

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

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

Monday 14th July 2025

Present:- **Councillors** Dine Romero, Liz Hardman, Paul Crossley, David Harding, Lesley Mansell, Bharat Pankhania and Michael Auton

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Joanna Wright and Onkar Saini

#### **14 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **15 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Onkar Saini and Joanna Wright.

#### **17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Liz Hardman stated that she had visited St Michael's Primary School to see the music project that was the subject of items from the public.

#### **18 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

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

Becky Mellor Head of St Michael's Primary School, Twerton and Jon Gore, Orchestra of Everything presented a statement about a pilot project which had been taking place to bring music tuition to children in underserved communities and had resulted in an increase in the resilience and confidence of pupils across the curriculum. They asked for the panel's support in identifying future funding opportunities when the current funding ended in November 2025.

Panel Members asked questions about the project and received responses as follows:

1. Cllr Hardman: Educational attainment gaps are widening for disadvantaged children and 70% of children at this school are in receipt of

free school meals. This project has been beneficial in improving attendance at the school. What is the reason for the impact and what parts could you continue without funding? *The project has enabled teachers to build their confidence to run music sessions and so we could continue with group sessions, but without future funding we would not be able to deliver individual tutoring and so there wouldn't be the same level of impact. The success of the project was due to a combination of the enthusiasm and support from both the charity and the staff at the school.*

2. Cllr Auton: Do you accept donations of musical instruments? *Yes, this would be welcomed.*
3. Cllr Mansell: there may be music charities that will be willing to support the project? *The Chair suggested that members of the Panel contact any organisations that may be interested in supporting this project.*
4. Cllr Crossley: what is the policy of the MAT re-music and this the project? *The Bath and Wells MAT recognised this work, but support was focussed on curriculum rather than extra-curricular activities. There was a national focus on outcomes in reading, writing and maths in line with the inspection framework for schools. This project was more about the development of character, similar to participation in sporting activities.*
5. Cllr Hardman: were there opportunities for pupils to continue once they moved into Year 7? *There was work going on with the Southside Project and local police to develop a further pilot project for older children, but this was likely to be based in youth clubs rather than an education setting.*

Following a request from the panel, Cllr May, Cabinet Member for Children's Services undertook to investigate options to secure future funding for the project and to report back to a future meeting.

## **20 MINUTES: 16TH JUNE 2025**

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

## **21 TARGETED EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION TASK GROUP UPDATE**

The Chair/Vice-Chair gave an update as follows:

1. The Task Group had now met twice, and it was clear that the work of the Panel mirrored the work the Government wanted Councils to be doing around family help.
2. At the last meeting, the group heard from Paula Sumner, Assistant Director – Children's Transformation and Pheobe Holland, Assistant Director for Children and Young People about the transformational work they were doing around the whole family approach and wraparound support "family first partnership".
3. The Group was asking for regular updates and to make sure it could add value and provide steers.

4. One of key concerns was whether the £400k resource that has been allocated was enough to ensure that families had access to support. It was noted that this was additional money to build on what was already in place.
5. The Panel had discussed integrated front doors, the use of technology and ensuring there was no duplication in the system.
6. The next step was to look for examples of best practice in other local authorities across the country.
7. The next meeting would have early sight of the business case that the team are putting together.

The Chair invited members not on the group to contact her if they had any views.

## **22 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

### **Youth Trailblazer Scheme**

Cllr May welcomed officers from the Business Growth and Skills Team to update the Panel on the Youth Trailblazer scheme as follows:

- The scheme was a national pilot initiative that supported young people aged 18–21 who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). In B&NES, the scheme had been extended to include 16 & 17-year-olds.
- The scheme was open to all young people in B&NES but there was a particular focus on rural areas where lack of transport had been identified as restricting opportunities for young people.
- The team was trying to support as many young people as possible with a range of projects such as support with interviews and free bus passes.
- The support of the Panel was requested to promote the scheme and make links in communities.

Panel Members asked questions about the scheme and received responses as follows:

1. Cllr Hardman - How do you define rural? Would Paulton qualify? *Yes, although the scheme was open to all young people, there was a particular focus on areas outside the urban areas of Bath and Keynsham.*
2. Cllr Hardman - Do you have any timetable of events? *WECA will be marketing the scheme, and we weren't able to publicise in advance of securing the funding in April. Since then, we have been going out to speak to local communities to publicise the scheme. Events include mock interviews planned for September. We have a target to secure 100 work placements.*
3. Cllr Harding - What work have you done in Chew Valley? *It would be useful for the team to publicise the scheme with Parish Councils. There had been engagement with Chew Valley School and the team had met with young people whose transition plans had not worked out as anticipated. Cllr May undertook to pick up the point relating to Parish Councils.*

4. Cllr Harding - What other options were available for young people in villages with limited public transport? *We have listened to feedback from young people, and we are looking at putting on a minibus to attend the mock interviews and also considering options around e-bikes and moped training.*
5. Cllr Auton - As well as transport, there is a lack of local employment opportunities, e.g., in Midsomer Norton where a lot of residents commute to Bristol or Bath for work. Have you worked with Youth Connect South West? *We are engaging with local employers and building on existing relationships. We are also working with key partners including Youth Connect South West to add value to what they are doing to support young people.*
6. Kevin Burnett –Who will evaluate the success of the project and how will this be done? *The scheme will be evaluated by the DWP. There is a detailed plan for evaluation including a target of engaging with 250 young people, 100 employers to offer work tasters/placements and referring young people on for mental health support recognising that this can be a barrier to being work-ready.*
7. Kevin Burnett - what are the criteria for the scheme? Is there an overlap with other projects? Are you coordinating work on youth hubs? *The criterion is to support young people in the local authority area. There are some projects that overlap but we can dovetail with these to ensure work is joined up.*
8. Kevin Burnett – do you find that young people being work-ready is a big factor? *Progression is the key, whether the person needs support with their mental health or with securing employment or training. We are using an evaluation tool “Outcomes Star” which will enable young people to see their progression.*
9. Cllr Mansell – welcome engagement with young people in Radstock. One impact of Covid is that some young people don’t have the confidence to travel on public transport and it is good to see you are working with local employers. There is a concern that it is a short-term scheme and welcome future information about outcomes. Would also welcome links with data around attainment gap/attendance/exclusions and ensure that disadvantaged groups are targeted.
10. Cllr Romero - are you aware of proposed funding for investment with youth service projects and would you expect to receive some of this funding? *Funding would be allocated to WECA, and our team would only receive some if there was a link with business skills, but it may be directed to another team in the Council.*
11. Cllr Romero – are you working with Bath College? *Yes, we work with the college and both universities.*
12. Cllr Romero – connectivity can be an issue in rural areas and young people may not be able to access digital bus timetables? *We are addressing this through our digital hubs.*
13. Cllr Harding – where are the digital hubs? Is there one in Chew Valley? *The hubs are in Twerton, Midsomer Norton and Paulton. We welcome other suggestions.* Cllr Harding - Chew Valley Community Library?
14. Are you doing any additional work for young people with SEND? *Yes, we are working with neurodivergent young people. We are adding value to the work of We Work for Everyone.*

The Panel thanked officers for the update and welcomed an update at a future meeting.

### **Free School Meals**

Cllr Paul May introduced officers from the Finance Welfare Support and Education Teams to answer questions about the new rules relating to free school meals.

1. Cllr Hardman: had the additional 666 students entitled to free school meals been identified? *This figure was based on the estimate by Government, we think there will be 1,128 additional children eligible for free school meals. We haven't identified them, that work will be done after we have completed auto enrolment process this August. We need to establish a baseline first. Also, we didn't contact households too far in advance in case the rules change, but this would be done in advance of the new rules being in place in September 2026.*
2. Cllr Romero: will the new rules affect Free School Meals Ever 6? *Yes, the DfE has stated that the transitional protection will come to an end in September 2026.*
3. Kevin Burnett: can you explain the conflicting messages about families getting entitlement for free school meals and schools not getting pupil premium funding and having to subsidise school meals? *There are two parts, when a child registers for free school meals, the schools get additional resources through funding formula. Under the new rules, pupils entitled to free school meals through universal credit will not get a pupil premium allocation on top. Some schools may get more money, and some may get less under the new rules, but it was difficult to assess the full impact at the current time.*
4. Kevin Burnett: If there is a shortfall, will there be additional resources for schools to pay for top up? – *This will be an issue for schools in setting their budgets. This is likely to be a challenge as there was an article in the media recently about schools struggling to find suppliers who could deliver the service for the contracted price.*

The Panel agreed that there should be a further update at the October meeting.

### **School Attendance**

The Director of Education confirmed that school attendance in B&NES had risen back up to pre-Covid levels but there was a group of children with long term health issues. It was noted that there would be an update in October and the Panel asked that this also include:

1. Data around respiratory infections including Covid/long Covid.
2. Data and details of work carried out to reduce exclusions.

### **Safety Valve**

Cllr May responded to questions as follows:

1. Cllr Hardman – I note that the submission is held up by the free schools issue, is there any way forward? *We have to respond to questions this week about mitigations if we don't get the funding for the provision for the 2 free schools at the Culverhay site. The provision is fundamental for us breaking even on SEND. Addressing SEND in mainstream schools would not be a solution for the students who would be served by the provision at Culverhay. £11m of safety valve money is being held back pending the outcome.*
2. Cllr Hardman – do you need to contact a different Government department re- Culverhay? *We have contacted different departments and have also asked the Labour Group Leader at B&NES for help in getting clarification about the position relating to Culverhay.*
3. Kevin Burnett: As projects applied for by the Local Authority are on hold, but some projects applied through by a Multi Academy Trust are progressing, could a B&NES MAT take on the applications for the 2 free schools or could the LA consider saving that money by putting capital up front? *The LA had already entered into a contract with a MAT to run the free schools and it had still not been possible to progress. In terms of putting capital into a school scheme, I don't know if there is an opportunity to do this, but I'll take this back.*

### **Baroness Casey Report**

The Chair asked for a future update on how the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership would be addressing the recommendations within the report.

### **ILACS Inspection**

The Panel noted that the inspection had been carried out and the report was embargoed until early August and would be brought back to a future meeting. The Chair thanked all staff involved in the recent inspection.

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

The Panel noted the report and presentation that had been circulated with the agenda papers and raised the following questions which were answered by Val Scrase, Regional Director of HCRG and Laura Ambler, Executive Director of Place, B&NES BSW ICB):

1. Cllr Hardman – I'm concerned about the large cluster arrangements for ICBs. How will you focus on day-to-day care? *ICBs have been directed to reduce running costs and to look at clustering. BSW has now formally been recognised as a cluster with Dorset and Somerset but there will be a focus on maintaining day to day operations. Any formal changes in governance will*

- require legislation. There was guidance that ICBs would still be responsible for winter planning but there was an expectation that ICBs identify how they will reduce operational running costs by the end of quarter 3.*
2. Cllr Pankhania – are you being clear that ICB clustering arrangements are taking place to save money? *We have been clear that ICBs have had a directive to make these changes to cut costs and there will be redundancies as a result.*
  3. Cllr Hardman – Residents have advised me that the RUH appointments system is not working; people are not receiving notification of an appointment until the day of the appointment and there was no coordination between different departments. *This concern will be fed back.*
  4. Cllr Pankhania – I agree that there is a lack of co-ordination in organising appointments. Appointments are sent out at the last minute and phone calls from patients trying to rearrange are left unanswered. *As part of the new contract there will be a digital front door and an opportunity for patients to manage their own appointments if they are able to do so. Alongside this there will be a care co-ordination centre and neighbourhood teams to allow for direct contact for those who need it.*
  5. Cllr Pankhania – there is a concern that the non-digital service will be wound down. Will there be an independent audit for this service? *We will have care co-ordination centre and care navigators as part of the model in addition to the digital front door. There will be an assurance process by commissioners. ICB and the 3 Local Authorities.*
  6. Cllr Hardman – is there any data about Health Passports? *I will bring this back to a future meeting with case studies.*
  7. Cllr Auton - How are you engaging with minority communities in relation to the Health Passports? What is your definition of a minority community? *We have focussed on people with learning disabilities, autism and the traveller and gypsy community. We recognise it can be used as a template for good practice and so would appreciate feedback if any other minority communities will benefit.*
  8. Cllr Auton - How will you engage with 40-year-olds around health checks? *This followed a campaign in June and there will be feedback at a later date.*
  9. Cllr Auton – in relation to the Big A&E survey, how do the statistics about people going to hospital compare with previous years? *There hasn't been a survey like this before but will report back on any comparable data.*
  10. Cllr Auton – I'm concerned about the Digital Front Door as I know a lot of elderly people do not have access to technology and have to wait 6 weeks for a letter as they are unable to download an app. It feels like there is a disconnect between people delivering the service and vulnerable people? Is this just about saving money? *The digital front door is important, people are asking for this service, but we know we have to provide other support. We have a care coordination centre, and we monitor calls and how long people*

*have to wait, we know it is an important service, and we will build on that, we recognise we need mixed access.*

11. Cllr Mansell – What will be in the new centre in Trowbridge? *Some facilities from the community hospital will be moving there but it won't be a bedded unit.*
12. Cllr Mansell – I'd like to see future feedback on men's health checks, health passports and equalities monitoring for the Big A&E survey.
13. Cllr Harding – have you yet worked out details of levelling out of resources across the BSW area? *Harmonisation was part of the bid, and we are currently in the discovery phase looking at data, policy, procedure, etc. It is difficult to say what areas would level up at this stage and this will become clearer over the next two years.*
14. Cllr Harding - How long is the contract? *7 plus 2 years*
15. Cllr Harding – You previously said that this would be an outcome based contract and you were going to come back with outcomes/milestones? *This will be a different type of contract in that we will be reporting outcomes as well as normal KPIs. We are working on outcomes and we need to measure and will report back on these in the longer term. The outcomes framework is referred to in the slides circulated with the agenda and we could also circulate the framework document after the meeting.*
16. Cllr Harding - Have you had chance to look at referral patterns with GPs – can they still refer to Bristol? Which elective referrals will be rationed and how (as mentioned in HSJ article to be forwarded to Laura Ambler)? *GPs could still refer patients to cross boundary providers, e.g., Bristol. There will be a report back to the next meeting on elective recovery plans including changes around the elective recovery cap.*
17. Kevin Burnett – I welcome the new facility at Trowbridge, but what is the state of the NHS estate under your care and what measures are in place to make buildings climate proof? *There is a mix, but some buildings are in a state of disrepair and there were significant challenges. There was a capital programme which prioritised works, but this was limited and there was a need to move forward in a partnership way and consider options such as co-location. From a policy and strategic perspective there was a sustainable green plan in place.*
18. Kevin Burnett – The Community based contract mentions charities are involved – how are they commissioned, and which charities are involved? *We have appointed Phil Walters as Head of Partnerships and Engagement, he has a background in the voluntary sector and will be linking with communities and voluntary sector, working with community hub and 3SG as well as communities not linked with voluntary sector. We have subcontracted elements of services to voluntary sector in recognising the importance of the voluntary sector to deliver these services.*

19. Kevin Burnett – what safeguards are in place for the digital service in view of recent high profile cyber-attacks? *There will be heightened security and HCRG is constantly reviewing and managing.*
20. Cllr Hardman – there is a commitment to engage Councillors but how? Have you coordinated transformation plan with public health team? *Every stage of our governance has local authority representation, including public health. We welcome additional feedback on how Councillors can be engaged.*
21. Cllr Romero – Can you give details of the overview group? *As part of our governance, we have a collaborative oversight forum.*
22. Cllr Romero - Healthwatch is being discontinued, will it be replaced? *Healthwatch and some other patient groups are not being taken forward as part of the ICB/NHSE changes, but we don't know timescales or who would provide the patient voice function in the future. Healthwatch representatives have continued to attend meetings and give a professional commitment to their role.*
23. Cllr Mansell – is there an equalities impact assessment? *There was an assessment as we went through the procurement process and there is now one for HCRG to take forward. This information could be circulated.*

## 24 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced the item and referred to the following items that were already on the workplan/had been raised at this meeting:

### September (adults)

- modern slavery
- ICB pharmacy strategy and dental care - criteria to assess pharmaceutical needs assessment – *or to be circulated outside of the meeting*

### October (children)

- Child sexual exploitation
- School survey
- Free school meals update
- Youth Trailblazer update
- St Michael's Primary School/Orchestra of Everything update
- Attendance, including respiratory illness and Long Covid
- Attainment gap, to include wider determinants project from public health
- Safety Valve - DfE/Culverhay issue

The meeting ended at 12.49 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**