

Children, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee

23 July 2019

Cabinet Members' Briefing

Children of Alcoholics (NACOA response)

The previous Children's PDS panel received a comprehensive report from officers regarding local support available for children of alcoholics, following a Full Council resolution referring the matter to the panel. The outstanding action to be completed was reporting back on comments from the National Association for the Children of Alcoholics (NACOA), who had been sent the report. Those comments have subsequently been received from Hilary Henriques, CEO, who says that 'in my opinion it addresses the needs of children of alcoholics and services they are likely to access.' Hilary highlighted one correction to a NACOA programme referred to as three C's, which should read 6 C's.

Post 16 unregulated placements

Our aspiration in B&NES is that no young person/child will be placed in 16+ unregulated placements. Until 5 or 6 years ago, it was unheard of, but it is now an option we have to consider due to changes in the market, linked to changes in Ofsted regulations, as well as the need to think creatively to identify suitable care packages for young people with complex needs, in line with their own expressed preferences. This is both a local and national shift. We hold a list of 'preferred providers' who have been pre-assessed as suitable. Where such a placement is made, it will always be subject to a risk assessment relating to the placement and an agreed package of support; with providers subject to contract review meetings and annual safeguarding audit; as well as regular social worker visits and Looked After Children reviews in line with statutory guidance. There are currently 8 young people from B&NES in such placements and they are all being offered a visit from the cabinet member as part of their next planned review.

Government funding for education and schools

The cabinet member for Children's Services has written to the secretary of state regarding the funding pressure in the education system, both relating to funding for schools and the High Needs block which supports children with SEND and where we have experienced significant pressure in the last few years. He has offered to provide further evidence of these pressures and to meet with ministers to discuss this crucial issue.

SEND inspection

On 13th May, Ofsted and CQC published their report letter on the inspection of Bath and North East Somerset, carried out in March, to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs (SEN) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. This was an intense inspection across schools, college, early years settings and health as well as the local authority and other partners, with inspectors meeting face-to-face with young people, parents and carers during their week-

long visit. The report has been described as one of the most positive published so far, nationally, and the main findings are attached to this report for information. The panel will be offered updates on improvement actions within the service to address both the findings of this report and the previous inspection of children's social care.

Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

Following the development of a Local Safeguarding Children Board 'Youth @ Risk' strategy, there is a stakeholder launch event on the 30th September, which panel members might be interested to attend.

Forthcoming briefings and consultations in Adult Services

The Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 gained royal assent at the end of April and as a result we expect national consultation in the autumn on a new Code of Practice which details how Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) will be replaced by Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) from 2020. Further briefings can be brought to panel in due course. We will also be consulting locally on updates to the Care and Support Financial Framework, which has not been reviewed since the introduction of the Care Act in 2015 and which are intended to provide transparency, equity and consistency in how residents are charged in respect of contributions to their care and support. We anticipate bringing this to panel in September.

Ofsted/CQC SEND inspection - Main Findings

Local area leaders, driven by strong and shared values, are determined to provide the best for children and young people with SEND. They provide strategic leadership that enables a solid foundation for effective services, continuous improvement and creative solutions.

Collaborative working underpins the effectiveness of the local area. Joint commissioning is strong and continues to be strengthened. This means that traditional barriers of funding or service specifications are overcome so that children, young people or their families receive an offer that meets their needs in education, health and care.

Individual practitioners from health, education, care and the voluntary sector have positive working relationships with each other. They problem-solve together to improve support for children and young people.

Effective working together enables co-production (a way of working where children and young people, families and those who provide the services work together to create a decision or a service which works for them all). This is particularly evident in the recent recommissioning of the short-break service that incorporated the views of siblings into the information collected.

Many parents and carers talk very positively about the support they have received from staff of the local area and the difference that this has made to their children and families. A few parents are much less positive and attribute their poor quality of life to the battle they have had to fight for their children.

Many parents and carers praise the support they receive from schools, particularly specialist provision or those mainstream schools that are confident in working with children with SEND. They feel that their children are doing very well. A few parents are much less positive about the response they received from schools, where they felt unwelcome, or their concerns about their child were dismissed. The local area has recognised the inconsistency in schools' responses to SEND and has launched a graduated approach tool to strengthen identification and assessment. However, it is early days.

The proportion of education, health and care (EHC) plans completed within the 20-week timeframe is high and still improving. EHC plans are clear. They describe the child or young person well. However, annual reviews of the plans are not always effective in capturing progress and ensuring that changes are made to plans to secure further improvements in outcomes.

Most parents and carers feel that they are able to get the information, advice and support they need. The SEND partnership service is particularly praised. The local offer meets the expected statutory requirements and has recently been refreshed. Many parents and carers, though, do not find it a useful resource. They say that it isn't clear enough, and this causes frustration.

Leaders are aspirational to close the gaps between the progress of pupils with SEND and that of other pupils in Bath and North East Somerset and nationally. They have rightly recognised that there is more to do to secure improved academic progress, especially for those pupils with SEND who may be further disadvantaged due to poverty or other complexities. They have taken further steps to work strategically with leaders of schools and multi-academy trusts on this issue, as well as implementing targeted interventions.

Councillor Kevin Guy, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Councillor Rob Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Adult Services