Attainment 8 at the end of KS4. The link to this information is below.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/new-eef-research-points-way-to-closing-disadvantage-gap-at-primary/#:~:text=New%20EEF%20research%20points%20way%20to%20closing%20disadvantage,the%20attainment%20gap%20in%20reading%2C%20writing%20and%20maths.>

Whilst we know that attainment is not always the most useful metric to judge pupil achievement, it is at the very least a simple measure that can be used during these difficult times where progress calculations are not being produced nationally.

We are asking all schools and academies to follow the process below:

- 1) Identify their family of school's data set.
- 2) Study the set of data that highlights attainment of disadvantaged pupils and note where they sit in relation to the average for their family of schools.
- 3) Calculate the number of disadvantaged pupils in Y6 or Y11 that need to attain the identified standard to reach the 2019 Family of School average for your setting.
- 4) Identify, at an individual school or MAT level, what can be put in place for the identified pupils to make the progress required. You may wish to identify schools within your family data set that are achieving high levels of attainment with disadvantaged pupils and investigate the practice utilised by these schools. It should be emphasised that we have many school within Bath and North East Somerset that perform strongly within their Family of Schools.
- 5) We would then hold a meeting with the designated leads to co-construct reporting formats, share best practice etc so that we are able to monitor progress and evaluate impact.

This project has been chosen as it sets realistic aims, is grounded in what is actually happening in schools that are very similar and provides robust data to measure our performance against. The EEF calculated that if schools could match the average for their family of schools, it would result in a 38% closing of the gap in primaries and 6% in secondaries.

What is clear in our discussions to date, is that leadership from the MAT CEO and school Headteacher are paramount to success when improving the outcomes for disadvantaged

pupils. CEOs and Headteachers that look at the detail of pupil performance and the impact of provision are generally seeing outcomes for disadvantage pupils improve more rapidly.

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	15 th June 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Exploitation	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		

THE ISSUE

The Panel have requested a report outlining information in relation to children or adults at risk of exploitation and information on multi-agency working which reduces and identifies the risk.

The paper seeks to assure the Panel that relevant policies, procedures and strategies recognise and address exploitation and furthermore sets out examples of the services and programmes commissioned to support children, young people and vulnerable adults.

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

1. Note the content of the report and the range of arrangements across B&NES to recognise and respond to concerns around exploitation.
2. Consider whether the report provides assurance that the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership does adequately focus on Exploitation and have relevant policy and procedures in place.

THE REPORT

1. GOVERNANCE OF EXPLOITATION

The B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) arrangements are committed to integrating safeguarding children and adults with community safety and the work of the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) – **THE BCSSP** partnership commenced operation in September 2019.

Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership is committed to:

- The voice of children, adults, families and communities is strengthened
- Strengthening and improving the work on Think Family and Community
- Improving strategic decision making and leadership by having one cohesive conversation
- Focusing on shared strategic objectives to achieve the greatest impact and improve outcomes for children, adults, families and the community
- Reducing duplication and therefore enable us to use our resources more effectively across B&NES

Details on the work of the partnership can be found at: <https://bcssp.bathnes.gov.uk/about>

The partnership has an established governance arrangement: with an Executive, Operational and 7 sub-groups to drive forward the strategic priorities of the partnership, one of which is the sub-group that leads on exploitation. Please see link below to a Plan on Page.

<https://bcssp.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/BCSSP%20Plan%20on%20a%20Page%20FINAL%20270619.pdf>

The purpose of the exploitation sub-group is to develop, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategic and operational multi-agency responses to exploitation across B&NES.

A 3-year strategy has been developed by the exploitation sub group to support the children, young people and vulnerable adults in B&NES that are experiencing or at risk of experiencing exploitation and abuse outside their home environment. It embodies the determination of all partner agencies to work together to make effective strategic and operational responses to the complex, diverse and significant needs of the children, young people and vulnerable adults affected.

2. THE SCOPE OF THE EXPLOITATION SUB GROUP IS:

- Sexual Exploitation
- Criminal Exploitation
- Serious Youth Violence
- Missing children
- County Lines
- Modern Slavery / Trafficking
- Contextualised Safeguarding
- Forced Marriage, FGM, Honour Based Violence
- Hate/Mate Crime

- **Child Sexual Exploitation-Definition**

Child sexual exploitation involves situations, contexts or relationships in which a person under 18 is given something, such as food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts or money in return for performing sexual activities or having sexual activities performed on them. It can also involve violence, coercion and intimidation, with threats of physical harm or humiliation

- **Child Criminal Exploitation-Definition**

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of a person under the age of 18 and may coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under that age into any criminal activity in exchange for;

- Something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or Through violence or the threat of violence.
- The victim may be exploited even if the activity appears consensual (i.e. moving drugs or the proceeds of drugs from one place to another).

Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Home Office 2018)

- **Serious Youth Violence -Definition**

There is no universally adopted definition of serious violence. The national serious violence strategy (2018) focused on knife and gun crime and homicide and included drug dealing and robbery. A broader Avon and Somerset definition, developed in response to stakeholder feedback, added serious domestic abuse, serious sexual assault and rape. Locally, the focus to date has been on domestic abuse, youth violence, including knife crime and violence associated with the street community.

Exploitation is a generic term which encompasses different types of abuse towards both children and adults at risk. The definitions deal specifically with children however these definitions are easily transferrable to vulnerable adults and the Exploitation sub group uses these definitions interchangeably.

- **Missing Children-Definition**

Missing definition: a child reported as missing to the Police by their parents/carers because their whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be a victim of crime and/or there is a risk of harm to themselves or someone else;

- **County Lines-Definition**

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (Home Office 2018)

County lines is a form of Child Exploitation (CE). It is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing

persons. The response to tackle it involves the Police, the NCA (National Crime Agency) and a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations. County Lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing, and exploitation has a devastating impact on children, vulnerable adults and local communities.

- **Home Invasion (sometimes referred to as Cuckooing)-Definition**

Urban gangs establish a base in the market location, often by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force and/or coercion, in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'. Urban gangs then use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money.

- **Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking -Definition**

A person commits an offence if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another person to exploit them. It is irrelevant whether the exploited person, adult or child, consents to the travel. A person may, in particular, arrange or facilitate another person's travel by recruiting, transporting or transferring, harboring or receiving them, or transferring or exchanging control over them. 'Travel' means arriving in, or entering, any country; departing from any country and travelling within any country. A person who is a UK national commits an offence under Section 2 regardless of where the arranging or facilitating takes place, or where the travel takes place. A person who is not a UK national commits an offence under Section 2 if any part of the arranging or facilitating takes place in the UK, or the travel consists of arrival in or entry into, departure from, or travel within the UK.

In determining whether or not a child is a victim of trafficking, their consent to being trafficked is irrelevant and how they are trafficked is also irrelevant. Only the act and the purpose need to be present. It is not necessary to prove coercion or any other inducement.

Exploitation alone does not constitute trafficking – there also needs to be recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person. Slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour is, or may be, a crime in its own right under Section 1 Modern Slavery Act 2015.

- **Contextual Safeguarding-Definition**

Contextual safeguarding which includes child sexual exploitation, peer on peer violence and abuse (including gangs), modern day slavery, harmful sexual behaviour, criminal exploitation, and going missing should not be seen in isolation as they often overlap, creating a complex set of harmful circumstances and experience for children, young people, families and communities.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighborhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

- **Organised Crime Groups and Gangs-Definition**

Organised crime group means a group that:

- a) Has as its purpose the carrying on of criminal activities, and
- b) Consists of three or more persons who act, or agree to act, together to further that purpose

Gang related violence and drug dealing activity is defined as gang related if it occurs in the course of, or is otherwise related to, the activities of a group that:

- a) Consists of at least three people, and
- b) Has one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified by others as a group. (Serious Crime Act 2015)

All areas of exploitation should be viewed within safeguarding procedures and it is only by working together it can be tackled effectively this necessitates a multi-agency response

- **Forced Marriage-Definition**

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

The pressure put on people to marry against their will may be:

- physical: for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence
- emotional and psychological: for example, making someone feel like they are bringing 'shame' on their family
- Financial abuse, for example taking someone's wages, may also be a factor.

- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)-Definition**

FGM is a form of child abuse: professionals have a statutory obligation under national safeguarding protocols (e.g. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015) to protect girls and women at risk of FGM. Since October 2015 registered professionals in health, social care and teaching also have a statutory duty (known as the Mandatory Reporting duty) to report cases of FGM to the police non-emergency number 101 in cases where a girl under 18 either discloses that she has had FGM or the professional observes physical signs of FGM.

- **Honour Based Violence-Definition**

'Honour'-based violence (**HBV**) There is no Government definition of 'honour'-based violence. For the purpose of this report we have chosen to use the following definition, written by IKWRO (the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation) : "'Honour'-based violence is normally a collective and planned crime or incident, mainly perpetrated against women and girls, by their family or their community, who act to defend their perceived honour, because they believe that the victim(s) have done something to bring shame to the family or the community.

HBV is a form of violence and abuse and the use of the term 'honour' to define this type of behaviour is often challenged. As the Crown Prosecution Service states "There is no, and cannot be, honour or justification for abusing the human rights of others."

- **Hate Crime-Definition**

Hate crime is defined as 'any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic.' this common definition was agreed in 2007 by the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Prison Service (now the National Offender Management Service) and other agencies that make up the criminal justice system. There are five centrally monitored strands of hate crime: • race or ethnicity; • religion or beliefs; • sexual orientation; • disability; and • transgender identity.

- **Mate Crime-Definition**

A tentative definition, based on the experience of the safety net project, is mate crime happens when someone 'makes friends' with a person and goes on to abuse or exploit that relationship. The founding intention of the relationship, from the point of view of the perpetrator, is likely to be criminal. The relationship is likely to be of some duration and, if unchecked, may lead to a pattern of repeat and worsening abuse.

3. EXPLOITATION Sub-Group

Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety & Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP).

Oversees the Exploitation sub-group that meets quarterly. There is strong multi agency working within the group and this is reflected in the work that is undertaken and the outcomes it has achieved.

The focus of the Exploitation group is-

Prevention & Early Intervention

- Prevent children, young people and vulnerable people from becoming exploited through effective leadership, governance and a wider culture embedded within organisations and communities that recognises the root causes of Exploitation & Serious Youth Violence (SYV) the signs and risk indicators and do all they can to tackle them.

Prepare

- To develop a comprehensive and accurate intelligence picture which will inform local partnership understanding of context, and locations of concern to enable swift coordinated multi-agency responses to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and prevent, divert or prosecute those who seek to facilitate and /or perpetrate exploitation, abuse and harm.

Protect

- To protect children and young people and vulnerable adults who are at risk of exploitation as well as those who are already victims and survivors.

Pursue

- To commit to ensuring that we will do all we can to disrupt and pursue perpetrators who are sexually and or criminally exploiting children, young people and vulnerable adults and where possible prosecute them.

Engagement

- We shall engage with all children and young people at risk of, or experiencing CSE/CCE, as well as their families and communities, to ensure that their voices are heard and responded to.

4. Children's Social Care response to Exploitation

Approach and scale of demand/prevalence in B&NES

In Children's Social Care the organisational response to exploitation has resulted in the development of the Adolescent and Care Experienced Team. This team support plans for adolescents aged between 11-18 whose exploitation is assessed as the primary concern/risk. The care experienced part of the team provides support for care leavers from 18 – 25 years, some of which are young people that have experienced exploitation and as a result have been accommodated, and are now transitioning into adulthood and are still at risk from perpetrators of sexual and criminal exploitation harm.

There has been a reduction in referrals to the ACE team during the 3 lockdowns. Since October 2020 there has been 17 referrals to date. In recent weeks this has been a rise in referrals linked to schools reopening. This is positive and in line with what we would expect referrals to be.

Willow

The Council's organisational response also includes offering early intervention to children and young people at risk of both sexual and criminal exploitation through support from the Willow project. The lead practitioner for Willow also works closely with Barnardo's BASE who provide support and intervention to our young people who are either at high risk and/or actively being exploited.

Training was offered virtually in March 2021 and there are now four additional Willow team members. The Willow team support 16 young people currently. In addition, we have offered support to parents and carers who are concerned about exploitation via one to one sessions and have delivered group sessions within local secondary schools to those considered at an increased risk of exploitation.

We have strong working links with the police and their Topaz team.

Operation TOPAZ

Avon and Somerset Constabulary response to Child Sexual Exploitation is Operation Topaz. Soon this will also encompass Criminal Exploitation also. Topaz is a perpetrator disruption team enabling the force to proactively protect the highest risk child sexual exploitation victims by developing opportunities to disrupt suspects.

Topaz recognizes that disrupting suspects is often the most effective way of safeguarding victims of child sexual exploitation.

Topaz enables timely disruption, by any means available, including directing partner agencies to intervene.

Avon & Somerset Police and Children's Social Care work closely together to ensure that all young people from ACE/Willow are referred to TOPAZ via the Avon and Somerset Police Intelligence Reporting Portal. The Local Authority receive monthly reports from TOPAZ in respect of young people and perpetrators that have been flagged and this report also feeds into and is crossed reference at the Operational Exploitation Meeting (OEM) which takes place bimonthly. There are currently 32 CYP from B&NES discussed in the Topaz team. However, there is currently no active engagement from Topaz with B&NES children and young people for sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation at this time. There is good work being undertaken with the police in relation to locations and links to exploitation.

The Operational Exploitation Meeting

Bath and North East Somerset have adopted a contextual safeguarding approach to develop an Operational Exploitation Meeting (OEM) to address the extra familial risks that are posed to our young people. This group meets bi-monthly.

This is a multi-agency meeting that:

- Identifies those young people being exploited criminally or sexually, and seek to support, disrupt to reduce harm and ensure support is in place.
- Identifies vulnerable adults who are at risk of exploitation/Cuckooing and seek to disrupt activity, reduce harm and ensure support is in place.
- Identifies spaces where young people associate, can experience abuse and cause concern such as parks, housing estates, stair wells within the community in order to disrupt activity.
- Identifies workers of such establishments that may have contact with young people and vulnerable adults that may be exploited and offer training and pathways to report such abuse.
- Identifies adult perpetrators who are exploiting others with a view to action being taken to disrupt/support or prosecute (dependent on circumstances)

The information shared at OEM helps to enable early identification of those young people who may be at risk of exploitation, vulnerable adults, and of those who may pose an exploitation threat to our young people. Additionally, we are able to better identify specific hotspots and locations where there may be an increased chance of exploitation occurring, which subsequently strengthens our responses and enables the raising of awareness across partner agencies.

This group reports into the Exploitation subgroup bi annually.

SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE

A key development in the last 2 years has been the establishment of a multi-agency Serious Violence Operational Group to identify individuals, networks and places of concern; this group meeting on monthly basis and reports to the exploitation sub group. The Police Serious Violence App is used to identify individuals at high risk of involvement in serious violence as victims or perpetrators (and often, both) and direct notifications can also be received from any agency. The group has recently extended its focus from under 18s to under 25s and the intention is to eventually consider all age groups. The methodology is developing and the activity depends on a continuing strong partnership with Police.

Serious violence is concentrated in Bath city centre with increases in Keynsham, Twerton and Somer Valley. Robberies and hospital knife attendances are mainly in the after school period, whereas violence and knife injury admissions are more often in the early hours of the morning, suggesting links with the night time economy and domestic abuse. Victims of knife crime at hospital are mainly in the 25-34 age group and usually male. Most children who have been violent are aged 15-17 and almost all male.

As part of the Exploitation sub-group a multi-agency Thematic Review of Knife Crime is being undertaken to look at areas of good practice and any areas of development.

MISSING

Bath and North East Somerset e have robust systems in place in relation to missing children and young people. All B&NES children and young people that go missing are offered Return Home Interviews by the Integrated working Team. Following this, appropriate levels of support are offered depending upon their presenting needs. There is good joined up working with Police colleagues and missing trigger plans are created to ensure robust plans are in place for children and young people that require this.

Not known to children's social care	Child in Need	Child protection	Children Looked After
16	4	3	12

(19 known and 14 not known to Children's Social Care) these dates refer to 01/01/2021-01/06/2021

COUNTY LINES

Work continues across BANES using local policing neighbourhood staff, intelligence units and proactive teams including regular welfare visits and engagement to those vulnerable from cuckooing or drugs misuse, participation in nationally run operations, misuse of drugs warrants and intelligence driven targeting of known dealers.

Working in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police County Lines task force to target and disrupt the line holders, two County Lines were dismantled, those controlling the lines arrested, charged and remanded awaiting trial (6 persons in total, 4 from London, 2 local people) – one line was operating in the Paulton/Midsomer Norton area and one in Bath in 2020. Three other lines in Bath disrupted by police activities whilst trying to set up over the last 12 months and as a result none have been able to become established, such that there are no known active County Lines currently in BANES.

County Lines operations have changed due to COVID 19 and across Avon and Somerset we have seen this. The main points are:

- Move towards more local recruitment of children rather than using those from their “home bases” for example; London
- More creative use of social media platforms or peer to peer recruitment
- Profile of victims is changing – more affluent, more female, younger children
- New methods of transport are being embraced such as the use of taxis and hire cars. Traditionally the rail network was used but it has been easier to target the runners using the rail network so the gangs have changed their tactics.

Home Invasion (sometimes referred to as Cuckooing)

The exploitation subgroup undertook a multi-agency audit in relation to Cuckooing and this illustrated good use of the Adult Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), some good multi-agency working and that risks were effectively assessed and managed.

MODERN SLAVERY/TRAFFICKING

B&NES Inclusive Communities Team work with Public Protection, Police, Housing providers and other services to co-ordinate and participate in 'days of action' and regional operations that are evidence based and focused on premises where intelligence may show activity including serious organised crime, money laundering, people trafficking and modern slavery. During the last year no adults were referred into modern slavery referral mechanism from B&NES.

B&NES Council continues to be an active member of the regional anti-slavery partnership and the Avon & Somerset Anti-Slavery Board with an aim to raise awareness of modern slavery amongst all employees and partners, to ensure a multi-agency approach to this issue and to implement the transparency in supply chain provisions of the Modern Slavery Act to prevent modern slavery from occurring in its own supply chain, noting that the Council's Contract Standing Orders already recognise the importance of preventing modern slavery.

FORCED MARRIAGE, FGM, HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

In B&NES we receive a very small number of referrals in relation to Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and Honor Based Violence. We have good policies and procedures in place that support strong multi-agency working in these areas to achieve positive outcomes.

HATE/MATE CRIME

Mate Crime is overseen by the Disrupt Panel where there is strong multi-agency working. Currently there are no active cases in this area being pursued.

5. CONSIDERATIONS

Children's Services and multi-agency partners will continue to respond to and offer comprehensive support to all young people at risk of exploitation. Children Service will keep under constant review the effective and efficient use of the financial resources allocated to it to endeavour to stay within the budgetary envelope in meeting the needs of our vulnerable children and young people at risk of exploitation

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE

Multi-agency partners must meet children and young people face to face to access risks and provide effective interventions: where possible we will seek to minimize travel and use technology

8. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

An EIA has not been carried out on this report.

9. CONSULTATION

This report was developed by the co-chairs of the BCSSP Exploitation sub-group. It was also shared with the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

Contact person	<i>Leigh Zywek</i>
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Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING	15 th June 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE
TITLE:	Corporate Parenting	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Annexe A: The Pledge		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 This report will outline the effectiveness of the Local Authority in meeting their safeguarding responsibilities and progress of children in care and care leavers.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

2.1 Note the progress made to date in these duties

2.2 Note that this work will continue to be a priority within the Local Authority

3 THE REPORT

3.1 As at 31st March 2021 there were 181 children in care, and 104 care leavers aged 18-21 years. The rates of looked after children in the Local Authority have remained relatively stable over the last 3 years.

3.2 Following the publication of 'Care Matters: Time for Change' in June 2007, there has been a requirement for all Local Authorities to develop and publish a Pledge to their Looked after Children and Care Leavers. The Pledge sets out the services and support children should expect to receive, see Annexe A. There is also an audio version available that has been recorded by young people in care.

3.3 The quarterly Corporate Parenting Group Meetings are now aligned to The Pledge to enable the Local Authority to report on progress against the principles within. This includes reports and presentations from the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team, the Commissioning Manager, the Virtual School, as well as our partner agencies such as Health. The In Care Council also attend the Corporate Parenting Group Meetings and provide an annual presentation giving direct feedback in relation to the Pledge from children and young people in care. Other agencies and presentations are provided by invitation and at the request of Elected Members

3.4 This report will focus on the key areas of The Pledge

3.5 *Your Social Worker.* All children in care have an allocated social worker and rates of stability are good. Historically, this number has been in part impacted on by systems within the Local Authority, namely the journey through relevant social work teams prior to becoming looked after. Following a recent redesign of children's services, it is envisaged that children will now experience less changes of social workers.

3.6 In order to best meet the complex needs of children in care and care leavers a redesign of our service was implemented in June 2020. Previously, children in care and care leavers were held within the same team (The Children in Care and Moving on Team). Since June 2020, we have created a new Adolescent and Care Experienced Team, which encompasses both care leavers and adolescents who are at risk of, or experiencing exploitation. The needs of many of our care leavers and young people, as well as the skills of our social workers and personal advisors, overlap in many areas and this has served to enable a clearer focus and service delivery for this cohort of young people.

3.7 The children in care team is now able to focus on children up to 18 years, but with clear links to the Adolescent and Care Experienced Team when a child reaches 16 years. We are currently developing a further pathway to enable Personal Advisors (PA's) to be allocated in a timely manner and ensure that Pathway Plans are appropriately focused on forthcoming adulthood. The team also work with children who have care plans for adoption and the redesign of the teams has enabled more focus on quality of work in this area, alongside our Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption West.

3.8 Visits to children in care are good, with 90% of children being visited within statutory timescales in 20/2021. It is important to note that covid restrictions have impacted on face to face visiting, with some visits not taking place due to symptoms or positive test results, as well as shielding etc. We have used creative methods to keep in touch with these children, i.e. through video call, messaging etc. The LA has practised in line with DFE Flexibilities introduced in 2020 in response to Covid 19. These Regulations enable virtual visits to be undertaken where face to face visits are not possible. These have been used minimally and always with Head of Service approval.

3.9 *How we make decisions:* Participation of children in care in decision making is a priority for the Local Authority. Where possible, children are seen alone during visits, in order to gain their views, wishes and feelings. The prevalence of children participating in their Children in Care reviews is high at 93%, with only 7% non-attendance. In order to further build on participation of young people in the services we provide, the Local Authority has recently

employed two Young Ambassadors. These young people are aged between 19-25 years and have experience of being looked after. The key focus of this role is participation and service development.

3.10 In 2021 we implemented a 'Long Term Matching Panel'. For those children that are unable to return home, this panel provides a place in which their care arrangements are scrutinised and formally agreed by a senior manager. This is important to ensure that children are matched with the most appropriate carer/connected person, and show good decision making from Corporate Parents. This has been an important service development.

3.11 *Your Care Plan:* All children and young people in care have a Care Plan that is regularly reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officer. 2019/20 data shows that 97% of child in care reviews were held on time (NB data for 20/21 is not yet available, but not felt to be significantly different). The Young Ambassadors are currently reviewing the care planning documents to ensure they are designed to meet the needs of all children in care.

3.12 Outcomes for children in care in B&NES will differ depending on individual circumstances. Some children will return home to live with their parents, or with wider family members or connected persons. The rate of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) in B&NES is high, which is felt to be an excellent alternative for children who are unable to live with their parents. This is exceptional practice and we have the highest rates of family arrangements within the South West. In recognition of the high number of SGOs in B&NES we have further developed our permanence team, to provide increased support to these carers. As a result, breakdowns of SGO placements are low, which means that children continue to live within their family network.

3.13 *Your Independent Reviewing Officer:* All children in care have an allocated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The appointment of an IRO for a child or young person in the care of the Local Authority is a legal requirement under section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Since 2004 all Local Authorities have been required to appoint an IRO to protect children's interests throughout the care planning process.

3.14 Feedback is gained from the Independent Reviewing Services and whilst the number of responses from children was lower than desired, there were no negative comments received by a child. The feedback provided suggests that children and young people value the role of their IRO and have a good relationship with them.

3.15 *Where you live:* It is important that children are placed within the geographical area of their family home, in order to remain connected to their family, friends and local community, as well as remain at the same school. There are specific sufficiency challenges within B&NES Local Authority, which means that some children are placed away from the area. In 19/20 69% of children were placed outside of the Local Authority boundary, or at a distance of at least 20 miles away from their family home.

3.16 The issue of sufficiency is also a national one and in December 2019, the Children's Commissioner published their report 'Pass the parcel – children posted around the care system'. This report identified that as of 31st March 2017/2018, 41% of children and young people in care were living out of area,

with 11,352 children and young people living more than 20 miles away from their home. The report highlighted that the number of children living out of the area has risen by 13% since 2014. The report acknowledges there are a number of reasons for children being placed at such distance from their home, but often it was identified that the location of the placement was simply because there was nowhere more suitable for them locally.

3.17 Sufficiency has also been identified as a priority across the South West . Work is underway across the LA's to develop our sufficiency; this is at an early stage. B&NES actively contribute to this transformational project. This is covered in detail in section 3.59

3.18 The aspiration with B&NES is to ensure that children are placed within the Local Authority. In order to be able to achieve this the recruitment and retention of local foster carers is a key priority. The more carers the Local Authority have available the more opportunity there is for children and young people to be placed within their local area. The Children's Transformation Programme includes a project group which a focus on recruitment and retention, including investment into services to enable an increase in the numbers of local carers to provide for a wide range of placements, i.e. adolescents, children with disabilities in need of short breaks, parent and baby.

3.19 It is important to note that for a small number of children, placements at a distance from B&NES are appropriate, i.e. due to risk or complex needs. For all children placed outside of B&NES they will continue to be visited by their social worker as well as IRO and receive education and health services appropriate to need.

3.20 Recent trends show increased prevalence of adolescents entering Local Authority Care. An analysis of these children shows that family breakdown due to covid restrictions have played a part. It is important to note that our care numbers have not significantly risen, as we have continued to support many children to remain or return home using additional funding via covid grant. Due to the older age of these children coming into care, it has provided difficult to find foster placements and therefore some of these children have been placed in 16+ accommodation and support arrangements (currently not regulated by Ofsted /unregulated placements).

3.21 To understand what constitutes an unregulated setting it is useful to understand what a regulated residential setting is. The Care Standards Act 2000 defines a residential children's home as an establishment that provides 'care and accommodation' 'wholly or mainly' for children. Therefore, an unregulated setting provides accommodation and support but not care. The law does not set out what care is, but there are some simple rules to apply. Administering medication, cooking for young people and shopping for them will constitute care. Whereas assisting young people to learn these skills will constitute support. If a provider crosses the line and provides care on an ongoing basis, the accommodation will become an unregistered children's home and will be illegal.

3.22 The use of 16+ accommodation and support has been in place for a few years, both nationally and locally. For some children, who are unable to live in a family setting, or where there are contextualised safeguarding issues, these types of placements can best meet their needs. In November 2019 OFSTED reviewed arrangements for young people over 16 years and Care Leavers,

stating; “the oversight of commissioned accommodation, including unregulated provision, is rigorous and results in additional support to keep young people safe”.

3.23 We have seen a small increase in the use of 16+ accommodation and support in B&NES during the pandemic, for the reasons outlined above. Since March 2020 we have put into place further measures to ensure that any children in these arrangements have rigorous oversight and appropriate risk management plans. This includes all 16+ accommodation and support providers being tendered through a dynamic purchasing system (DPS), in partnership with five other local authorities.

3.24 We have also increased our scrutiny of these arrangements by both Head of Service and Manager level. All children have appropriate support packages and supervision in place. The Head of Service and Deputy Lead for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance meet bi-monthly to review all these types of arrangements. In addition to this a recent audit of all children living in 16+ accommodation and support arrangements was undertaken in March 2021. As a result of this audit we have been further reassured about practice in this area in B&NES.

3.25 Stability rates of placements are consistently good in B&NES, with over 90% of children experiencing less than 3 placements over time. It is important to note that for some children placement changes are planned and a positive outcome for the child, i.e. reunification with parent, move to live with an extended family member or connected persons, or adoption

3.26 *Friends and Family*: Care Plans take into consideration a child or young person’s needs for staying in touch with their friends and family and this is proactively facilitated by social workers and IROs. For some children, there may be substantial risks posed from such contact time, but where possible the Local Authority will assess and mitigate such risks, even when these are significant.

3.27 In 2021 B&NES are also implementing the Lifelong Links Programme, which is a new approach, developed by the Family Rights Group, and aims to build lasting support networks for children and young people in care. This is achieved by rebuilding relationships and reconnecting children and young people in care with loved ones, including family members, significant persons and previous carers.

3.28 *Your Education*: To ensure that every looked after child is supported to achieve their very best the Virtual School (VS) hold termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. These are highly focused meetings dedicated to support educational outcomes. The PEP will be attended by the child’s social worker, the designated teacher at the school, the child’s carer and a member of the VS team. The child is invited to attend if they would like to, but if not, they can provide their views via the designated teacher. The child’s views are key to every PEP meeting and is normally the first part of the meeting.

3.29 Designated teachers complete the paperwork following a PEP which clearly records agreed actions and the impact they are expected to have. The V review every PEP and quality assure them before they are finalised and pupil premium plus funding is allocated. Every school has a statutory requirement to have a named designated teacher for looked after children and we provide regular

training for all our new designated teachers. The VS have good links with all the designated teachers and pupils are aware of who this person is in the school.

3.30 To ensure that every child gets a place at the best school for them, the VS have clear guidance that looked after children should only be placed in schools with OFSTED ratings of Good or Outstanding. In extreme exceptions we will place children in a school rated as requires improvement, but only where we are assured that the school can support the child effectively. Currently 94% of our statutory age children attend Good or Outstanding provisions. Where a mainstream school is not the best place for a child then we will work alongside the Special Educational Needs and D team to ensure that we find the best school to meet a child's needs. To support us in this the VS have two allocated members of the SEND team who have all our Looked After Children on their caseload. The VS also have a dedicated member of the educational psychology team who works with them two days a week.

3.31 The Virtual school will support a young person via the PEP process for as long as a child remains in education. Over the past 18 months the VS have worked hard to ensure that the quality of PEPs supporting post 16 education are the same high quality as our statutory school age children. The VS also carry out PEPs for all children who are in nursery. Once a child turns 18, it is then up to the young person and the social worker whether they would like these PEPs to continue with the young person's voice taking the lead in this decision. The VS have supported right up to university age where needed or required. The VS support schools and colleagues to provide work experience, and this is included in the PEP.

3.32 *Your identity:* All children in care have an up to date Care Plan which focuses on identity needs, including religious and cultural needs, as well as individual talents, interests and hobbies. Children's needs and interests in these areas are promoted and an annual celebration event is planned for 2021 to celebrate children in care achievements in all areas.

3.33 Life story work is important for children in care. It seeks to provide the child with an understanding of the reasons why they have come into care, as well as what has happened for them and their family whilst they have been in care. This work can take many different forms, from words and pictures, to photographs, letters, etc. Life story work will be completed with the child throughout their time in care. We are currently working to further develop our practice in B&NES and provide social workers with a range of tools to ensure that the child has a comprehensive range of information to best suit their needs.

3.34 *Your Health:* children in care are supported by the Looked After Child Health Team. The team provides for all children in care and their initial and annual health assessments, emotional and mental health, dental health, immunisations, planning for transition of health services, promoting children's development e.g. Speech and language development, achieving Healthy Weight of children and young people and good nutrition, and also ensuring specific provision for children with Education Health Care (EHC) plans

3.35 In 2019/20 53 initial health assessments, 13 Adoption Medicals and 26 Adoption Update Medicals were completed for B&NES children (all face to face contacts). In addition, 22 adoption updates were completed using relevant reports (child not seen). The Health team also work with partner agencies and

other Local Authority Health Teams to ensure that all children have regular health assessments, with 22 initial health assessments being completed for children placed outside of the Local Authority. *The 2020/2021 Annual Health Report is due in July 2021

3.36 The Designated Nurse for LAC or a Specialist Nurse for LAC attend strategy discussions or professional meetings with social care and police colleagues as required and contribute to the individual action plans when there are concerns in relation to significant harm, i.e. substance misuse, episodes of missing, criminal or sexual exploitation.

3.37 Provision of dental care is generally good across B&NES and neighbouring counties with the majority of Looked After Children being seen by local dental practices close to their placement. If this is not possible the Looked After Children Nurse will signpost to Specialist Dental Services. Dental health assessments are a key performance indicator for the health needs of Looked After Children and Young People, reported annually. 94% of Looked After Children and Young People in B&NES had dental assessments in 2019-2020.

3.38 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are seen for an initial health assessment by a paediatrician in the team, but are then referred to the Haven, a specialist service in Bristol, which means all their needs can be met by one service. This includes immunisations, TB testing, blood borne virus testing and mental health assessment. Preventative and health care guidance and support including nutritional advice, sexual health/relationship advice, contraception, alcohol, smoking and illegal substances and the Law in the UK regarding these issues are explained and discussed with the young person.

3.39 Emotional health and wellbeing is an important part of the initial health assessment, as well as continued assessment and monitoring through review health assessments. Early identification and treatment is critical to try and prevent longstanding serious problems with emotional health. This is supported through the use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) for children aged 5 to 15 years.

3.40 Emotional health and wellbeing is also a key focus for social workers and we work closely with our partners in Health, CAMHS and other agencies to ensure that children's needs are met. The children in care team commission a child psychologist to provide both consultation to social workers, assessment of needs and direct work with children.

3.41 *Leaving care and Moving On:* B&NES has high rates of keeping in touch with care leavers, consistently between 97-99%. At the time of writing this report, 88% of our care leavers have a Pathway Plan in place which is reviewed every 6 months. All care leavers up to 21 years have an allocated Personal Advisor (PA) that supports them in all areas of life, including housing, finances, education, employment and training, health (including mental and emotional health). For care leavers over the age of 21 years, we will continue to support them in line with their wishes and feelings.

3.42 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 provided a new duty to Local Authorities to provide PA support to all care leavers up to the age of 25 years, if they want this support. This duty commenced on 1st April 2018 and we have provided support to 27 additional young people between the age of 21-25.

3.43 Numbers of children Staying Put (SP) with their foster carers after 18 years are good in B&NES and we currently have 12 such arrangements. We have recently reviewed this service and our SP worker now sits within our Family Placement Team to ensure a smooth transition from foster care. We are also reviewing our policy and procedures to strengthen the service we provide to both young people and carers and seeking to support increased numbers in SP arrangements.

3.44 Aside from SP, care leavers can live in a range of housing provision, including supported living, semi-independent living and independent living. At the current time 96% of young people have suitable living arrangements as described above. Housing continues to be a challenge to young people in B&NES, especially those with complex needs. Children's Social Care are currently working with the Housing Department to identify solutions for some of our most vulnerable young people to ensure that they have stable and secure housing opportunities.

3.45 The number of care leavers in education, employment or training (EET) is 67%, with South West benchmarking figures aimed at a 70% rate. The number of young people who are not in EET has increased over previous years, which is also reflected nationally. We have therefore further developed our service within B&NES to include a skills and engagement worker within the social work team, development of an EET clinic, a focus on working with private industry in B&NES to provide work experience, training and job opportunities, as well as working with our partner agencies to increase EET figures. An EET Pathway has been developed to provide a clear aspiration for care experienced young people in B&NES and a strategic focus for this work.

3.46 The care leaver's last review health assessment is completed at the age of 17 years. A Health Passport is completed with the Care Leaver to provide up to date information about their immunisations and health needs. The Health Passport is for them to keep and can be used when accessing health services after their 18th birthday. An electronic version is also kept and shared with the GP. If the young person declines a review health assessment the Health Team will attempt to engage with them on the telephone or request that they complete a questionnaire about their health. The young person is informed that they may decline but can contact the Health Team directly or through their Personal Advisor at any point in the next year if they change their mind.

3.47 In 2017, B&NES care leavers service was rated as 'requires improvement' by OFSTED, although the overall judgement for Children's Social Care was 'good'. A further Focussed Visit was undertaken by OFSTED in 2019, in which Inspectors looked at the Local Authority's arrangements for care leavers only. This visit considered the recommendations from the 2017 inspection and stated, "Young people receive practical and emotional support from social workers and personal advisers who know them well. Importantly, the identification and response to risk has improved. Young people are now visited in accordance with their needs. They are very clear about their rights and entitlements, and the local offer results in tangible benefits for them".

3.48 The report continues, "Senior leaders have invested in improvements to performance data and quality assurance, including the case auditing process". Alongside this, OFSTED recognised that some improvements were recent and not fully embedded in practice, namely the application of the risk assessment

tool, timeliness and review of pathway plans. We have continued to work on these areas of development and further progress our care leavers service.

3.49 The recommendations made from this Focussed Visit have been taken forward by Children's Social Care and key area of work focusing on Pathway Planning and risk assessment.

3.50 This report will now consider specifically the impact of Covid upon our Corporate Parenting duties. The pandemic and associated restrictions have had a significant impact on many of our children in care and care leavers. For children in care, education provision has been disrupted, some aspects of health services such as dentistry and eye tests have been delayed or unavailable, and other partner agency support and community services have been significantly impacted on.

3.51 Despite this, we have worked hard in B&NES with our partner agencies to continue to provide good services to children in care. We have continued to visit children in their placements, where it is safe to do so. If this has not been possible, we have undertaken virtual visits and increased communication through messaging. Some children and young people have engaged well with this and have enjoyed the opportunity to have a video call with their social worker.

3.52 Health assessments have continued during this previous year, albeit virtually. The Virtual School (VS) have worked incredibly hard to support children who are both in school, and those in placement being home schooled. They put into place additional support and resources to both encourage and engage children in continued learning. In more recent weeks the VS has worked to assist children returning back to school.

3.53 Significant support has been provided to foster carers to ensure that they are well supported to enable them to continue to care for the children in their care. This has meant increased contact from the Family Placement Team and creative ways of working with our foster carer families so that they do not feel isolated. This has been successful, as shown in our placement stability rates, which remain consistently high.

3.54 Our care leavers have also been significantly impacted on by the pandemic. It is important to note that care leavers experience less opportunities in relation to education, employment and training due to many factors, including impact of abuse and trauma. The pandemic has served to further exacerbate these issues due to limited availability of technology to enable online education, or for some young people, they have been unable to engage with further education virtually. This was particularly the case in the first lockdown. The opportunity for work has also lessened due to the closure of non-essential businesses. The Adolescent and Care Experienced Team have worked hard to bridge these gaps for our care leavers, and we have ensured that laptops are made available when needed.

3.55 Further areas of development and service improvement via the Children's Transformation Programme.

3.56 The Children's Transformation Programme, established in March 2020, encompasses a range of initiatives focusing on children in care and care leavers,

amongst others. It provides a forum in which services are further developed, or initiated, through a multi-disciplinary group. The Transformation Programme is also able to identify budget savings where appropriate.

3.57 One project agreed for 2021/22 will further develop opportunities for young people to access employment, education and training (EET) in B&NES. As discussed above, one impact of the pandemic has led to less opportunities for EET and it is felt that this impact will continue for our care leavers over a sustained period of time. We will therefore be further developing and strengthening our pathway for EET, bring together resources from across the Council and our partner agencies.

3.58 As discussed earlier in the report, sufficiency of in-house foster placement is limited and as a result, children are placed outside of the Local Authority. The Children's Transformation Programme also includes a project which focuses on the recruitment and retention of foster carers. A successful bid was made for investment enabling us to employ a marketing apprentice and commission a marketing agency, in line with our neighbouring Authorities. Our recruitment will focus on recruiting foster carers to meet the needs of the hardest to place children, i.e. adolescents, parent and baby, as well as short breaks for children with disabilities.

3.59 We are also undertaking a review of the fee structure for B&NES foster carers, as we are not competitive in some age ranges. We have further developed our support and training package to carers, as well as facilitating a buddy scheme, in order to promote retention of carers. Furthermore, we are developing a 'Fostering Families' service which aims to support children on the edge of care and provide a fostering service to both the parent and child in order to avoid the child coming in care.

3.60 Alongside this, B&NES are also part of the South West Sufficiency Project led by the South Gloucestershire Council. This project has funding for a project manager for two years from the DfE (Oct 2020 – Oct 2022). The project is twofold; looking at how LA's can work more efficiently with the independent sector and how LA's can commission, design and deliver services together. It aims to

a) create a whole system approach; creating new models for commissioning that will compliment all existing models and give Local Authorities increased levels of sufficiency.

b) Establish new ways of working, to improve partnership working between Local Authorities, Independent providers, and agencies across the South West Region.

c) To improve placement sufficiency by placing children in Local high-quality placements at a sustainable cost for the LA's and the independent sector.

3.61 We are also implementing a Reunification Service within the Children in Care Team, as part of the Children's Transformation Project. Each year, several children leave their foster placement and return home. Currently, most of these moves are unplanned and many subsequently break down. The children returning to Local Authority care will have experienced significant disruption in their lives, failed hopes of returning to their families, and another experience of trauma and loss. Their families also will have experienced trauma and disruption.

3.62 B&NES is working with the NSPCC to embed their reunification framework. The framework supports practitioners and managers to apply structured professional judgement to decisions about whether and how a child should return home from care. It supports families and workers to understand what needs to change, to set goals, access support and services and review progress. We have support from our internal family therapy service and ongoing support once the child has returned home from the Connecting Families Team. It is planned that this service will be in place as from July 2021.

3.63 Transitions will be a key focus for 2021/22, and we are working closely with our partners in adult services and health to ensure early identification of need and smooth transitions between services in the best interests of children and young people. This is important for all our children in care, and especially children with a disability, complex needs, or at high risk.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Statutory guidance produced in February 2018 outlines the role of Local Authorities and the application of corporate parenting principles as set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Local Authorities must have regard to the needs identified in the Children and Social Work Act when exercising their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children). It should be read and applied alongside the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review, and volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers, resource implications (finance, property, people)

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The Local Authority seeks to ensure that it meets all its corporate parenting responsibilities. Placements are identified depending on the child's assessed need. Aside from the cost of the placement, additional funding may also be agreed relating to supervision and support. Placement sufficiency is a significant area for development. A number of Children's Transformation Projects seek to increase the range of children and young people supported through connected carers and an expanded in-house fostering provision. The financial year 20/21 saw significant pressures across Children's Services, the budget for 21/22 has been increased to reflect this. Children's Services continue to keep under constant review the effective and efficient use of the financial resources allocated to it to endeavour to stay within the budgetary envelope.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 An EIA has not been carried out on this report. Any changes to service delivery identified through the Children's Transformation programme will be underpinned by an EIA.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 The council has declared a climate emergency and has resolved to enable carbon neutrality in B&NES by 2030. When considering any placement for a child, we will seek to accommodate children within B&NES, therefore avoiding unnecessary travel for the child, their family, the social worker and other professionals. Children's Services must see children in their homes, settings and community in order to discharge their statutory responsibilities. Where possible, we will seek to minimize travel and use technology.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The Corporate Parenting Group are informed of progress against The Pledge on a quarterly basis. The services referred to within this report are directed and overseen by the Assistant Director and Director of Children's Social Care. Any significant changes to service development are discussed with the relevant authority.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 This report has been authored by Rachael Ward, Head of Service, in conjunction with the Assistant Director for children and Young People Service, the Director of Children's Service and the Children's Finance Manager. It has also been shared with the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

Contact person	Rachael Ward, Head of Service, 07976 184698
Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Children, Adult, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING DATE:	15 th June 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Bath and NE Somerset Food Equity Action Plan Update	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM/		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: B&NES Food Equity Action Plan APR 2021 Appendix 2: B&NES Food Poverty Steering Group Terms of Reference Appendix 3: Food Poverty Action Plan Update (21/01/2021) – report for Full Council Appendix 4: Case study – Oasis Pantry (Affordable Food Network Member)		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 This report provides an update on the development and progress of the B&NES Fair Food Alliance (BFFA) which was previously known as the B&NES Food Poverty Steering Group on delivering the actions set out in the action plan. The action plan was first presented to the Panel in July 2020. In this report we share progress to date, present our updated Food Equity Action Plan (see Appendix 1) and set out the ambition to move from crisis response to sustainable, affordable solutions to address household food insecurity.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to;

2.1 Proposal 1 Note progress since the last report (July 2020) and comment on the new refreshed Food Equity Action Plan and future priorities for the B&NES Fair Food Alliance.

Proposal 2 Consider how to promote inclusion of access to affordable healthy food in work with those who may be at risk of household food insecurity.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 In February 2021 B&NES Food Poverty Steering Group members decided by consensus to change the name of the partnership to the B&NES Fair Food Alliance (BFFA) to better reflect a solution focused and collaborative approach to addressing food insecurity. Similarly, we have moved from using the term food poverty to a preference for the term 'household food insecurity' to describe a situation where people do not have means to reliably meet their needs for food of sufficient quantity, quality or variety in socially acceptable ways.

3.2 Food insecurity work in B&NES is led by the public health team and coordinated by a Health Improvement Officer (HIO). The HIO post was recruited as a 0.6 FTE, fixed term contract until July 2021. Recently funding has been secured from St John's Foundation to increase this to 30 hours a week and extend the post until July 2024.

3.3 The B&NES Fair Food Alliance (BFFA) has met six times since the first meeting at the start of the first coronavirus lockdown period in March 2020. The focus has been on understanding the challenges emerging for residents in relation to immediate food needs and provision of welfare support and supporting partners in meeting these needs.

3.4 The BFFA has provided a network for members to share information, co-ordinate activity and both offer and request support. Membership currently stands at over 60 members representing a range of statutory, third sector, education and independent organisations (see Appendix 2).

3.5 Our partnership with **Feeding Britain** continues to be fruitful. This national charity and network of similar alliances has been both a source of good practice examples for us to draw on and a platform for us to share our own successes. B&NES has been represented twice on Feeding Britain's national network webinars – once to share Bath Rugby Foundation's *Summer Break Out* scheme of holiday activity and food support, and on another occasion to present *CropDrop*, which is our local project redistributing abundant allotment produce to projects within our Affordable Food Network.

3.6 Feeding Britain are very effective at lobbying parliament on issues of national policy and legislation. They often ask for evidence to support this work and examples from B&NES have contributed to the authenticity of the case they can make. Successes include their contribution to the extension of the £20 uplift for Universal Credit payments. More detail of their campaigns and lobbying is available on their website.¹

3.7 While food insecurity was already an issue facing many households in B&NES prior to the pandemic, the past year has seen a significant increase in demand for support with food and income related issues. A report prepared for Full Council in January 2021 (see Appendix 3) documents a detailed account provided by BFFA members on increases in Universal Credit claims, crisis

¹ <https://feedingbritain.org/what-we-do/policies-research/>

financial assistance grants, provision of white goods, referrals to and use of local foodbanks and support with debt issues.

3.8 Our B&NES Fair Food Alliance has three key working groups feeding into it. **The Affordable Food Network (AFN)** meets monthly and invites all the fair food providers including food banks, food clubs, pantries, community cafes, larders and fridges to come together to build relationships, share good practice and work in partnership. The aim is to build a robust safety net, serving the whole B&NES area. This comprises community-led food support with wraparound services, signposting, and referral to help people meet their needs which are often complex associated with low income, social isolation, poor health, and family pressures. The Oasis Pantry, of one of our AFN partners, has shared a case study outlining the development and impact of the pantry including how being a member of the AFN has supported and enhanced their work (see Appendix 4).

3.9 More **geographically localised networks** are also establishing in areas of greatest need. An initial meeting of a budding Somer Valley network in March 2021 was well received and will be followed up by another meeting in June. Another local network will be initiated in the Keynsham / Saltford area and a third will explore linking with the existing community network in the Twerton / Whiteway area in Bath. These locality networks can draw in community actors who have responded with mutual aid offers during the Covid-19 pandemic who would benefit from stronger connections with other local voluntary and statutory services.

3.10 The **CropDrop** project has been a particular success of the AFN and has been showcased in national and regional forums as an example of innovative good practice. It is now being replicated in at least five other areas around the country. The team of skilled and experienced volunteers who coordinate it are now planning for the 2021 growing season and are forging links with more growers and recipients including Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association (BEMSCA) and the Social Prescribing scheme led by DHI.

3.11 The **Income Maximisation group** meets quarterly and has been chaired by St John's Foundation. It invites all those services and voluntary sector organisations who offer financial support, advice and guidance to share good practice and present a coordinated message to the public about where best to seek help with a diverse range of money-related challenges. The topics of pension credit uptake, fuel poverty and return to work support for women have been covered. Future meetings will focus on childcare costs and improving the local networking of provision of affordable goods and services including school uniform, furniture and furnishings, white goods, fuel and fuel efficiency.

3.12 These two sub-groups of the BFFA have been the key routes of distribution for a B&NES specific printed edition of Clean Slate's Food Magazine. This is especially important as a reliable information source about local services for people who are not digitally connected. A sample from the B&NES guide can be viewed on their website.²

² <https://quidsinpro.com/quids-in-guides/food-guide/>

3.13 The third key strand of our local work, **Hear my Voice**, aims to find effective and meaningful ways for the voice of people with lived experience of food insecurity to be heard and to guide the policy and practice response in B&NES. Initial discussions with Bath University in 2020 were developed into an ambitious application for research funding from the UKRI Transforming Food Systems programme. An outline bid was submitted in early April 2021 and is a collaboration between researchers from Bath, Cardiff, Reading and Hertfordshire Universities. If successful, the qualitative and quantitative multi-themed project will run over three years from April 2022.

3.14 In the meantime, the working groups are encouraged to bring the voice of the people they serve to inform on going work, setting priorities and the delivery of the action plan. As Covid restrictions are lifted and face-to-face meetings become possible again, more direct contact and feedback will be sought.

3.15 One of the challenges in coordinating the local response to household food insecurity has been a lack of detailed **local intelligence on mapping gaps and needs with community food provision** both geographically and in terms of specific socioeconomic groups in B&NES. Intelligence analyst support and insight on local data to inform our work on food insecurity has been difficult as colleagues have been deployed in response to Covid-19 over the past year. As some of these pressures begin to ease, we will be able to draw on this resource to help in planning future work and implementation of our Food Equity Action Plan.

3.16 Significant government funding of over £430K has been allocated to B&NES for the 2021/22 national **Holiday Activity and Food (HAF)** programmes across all the main school holiday periods. Bath Rugby Foundation built on their successful 2020 Summer Breakout programme to coordinate HAF in collaboration with other agencies for the 2021 Easter break, supported by £48K of 2020/21 government allocated funding. For four days of each week of the Easter break, two sessions per day were delivered (morning for primary age and afternoon for secondary age) at each of three sites across B&NES (Midsomer Norton, Keynsham and Twerton). Over the two-week holiday period, a total of 130 children (95 aged 5-11years; and 33 aged 12 to 16 years) attended the hubs on average almost 4 times equating to 499 attendances in total. Colleagues in public health are bringing together a steering group to manage and coordinate the commissioning of the HAF programme over the 2021/22 school year.

3.17 The **uptake of both Healthy Start Vouchers (HSV) and means-tested Free School Meals (FSM)** is low in B&NES. Current HSV take-up is 40-55% and the take up FSM by eligible children in 2019 was 79%. We are working with other members of the public health team to promote the recent increase in value of HSV from £3.10 to £4.25 and will continue to do so as preparations are made for the roll-out of digital application and vouchers in the Autumn.

3.18 **Eligibility thresholds for both HSV and FSM** are based on very low earned income of £7,400 a year. There are many families who are just above this threshold and in need of support but miss out on these initiatives. As illustration, B&NES FSM Service rejected 367 claims to benefit related free school meals during the period 7.6.20 to 18.4.21 using the DWP ECS service that local authorities use to check claims. Other benefits including tax credits stop at the point of application for Universal Credit (UC) but FSM and HSV don't

start until the UC claim is approved and are then not backdated. UC claimant numbers have increased by around 3000 since the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020 and a significant proportion of those are families with children. The current minimum 5-week wait for UC can leave families in a distressing financial vacuum.

3.18 While helping people to reduce outgoings without compromising their standard of living is crucial, increasing income is also essential and meets our aim of a cash-first approach to tackling household food insecurity. To this end we are currently scoping options for adoption of, and possibilities for encouraging an increase in the number of employers who offer, the **Real Living Wage (RLW)** in B&NES.

3.19 The impact of household income insecurity is multi-faceted and affects not only access to affordable nutritious food but also other necessities of life. A useful model for **'Poverty proofing the school day'** has been developed by schools in NE England. Development of an audit tool for schools based on this resource has been included in the refresh of the B&NES Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2024 and we will work with colleagues in education, and with schools to produce this audit tool.

3.20 The direction of travel of the BFFA and the refreshed Food Equity Action Plan reflects the how the focus is moving from emergency food aid via foodbanks, through the diverse network of community support with their developing offers of wraparound support, to **integrated locality networks and one-stop-shop hubs**, and ultimately towards the vision of contributing to eliminating food insecurity. What is now an Affordable Food Network could become or link to an 'Affordable Living Network' including support around other aspects of household budgets affected by poverty as outlined above.

3.21 In taking forward the action plan the BFFA is seeking to **prevent the creation of a two-tier food shopping experience** where people living on low incomes are increasingly using separate, membership-based affordable outlets which are out of the mainstream. However, when affordable food is core to the offer of other aspects of social and health support, it can have a meaningful impact on pervasive issues of social isolation, community cohesion and health inequalities. The BFFA aims to strike the balance between targeted and universal approaches to tackling household food insecurity and its causes.

3.22 We also recognise the fundamental place and importance of food in everyone's life; not just for the calories and nutrition that sustain us physically, but also for the social connection that can be created around its growing, harvesting, preparing, cooking and eating together. These are activities that deeply nourish us and can positively impact on wider influences on health like physical activity, social connection, community cohesion and mutual aid. Food insecurity also impoverishes these experiences in people's lives too. With this in mind, we would like to see an **assessment of access to healthy food universally included** wherever people encounter health, social care or voluntary agencies that are addressing complex needs.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 By developing a Food Equity Action Plan, B&NES Council as part of the B&NES Fair Food Alliance will support residents through seeking to prevent, reduce and mitigate against the effects of experiencing household food insecurity and thereby take preventative collective action to address health inequalities longer term.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 No current resource implication currently. The application to UKRI for research funding, as detailed above (3.13) includes reference to the 'in-kind' support from B&NES as an active partner and co-creator of the research. This would comprise up to two hours a week of HIO time (3.2) to facilitate introductions and liaise with the research team if the application is successful.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 While the experience of household food insecurity is something that can affect anyone, the evidence shows that some sections of the community can be particularly vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity. The BFFA members are conducting an Equality Impact Assessment in order to:

- Consider how the B&NES Food Equity Action Plan is targeting support to the most vulnerable groups in our area
- Highlight and address barriers that some groups might face in accessing support

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 This work has the potential to contribute to achievement of carbon neutrality as part of a wider focus on food and food systems in B&NES which aims to reduce food waste and increase access to fresh, seasonal local produce.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Information in this report has been provided by members of the B&NES Fair Food Alliance (see Appendix 2 for membership) and the action plan is collectively owned and produced by the alliance.

10.2 This report has been approved by Chief Financial Officer -Nominated report clearance officer

Contact person	Milly_Carmichael@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 394058 Sarah_Heathcote@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 394455
Background papers	Children, Adult, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel 14th July 2020 Full Council Report January 21 st 2021
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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Appendix 1

Bath and North East Somerset Food Equity Action Plan

Goals

1. Everyone living in B&NES can reliably afford and access suitable food to meet their needs for energy, nutrition, and social & cultural connection, with dignity and without resort to emergency food aid.
2. In partnership with broader strategies, the growing, production, packaging, transport, marketing and consumption of that affordable and accessible food will contribute to a thriving local economy and a flourishing biosphere.

Principles

- The **right to food** is respected. “The right to food is a human right. It protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The right to food is not about charity, but about ensuring that all people have the capacity to feed themselves in dignity”.[\(www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/what-is-the-right-to-food/](http://www.righttofood.org/work-of-jean-ziegler-at-the-un/what-is-the-right-to-food/)
- Food poverty is recognised as an acute form of poverty and **preventive measures** must, therefore, be taken to tackle poverty at source
- Every **council** decision takes into effect its **impact on food poverty**
- The council **uses all the levers at its disposal to maximum effect** to reduce food poverty. These include but are not exclusive to Welfare Support, Commissioning and Procurement, Planning and S106 funding.
- Strategies to reduce food poverty must be **sustainable in the longer term** and embedded in core practice across all agencies .

Systems, Structures and Governance

- In this context 'sustainable' solutions are preventative measures that largely negate the need for crisis intervention. They address inequalities and are informed by and responsive to comprehensive local data. They are embedded in core practice across agencies and integrated into a whole systems approach to the provision of affordable, healthy and socially & culturally acceptable food for all. Any solutions to food insecurity which are achieved through narrowly-targeted and/or short-term funding are, by definition, not sustainable.
- When identified solutions are beyond the scope and power of Local Authority, national Government must be lobbied for broader policy and legislative change. This includes but is not restricted to the right to food; income from work and social security that is adequate to meet fundamental needs of life; provision of genuinely affordable housing; fair and equitable processes to access welfare support; associated food trade, production, pricing, labelling and promotion.

Aims	Actions	Achieve by	Lead Agency/ Org	Progress
Create the framework for working collaboratively with local stakeholders and communities, to identify and embed local sustainable solutions to address poverty that results	Convene and manage a Steering Group and associated task groups for key themes/areas of work	Achieved and ongoing	PH	April 2021 Steering Group meeting since March 2020 – now quarterly. 50+ multi-agency membership Renamed B&NES Fair Food Alliance (Feb 2021) Working groups meeting regularly - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Maximisation • Affordable Food Network

in household food insecurity.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Large funding bid for local research on lived experience underway with Bath Uni and partners
	Conduct a Covid-19 debrief, harvest the learning from how community food provision evolved during the crisis.	Sept 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covid restrictions still in place and much Covid-related support will continue until June / July at least.
	Report regularly on progress to Cabinet Member lead, Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel and Full Council as required	Ongoing	PH	April 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet member lead attending Steering Group and has regular contact with PH leads. Papers taken to PDS panel in January and July 2020. Paper went to full council January 2021. Further paper for PDS panel in May in progress
Encourage advocacy via community organisations - targeting national policy change by lobbying national government for change.	Formalise partnership arrangement with Feeding Britain (FB)	Achieved Sep 2020	PH	Partnership agreement signed and reviewed
	Work collaboratively with FB partnership to develop local project ideas, explore funding opportunities and contribute to national learning, advocacy and lobby for change	Ongoing	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent FB representation and network news shared at our Alliance group meetings . A local project – CropDrop – was supported to present to the FB network as evidence of good practice and now replicated by 3 more FB partners Funding has been offered to support local development of affordable food projects like food clubs and pantries. 2-way information share to support and inform advocacy and lobbying

	Connect closely with the Sustain / Food Power network - draw on and contribute to sharing of good practice across the national network	Review after Food Power Festival in May 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of SW regional Food Power networking group Food Power funding expires in March 2021 and resourcing for further coordination not yet secured. MC – delivered well-received presentation at a regional meeting in March 2021
Secure adequate/additional resource and capacity to enable a long-term sustainable approach to this issue locally	Identify resource for strategic and operational leads on broader poverty eradication and food strategies for B&NES	April 2022	Lead members	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No firm progress on identifying resource but greater recognition of the need is becoming evident.
	Work in partnership with existing networks, structures and organisations to develop sustainable solutions to co-ordination of food equity work beyond 2021	July 2021	PH	April 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three year funding secured, Dec 2020, from St John Foundation to continue HIO Post in Public Health beyond current fixed term contract ending July 2021. Work has begun to create an integrated strategy on Obesity, Physical Activity and Food Insecurity
	Connect with the B&NES Covid Recovery plan and the Corporate Strategy and encourage the adoption of Community Wealth Building practice (***)	July 2021	PH	To be progressed
Consistently use language in internal and public communications that promotes dignity, choice and personal agency	Create and circulate guidance to all members of the Steering Group and working groups on suitable language and terms (**)	Ongoing	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nourish Scotland's Dignity I Practice training resource widely circulated (Nov 2020) Food Clubs and Pantries Group changed name to Affordable Food Network (Dec 2020) Steering Group name changed, after consultation, to B&NES Fair Food Alliance (Feb 2021)

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation to regional Food Power meeting encouraging a shift from 'food waste' to 'wasted food' (Mar 2021)
Coordinate associated funding streams. e.g. from central government, Feeding Britain or local fund-raising	Create effective distribution structures with clear identification of eligibility and monitoring requirements	Ongoing	WS / SJF /B&NES Finance leads	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SJF distributed £15K of FB funding for summer programmes (Jul 2020) WS and SJF distributed £45K of local fundraising for community food projects (Nov 2020) WS and B&NES Education Finance leads distributed £380K of Government Covid Winter funding (Dec 2020) Easter HAF funding distributed and leads identified for HAF Summer funding commissioning (Mar2021)

(**) This action point is also included in the Data and Communication section

(***) <http://intranet/bath-and-north-east-somerset-corporate-strategy-framework> <https://cles.org.uk/what-is-community-wealth-building>

Maximising Income

- B&NES will take a money-first approach to supporting people and households with low and /or insecure income
- The financial provision of the local welfare support safety net is collaboratively provided by B&NES Council Welfare Support (WS) team and St John Foundation individual hardship funds
- An 'Income Maximisation' group (IMG) will largely oversee this aspect of the Action plan and membership will include representation from DWP, Welfare Support, St Johns Foundation, Citizens Advice, local 3rd sector organisations offering financial guidance and those addressing needs of specific vulnerable groups e/g Age UK

Aims	Actions	Achieve by	Lead Agency/ Org	Progress
Ensure the local welfare safety net is clearly defined,	Remove the blanket cap on local welfare support provision and create robust	April 2022	WS	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £400K uplift to WS budget for 2021/22

promoted, accessible and flexible to varied need and provides sufficient support to those in hardship to reduce reliance on crisis food banks	guidance to assess limits to provision on a case-by-case basis			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WS Food support offer increased by £20
	Collate jointly agreed information on available welfare support services and how to access them.	Ongoing	IMG	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Big database being updated, renamed, absorbing Rainbow Resource and Wellbeing Options and developed as key public-access information source (Dec 2020) Agreed, in principle, to create a local version of IFAN's cash-first leaflet of local services (Mar 2021) PH meeting to coordinate communications with schools (Apr 2021)
	Make this widely known across agencies /charities/schools/public and framed to encourage people to present earlier and to reduce stigma.		IMG	
	Develop stronger joint working and collaboration across support agencies including data sharing and co-located working where needed, in line with learning from the Community Wellbeing Hub model	Ongoing	IMG	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Models of delivery within the Affordable Food Network include increasing their wrap-around support and openness to other agencies operating from their sites Support offered from Feeding Britain to resource co-located and multi-agency collaboration
	Support campaigns to raise awareness of doorstep/online lenders, illegal money lenders and financial scams and direct people to legitimate sources of financial support	June 2021	IMG	To be progressed
	Promote best practice in financial literacy and money management skills and support locally	Ongoing	IMG	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local B&NES edition of Clean Slate's Food magazine distributed (Feb 2021)

Increase knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise the key drivers of food insecurity, to enable timely access to self-help, early help and preventative services	Create a training resource and promote its use by all agencies working on maximising income to improve confidence to recognise, assess and offer support around food insecurity as a routine part of their work.	July 2021	PH / IMG	<i>(This same resource can be adapted to ensure people working around food issues are also confident to offer guidance about accessing welfare support – cross action with the 'food for all' section of action plan)</i>
	Improve identification of people in, or at risk of, rent and council tax arrears at an earlier stage and put in preventative measures	Ongoing	WS and Curo	April 2021 Awaiting update
	Collation of information and promotion of employment support services available in B&NES and how to access them	Ongoing	IMG	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good links built through the IMG with B&NES employment and enterprise team for dissemination of information to the group, the wider Alliance and the AFN.
Champion the living wage across contractors and local employers including social care, retail and hospitality to contribute to ensuring people can earn a fair income	Identify current living wage employers in B&NES and work with them to identify and share benefits for both business and employees	June 2021	IMG	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-team working in PH and initial research undertaken into current RLW status of the Council. Contact made with RLW Foundation, toolkit resources shared and support offered to B&NES to pursue the action point.
	Identify strategic leadership within the B&NES Council to work with the Living Wage Foundation to implement their Local Authority toolkit. https://www.livingwage.org.uk/local-authority-toolkit-0	Nov 2021	Lead Cllrs	April 2021 Engagement with economic development and procurement colleagues to scope opportunities to promote Real Living Wage (RLW)

Maximise the use of local authority powers and other local levers in tackling food poverty	Promote Healthy Start voucher and vitamin scheme and facilitate roll out of digital application process to improve uptake from 2019 levels of 39%	Oct 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PH lead identified for coordinating HS roll-out. Promotional material around the value increase widely disseminated. All Alliance, IMG, AFN members requested to raise awareness of the scheme and encourage uptake.
	Promote Free School Meal take up and improve from 2019 levels of 79%	Sept 2021	PH	April 2021 Awaiting update

Dignity and Inclusion (Hear My Voice)

- All actions to address household food insecurity in B&NES must be fully informed by the life experience of people who are living, or have lived, with poverty and household food insecurity themselves.
- The barriers to having their voice heard and respected are many and it is understood that a longer-term, relationship-based approach will be more dignified and lead to more meaningful involvement.
- Whatever we do to address household food insecurity in B&NES, we must ensure that the practice of 'solving' it with the equally problematic food 'waste' or surplus streams is only ever a temporary and pragmatic step in the process of designing a truly sustainable food system, that does not rely on perpetuating co-dependency of two wholly undesirable situations.

Aims	Actions	Achieve by	Lead Agency/ Org	Progress
Involve people with life experience of food insecurity in	Undertake local qualitative and qualitative research, led by University of Bath, to seek out and listen to people with life experience of food	April 2022	University of Bath	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large UKRI transforming Food Systems funding application submitted by Bath Uni in

the strategic work of the group and development of local solutions	insecurity and their suggested solutions.			collaboration with Cardiff, Reading and Hertfordshire (Apr 2021) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Leda Blackwood leading on initial scoping interviews to inform a future funding for substantive local research (Sep 2020)
	Identify existing networks of trust in B&NES who can find and support people with life experience of food insecurity to be meaningfully involved in developing the local strategy, actions and evaluation	Sep 2021	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFN members all in support of the research application and willing to facilitate the involvement of their own members and customers within ethical guidelines
	Create a series of modes of engagement to enable participation	Sep 2021	AFN / University of Bath	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The second round of research application due in Sept when more co-created detail of methods will be needed.
	Create effective channels of communication to bring the voices of people with life experience to the decision makers and policy maker of B&NES, regional bodies and national government.	Apr 2022	PH / University of Bath	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The second round of research application due in Sept when more co-created detail of methods and dissemination will be needed.
	Support, train and encourage people who want to develop their community advocacy skills and impact	Sep 2021	AFN	To be progressed
Empower local communities to develop local solutions where need is identified	Work with Compassionate Communities and the development of local hubs, using best evidence-based practice in community resilience building, to keep food as a key focus for the network.	Ongoing	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First meeting of a budding affordable food network in Somer Valley (Mar 2021) • Positive connection made with Welton Baptist Church and their strong locality network (April 2021)

	Actively promote Nourish Scotland's Dignity in Practice Toolkit and training resources to inform and guide service delivery	Achieved and ongoing	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training resources disseminated and promoted with the AFN (Nov 2020)
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Food for All

- The overall aim of this aspect of the Action Plan is, ultimately, the eradication of need for emergency or crisis food provision and the creation of a food environment in all parts of B&NES that can reliably provide nutritious, affordable, socially acceptable and culturally suitable food within easy reach of every community and neighbourhood.
- It is acknowledged that household food insecurity is equitably solved in the longer term, not by the provision of free or affordable food from donated or surplus sources, but through fair and reliable income, solid informal social support networks and the resources to buffer adverse life experiences. As a pragmatic use of available resources in the short to medium term, donated and surplus food sources will be utilised and coordinated alongside a guaranteed connection to financial, social and health care support to address root causes of poverty, social isolation and trauma.
- There is clear synergy here with one of the four pillars of the St John Foundation's goal of 'all children under 12 in B&NES will have access to nutritious food every day'.
- [The Food Foundation's 'Children's Future Food Inquiry'](#) drew evidence from workshops with over 300 children and young people aged 11-16 across the UK. Of the 13 groups who participated, one was in Radstock and the evidence from those B&NES children contributed to this important research.
- An 'Affordable Food Network' group (AFN) will largely oversee this aspect of the Action Plan and membership will include representation from foodbanks, food clubs and pantries, community cafes, surplus food redistribution services, people with responsibility for food related benefits like Free School Meals and Healthy Start.

Aims	Actions	Achieve by (R/A/G rated)	Lead Agency/ Org	Progress update
Provide wrap-around support alongside all provision of food support in the community	Provide clear links for accessing financial guidance and advice at all points of public contact	Ongoing	IMG / AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement from AFN and IMG to pursue production of local version of IFAN's cash-first leaflet (March 2021) • Dissemination of local edition of Clean Slate's Food magazine with detail of local services (Feb 2021)

	Build strong and reciprocal working relationships with the Community Wellbeing Hub	Achieved and Ongoing	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3SG and Wellbeing Hub leads are active members of the FFA and AFN with regular communications with PH team directly and through various forums.
	Provide accessible opportunities to build confidence and skills to budget for, store, cook and grow healthy food	Sep 2021	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Covid restrictions are lifting, projects are planning a return to face-to-face contact which, for many, included cookery and budgeting skills Discussions starting around better connections with AFN and other 'affordable living' projects including furniture and white goods.
	Facilitate the provision of fresh, locally grown fruit and veg via the CropDrop project	Achieved and ongoing	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CropDrop team have put together a comprehensive plan for the 2021 growing season, connecting with more growing sites and recipient projects, and recruiting more volunteer drivers. After sharing the success of the project through Feeding Britain and other networks it is now being replicated in at least five other areas around the country as an example of innovative good practice.
All households with children in B&NES have reliable access to enough nutritious food every day	Identify families at greater risk of food insecurity by reason of low or insecure income, single parenthood, families with three or more children, and families with complex needs	Ongoing	PH / AFN	April 2021 Awaiting update
	Review the complex system of children's food support through the eyes of those families and create clear communications resources that promote all the elements together (e.g.			

	universal and means-tested free school meals, Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins, free prescriptions and dentistry, free fruit and veg in schools, ,voluntary sector community food support projects)	Oct 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation slides prepared to describe the complexity of children's food system (Jan 2021) • Slides included in a presentation to Sustain regional Food Power meeting (March 2021) • Focused work group in process of convening around Healthy Start promotions (April 2021) • This issue be included in presentation to Early Help and Intervention sub-group in May 2021
	Create detail for an action plan to Increase uptake of Free School Meals (to include the needs of rural areas, poverty-proofing schools ¹ and reducing stigma, data collection, school holiday provision, lobbying for universal eligibility if on UC)	Sep 2021	PH / Education - Business Support and inclusion	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update from FSM team indicates frequently turning applications down as the income thresholds are so low and also not being able to process claims in the 5-week wait between UC application and payments starting. Figures requested. Current known uptake of those who are eligible 79% • Agreed to create a 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' audit tool for schools with Public Health Colleagues (CYP Plan).
	Create detail of an action plan to Increase uptake of Healthy Start vouchers (to include the local promotion of digital roll-out, retailer engagement, lobbying for automatic enrolment)	July 2021	PH / Early Help Partnership	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused work group in process of convening around Healthy Start promotion (April 2021)
All households without children in B&NES, who	Identify and build connection with agencies, teams and organisations who already work alongside the following groups of people who	Ongoing	AFN	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEMSCA now represented and active on the AFN

¹ <http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk/>

are experiencing or are at risk of food insecurity are identified and provided with appropriate support to meet their food needs	may be at higher risk of household food insecurity:			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early research into B&NES provision for people with NRPF is being collated • Curo, MIND and Age Concern all invitees to BFFA • AFN members actively working to create relevant wraparound support signposting and referral for the people they work alongside.
	Create a more detailed action plan to address identified food security needs in these groups	Oct 2021	PH	To be progressed
The food retail environment in B&NES prioritises nutritious food that is affordable and accessible to all	Refresh and extend mapping of food retail provision and concentration of hot takeaway food outlets, particularly near to schools and areas where more people live with lower income	Jan 2021	PH	To be progressed
	Ensure mapping illustrates the challenges for rural areas with small pockets of low income and food insecurity	Jan 2021	PH	To be progressed
	Work with the planning teams and PH 'wider determinants of health' to determine how best to use this data to influence future planning policy and practice around food outlets	Jan 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact with PH HIO working on wider determinants of health to understand where this mapping, once refreshed, can be communicated and influential.
Determining access to affordable and nutritious food is a routine element of all health and social care assessments	Gather information on how food insecurity is currently identified in these areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital discharge • Connecting families • Safeguarding • Supported housing • GP – particularly with complex need and chronic conditions 	Sep 2021	PH / AFN / IMG	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial contact made with hospital discharge team. • This issue be included in presentation to Early Help and Intervention sub-group on May 4th • This issue to be included in paper and presentation to H&W PDS panel on May 18th

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help 			
	Create an awareness-raising resource that demonstrates the value to all services of having a focus on food	Oct 2021	PH	To be progressed
	Create detail of an action plan to roll out this resource to all health and social care providers in B&NES	Nov 2021	PH	To be progressed

Data and Communications

Food insecurity is not yet routinely or robustly measured nationally or at Local Authority level yet accurate and updated local data are crucial to identify need, inform the scale and scope of needed interventions and to measure progress.

Aims	Actions	Achieve by	Lead Agency/ Org	Progress
Embed systematic ongoing data collection, reporting and monitoring of food insecurity to maintain the profile of the issue and to measure progress in addressing it locally	Carry out a needs assessment to better understand the scale of the issue locally, who is affected and where there may be gaps in services and/or support	Sep 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial work in early 2020 had largely stalled due to data analytics resources being diverted to Covid-19 work during 2020 and into 2021 New data lead now identified and a meeting set up to re-energise this aspect of work
	Create and keep updated a WIKI page on Food Insecurity for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable access to data	Sep 2021	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above
	Develop local University links to explore development of local research to support our understanding of need locally.	Achieved	PH / Uni of Bath	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-creation of a research proposal was developed through 2020 with Bath Uni researchers. A collaborative application, alongside Cardiff Reading and Hertfordshire University researchers, was submitted in April for substantial research funding through UKRI
	Ensure inclusion of food insecurity questions in annual Voicebox survey to residents	Achieved	PH	April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two questions included in 2020 Voicebox survey and will be repeated in 2021

	Explore ways of developing this data set through systematic data collection across front line services	July 2021		April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New data analysis lead identified
Keep the issues of food insecurity alive for the public and associated professionals & volunteers through a managed programme of communications	Develop a comms plan for the Alliance to support co-ordination of campaigns, information dissemination and awareness raising across agencies and to the public	Oct 2021		April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good comms output to public of AFN activity, holiday FSM cover and launch of B&NES edition of Clean Slate's Food magazine, but as notable activities rather than as part of a defined Comms plan for the work.
	Review name of the Steering Group and working groups to clearly communicate the outcomes the groups would like to see	Achieved		April 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Food Clubs and Pantries Group' renamed the 'Affordable Food Network' (Dec 2020) Food Poverty Steering Group renamed B&NES Fair food Alliance (Feb 2020)
Creation of training and awareness-raising resources	Detail identified in other relevant sections of the plan	Oct-Dec 2021		To be progressed

Abbreviations used in this document:

DWP - Department for Work and Pensions

IMG – Income Maximisation Group

AFN - Affordable Food Network

FB – Feeding Britain

PH – Public Health

WS – Welfare Support

FSM – Free School Meals

FFA - Fair Food Alliance

IFAN – Independent Food Aid Network

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Appendix 1

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Food Poverty Steering Group

Terms of Reference

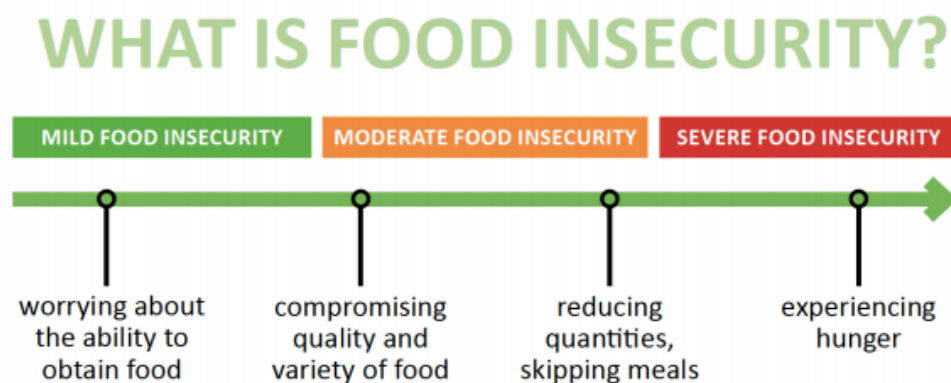
1. Background

The UK pledged in 2015 to end hunger by 2030 as part of its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals which includes a goal *‘to enable access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round’*.¹

Food poverty is defined by the Department of Health and Social Care as ‘the inability to afford, or have reasonable access to, food that makes up a healthy diet.’

Food insecurity is defined as ‘Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g. without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies)’.²

Food insecurity has various degrees of severity. Early stages involve worry about whether there will be enough food, followed by compromising quality, variety and quantity of food. Going without food and experiencing hunger are most severe stages (see Figure below).



B&NES Council passed a motion on Food Poverty on 11th July 2019 requesting:

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>

² While there is not an official government definition of food insecurity used in the UK, this definition is drawn from guidance on measuring food insecurity in the USA and was used for the UK's Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey, 2007
Taken from Food Foundation Report May 2016 Food Insecurity Briefing

- the Children, Adult Health & Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to work with local organisations and develop recommendations for a Food Poverty Action Plan for Bath and North East Somerset; and
- that the Cabinet investigate refreshing the Local Food Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset.

The process for taking forward the development of a Food Poverty Action Plan was agreed with Children, Adult, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel on 28th January 2020. This included the formation of a local steering group to drive the work and support implementation.

2. Principles

The Right to Food

The Right to Food is about ensuring that all people regardless of their gender, race, immigration status or age are able to access food in a dignified way. The United Nations Convention on Human Rights, to which the UK government is a signatory, declares that it is the State that has an obligation to fulfil the right to food.³

The Right to Food is defined by former United Nations Special Rapporteur Jean Ziegler as: “The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.”

The UK has ratified a number of international treaties that refer to the Right to Food and broader socioeconomic rights. These include the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, the convention on the rights of the child and the convention on the rights of people with disabilities.⁴

By adopting this principle, the steering group is looking to raise awareness of the universal right to access food, with the aim of specifically empowering those with lived experience.

Addressing health inequalities

Food poverty disproportionately impacts on women and children and those with long term conditions and disabilities. By developing a food poverty action plan in partnership with a wide range of local stakeholders and partners, we will strengthen collective action to support residents experiencing food poverty and through a focus on preventative action contribute towards addressing health inequalities longer term. It must also be acknowledged that the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic will affect a wider proportion of the population and broaden the profile of those experiencing food poverty in the short to medium term.

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/food/pages/foodindex.aspx>

⁴ https://www.sustainweb.org/resources/files/reports/Why_we_need_the_right_to_food.pdf

Social perspective of poverty

Food poverty is driven by a combination of structural issues relating to the security and cost of housing, quality of employment, adequacy of welfare provision and the cost of living generally.

A social perspective of poverty is concerned with the structures and organisation of society and how it relates to social problems and individual lives, looking at the issue of poverty through the lens of how society is organised rather than a focus solely on individuals' behaviour and choices.

Involving those with life experience

This work will be guided by the meaningful involvement of people with life experience of food insecurity. Those with lived experience will be actively involved at all levels to identify and develop local solutions as well as advocating for longer term sustainable action both locally and nationally.

Community engagement

Engagement with local residents, communities and the 3rd sector is essential to understanding need and developing sustainable solutions to food insecurity. This work will reflect the principles in the Council's Community Engagement Charter.

Safeguarding

This principle relates to our moral duty of care to provide a healthy food system for all.

Future proofing

This means taking into account how local responses to food poverty can be resilient to local, national and global change including the planned transition of residents to Universal Credit, the impact of COVID 19, Brexit and climate change for example.

3. Outcome

The overall aim of this work is to eliminate food poverty and to reduce the numbers of people living in food insecure households in B&NES.

4. Specific aims

Promote dignified access to nutritious and healthy food for all

Ensure the local welfare safety net is clearly defined, promoted, accessible and flexible to varied need and provides sufficient support to those in hardship

Ensure children in B&NES have access to nutritious healthy food 365 days a year (term time/weekends/school holidays)

Increase knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise the key drivers of food insecurity, to enable timely access to self-help, early help and preventative services

Champion the living wage across contractors and local employers including social care, retail and hospitality to contribute to ensuring people can earn a fair income and

Maximise the use of local authority powers and other local levers in tackling food poverty - e.g. boosting welfare support, increasing uptake of free school meals and healthy start vouchers

Align with other key agenda such as climate and nature emergency to ensure food insecurity is central to developing local strategy on food, transport, housing and planning thereby mainstreaming the reduction of food insecurity across a range of strategies and plans

To embed systematic ongoing data collection, reporting and monitoring of food insecurity to maintain the profile of the issue and to measure progress in addressing it locally

Empower local communities to develop local solutions where need is identified

Secure adequate/additional resource and capacity to enable a long-term sustainable approach to this issue locally.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Functions

- To carry out a needs assessment to better understand the scale of the issue locally, who is affected and where there may be gaps in services and/or support
- Assess the impact of current local policy and initiatives on food poverty in B&NES
- To work collaboratively with local stakeholders and communities to identify and embed local sustainable solutions to address food poverty and household food insecurity
- To develop a food poverty action plan for B&NES with a focus on preventative activity
- Involve people with life experience of food insecurity in the strategic work of the group and development of local solutions
- To oversee implementation of the action plan through local partnerships (new or existing)

- To encourage advocacy via community organisations -targeting national policy change by lobbying national government for change.

Roles and responsibilities – From September 9th 2020 a formal partnership agreement is in place with Feeding Britain. As a stipulation in that agreement, any work undertaken by Bath & North East Somerset Food Poverty Steering Group and its individual members will be carried out in line with the relevant policies relating to health and safety, insurance, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, food handling and hygiene, and equality, diversity, and inclusion.

6. Membership

Membership of the group will comprise the following organisations/agencies and representatives from Council departments

Becky Reynolds (Chair)	Consultant in Public Health	Public Health B&NES Council
Angela White (Notes)	Business Support Officer	Public Health B&NES
Cllr Liz Hardman	Paulton	Children, Adult Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel
Cllr Ruth Malloy	Weston	Children, Adult Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel
James Carlin	Director	3SG
Peter Heywood	Chair	Bath Christian Network/Genesis
Grainne Moyer	Bath Food Bank	Genesis
Sam Gillet	Head of Delivery and Impact	St John's
John Thornfield	Charity Funding programme manager	St John's
Les Redwood	CEO	Citizens Advice
Sarah Rogers	Manager	Curo
Nichola Valls	Universal Credit Advisor	Curo
Jane Middleton	Researcher	Bath University
Michelle Jacobs / Sue Deedigan	Head of Contract, Quality and Support / Service Manager	Curo
Janet Dabbs	CEO	Age UK
Julian Mines	CEO	FareShare SW
Susannah Salino	Business Development lead	FareShare SW
Fiona Bell / Joe Lavington / Immi Cory / Sam Rudd	Volunteers	Sustainable Food Partnership / CropDrop
Allison Todd	Co-founder	Mercy in Action
Claire Middlehurst	Future Bright Manager	Economic Development B&NES Council
Simon Graham	Future Bright Coach	B&NES Council
Mike Chedzoy	Manager	Housing Options & Homelessness team B&NES Council
Tracy Pullen	Snr Housing Practitioner	Housing Options & Homelessness team B&NES

		Council
Chris Mordaunt	Manager	Housing Standards and Improvement B&NES Council
Paula Bromley	Service Manager	Connecting Families B&NES Council
Tracey Bidgood	Connecting Families	Team Leader B&NES Council
Heidi Limbert	Manager	Children's Centre Services B&NES Council
Joseph Prince	Insight Manager	Public Health B&NES Council
Adrian Carr	Partnership Manager	DWP
Milly Carmichael	Health Improvement Officer – Food Poverty	Public Health B&NES Council
Cathy McMahon/Sarah Heathcote	Development and commissioning manager	Public Health B&NES Council
Damien Peake	Welfare Support Manager	B&NES Council
Claire Parfitt	Head Teacher	St Martin Gardens School
Lucy Hanney	Food and Health Lead	Virgin Care
Dave Dixon/Sara Dixon	Community Engagement	B&NES Council
Andrew Forsey / Elaine Hanham / Sarah Clark	National Director / Finance officer / Project Manager	Feeding Britain
Megan Mehnert	FOOD Clubs Manager	Family Action
Becca Wilcox	Corporate Sustainability Officer	BANES Corporate Sustainability
Caryl Thomas / Dan Hine	Programme Development Manager / Inclusion Officer	Bath Rugby Foundation
Ed Harker	EYFS Educational Consultant	Brighter Futures
Emma Greenwood	Area Manager – SW England	Trussell Trust
Hatty Richards / Kim Brooks	Farm Engagement Manager / Managing Director	Chew Valley Community Farm
Helen Wright	Manager	Vegan Food Bank
Jenny Wilson	Health Improvement Officer	Public Health
Julian Greaves	Sustainability Manager	Bath Spa University
Jeff Mitchell / Karina Legumi/ Lisa Woodman	Founder & Director / Work Champion / Partnerships Manager	Clean Slate
Dr Lyn Barham	Food Lead	Transition Bath
Ped Asgarian	Director	Feeding Bristol
Teresa Welch	Customer Services Team Leader	Welfare Support
Tracy Pike	CEO	Youth Connect
Wendy Jefferies	LMS and Formula Accountant	Education Business Support (Free School Meals team)

Receiving minutes only

Cllr Rob Appleyard
Cllr Kevin Guy
Jane Wildblood/Micaela Bashford Corporate Sustainability Team

7. Meeting Arrangements

Meetings will be held 4-6 weekly for the first 4 meetings and quarterly from that point.

Meetings will be chaired by Becky Reynolds, Consultant in Public Health, B&NES Council.

Secretariat function will be provided by B&NES Council (resource allowing)

8. Agenda

Agendas shall be developed:

- By discussion amongst the members of the Group
- By requests from individual members of the Group

Accountability

- Update Cabinet Member to Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel after each meeting
- Report 6 monthly to PDS Panel, Children and Adults Health and Well Being
- Report annually to B&NES Council

Date agreed: 4th May 2020
Updates agreed: 12th October 2020
Review date: 3rd May 2021

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Appendix 3

Appendix 3

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Full Council	
MEETING DATE	January 21 st 2021	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E
TITLE:	Food Poverty Action Plan Update	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix 1 B&NES Food Poverty Steering Group Terms of Reference and membership list</p> <p>Appendix 2 Testimonials from families</p> <p>Appendix 3 Draft Food Poverty Action Plan 20/21</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The process for taking forward the development of a Food Poverty Action Plan for B&NES was agreed with the Children, Adult, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel on 28th January 2020. This included the formation of a local Food Poverty Steering Group to drive the work and support implementation of the plan. An update report was taken to the same panel on 14th July 2020. This report provides a further update on progress, local priorities, the evolving action plan and sets out the case to widen the scope of the food agenda for comment and engagement.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to

- 2.1 Consider the information in this report, note the significant developments and progress made. Council is asked to reaffirm its commitment to addressing food poverty as a whole council issue.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 Terminology around this issue is important. The term 'food poverty' is used here to reflect wording in previous reports to Council, however, more fitting terms that reflect our ambition rather than what we intend to eradicate are being explored and will be used in future reports. The term 'household food insecurity' will also be used in this report to describe a situation where people do not have

means to reliably meet their needs for food of sufficient quantity, quality or variety in socially acceptable ways.

3.2 Household food insecurity is a growing national issue and B&NES residents living in areas of high deprivation are increasingly affected. Existing vulnerability has been greatly exacerbated through the past nine months of the coronavirus pandemic. Household food insecurity is a complex issue with three core and closely linked drivers at the household level:

- Insufficient household income to reliably and consistently afford a healthy and nutritious diet for all household members
- Poor networks of informal social support
- Adverse life experiences (job loss, bereavement, relationship breakdown, social exclusion, trauma, poor health etc)

3.3 These key drivers have been exacerbated by a decade of austerity measures that have led to cuts to universal and targeted services, stagnated wage growth and an increase in insecure employment models including zero-hours contracts. Much of the B&NES economy is dependent on the more precarious sectors of food, hospitality and service, and this is coupled with a higher than average cost of living in the area, mainly due to higher housing costs, which can all have a detrimental impact on household income.

3.4 The Food Poverty work in B&NES is led by the public health team and coordinated through by a Health Improvement Officer. The post was recruited as a 0.6 FTE, fixed term contract until July 2021. Recently funding has been secured through the St John's Foundation to extend the post until July 2024.

3.5 The B&NES Food Poverty Steering Group (see Appendix 1 for Terms of Reference) has met five times since its first meeting on 25th March 2020 at the start of the first coronavirus lockdown period. The main focus has been on understanding the challenges emerging for residents in relation to immediate food needs and provision of welfare support. The Steering Group has provided a network for members to share information, co-ordinate activity and both offer and request support. Membership currently stands at over 60 members representing a range of statutory, third sector, education and independent organisations.

As the new and acute needs that emerged through the coronavirus situation subside in coming months, household food insecurity which existed in B&NES prior to the pandemic will require the focused attention of the Steering Group to shift the emphasis of action from crisis intervention to long term solutions to reduce and eradicate household food insecurity.

3.6 Following a presentation by Andrew Forsey, National Director of Feeding Britain¹, the Steering Group formalised its relationship with the Feeding Britain network in September to access the benefits of;

¹ <https://feedingbritain.org/>

- Membership of a growing national network of partnerships around the country from whom we can learn and with whom we can share our own innovation and best practice.
- Support for funding of local projects with experienced bid-writers and possibilities of joint projects to increase traction with funders.
- A direct route of communication to government through the Feeding Britain trustees and their lobbying capacity to take forward aspects of the work that require legislation or national policy change.
- Access to, and possible involvement in the creation of a growing body of credible research into poverty and food insecurity and the complexity of solution-finding.

3.7 The significant increase in demand for support with food and income related issues since March are illustrated with the following figures shared by some of the key partners from the Steering Group:

3.8 From March to September 2020 Universal Credit (UC) claims in B&NES increased from 7500 to 13,660, with the steepest rise between March and May. This also resulted in an increase in children becoming eligible for free school meals (FSM). For the nearly 3000 UC claimants who are aged over 50 it can be more difficult re-enter the Labour Market at their previous pay rate.

3.9 B&NES Welfare Support team awarded grants totalling over £21,000 specifically for food support from April to September 2020. This accounted for around one third of the 1528 grants awarded for crisis financial assistance for that period. The team also provided white goods to the value of £45,000 to residents and made 550 referrals to the area's foodbanks. The Welfare Support team are also managing additional Government funded schemes to:

- (1) relieve Coronavirus-related debt/financial crisis.
- (2) £500 Test and Trace payments for people who have lost income through self-isolation and meet the qualifying criteria.
- (3) support those facing eviction, since the ban on evictions was lifted on 21st September, through the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme.

3.10 By September St. John's Foundation Crisis Fund had benefitted 1149 people through 558 applications and a total of £231,424. White goods and support around food insecurity have featured strongly in the applications. St John's are long-term funders of FareShare South West's work in B&NES and have offered specific support to Julian House and Mercy in Action.

3.11 Citizens Advice (CA) have dealt with over 4500 cases since the first lockdown, predominantly involving benefit claims and significant debt issues.

3.12 Further rises in claimant numbers are expected as furlough schemes come to an end and service, retail, hospitality and entertainment sectors continue to see large numbers of job losses.

- 3.13 The B&NES community response has been broad, diverse, flexible and continues to evolve as the pandemic situation changes and the pre-Covid scale of existing household food insecurity becomes increasingly evident.
- 3.14 In the early stages of the pandemic acute need around food crisis was largely met by increased use of established foodbanks. Across the Southwest region use increased by 124% by April 2020 compared to April 2019.
- 3.15 The broader community response which quickly followed involved the coordination and mobilisation of a large network of businesses, community projects, charities², volunteers and B&NES council teams to safely provide food parcels, chilled / frozen meals and home deliveries to thousands of B&NES residents over the months of Covid-19 restrictions.
- 3.16 That community response, while still very much addressing acute crisis where it arises, has evolved into a growing network of community-based support offering FOOD (Food On Our Doorstep) Clubs, Food Pantries, Community Cafes, Community Fridges, Village Larders and redistribution of locally grown produce from allotments and gardens via an innovative new project called CropDrop. The FOOD Clubs and Pantries run on membership models where households pay a small weekly subscription (around £3.50) to access around £15 worth of varied groceries.
- 3.17 Most of the projects described above are among the 35 charities, schools and children centres who are B&NES members of FareShare Southwest. They provide wholesale food surplus for redistribution to the people engaged with the projects. Nearly 17 tonnes of food, enough for around 40 000 meals, is shared in B&NES every month via FareShare.
- 3.18 All members seek to offer as much wraparound support as possible to help people not only address acute needs and hunger but also the causes of food insecurity to prevent future crisis. This support includes financial guidance, referral and signposting to other services, building social connection and relationships, and practical skills-building around cooking, budgeting and food growing.
- 3.19 The Sustainable Food Partnership and 3SG set up an online Food Finder platform showing which local businesses were offering food deliveries and takeaway during the lockdown.³
- 3.20 John Thornfield, Funding manager at St John's Foundation, shared his feedback on perceptions of the work in B&NES to address food poverty and how it is being coordinated:

“Looking more widely at themes, our conversations with the likes of FareShare and Feeding Britain, indicate that B&NES is an exceptionally well-coordinated locality with a strong emerging strategy around food insecurity. With a proactive local authority public health team working in close alignment with a major local funder in St John's and an influential national player in Feeding Britain, allied to the good work

²Charities and community groups include Mercy in Action, Oasis, Bath City Farm, Southside Family Project, Bath Area Play Project, Food Cycle, Age UK, BEMSCA, Community at 67, Youth Connect, Square Hot Meal and Sporting Family Change

³ <http://banesfoodfinder.org.uk/>

emerging from 3SG and the wider Community Wellbeing Hub, we feel very confident in the progress that is being made”

- 3.21 **Funding** Support for this network has been strengthened by a combined Holiday Food Grant Programme of £30K from Feeding Britain and St John's Foundation over the summer. There was a further £50K fund from public donations initiated by Wera Hobhouse MP and a generous single business donation, distributed through 3SG and administered through the St John's Foundation in October.
- 3.22 Schools have worked hard to identify and connect with their more vulnerable families to offer additional support including the technical support required to access vouchers and provision of food parcels and home delivery as needed. Many have reported that this new route to connecting with families has had a positive effect on the relationship between families and the school. This is echoed in the testimonials of families supported by voluntary sector projects too (see Appendix 2).
- 3.23 The national Free School Meal voucher system over the summer holidays saw families with children eligible for free school meals (FSM) receive vouchers worth £90 to cover the 6-week period. We know this was not sufficient to meet all need and there are other families who fall outside of eligibility criteria but still have very low incomes and need additional support.
- 3.24 The government Covid Winter Grant Scheme which began early December 2020 has largely been directed to fund a locally administered voucher system, arranged through Education Business Support and Welfare Support to provide for all children eligible for FSM and those in early years who fulfil the eligibility criteria for FSM. Between the 8th and 29th December, the Welfare Support team issued vouchers in respect of more than 3,700 children in B&NES. The vouchers will cover the Christmas holiday and a similar exercise will be conducted for the February half term period. The remaining funding will be accessible to other households in need of support through application to Welfare Support services.
- 3.25 Further government funding, through an extended Holiday Activities and Food programme will cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays in 2021. The value of that grant is not yet known.
- 3.26 The £20 a week uplift in Universal Credit value from early April is likely to have been an important driver in keeping emergency food needs from spiralling as the pandemic progressed. It will be important to consider and prepare for the potential impact on demand when the uplift ends in April 2021.

4 FOOD POVERTY ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 Proposed priorities for action, drawn from discussions with Steering group members, have been incorporated into an evolving action plan (see Appendix 3). Delivery of these actions is led by three task groups to guide and develop the work and report back to the Steering Group.
- 4.2 The task groups are:
- Income Maximisation

- Food for All
- Hear My Voice

- 4.3 The **Income Maximisation** group is chaired by St John's Foundation and has representation including DWP, DHI, Welfare Support, Citizen's Advice, Age UK, CleanSlate, and Curo. A key purpose is sharing information and best practice across B&NES so people can be confident of a consistent response when approaching any member organisation for support and advocacy around financial issues including benefits advice, debt solutions, household budget management or employment / enterprise support.
- 4.4 The **Food for All** theme is currently focused around two key projects; developing an Affordable Food Network of free and affordable food projects, and supporting the development of CropDrop, a volunteer-led initiative to redistribute locally grown allotment produce to the projects in that network. Both are seeking to build resilient and forward-thinking resources for local communities to alleviate and prevent ongoing food insecurity and help people make stronger and more meaningful personal connections with sources of healthy locally grown food.
- 4.5 The **Hear My Voice** theme is taking shape through work with both Bath University and Bath Spa researchers to carry out initial exploratory local research, with people with life experience of household food insecurity and any agencies with whom they are already closely engaged. This will inform funding applications for more significant pieces of research.
- 4.6 Both Universities are also examining their own contribution to the local food economy and how food insecurity may impact their own staff and students. This involves exploration of the impact of their own procurement and use of food, considerations around being a Real Living Wage⁴ employer and supporting students on low incomes who may be affected by the issues directly.
- 4.7 The key areas around Data and Communications are currently co-ordinated by Public Health with support from Steering Group members.
- 4.8 In order to address key drivers relating to poor social networks and adverse life experiences we are actively engaging with existing partnerships such as, B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) and the Early Help and Compassionate Communities partnerships.
- 4.9 B&NES Renewal Board have agreed for public health to lead on the development of an integrated strategy on obesity, physical activity and food in 2021. The prevention and mitigation of the effects of food poverty is best addressed at a systemic level and the food elements of the new integrated strategy will link to the wider sustainable food agenda. Alongside this a commitment by the Council to sign and implement the Healthy Weight Declaration⁵ (HWD) would further help to support work around household food security.

5 WIDER LOBBYING AND CROSS-STRATEGY WORKING

⁴ www.livingwage.org.uk

⁵ <https://foodactive.org.uk/what-we-do/influence-policy/local-authority-declaration-on-healthy-weight/>

5.1 Wera Hobhouse MP has agreed to champion the National Food Strategy recommendations, as they impact on household food insecurity, in Parliament. These are to:

- (1) Expand eligibility for the Free School Meal scheme to include every child (up to the age of 16) from a household where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefits.
- (2) Extend the Holiday Activity and Food Programme to all areas in England, so that summer holiday support is available to all children in receipt of free school meals. (Funding has been agreed to extend this scheme from April 2021).
- (3) Increase the value of Healthy Start vouchers to £4.25 per week, and expand the scheme to every pregnant women and to all households with children under 4 where a parent or guardian is in receipt of universal Credit of equivalent benefit (The value of the vouchers will increase from April 2021).

5.2 Our Steering Group members are also encouraged to provide data and testimony to support the national lobbying by Public Health England, Sustain and Feeding Britain on wider associated issues of food policy and welfare provision.

5.3 It is crucial that B&NES not be drawn into the rising global pattern of ‘solving’ household food insecurity with the equally problematic overproduction of food; endemic in our industrialised food supply chain which creates a great deal of surplus⁶. Food waste isn’t accidental or unavoidable– it is an intrinsic and necessary part of our current industrial, commodified food system. Household food insecurity is rooted in social and economic inequality and it is this which creates the barriers to and availability of sufficient sources of healthy food. We must de-couple these two problems rather than use them each to mitigate the other and, consequently, serve to perpetuate them both.

B&NES should continue to take a whole Council approach, considering the potential contribution each department and team can make to the eradication of food poverty locally and linking with work on wider sustainable food systems.

6 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 By developing a Food Poverty Action Plan, B&NES Council, in partnership with a wide range of local stakeholders and partners, will strengthen collective action to:

- (1) support residents experiencing or at risk of household food insecurity and
- (2) through a focus on preventative action contribute towards minimising health inequalities longer term.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

7.1 No additional resource implications at present.

7.2 The Health Improvement Officer role within the public health team will be supported beyond the current contract by St. John's Foundation funding.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

9 EQUALITIES

9.1 Household food insecurity can be a very dynamic experience and is something that can affect anyone; individual circumstances can change rapidly as this year particularly has demonstrated. Research shows however, that some sections of the community can be particularly vulnerable to experiencing food poverty. Following discussions with the Council's Equalities Team the Food Poverty Steering Group will collaboratively complete an Equality Impact Assessment in order to:

- consider how our local action plan is targeting support to the most vulnerable groups in our area
- highlight and address barriers that some groups might face in accessing support

10 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 This work has the potential to contribute to achievement of carbon neutrality as part of a wider focus on food in B&NES which aims to reduce food waste and increase access to fresh, seasonal, local produce. Work is in progress to forge meaningful links between the work around food poverty and wider cross-departmental work in the Council in relation to addressing the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis, sustainable food, minimising over purchasing, better use, local food production, and soil health.

11 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 None

12 CONSULTATION

12.1 Information in this report has been provided by members of the Food Poverty Steering Group and the draft action plan is a product of discussions and consultation with group members and other stakeholders since March 2020.

12.2 This report has been approved by the S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer

Contact person	Milly Carmichael@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 394058 Sarah Heathcote@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 394455
Background papers	Children, Adult, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel 14th July 2020

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Appendix 4 – Case Study

Oasis Pantry opened in September 2021, to fulfil a growing need for long term access to low cost, high quality food. This need had been identified through a number of different channels, including the long term holiday hunger project run by Oasis (Make Lunch), which developed from bi-weekly clubs with enrichment and hot meals in every school holiday to the delivery of weekly food parcels for 19 weeks due to Covid-19 as 70% of our Make Lunch families reported difficulties affording food directly as a result of Covid. However, this model did nothing to support people to move on from that point of crisis, and so we opened the pantry to support people to find a way to stay out of crisis situations through signposting to other services while reducing pressure on their budget.

Our members

Our membership is around 80 active members, and on average around 40 attend on any given week. Reasons for membership are varied: some members have joined because of the impact of Covid on their household situation and finances, eg. because someone in the household has been furloughed or made redundant, or because they don't qualify for any of the support measures put in place; 60% of members are unemployed long term; nearly 20% have experienced domestic abuse and two thirds are supported by support workers.

Our members predominantly live within walking distance of Oasis, however several travel from further away because we are the closest pantry they qualify for.

Our partnerships

We have established strong partnerships with several local charities and agencies. We receive referrals from the Wellbeing Hub, along with other organisations such as DHI, Genesis, Julian House, Foodcycle, Bath Mind, Reach and HomeGroup.

We are part of the Affordable Food Network which has proven to be invaluable in developing both the pantry membership and the pantry offer, eg through connecting us with potential suppliers, highlighting funding opportunities, connecting us with groups able to support our wrap-around care and signposting offer. We've been able to extend our immediate network and work more closely with other local charities, and have particularly benefitted from this group's association with Feeding Britain.

What's the impact of the Pantry?

In these exceptional times, with the uncertainty of income from my self-employed work, and as a single parent, I have found the Oasis Pantry a lifeline and fantastic service. A service that, if it didn't exist, I would struggle to put nutritious food on the table for my family. I don't know what I would do without the Pantry. I am so very grateful to the team that make this happen.

I'm a domestic abuse survivor and have 2 young children. My benefits were stopped by mistake and I started to struggle to make ends meet. The Pantry has been a life saver over this period as I've been able to get nutritious food at a fraction of the usual price. The extra support over Christmas was amazing too and the presents we received really made the day.

Julian House supported housing team leader said this: *It's been fantastic. Clients may sometimes rely on foodbank and that can become a dependency. There's no shame attached, they are having an experience of going shopping, and choosing their food, not receiving a handout. That*

transactional relationship is really important because it requires commitment. There's not a sense of entitlement - there's a sense of gratitude.

Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING	Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Panel
MEETING DATE:	15th June 2021
TITLE:	Adoption West Scrutiny Panel Annual Report
WARD:	All
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Adoption West Annual Report AW Appendix1 TOR AW Appendix2 AW Appendix3 Forward Work Programme	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 To consider the annual report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Adoption West.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

2.1 Note the annual report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Adoption West

2.2 Invite areas of focus for the scrutiny panel in 2021-22

2.3 Suggest the contents that should be included in the scrutiny panel's annual report in future; and any comments on formatting the information for ease of reading.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency and was formed in March 2019. Scrutiny arrangements are not required for a regional adoption agency, but it was felt that this would be good practice, so a scrutiny panel was formed in 2020, and comprises councillors from all 6 Local Authorities that form the adoption agency, which are Bath & NE Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

3.2 There are close links between Adoption West and B&NES Children's Social Care. Mary Kearney-Knowles , Director Children's Services and Education

represents B&NES at Board level and attend quarterly Adoption West Board Meetings. The Adoption West Board has responsibility for, organisational strategy, financial oversight, performance and risk management, policies and procedures of the Regional Adoption Agency. The Scrutiny panel's meeting schedule mirrors the board meetings.

- 3.3 Rachael Ward, Head of Service: Care Outcomes, is vice chair for the Leads Meeting. This takes place bi-monthly and involves all 6 LAs and senior representatives from Adoption West. The meetings provide a strategic overview across all LAs of the work and developments within Adoption West. A key area of work is to ensure quality, consistently and equality in service.
- 3.4 Alongside this, the LA also meets quarterly with Adoption West to consider B&NES specific issues at a strategic level. These meetings aim to ensure that shared policies and practice are effective and also identifies any areas of development. This meeting is attended by Heads of Service, Team Managers and Adoption West.
- 3.5 The Head of Service also chairs a bi-monthly Tracker Meeting in which individual children with a plan for adoption, or potential plan of adoption, are considered in detail. This meeting ensures that there is no drift or delay in achieving permanence for children and explores operational aspects of service delivery. It is felt that this approach provides the LA with oversight of both operational practice and strategic work in B&NES.

3.6 Numbers adopted BANES in 2020/2021:

- (1) 12 Orders granted
- (2) 16 Adoption Orders

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 An Adoption West and Local Authority Partner Relationship document describes the relationship between BANES, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Councils and Adoption West in relation to governance and operational practice. The successful delivery of adoption services by Adoption West and the local authorities will be dependent on a high level of joint working and clear lines of communication between the six LAs and Adoption West managers and staff at all levels of service delivery.
- 4.2 As a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) it is also subject to an Ofsted inspection of arrangements.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 Adoption West is expected to deliver its range of services within the agreed budget. The resources and budget amount was agreed when Adoption West was created. The expenditure is monitored on a quarterly basis at Board level, and Adoption West's budget is appraised annually with the involvement of each Local Authorities' Finance Manager. Additional cost pressures/service developments need to be presented by Adoption West and taken through the individual 6 Local Authorities' Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) process. The scrutiny papers indicate that there may be some financial pressure.

emerging in relation to the post adoption offer. This will be fed into the MTFP for BANES for consideration for 2022/2023.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An EIA has not been carried out on this report

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic Adoption West's scrutiny panel have moved to online meetings, which has cut down on the need for travel. The intention is to continue this and have only one in-person meeting per year.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 This report has been reviewed with the Local Authority Finance Manager that supports Adoption West.

Contact person	Michelle O'Doherty 07748 787654
Background papers	None
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Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel

2020-2021 Annual report



*"sometimes superheroes
reside in the hearts of
children fighting huge battles"*



Bath & North East
Somerset Council



Wiltshire Council



Foreword by the chair of Adoption West Board

Although the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel does not fall under the banner of 'Overview and Scrutiny' as defined by the Local Government Act 2000, it clearly still provides a needed and valued scrutiny function, as evidenced in its first annual report.

The scrutiny arrangements as described in the terms of reference were thoroughly reviewed by each local authority and unanimously agreed by the Adoption West Board.

There is a strong belief, shared by the overview and scrutiny councillors involved at the time the panel was first thought of, and members of the Adoption West Board that more and better can be achieved through this joint approach; more depth to the joint scrutiny as it benefits from each local authority's councillor representative's skills, knowledge and input, better use of the finite time available to Adoption West's management to meaningfully engage with independent scrutiny of the Regional Adoption Agency's work.

I have no doubt that members of the joint scrutiny panel have been on a very steep learning curve in this first year, but I can also see that they have engaged with enthusiasm and really committed to developing their knowledge and understanding of Adoption West and its work, which I feel will be even further supported by developing the membership of the panel.

Looking at the joint scrutiny panel's forward work programme, I see a busy year ahead! It will be particularly interesting for the Adoption West Board to see the outcome of the review of adoption support and the review of the evaluation of the Regional Adoption Agencies.

I am also pleased to see that a key area of work for the panel in 2021-22 will be to work with all six local authorities to develop a process to ensure that reporting on adoption is co-ordinated as best as possible.

Much of my work over the past 15 years has been in building and sustaining partnerships and strategic relationships, so it is naturally important for me that there is a clear line of sight between the joint arrangements and local scrutiny functions and that the Adoption West Board remains open to enhancing those links as we move forward, albeit without creating parallel or duplicate processes.

As chair of the Adoption West Board, I am looking forward to engaging with the joint scrutiny panel in the year ahead to carry on developing robust and effective oversight and scrutiny of the work and management of Adoption West, whilst ensuring it remains an independent and democratically-led scrutiny process.

Andy Dempsey

Director of Partnerships and Strategy, Gloucestershire County Council

Chair of the Adoption West Board of Directors

Foreword from the chairman of the scrutiny panel

Right from when the plans were first spoken of for the new Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption West, it was my strong personal belief that any new body should include an effective overview and scrutiny involvement provision, and I could not have wished for it to go any better than it has for its first year (2020-21).

The panel members have seen real commitment and willingness to learn from the scrutiny panel's input from all six Local Authorities and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their engagement with this work.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the panel who have demonstrated a keen interest in the issues we have addressed and a willingness to learn and participate. I would especially thank Alana Buckingham, the chair of the Adoption West Adoption Advisory Board, who recently joined the scrutiny panel. There is incredible value in bringing in the voice of people for whom adoption is a day-to-day reality, not just a data-set. There are further ambitions for the scrutiny panel to develop its membership to include representatives from the "adoption triangle" (e.g. adoptive parent, adopted young person, adopted adults, birth family member, etc.) and I dare say this would bring invaluable strength and depth to the scrutiny panel's work.

I am pleased that Adoption West recognised the benefits that come from scrutiny by lay members and the value that can be added, and committed to openness and transparency. As a scrutiny panel, we have seen this at every meeting through the cooperation and engagement from Alison Lewis, Service Director for Adoption West. The scrutiny panel would like to recognise Alison's commitment to this process, but furthermore her evident commitment to adoption and making Adoption West a success – for the right reasons!

May 2021 elections notwithstanding, I believe there is great work to be achieved by the scrutiny panel and a key piece of work for 2021 could be the review of adoption support. I believe this is an area of work where the scrutiny panel could add so much, by reviewing support offers across the country and helping create a clearer picture of the support that would be most beneficial for families supported by Adoption West.

I'll conclude with a wish. I hope the work of the scrutiny panel will carry on improving, for all councillors in all six Local Authorities, their understanding of the importance of Adoption West and the role it plays in the adoption journey, but never forgetting that adoption remains an integral part of all our Children's Services.

I wish that in time this scrutiny panel is seen as a natural extension of the overview and scrutiny we all undertake of our Children's Services.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Wiltshire Council

Chair of the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel (2020-2021)

Purpose of the report

1. This report is written to:
 - a. publicly present the work undertaken by the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel (thereafter referred to as the “scrutiny panel”) from May 2020 to March 2021 to the following committees:
 - Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel, Bath and North East Somerset Council
 - People Scrutiny Commission, Bristol City Council
 - Children and Family Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Gloucestershire County Council
 - Children and young people’s services policy and scrutiny panel, North Somerset Council
 - Scrutiny Commission, South Gloucestershire Council
 - Children’s Select Committee, Wiltshire Council
 - b. enable the Adoption West (AW) Board to monitor the efficiency of the scrutiny panel.
 - c. invite suggestions from the scrutiny committees (as listed in a. above) and the AW board on:
 - areas of focus for the scrutiny panel in 2021-22;
 - the contents that should be included in the scrutiny panel’s annual report in future; and
 - formatting and presentation of the information to ensure ease of reading for future reports.

Background

2. Adoption West (AW) started operating on 1 March 2019, as a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) created by Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Wiltshire Council as a response to the government’s plans, published in June 2015, to regionalise adoption services across England and Wales.
3. Adoption West is a local authority trading company which is owned by the six local authorities and commissioned by them to provide adoption services. Adoption West is registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency. Further information can be found on its [website](#).
4. The primary aim of this regionalisation was to deliver an adoption service which offer improved outcomes for both children and those who want to adopt.
5. The scrutiny panel (Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel) has been created to act as a critical friend, providing independent scrutiny of the work of AW and

making constructive recommendations to ensure that AW meets its performance targets and expectations. The terms of reference for the scrutiny panel are included as Appendix 1.

6. The scrutiny panel is an essential element of assuring democratic accountability for the use of public funds; although it does not fall under the banner of 'Overview and Scrutiny' as defined by the Local Government Act 2000 in that it is not a body jointly formed by the six participating councils.
7. The scrutiny panel reports directly to the AW Board. The AW board will monitor the efficiency of the scrutiny panel, including through this annual report.

Membership

Elected Voting Member

Cllr Michelle O'Doherty, Bath and North East Somerset Council
 Cllr Carole Johnson, Bristol City Council
 Cllr Dr Andrew Miller (Vice Chairman), Gloucestershire County Council
 Cllr Wendy Griggs, North Somerset Council
 Cllr Nic Labuschagne, South Gloucestershire Council
 Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Wiltshire Council
 Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Wiltshire Council

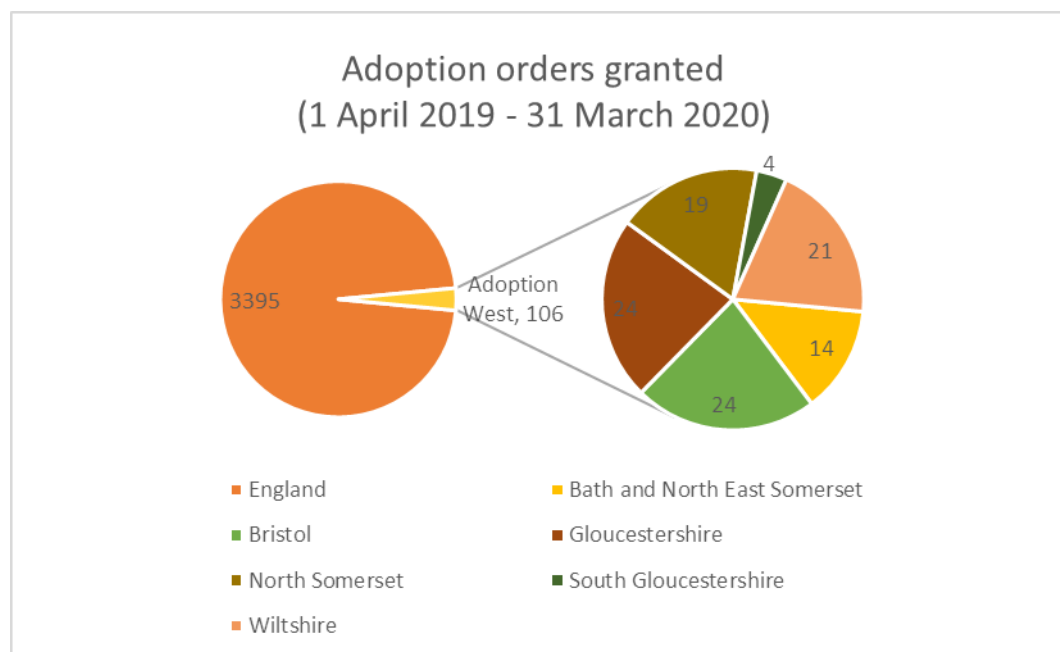
Advisor (non-voting)

Alana Buckingham, Chair of Adoption West Adopter Advisory Board, Adoption UK

Snapshot

	Looked after children (as at 31 March 2020)	Number of children adopted (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020)	Adoptions as % of average number of Children Looked After between 2016 and 2019
	<i>(per 10,000 children and young people)</i>		
Bath and North East Somerset	181 (50)	14 (4)	22.58%
Bristol	623 (66)	24 (3)	10.72%
Gloucestershire	731 (57)	24 (2)	15.02%
North Somerset	230 (53)	19 (5)	17.70%
South Gloucestershire	210 (35)	4 (<1)	11.11%
Wiltshire	458 (43)	21 (2)	20.53%

Number of Adoption West children adopted - within a national context



Work undertaken

8. Between May 2020 and January 2021, the scrutiny panel held four meetings (virtual meetings to comply with Covid-19 regulations).
9. From the time the scrutiny panel was created, it was accepted that its first year would be a steep learning curve for its members as the world of adoption is often shrouded in mystery or media and movie-led misconceptions for anyone but those either working in that field or personally touched by adoption.
10. It was therefore also accepted that a significant portion of its work, in the first year, would be gathering knowledge and developing an understanding of both adoption and the implementation of the RAAs (regional adoption agencies).

May 2020 meeting - Understanding “Adoption West”

11. At its first meeting the scrutiny panel reviewed the process that led to the establishment of AW, AW’s purpose, structure and current governance.
12. The scrutiny panel also established which elements of the adoption process were within its remit, as each Local Authority retains responsibility for the permanence planning for looked after children and continues to report to Government on performance in that area. Appendix 2 illustrates the split of responsibility between AW and the local authorities.

13. Finally, the scrutiny panel focused on performance monitoring by considering the October 2019 to March 2020 6-months performance report for AW, as well as the Scorecard data for 2015-2018.

14. The scrutiny panel resolved that some of the priorities identified by AW would also be areas of focus for its work:

- Adopter sufficiency (also a national focus) – having the right number of adopters, but also adopters matching the children awaiting adoption (e.g., sibling groups, older children, BAMES (black, Asian, and minority ethnic), etc.);
- Adoption support - developing clearer adoption support that engages with families as early as possible (rather than at crisis point) and with a focus on preventative actions.

July 2020 – performance monitoring

15. The scrutiny panel considered both the AW annual report (2019-20) and development plan (January-March 2020).

16. The scrutiny panel suggested a number of additions to the AW annual report to enable easier and more robust comparison of data (either against national figures, with statistical neighbours or for “year on year” comparison).

November 2020 – performance monitoring and reporting

17. The scrutiny panel focused its third meeting on understanding the performance monitoring process followed by AW. This included finding out what data is collected, how it is collected, who it is reported to, and how AW compares nationally (RAA scorecards).

18. The scrutiny panel also reviewed performance monitoring reports previously taken to each of the local authorities forming AW, to consider how this can best be undertaken to develop consistency across AW members.

19. The scrutiny panel resolved to consult with officers in each of the local authority to develop a common “core” report template, which each authority could then expand upon to include information that may be specific to that authority, for processes within adoption that remain the responsibility of the local authorities (Appendix 2 refers).

20. Developing a common template as described in the above paragraph remains an area of work for the scrutiny panel; it is also hoped that the pattern / timing of reporting to each authority could be aligned to ensure that all information on adoption is presented in / around May to all local authorities forming AW, including:

- Local authority’s performance report with regards to adoption;
- AW’s annual report;
- This scrutiny panel’s annual report.

21. This would ensure consistency across AW members, which in turn would enable robust year on year performance monitoring and more robust scrutiny of adoption performance by having all relevant information available at the same time (enabling triangulation of evidence).

January 2021 - performance monitoring and adopters' views

22. At its January 2021 meeting, the scrutiny panel considered the April to September 2020 AW's report and made recommendations on content to be included to ensure that effective scrutiny could be carried out (e.g., identifying trends, including comparator data, etc.); although it was recognised, and appreciated, that earlier recommendations made by the scrutiny panel on the format and contents of the AW's reports had been integrated in this report.
23. The scrutiny panel also considered the Adoption UK Adoption Barometer (2020) which offered an insight into the issues faced by adoptive families and how they were feeling with regards to processes and support offered to them.
24. The scrutiny panel noted that adoptive families reported increasing difficulties in adolescence and early adulthood and resolved to focus some of its work on this area (support for adolescent and young adults) in 2021-22. Adoption UK would focus some of its 2021 Adoption Barometer survey on the same topic.
25. The panel then considered this annual report and funding arrangements and resolved to develop its working relationship with AW Board in 2021-22.

Covid-19 impact

26. At each meeting throughout the year the scrutiny panel monitored the measures put in place to comply with government's guidelines with regards to Covid-19, whilst enabling delivery of services.
27. The scrutiny panel would like to express its recognition of the work undertaken by AW officers to ensure that after an initial (and understandable) short period of delays (March to May 2020), services have carried on being delivered at a high standard and with minimum delays.
28. It was also noted that AW had made the decision to maintain its quoracy for its adoption panels, wherever possible, which the scrutiny panel felt demonstrated a commitment to quality, and AW quickly implemented and supported online meetings to avoid delays in the adoption panels work.

Ambitions for 2021-2022

29. There were a number of membership changes before the third meeting of the scrutiny panel, and with three of the local authorities within AW holding elections in May 2021, there could be a further significant change in membership.

30. This reinforces the scrutiny panel's commitment to developing its membership to include up to five stakeholders within the "adoption triangle", such as (but not limited to) adoptive parent, adopted young person, adopted adult, birth family member. This would have the dual benefit of deepening the scrutiny panel's understanding of adoption and, hopefully, enable continuity of work through continuity of membership.
31. Having developed an understanding of both adoption and Adoption West over its first year, the scrutiny panel has set its work for 2021-2022 (Appendix 3 – forward work programme). Significant changes of membership could make it difficult for the scrutiny panel to complete its forward work programme (as new members would likely need time to develop their understanding of adoption and Adoption West).
32. A key area of work for the panel in 2021-22 will be to work with all six local authorities to develop a process to ensure that reporting on adoption is co-ordinated as best as possible to enable robust scrutiny (paragraphs 21 to 25 refer).

Conclusion

33. The establishment of the joint scrutiny panel itself is an achievement for 2020-21 and reflects the commitment from the AW Board and from each local authority within AW to independent, and democratically led, scrutiny of the use of public funds.

Proposal

For the scrutiny committees (as listed in paragraph 1.a. above) and the AW board to:

34. Note the annual report 2020-21 of the scrutiny panel and make suggestion on contents to be included for future annual reports, and formatting and presentation of the annual report to ensure ease of reading;
35. Note the forward work programme for the scrutiny panel for 2021-22 (Appendix 3) and suggest any amendments or additional areas of focus for the scrutiny panel in 2021-22;

For the scrutiny committees (as listed in paragraph 1.a. above) to note that:

36. The scrutiny panel would like to invite all councillors to read the Adoption Barometer 2020 to gain some understanding of the difficulties and issues faced by adoptive families, as this is likely to inform the support offered, and financed, by adoption agencies (including AW). The Adoption Barometer 2020 can be accessed here, alongside information on the 2019 and 2021 surveys: [Adoption Barometer](#).

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Wiltshire Council, Chairman of the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Committee

Date of report: 11 March 2021

Report author: Marie Gondlach, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Wiltshire Council

Appendices

Appendix 1 – terms of reference of the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel

Appendix 2 – Split of responsibilities between Regional Adoption Agency and Local Authority

Appendix 3 – forward work programme

Adoption West – Joint Scrutiny Panel

Terms of Reference

General

1. These terms of reference set out the membership, remit, responsibilities and reporting arrangements of the Adoption West (AW) Joint Scrutiny Panel (also referred to as the panel in this document).

Background

2. Following the general election in May 2015 and the publication of 'Regionalising Adoption' (July 2015), in which the government set out their proposals to move to Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) by the end of the Parliament in 2020, AW was formed and started operating on 1 March 2019.
3. AW is a RAA commissioned to deliver adoption services by six local authorities:
 - a. Bath and North East Somerset Council
 - b. Bristol City Council
 - c. Gloucestershire County Council
 - d. North Somerset Council
 - e. South Gloucestershire Council
 - f. Wiltshire Council
4. AW is a company limited by guarantee and is registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA).
5. The respective Directors of Children Services for the six local authorities are the registered owners of the company with ultimate responsibility for organisational performance and appointment / dismissal of directors, which they discharge to the AW Board (see Appendix 1 - AW governance structure).
6. There are a number of documents underpinning the operating of AW, including:
 - a. A Members' Agreement, which clearly sets out the purpose of the collaboration, assigns roles and responsibilities to each of the participating authorities and deals with governance and issues such as dispute resolution;
 - b. Commissioning agreement.
7. Service delivery is defined by a contract that sets out specific performance measures and the reporting requirements of the RAA.
8. The service operates from three hub premises, each comprising a multidisciplinary team of recruitment, assessment, matching and support staff. There is one Adoption / Permanence Panel (see Appendix 2 - AW structure chart).

Effective scrutiny

9. The Centre for Public Scrutiny has previously identified four Effective Scrutiny Principles, in that it:
 - a. Provides critical friend challenge to decision-makers;
 - b. Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
 - c. Is carried out by independent minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
 - d. Drives improvement in public services.
10. Some key concepts for the panel to consider are that scrutiny should:
 - a. Be independent of the AW Board;
 - b. Be inclusive, structured, non-adversarial and cross-party;
 - c. Offer constructive challenge to prompt AW Board reflection;
 - d. Make recommendations which are evidence based;
 - e. Be part of a wider web of accountability, which may include partners and the public;
 - f. Not unnecessarily duplicate other assurance activity;
 - g. Be appropriately challenging and use effective questioning techniques;
 - h. Ensure value for money; and
 - i. Provide high levels of assurance.

Purpose of the AW Joint Scrutiny Panel

11. It should be noted that the AW Joint Scrutiny Panel does not fall under the banner of 'Overview and Scrutiny' as defined by the Local Government Act 2000 in that it will not be a body jointly formed by the six participating councils. Although it will not have the power to call in a decision or summon officers to attend, the panel will still provide a scrutiny function led predominantly by democratically elected councillors.
12. It should also be noted that as part of the division of roles between AW and the local authorities, each local authority has retained case management responsibility for the child until the making of the Adoption Order. The local authorities remain responsible for all statutory functions including but not limited to: Statutory Visits, Management and supervision of contact between child and family members, Supervision, administration and finance of foster placements and communication with foster carers (including Fostering for Adoption placements).
These responsibilities will be monitored by each local authority through its chosen scrutiny mechanism, although the panel will make every effort to notify a local authority if issues within the local authority's responsibility are identified by the panel.
13. The panel will act as a critical friend, providing independent scrutiny of the work of AW. It is an essential element of assuring democratic accountability for the use of public funds.

14. The objective of the panel is to make constructive recommendations to ensure that AW meets its performance targets and expectations. The focus of the panel will be on the Region (not each individual local authority – *paragraph 11 refers*) and members of the panel will work in partnership to focus on performance for the Region overall.
15. The role of the panel is to enhance good decision-making process and it will be able to make recommendations for improvement and make its conclusions public but will not have the power to delay decision-making by AW.
16. Through the panel, and its annual report, each local authority will have an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to democratically-led scrutiny of AW, without duplicating the workload for either officers or elected members for the six local authorities. It is therefore expected that each local authority would commit to engaging with the work of the panel, either as elected councillor(s) on the panel or as witnesses attending meeting of the panel to provide requested information and answer questions.

Responsibilities

17. The panel will foster and encourage an inclusive, structured, non-partisan and non-adversarial approach which is reliant on evidence rather than anecdote, to perform all scrutiny function on behalf of the Region in respect of AW.
18. The panel will produce an annual report for the AW Board, which will also be presented to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or any other Committee the local authority has chosen to review the work of the panel, for each of the authorities by its councillor representative on the panel and, if required, its officer representative on the AW Board.

AW Joint Scrutiny Panel membership

19. Membership: The panel will have a membership of a maximum of 14, made up of:

- a. 7 non-executive councillors: 1 from each local authority + 1 chair;
- b. Up to 6 stakeholders within the “adoption triangle”, such as (but not limited to) adoptive parent, adopted young person, adopted adults, birth family member, etc.

Consideration will have to be given to a balance between the different roles, as well as geographical representation of the Region;

- c. The chair of the Adoption Advisory Board (AAB) will be appointed as advisor to the panel, to regularly inform the committee of the work undertaken by the AAB, as well as share relevant feedback from adopters collected through AAB’s engagement activities.

No substitutions are permitted for the panel. Members of the panel will gain an in-depth understanding over a series of meetings before reaching conclusions and it would therefore be difficult (and potentially disruptive) for a new member to enter the arena partway through the process.

20. Appointment: the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or any other committee the local authority has chosen to review the work of the panel) for each authority will appoint its respective non-executive councillor(s). The panel will invite applications from stakeholders and appointments will be made by the Chair of the Panel in consultation with the AW Service Director.
21. Term of office: each non-executive councillor will be appointed for 2 years, and consideration should be given to local election patterns where appropriate. Stakeholders will also be appointed for an initial period of 2 years from the date of joining the panel.
22. Chair: the chair will be a non-executive councillor elected by the panel on a 2-year rotating basis, at the panel's discretion.
Once a chair has been elected by the panel, the local authority the chair of the panel belongs to will be invited to appoint a further non-executive councillor to the panel. The Chair of the panel will act solely in the interest of the Region and focus on the role of chair, whereas the second non-executive councillor will represent his or her local authority and undertake associated reporting duties.
- The panel will appoint a chair from its first meeting until May 2021. After May 2021 the chair will be appointed for a 2-year period. This is designed to avoid conflicts with local election patterns and to allow some continuity for membership of the panel.
23. The Chair has the following duties:
- a) To have a holistic view of performance for the whole Region and to act on behalf of the Region;
 - b) To work with the AW Service Director to develop an Annual Work Programme for the panel, having regard to the advice of support officers
 - c) To set the Agendas for meetings, having regard to the advice of the AW Service Director and of support officers;
 - d) To ensure that the panel's annual report is presented to each relevant committee for each local authority, or delegate representation to another member of the panel where required;
 - e) To facilitate the smooth running of each meeting;
 - f) To ensure that Members of the Panel have an equal voice and an opportunity to discuss and debate items of interest;
 - g) To ascertain the sense of the meeting and ensure realistic recommendations are developed;
 - h) To resolve any dispute in meetings through the exercise of his/her powers;
 - i) To lead the panel in its role as critical friend; and
 - j) To be a champion for the scrutiny role.
24. Quorum: the meeting will require three members, at least two being non-executive councillors, to be attending the meeting, either physically or remotely (online or by phone), to be quorate.

25. Attendance: non-executive councillors are expected to attend, either physically or remotely, all meetings of the panel. Issues with attendance will be reported to the AW Board and the relevant Committee.
26. Voting rights: only non-executive councillors will have voting rights; however, it will be at the chairman's discretion to invite all members of the panel to express their views and opinions on a decision or recommendation being put to a vote.

Meetings of the AW Joint Scrutiny Panel

27. The Joint Scrutiny Panel will meet no less than four times a year and no more than six times a year, unless an additional meeting is either requested by the AW Board to undertake a specific scrutiny exercise or under exceptional circumstances as requested by at least three members (two of which must be elected councillors) of the Joint Scrutiny Panel.
28. Meetings will be set on a pattern taking into accounts the meetings of AW Board and at a day and time to suit members of the panel and will be reviewed on a yearly basis; or following significant membership changes.
29. Meetings format: Members of the panel would be expected to attend pre-meeting briefings (usually 30minutes to 1 hour – just before the meeting), meetings (usually 1.5 to 2 hours) then “wash-up” sessions (usually 30 minutes – straight after the meeting).
30. Meetings can be attended either in person or remotely (online / telephone) to take into account the geographical distances between members of the panel. However, one meeting a year will be set to be attended in person by all members of the panel.

Witnesses

31. The panel will identify the areas it wishes to scrutinise and will request the Service Director (or any officer the Service Director delegates this role to) to identify relevant witnesses and arrange their attendance.
32. The panel can operate flexibly, taking any approach it considers necessary to inform its deliberations, including:
- a. Meeting with members and officers
 - b. Meeting with external agencies, interest groups and service users
 - c. Considering existing evidence e.g. performance reports
 - d. Gathering new evidence e.g. through surveys, site visits or research ***
 - e. Undertaking or commissioning analysis ***
 - f. Visiting relevant sites or organisations ***
 - g. Learning from other local authorities and areas

*** It should be noted that financial agreement may have to be sought from the local authorities prior to undertaking d, e or f listed above.

Agendas and minutes for the AW Joint Scrutiny Panel

- 33. Agendas and minutes for the AW Joint Scrutiny Panel will be supported by Wiltshire Council's Overview and Scrutiny team and accessible to all members of the Joint Scrutiny Panel.
- 34. Agendas and minutes will also be circulated directly to the members of the panel and any witness presenting evidence at the meeting.

Closed meeting and confidentiality

- 35. To ensure a full and frank discussion of the issues and evidence, the meetings of the panel will not be public meetings. On occasion, the panel may have a specific reason for holding an open meeting, for example to enable wider consultation with interested members of the public. This would have to be a decision made by the panel.
- 36. Members of the Panel are required to respect confidentiality of specific topics discussed at the meeting as well as the confidentiality of the agendas and minutes for the meetings of the panel.
- 37. However, the Annual report from the panel will be a public document and considered in public forums.

Reporting and Monitoring

- 38. The Joint Scrutiny Panel reports directly to the AW Board. The AW board will monitor the efficiency of the Joint Scrutiny Panel, including through its annual report.
- 39. The panel's annual report will also be presented to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or any other Committee the local authority has chosen to review the work of the panel) for the six local authorities by its elected councillor representative on the Joint Scrutiny Panel and, if required, its officer representative on the AW Board.

Review of the Joint Scrutiny Panel

- 40. At a minimum the terms of reference will be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain aligned with government policy around accountability and transparency and OFSTED guidance.
- 41. These may be reviewed sooner, either at the AW Board or Panel's request, should there be significant changes to government policy, recommendations from an OFSTED inspection or if the Terms of References set are preventing the Joint Scrutiny Panel from fulfilling its purpose.
- 42. Any proposed changes to the Terms of Reference will also be presented to the six local authorities' relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or any

other Committee the local authority has chosen to review the work of the panel, for consideration.

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Appendix 2 - Split of responsibilities between the Regional Adoption Agency and a Local Authority

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters		✓
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
PERMANENCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption		✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓
Support and advice to childcare social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments		✓
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓
Agency Decision Maker for “Should be placed for Adoption” decisions		✓
Case management for the child		✓
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓
Shortlist and visit potential families	✓	
Organising child information meeting	✓	

Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement		✓
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child		✓
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book		✓
Statutory visits pre adoption order and Early Permanence		✓
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child's care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter		✓
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Partner adoption (Step Parent) assessments	✓	
Intercountry adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	
ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES		
Assessment for adoption or special support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption and support plans	✓	
Management and administration of all aspects of the Adoption Support Fund	✓	
Adoption support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption training • Independent Birth Relative services • Management and support of ongoing birth relative contact (letterbox and direct) • Specialist Life Story practitioners • Adoption counselling and training 	✓	

Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel FWP

2020-21	Topic	Witnesses / presenter
Wednesday 4 November	BRIEFING – Adoption UK’s Adopter Advisory Board (AAB) What / who is AAB and its relationship with Adoption West (conduit for communication, monitoring of services from a “customer” perspective, etc.).	AAB’s chair (who attends AW Board Meetings to feedback)
	Key Performance Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review reports that have been received by each LAs in the past 2 to 3 years and the KPIs in these (this should also identify statistical neighbours); - Review what can be provided by CHARMS (software); - DfE scorecards; - How are other RAAs reporting performance; 	
Wednesday 20 January	BRIEFING: AUK adoption Barometer (personal / emotional – case studies and quotes) AUK – Covid emergency scheme report	
	Funding arrangements – outcome of review as undertaken for the Board	
	Adoption West – 6 months report (April to September)	
	Amended Terms of Reference (membership to include chair of the AAB as non-voting member of the panel)	
	Annual report for the AW Joint Scrutiny Panel	
Wednesday 17 March	BRIEFING – internal. Animation – adoption from a young person’s experience (AW website)	
	Develop knowledge of the AW adoption panels (e.g. approval of adopters, matching, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership of the panels - Adoption Panel Six Monthly Report (including quality assurance) 	an adviser to explain the work of the panel, and

		a panel member to talk about experience.
	<p>Recruitment of adopters / adopter sufficiency (Q3 data)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feedback and “lessons learnt” from national campaign (currently planned for September 2020); - current number of adopters for AW and “anticipated demand” - how AW does recruit and assess potential adopting families, and how the “supply” matches “demand”. 	
	<p>Service / Covid-19 update</p> <p>To receive a verbal update on work under current restrictions (and impact) but also plans for “recovery” - including areas considered for changes in ways of working (e.g. better use of technology, virtual meetings avoiding the need for childcare, etc.) and aspirations for Adoption West for the year ahead.</p>	
	<p>Review the work of the joint scrutiny panel – lessons learnt and legacy (pre 2021 elections)</p> <p>Finalise annual report</p>	n/a
Page 136 2021-22		
Wednesday 14 July 2021	BRIEFING – Adoption from an adopter’s perspective - focusing on adoption support	Adopters – ideally positive / negative on accessing ASF (and can also use some podcasts, etc.).
	Meet the chairman of the Adoption West board	
NB – to remain single substantive item to allow time for consideration	<p>Adoption support - delving deeper into what is meant by “Adoption Support” and develop understanding of the ASF (Adoption Support Fund)</p> <p>Regarding the ASF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process to apply (including criteria / what can be applied for) - Issues raised by adopters and Adoption Agencies regarding year-on-year funding - Adoption UK’s review of the covid emergency scheme (and any update from government since) 	

		<p>regarding support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National blueprint for adoption support – how does AW compare (internal review taking place from February 2021) - Is there any support that is mandatory? - Overall support offered by AW showing universal support / on-demand - Funding of support (and monitoring of spend and efficiency) - Evaluation of need – how are adoptive families consulted / any other evaluation - The development of “early support” (priority for AW mentioned at the May 2020 meeting) 	
		Adoption West - 6 months report (October to March)	
Wednesday 13 October 2021		BRIEFING – adoption from an adopter’s perspective – focusing on the process to become an adopter.	Adopters – ideally one EP, one not, maybe even a second time round
Page 137		<p>Adoption process The adoption process for the child (from a child being identified as “at risk”, being removed, being in care, etc. all the way to the adoption order). If possible, a diagram showing the process and the different decision-making stages (and decision makers).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AW’s animation “I am Tia” <p>The adoption process for adopters – expanding on something like this https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/the-adoption-process/</p>	Adoption social worker / Legal Services
		Adoption UK Barometer 2021 (should be published in September) NB focus on support for adolescent and young adults (key issue from Adoption Barometer 2020 as identified at January 2021 meeting)	Adoption UK rep?
		Update / progress on the AW development plan [NB may be superseded by update on chosen KPIs]	
Wednesday 12 January 2022		BRIEFING - tbc	
		Evaluation of RAAs – should come out September / November 2021 Already 4 reports published as at 01.03.2021 DfE - Evaluation of regional adoption agencies - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	

	Adoption West – long term vision (may be in 6 months report) Permanency planning – progress and plans	
	Annual review of terms of reference (last reviewed 20 January 2021)	
	Update on arrangements / work to date with all 6 local authorities to “co-ordinate” reporting on adoption	
	Review the scrutiny panel’s annual report (DRAFT) For each member of the panel to consult with his / her overview and scrutiny committee on the draft report	
	Adoption West – 6 months report (April to September)	
Wednesday 13 April 2022	BRIEFING -	
Page 138	Annual review - Recruitment of adopters / adopter sufficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - current number of adopters for AW and “anticipated demand” - Quarter x Data - AW performance in recruitment of adopters compared to national (CoramI stats) - how the “supply” matches “demand” (e.g. sibling adopters, older child adopter, BME adopter, etc.) - how AW currently advertises / recruits adopters (key “selling points” for adopters to sign up with AW rather than other RAA or VAA) - AW compliance with national requirement / targets for processing of adopters’ applications + matching + etc. (all scorecard data linked to adopters) - feedback and “lessons learnt” from any national campaign / drive to recruit adopters 	
	Finalise scrutiny panel’s annual report	

Briefing items:

Adoption UK

Repeat items:

January / February: annual review of terms of reference

February / March / April: produce the panel's annual report (to be presented in / around May in conjunction with AW's annual report and LAs performance reports)

June / July: Adoption West – 6 months report (October to March), produced in May

December / January: Adoption West – 6 months report (April to September), produced in November

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CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

This Forward Plan lists all the items coming to the Panel over the next few months.

Inevitably, some of the published information may change; Government guidance recognises that the plan is a best assessment, at the time of publication, of anticipated decision making. The online Forward Plan is updated regularly and can be seen on the Council's website at:

<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>

The Forward Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to openness and participation in decision making. It assists the Panel in planning their input to policy formulation and development, and in reviewing the work of the Cabinet.

Should you wish to make representations, please contact the report author or, Democratic Services (). A formal agenda will be issued 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Agenda papers can be inspected on the Council's website.

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
18TH MAY 2021 - MEETING POSTPONED				
15TH JUNE 2021				
15 Jun 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Narrowing the Education Gap	Christopher Wilford Tel: 01225 477109	Education and Safeguarding Director
15 Jun 2021 Page 142	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Child Exploitation	Rachael Ward Tel: 01225 477914	Director of Children and Education
15 Jun 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Corporate Parenting	Mary Kearney- Knowles Tel: 01225 394412	Director of Children and Education
15 Jun 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Food Insecurity	Sarah Heathcote Tel: 01225 394455	Director of Public Health

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
15 Jun 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Adoption West Annual Scrutiny Report	Councillor Michelle O'Doherty, Mary Kearney-Knowles Tel: 01225 394412	Director of Children and Education
13TH JULY 2021				
13 Jul 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Complaints and Feedback Annual Report for Adult Social Care 2020 - 21	Sarah Watts Tel: 01225 477931	Director of Adult Social Care
13 Jul 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Complaints and Feedback Annual Report for Children's Services 2020 - 21	Sarah Watts Tel: 01225 477931	Director of Children and Education
13 Jul 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report & The Health & Care White Paper	Sarah Hogan Tel: 01225 39 6810	Director of Children and Education

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
13 Jul 2021	Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Community Mental Health Framework	Alison Elliott	Director of Adult Social Care
14TH SEPTEMBER 2021				
The Forward Plan is administered by DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk				