

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Tuesday, 14th September, 2021

Present:- Councillors Vic Pritchard (Chair), Michelle O'Doherty (Vice-Chair), Ruth Malloy, Andy Wait, Liz Hardman and Gerry Curran

Also in attendance: Suzanne Westhead (Director of Adult Social Care), Mary Kearney-Knowles (Director of Children's Services and Education), Christopher Wilford (Education and Safeguarding Director) and Sarah Watts (Complaints & Data Protection Team Manager)

30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

31 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Paul May, Councillor Mark Roper, Chris Batten (Co-opted Member) and Gill Stobart (Co-opted Member) had sent apologies to the Panel.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Dine Romero (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Communities and Culture) and Dr Bryn Bird (B&NES Locality Clinical Chair, BSW CCG).

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gerry Curran declared an other interest as he is employed by Virgin Care.

34 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

36 MINUTES: 13TH JULY 2021

Kevin Burnett asked if there was an update on the Escalation Protocol.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that sign off had been delayed slightly and was hopeful that it would be ready by the next meeting of the Panel.

Kevin Burnett asked to be updated on whether the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) had agreed to attend a future Panel meeting to explain the procedure regarding public accountability for how MATs (Multi Academy Trusts) are run.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that following his request the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) had agreed to attend the November 9th Panel meeting.

Councillor Andy Wait reminded the Chairman of his proposal that a Corporate Parenting report should be received by a future meeting of Full Council.

The Chairman apologised and said that he would enquire as to whether this would be possible for the 18th November 2021 meeting.

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

37 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Alison Born, Cabinet Member for Adults and Council House Building 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.

The health and social care system remains under pressure across B&NES, as it is across the country, with increased demand for services and staff shortages. This is continuing to have a significant impact on our Reablement Service provided by Virgin Care and on mental health services provided by AWP and Oxford Health.

Social Care Plan

The Prime Minister has announced the Government's reform package for social care, and increased funding for the NHS from 2022-23:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-health-and-social-care>

National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for employees and employers will increase by 1.25%. This new "Health and Social Care Levy" will be "hypothecated in law" and will have to be spent on frontline services. The increase in employer's national insurance will cost B&NES £750k next year.

Changes will be introduced from October 2023 and will have an impact on the income that local authorities receive from social care clients. Lost income is

estimated by the Government at £5.4bn and local government will receive funding for these losses. However, the methodology for distributing the funding will need to be determined. The White Paper says that, “The Government will consult on its proposals for funding distribution and keep this distribution under review”. Clearly there is a risk for local authorities that the funding is insufficient to offset the lost income.

Additional funding raised from the tax increases will be used for the NHS (£25bn over 3 years in England) and to fund the costs of social care reform (£5.4bn over 3 years). Although the Prime Minister said, “you can’t fix the NHS without fixing social care”, there will be very little additional funding for social care to either close the funding gap or to improve care standards. Within the £5.4bn for social care, there will be £500m over 3 years to support the social care workforce.

Virgin Care Contract

B&NES, Swindon & Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSWCCG) Governing Body and B&NES Council, as joint commissioners, have requested a report setting out an options appraisal to help decide whether or not to extend the Virgin Care contract.

This is a seven-year contract from 2017/18 to 2023/2024 with the option to extend the contract term by three years, taking its term to 2026/2027. The option to extend the contract in this way can only be taken once. Virgin Care will need to be notified of the decision to extend or not by no later than the end of March 2022.

Initial dialogue with Virgin Care has identified their commitment to securing the 3-year extension term and their intention (at this stage) not to renegotiate the financial terms of the funding from BSWCCG and B&NES Council for the 3-year term.

The next Virgin Care commissioning report is due to this panel in October and will concentrate on the key themes of workforce and service user experience.

Update on Transformation Process

Community health and social care services continue to see increased demand and staff continue to work hard to meet the demand. To ensure that services are sustainable in the future, Adult Social Care are embarking on a significant Transformation Programme focused on delaying the demand for statutory services, ensuring quality service provision, improving outcomes for individuals and reducing spend.

The Adult Social Care Internal Transformation Group (ASCITG) commenced in July 2021 and is chaired by Claire Thorogood - Head of Contracting and Performance. This meeting is held monthly and reports into the Social Care Transformation Board (SCTB) which also commenced in July 2021. The monthly Board Meeting is chaired by Amanda George – Director of Business Change and Customer Services.

The Chairman asked if she had received responses from enough Councillors to take part in the Transformation of Adult Care Services Working Group.

Councillor Born replied that she would check and would look to ensure that the group has a political balance.

The Chairman asked if the process was about saving £2m or improving services.

Councillor Born replied that the process was primarily about improving services as some were perceived as being old fashioned. She added that savings should also be made as part of the process.

The Chairman asked if the transformation would mean a degree of technological changes for staff and service users.

Councillor Born replied that the plan is to provide the public with better information to enable them to navigate through our services easier and to make better use of the data available to plan for the future needs of patients.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how the Council will attempt to delay the demand for statutory services.

Councillor Born replied that they will seek to increase awareness of available preventative services as a better use of resources.

Kevin Burnett welcomed her work for keeping the pressure on Jacob Rees-Mogg over the state of Social Care. He asked if all Social Care Services in the South West doing the same thing.

Councillor Born replied that she was not aware of any other colleagues taking similar action but said she was due to meet with other Adult Social Care leads in the South West on Friday. She added that some colleagues within the South West also have MPs who are members of the government so may have a similar view.

Kevin Burnett asked what her views were on the Government's Social Care Reform proposals and did the Government consult Local Authorities (LA's) prior to announcing them.

Councillor Born replied that she found it hard to believe that the Government would have come up with the proposals it did if it had consulted LA's but she may be wrong.

She said that she thought that there were a number of problems with the proposals which include:

- The package should be funded from general taxation, not NI as NI disproportionately affects those on lower incomes, is an additional cost to employers, many of whom are struggling due to Covid and the NI payments will further reduce the take home pay of care staff who are already paid less than they should be. The Employers NI requirement also puts significant further pressure on council budgets so it may hinder rather than help.
- The proposals are targeted at older adults, the majority of our ASC funding goes on LD, PD and MH with LD having about 50% of funding for about 25% of the caseload, reflecting the complexity of need for this group. The

government's proposals do not impact significantly on these other client groups but change is needed.

- Whilst the plan to stop self-funders from paying more than council funded clients is welcome, it will require significant investment in council budgets, including in brokerage services and could risk destabilising the care home market.
- The plan does nothing to address the immediate crisis in home care services and the NI implications may make recruitment even more difficult.
- The proposals offer very little to unpaid carers who desperately need more support.
- The proposals do not appear to do enough to address the need for training and career development within care settings. This is essential to addressing the staffing crisis.

She added that whilst the financial proposals will cap care costs for individuals the cap is quite high, particularly as accommodation costs are not included so is unlikely to meet expectations. However, significant additional costs will still fall to local authorities which will need to be funded.

Kevin Burnett asked if the Government has made any comments about the new tax effects (National Insurance) on the Local Authority – which in our case is £750,000. He added that unlike private companies, the LA can't just pass on these costs to the public.

Councillor Born replied that the Council were yet to receive guidance on this.

Kevin Burnett referred to the Virgin Care Contract and asked when a report on whether to extend the contract or not would reach Panel. He also asked why some services might be removed from the contract if an extension is approved.

Councillor Born replied that an update on the Virgin Care contract performance would be presented to the Panel on the 15th October 2021. She added that a report identifying the options for extending the contract or not was due to go to the Cabinet meeting on the 11th November 2021.

She said that discussions are ongoing with Virgin Care about whether any services may be better provided by the Council and the CCG.

The Chairman asked if members of the Panel had any questions for Councillor Romero based on the written update that she had submitted. A copy of the update can be found as an online appendix to these minutes.

Councillor Liz Hardman said that she welcomed Councillor Romero's update as she is targeting all the areas I would have asked about, including poverty proofing schools, additional money for those entitled to FSMs during the summer holidays, a new approach to mental health support for schools and also information about the Primary Empowerment Project.

She asked if any thought had been given to support for those entitled to FSMs during the October half term, this is especially important at a time when the Universal Credit £20 uplift is about to be cut.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding read out a response on behalf of Councillor Romero. He said that she will campaign as hard as possible to have some measures in place for October and that this was partly why she is attending the LGA CYP Board today to make sure it's on all parties' agendas.

Councillor Hardman commented that later on the agenda the Panel will be considering a report on complaints and feedback on Children's Services. She said that in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 of that report, we see that complaints relating to SEN have increased significantly, covering issues such as lack of special school places, the content of the EHC Plan and the delivery of provision by the school. She added that we know that behind every complaint is a desperate family and I welcome the additional support that has been provided to the service to increase capacity. She asked to what extent is SEN a political priority for the administration.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding read out a response on behalf of Councillor Romero. He said that all children's matters matter to her, none more so than SEND. She has been raising her concerns on funding widely with Cabinet colleagues as she, and those within Children's Services are acutely aware the Council is likely to have to meet a shortfall in this funding of around £5million unless government commits to new funding. She added it was quite likely she would bring this up at the LGA meeting today.

Kevin Burnett asked whether with the new changes this term and focus on Ofsted with peer on peer abuse – and the issues raised with the Everyone's Invited website – is the Council itself seeking ways to change the social culture of dignity and respect for women and will the sexual health training mentioned in the report reflect these 'cultural issues'.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that Councillor Romero was chairing a workstream in the Council about this issue.

Kevin Burnett asked if the Bath Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership was carrying out work in this area.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that the Police are the national leads for responding to 'Everyone's Invited' and have been issuing advice on this matter to the BCSSP. He added that The BCSSP has sent a letter to all schools in B&NES with links to advice and support on how schools should review internal Safeguarding policies and where they can seek additional advice and support. He said that the BCSSP will also look at the OFSTED review into peer on peer abuse and consider how the learning from this review can be shaped locally.

Kevin Burnett asked for some examples of the activities supported by the Covid Outbreak Management Fund.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied on behalf of Councillor Romero and said that in line with grant conditions, examples of proposals approved

for funding include: contact tracing posts; staff to take forward universal and targeted testing, vaccination, communications and outbreak management work programmes; communication campaigns on testing and vaccination; Early Years summer holiday childcare sufficiency support fund; continuation of a city centre Covid-19 symptomatic testing site; projects to support populations significantly impacted by covid such as Children and Young People with Special Education Needs; and Covid Marshals.

Kevin Burnett asked if the 'tone of advice' provided nationally to schools on their return this term was 'too reckless' and would she prefer a more cautious climate to have been created and was she and our B&NES Public Health Teams sending out such a message.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding read out a response on behalf of Councillor Romero. He said that our schools and colleges continue to work extremely hard to make sure their settings remain as safe as possible, and we thank them for all of their dedication and support to our children and families.

He added that in order to prevent Covid-19 circulating as far as possible, schools will continue to encourage regular handwashing, cleaning regimes, and keeping spaces well ventilated. All secondary school pupils have also been asked to take two lateral-flow tests at school at the beginning of term and are encouraged to participate in twice weekly testing going forward. He said that B&NES Council supports use of these public health measures and has been providing advice to schools and colleges as needed.

He stated that through our joint communications with the NHS, we also encourage all those eligible to take up the vaccine offer as soon as possible. This includes young people aged 16 and 17, and children aged 12 to 15 with specific underlying health conditions, or who live with a person who is immunosuppressed.

He said that it was likely that there will be some increase in cases in schools over the coming weeks, either reflecting higher rates in the wider community, or transmission within schools. Should an increase happen, it's useful to remember three things:

- For most children and young people, coronavirus infection has no or very mild symptoms.
- There are higher levels of protection in the wider community as by mid-September all adults, including school staff, will have had the opportunity to be double-jabbed.
- Schools will be alert and ready to reintroduce social distancing and other measures to reduce the risk of spread of the virus if that's needed, in collaboration with public health.

Kevin Burnett said it was exciting to know that finally the Primary Empowerment Project is underway and recalled that the Panel was advised in the Autumn of 2020 that the School Standards Board (SSB) had established a task & finish group re: school performance / narrowing the gap. He said the Panel was advised that this sub-group had met / would meet just before Christmas 2020 and was working with

CEOs on how to collect necessary data around the EEF family of schools information. He said that their work had been 'paused' given the need for new 'testing in schools' etc. He asked if there was any more information on whether this sub-group is now up and running and when they are likely to report back to the SSB / Panel.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding read out a response on behalf of Councillor Romero. He said that the sub-group had held two meetings and has suggested that a strategic approach across B&NES on what works for PP strategies needs to be developed first. He added that officers are meeting with the St Johns Foundation, the RSC and the new Teaching Hub to consider how this project can be moved on to the next stage.

Kevin Burnett asked if the work of the Inclusion Expert had concluded.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that this work had finished and said that the schools involved had welcomed the input that had been provided.

Councillor Andrew Wait commented that he was pleased to see the Council's involvement in the resettlement of Afghan families.

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

38 BSW CCG UPDATE

The Chairman stated that in the absence of a representative from the CCG any questions regarding the update should be held over until the next Panel meeting on 15th October.

39 COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2020 - 21

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager introduced the report to the Panel.

She informed them that the total number of complaints received across Children's Services was higher than the previous year; however, the number is broadly in line with the numbers received in the past 5 years. She added that this is despite all services being under pressure throughout 2020 – 21 and particularly during the first lockdown. She said that it was anticipated this would have a significant impact on the number of complaints received but this did not materialise.

She explained that the most significant change was in the number of complainants who were dissatisfied with the initial response to their complaint and escalated their complaint to Stage 2. This resulted in 13 requests for a Stage 2 investigation compared to 5 in the previous year. Although 6 of these complaints did not progress to a full investigation either because the complainant withdrew the complaint (4

complaints) or because the Stage 1 review under the Corporate Procedure found further investigation was not required.

She said that an exercise has been carried out to compare the number of complaints received by Bath and North East Somerset with the 10 comparator authorities to establish whether the number of complaints is in line with these authorities. Unfortunately, insufficient data has been published by other authorities and the information provided the Ombudsman no longer gives sufficient detail to make a comparison.

She informed the Panel that the number of complaints in most service areas remains consistent except for the statutory SEN service. The complaints covered issues such as lack of special school places, the content of the EHC Plan and delivery of provision by the school. She said that the rise in SEND complaints had coincided with the national Covid 19 pandemic. During this time, the requests for new assessment had grown significantly, both locally and nationally. She explained that in this calendar year, there have been 77 more requests for assessment (260) than at this time in the previous year (183) and this has had a significant impact on the team's ability to process work and adhere to timescales.

She stated that additional support has now been provided to the service, capacity has improved, and demand is being managed. She added that while the increase in complaints is a concern, each complaint has been carefully responded to and no requests for a stage 2 complaint have been received.

She said that colleagues in Children's Services and Education welcome complaints and will always strive to use all types of feedback to improve practice and service delivery.

She said that they plan to review the information available to the public to ensure it is accurate and accessible for children, young people, their parents and carers.

The Chairman referred to section 4.11 of the report and asked how a complaint is deemed 'out of time'.

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager replied that they normally have to be received within 12 months of the particular issue taking place. She added that in certain circumstances they can be accepted.

The Chairman asked if the Council ever receives complaints relating to historic abuse cases.

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager replied that occasionally they do and then discussions are held with the LADO.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if in relation to the growing number of complaints relating to SEN (paras 3.8 and 3.9), are the actions that are being taken, sufficient to address the issue and will we see an increased number of special school places.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that referrals relating to SEN have increased largely within the last couple of years and that it was acknowledged that there is a shortage of Special School places locally. He added that work was ongoing to attempt to achieve additional places at current sites in the coming year.

Councillor Hardman referred to advocacy (paras 7.4 - 7.7) and said that the report mentions that it is not available to parents in the same way as it is available to children. She said that it would be useful to understand this a bit more and also asked what role does the B&NES IASS (SEND Partnership) play in advocating on behalf of parents.

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager replied that advocacy is made available for children in need and looked after children through Off The Record. She added that B&NES historically has been proactive in supporting parents. She said that POhWER were now assessing requests on a case by case basis and added that the Parent Partnership do provide support.

Councillor Hardman commented that she was pleased to see that paras 7.9 and 9.2 of the report highlight that improved equalities information is an area for development.

Councillor Andrew Wait asked if any further comment could be made regarding Data Protection and Information Sharing requests.

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager replied that since the awareness of GDPR was made the number of Subject Access Requests had risen over the past 5 years whereas the number of requests from the police and other agencies had fallen sharply. She added that they were seeing an increase in requests for information to be removed.

Kevin Burnett asked if the increase in complaints to the Family Support Teams has been addressed.

The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager replied that she believed that they have and that in the main they related to assessments and some parents feeling that they are not being represented fairly if living apart.

The Director of Children's Services & Education said that the Council welcomes conversations with families to discuss their situations and will try to help to find the best solutions for the people involved.

The Chairman thanked the Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager for the report on behalf of the Panel and said that it was an important matter for them to be aware of.

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

40 **ADVERSE EFFECTS OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN**

The Chairman introduced the report and asked the Panel to consider what should be the next steps in the process having received this information.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the report will inform the way in which the Council provides services and on the way in which it acts as an employer.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty recommended that report is picked up and looked at in more detail by the Members Women's Working Group who can then report back to the Panel before any recommendations are made to Cabinet.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation made by Councillor O'Doherty.

41 **DIRECTOR BRIEFINGS - ADULT SOCIAL CARE & CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

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

Health and Social Care pressures

The Health and Social Care system remain under significant pressure. South West Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) declared a critical incident on Tuesday 7th September due to the high volume of calls. The Royal United Hospital Trust Bath NHS Foundation Trust (RUH) continues to see increased demand in A&E. Both the Wiltshire and Swindon systems are in a similar position.

The number of Covid patients in RUH remains low but is increasing and this is putting even greater pressure on a system that is already challenged.

Mental Health Services have seen an increase in the referral rates, and this, combined by an inability to recruit into key positions such as, social workers and health staff, is leading to a system that is severely under strain. This is a picture that is being reported across the whole of BSW and indeed nationally.

The Council and Virgin Care continue to work to support RUH and Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) and where appropriate, diverting people to the community who do not require an admission and discharging people from hospital in a timely way. Staff in hospitals and the community are continuing to work hard to meet increased demand.

Internal Care Homes and Extra Care Service Consultation

The consultation of Care Homes and Extra Care (CRE) staff pay has now closed. The agreement is that all staff who transferred from Sirona will go onto council pay and conditions. They will retain their enhancement, plus an additional increment for

staff with 5 years plus service. The new salaries will be paid to staff in the September payroll.

Safeguarding Activity

During 20/21 the Council received 1,115 safeguarding concerns, relating to 838 adults considered to be at risk of abuse or neglect. Despite national concerns at the start of the year that the reporting of safeguarding issues would decrease due to the lack of access to care settings or visits by family or friends to people's homes, the B&NES referral level only decreased by 27 in comparison with last year.

There has however been a significant increase in the number of referrals received from General Practitioners and other Primary Care staff. Of those who were supported through the safeguarding enquiry process, 67% said that their identified outcome had been fully met, 30% said they were partly met and 2% said their outcomes were not met. The outcomes that remained unmet mostly related to wanting the alleged person sacked or prosecuted, but the employer or police did not feel this was warranted following an investigation.

Councillor Andy Wait asked if the transfer of staff from Sirona had resulted in a financial hit to the Council.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that the process was carried out within the budget of Adult Social Care.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if staff working within safeguarding were able to deal with the seriousness of the cases presented to them.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that all the Social Workers are trained to a level to deal with the cases within their workload. She added that data on this matter is reviewed on a regular basis.

Kevin Burnett asked what appear to be the reasons for continued increase in demand at A&E and are these being addressed.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that the reasons for demand and related performance at A&E are complex. The numbers of attendance in A&E are showing an upward trend in the numbers of people in A&E over the last 90 days. Age, acuity, complexity, seasonal and structural factors linked to access to other services all play a part in driving up demand in A&E

The Council understanding is that people have delayed or stayed away from primary care over the pandemic and are now becoming unwell or are more seriously unwell due to later diagnosis and missed early care. For example, people have not been able to attend for physiotherapy or remained mobile while staying indoors, as a result they are at higher risk of falls.

The RUH is not back up to full bedded capacity due to covid and the numbers of covid patients continue to increase putting greater pressure on the system.

Workforce remains an issue across the system and due to the lack of skilled staff the pace and flow of discharges is slower than previously. In addition, as these are now more complex cases the size of packages and amount of help needed is continually increasing.

Kevin Burnett asked what the current OPEL level was.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that the current OPEL level for Bath & North East Somerset was OPEL 4. She added that the levels range from OPEL 1 which is the system is working well up to OPEL 4 which describes when the system is under the greatest strain and has little or no capacity.

Kevin Burnett asked if there was any further news from July's comment around rationalising care home provision and seeing if care homes can help provide care in the community services.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that currently care homes are not choosing to diversify as between July and now occupancy has risen sharply, and recruitment for Domiciliary Care Providers has become difficult so they are simply struggling to keep their day-to-day business running.

Kevin Burnett asked for an update on Discharge to Assess funding.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that funding is expected to continue to the end of this financial year; however, we don't yet know on what scale. She added that further information and guidance was expected shortly.

Kevin Burnett asked if there was any update on the Mental Health White Paper and the impact it will have on B&NES, mentioned in March 21 meeting.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that the Government have published a paper with the responses to the consultation and that it is on the DHSC website.

Kevin Burnett asked has the Government guidance come through on the Debt Crisis Plan (Breathing Space).

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that the Debt Respite Scheme (sometimes referred to as Breathing Space) guidance has been published and referrals have started to come into the AMHP service under this new act.

The Chairman asked if she was able to comment on the Bladder & Bowel Service provided by Virgin Care as he had been made aware that a number of staff were due to leave and wanted to know whether a restructure would be required and if any interruptions to the service were likely.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that she would need to take that matter away and discuss with colleagues.

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

SEND

As noted in the Lead Member report, SEND continues to be an increased area of need and demand for services remain high. Whilst our services are responding positively, we are awaiting a long overdue Government review into SEND and the systems, law and practice that local authorities and CCG's have to adhere to.

Children's Services

Children's Services continues to work hard to effectively discharge all Local Authority statutory responsibilities. Demand is high across all services. The workforce continues to work diligently to best support the needs of our local communities.

Children's Social Care continue to facilitate monthly multi agency meetings, all attendees find this valuable, as it offers an opportunity to understand and address challenges across the system.

Virtual School

As the panel has been previously advised, our virtual school for looked after children had been part of a national pilot to support children in care and children on child protection plans, following DFE funding this extended offer will continue for another 12 months.

Children's Transformation Programme

A significant Fostering Campaign will be launched across B&NES in September aiming to attract foster carers to B&NES. B&NES now has a dedicated Recruitment Officer for fostering, a marketing apprentice, and have commissioned the services of a marketing agency to support this work- please look out for posters on buses.

Kevin Burnett commented that he was going to ask what the key areas and outcomes are planned for the 'transformation of Children's Services', but then noticed from his previous notes that paper might come to a future Panel. He asked has a date been agreed for doing this.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that a date had not been set yet, but she would be very happy to discuss and agree at the next agenda setting and could take a paper in November 2021.

Kevin Burnett asked what the areas of focus and planned outcomes in the Service Improvement Plan are.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied with the following points.

- Pre- proceedings

- Retain a skilled and stable workforce
- Participation of parents/carers/ children and young people
- Data and performance
- Exploitation
- More young people are in Education, Employment, and training
- Disabled Children's Team

She said that these areas will lead to improved outcomes for Children, Young People and Families.

Kevin Burnett asked if officers had been able to track down the Child Protection Forum's report which had feedback from schools on frontline services which Lesley Hutchinson was trying to find back in October 2020.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that they are trying to source it and will aim to provide it in the near future.

Kevin Burnett asked if she could confirm whether Avon & Somerset Police are now fully implementing 'Operation Encompass'.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that Avon & Somerset Police are not currently signed up formally to Operation Encompass, however they do follow the principles. She said that across all areas, they share the DA notifications with the LA, either via school safeguarding in education teams, or via children's social care, dependent on the local arrangements. She added that the LA then check school roll information and share with the appropriate school/college.

She stated that Avon & Somerset Police are looking at ways that we can automate this process and that we should know shortly whether we have been successful with the joint bid for the Data Acceleration Fund, which B&NES have been a part of. She said that if this is the case, we will be combining LA and Police datasets to send information to schools straightaway. She added that the intention will be to work in two pilot sites initially – Bridgwater in Somerset, and an area of South Bristol to test the system, but this will be rolled out force wide as soon as possible.

The Chairman commented that he had been pleased to hear that the Council would be involved in bringing Afghan refugee families to live in the area and asked if it was known how many it would be.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that it was due to be five families that were to be located in the area. She added that the support from local schools has been welcomed.

The Chairman thanked both Directors for their reports on behalf of the Panel.

42 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. He asked for any proposals for the workplan.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the Panel could hear about the work of the School Standards Board.

The meeting ended at 12.17 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services