

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

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

Tuesday, 8th November, 2022

**Present:-** Councillors Vic Pritchard (Chair), Michelle O'Doherty (Vice-Chair), Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Liz Hardman, Rob Appleyard and Joanna Wright

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

**Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, Communities:** Councillor Dine Romero

**Also in attendance:** Mary Kearney-Knowles (Director of Children's Services & Education), Christopher Wilford (Director of Education & Safeguarding), Sarah Hogan (Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (Children and Young People) and Simon Lock (Music Service and Education Hub Lead)

#### **51 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **52 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillors Andy Wait and Gerry Curran had sent their apologies to the Panel.

#### **54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

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

There was none.

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

There were none.

#### **57 MINUTES: 19TH OCTOBER 2022**

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

## 58 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Dine Romero, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Communities addressed the Panel and had circulated an update prior to the meeting. A copy of the update will be attached as an online appendix to these minutes.

In addition, she informed them that she had attended an Inequalities Summit on 7<sup>th</sup> November at Bath College. She said that discussions took place regarding the local and national picture and the factors involved. She added that there was an agreed view of the need to grasp and address these issues.

She highlighted to the Panel that she had attended the Youth Connect South West Awards evening on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. She said that the awards showcased the outstanding personal effort by young people through another tough year and that it was wonderful to see them and their families celebrate their achievements. She added that Youth Connect South West spun out from the Local Authority as a Staff Mutual 3 years ago and it was evident that they have gone from strength to strength.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that cuts to resources are expected to be made in the upcoming budget and that she hoped that certain elements could be ringfenced for Children & Young People. She also asked if there was anyway in which the budget could be increased to enable statutory duties to be met.

Councillor Romero replied that this was an important point to raise and that she too was troubled by the current situation. She said though that many elements in relation to finances were out of their control as more children were coming into the care of the Council and that increases were being seen in Passenger Transport for assisting children to get to and from school.

She assured the Panel that she would do all she could to protect the most vulnerable people across the Council.

Kevin Burnett commented that Teaching Unions feel that we are now in a time of crisis and would urge the Council to do all it could to limit the cuts that are to be made.

Councillor Romero replied that she and officers have met with leaders of Multi Academy Trusts and have discussed financial matters, including the rising energy costs. She added that where possible they will lobby the Government to seek extra funding.

Kevin Burnett said that the Government's investment in Early Years training was welcome as without it the impact of Covid-19 will be compounded.

Councillor Romero replied that the majority of funding will not be for statutory services and that preventative services would not be covered.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding added that he was not yet fully aware of the funding details, but said that it would be for staff training and not be an increase in the funding rate per child. He said that he would provide further information to the Panel in due course.

Councillor Paul May said that he was pleased to hear the progress that had been made by Youth Connect South West and would welcome further information on what has been achieved.

The Chairman asked Councillor Romero to integrate that information into her next Cabinet Member Update to the Panel.

Councillor May stated that the SEND Review was a key issue for the Council and asked if the Government were going to be able to provide further support within this area.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that they were expecting the Government to respond to three reviews (SEND Review, Care Review and the White Paper) around mid-December.

Councillor May said that if SEND was not funded properly there would be an adverse risk to many young people.

Councillor Ruth Malloy suggested to also lobby through the LGA (Local Government Association).

Councillor Romero stated that she would raise this matter wherever she could and that she would write to the appropriate Government ministers and local MPs to advise them of the need for a positive local solution.

Kevin Burnett said that locally there was a shortage of SEND support staff and asked if the Council had considered using a model adopted by Oxford where they use bank staff to fill these placements.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that discussions have taken place internally and at the School's Forum regarding what support can be provided. He added that they were aware of the approach taken by Oxford and that the Head of Education Commissioning was looking into this model.

Councillor Joanna Wright commented that she had heard that should university students complete their courses and not initially gain employment on conclusion of that course then it may be cut from that university's curriculum. She asked the Cabinet Member to investigate this matter.

Councillor Romero replied that she would do so.

The Chairman thanked her on behalf of the Panel for her update.

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

Laura Ambler, Place Director for Bath and North East Somerset, BSW ICB addressed the Panel, a copy of the update will be available as an online appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

### Delegation of accountability for commissioning of pharmaceutical services, general ophthalmic services and dental services to BSW ICB from April 2023.

For BSW this covers: 147 community pharmacies, 83 ophthalmic services contracts and 126 dental services contracts.

To support the transition of commissioning services for these groups and to provide stability, a new Commissioning Hub called the Southwest Collaborative Commissioning Hub is being formed which will provide the daily operational commissioning support for Prescription Ordering Direct services from April 23 for two years. The Commissioning Hub will be staffed by the existing NHSE commissioners for these services.

BSW ICB with NHS England and Improvement has carried out a pre-delegation assessment to determine readiness to assume responsibility for these services and to set out the minimum criteria BSW ICB will be expected to meet prior to delegation.

This has now been signed off by the NHS England National Moderation Panel, and this will now make the appropriate recommendations to the NHSE National Board for final approval on 1st December 2022.

The benefits for local people of BSW ICB taking on responsibility for commissioning these additional services include improved care quality, reduced health inequalities, improved health prevention, improved use of resources and clinical leadership in place to lead and collaboratively work to identify and oversee clinical improvements in services.

### Temporary ward at St Martin's Hospital for recovering patients to provide extra winter capacity.

A temporary ward has opened at St Martin's Hospital in Bath to support people who are well enough to leave hospital but not ready to go home. The ward has opened to help relieve pressure on local acute hospitals and free up beds for the most ill patients.

The community ward, which also opened to help provide extra capacity to the local health and care system during the winter of 2021-22, has twenty three beds and offers a peaceful and relaxed environment in which patients can take time to recover before being discharged to home or to a care home.

### Bid submitted to Barnardo's Health Equity Collaboration.

BSW ICS has submitted a bid for the Barnardo's Health Equity Collaboration to design a Children and Young People's Health Equity Framework, with support from children and young people, and VCSE partners in the ICS region. This will gather the right information to focus resource on the development of emotionally, mentally and physically healthy children.

Barnardo's and the Institute of Health Equity will lend their expertise in developing supporting interventions to take evidence-based action on equity indicators over a three year programme.

#### Winter planning and virtual wards.

We are monitoring the impact of our capacity improvement plans at both a System and Place level and will take the learning into the development of our plans for the coming winter.

One important aspect of our future plans is the delivery of a Virtual Ward model. A virtual ward is a safe and efficient alternative to going into hospital for people who are unwell. By being in their own home, people are enabled to recover and rehabilitate in familiar surroundings, which can be a benefit to people who become less orientated or less mobile in a hospital environment.

The virtual ward service in BSW will deliver a range of interventions, tailored to meet the needs of the individual, to help prevent hospital admissions and to accelerate discharge from hospital.

In BANES this will build on the successful Hospital at Home model which is already in place and currently focuses on those already in hospital, enabling them to be treated at home.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how resource intensive would the virtual ward work be.

Laura Ambler replied that resources for the virtual wards would be blended alongside other initiatives. She added that all patients would be under the supervision of a clinical lead and where appropriate, personalised digital technology such as healthcare apps, wearable symptom tracking devices and telephone or video consultations may also be used by the team to remotely manage and monitor the person's condition until they are well.

Kevin Burnett said that he believed that the main problem in relation to the shortage of dentists were issues around contracts and money. He asked if the ICB were going to be able to change anything in this regard.

Laura Ambler replied that they were currently waiting to see exactly what the delegated responsibilities will look like and would therefore have to take that question away and seek a response.

Councillor Joanna Wright asked if the Southwest Collaborative Commissioning Hub was to be seen as a form of flexible commissioning.

Laura Ambler replied that the intention behind the Southwest Collaborative Commissioning Hub is capacity and capability and is not intended to remove any flexibility that can be achieved locally. She said that she would ask colleagues in commissioning to confirm this position.

Councillor Wright asked if this work would lead to further dentist appointments being available locally.

Laura Ambler replied that she felt that this was a scenario that we are going to need to see how it evolves through the delegated process. She added that she would attempt to find out some further information and respond to the Panel.

Councillor Wright informed the Panel that through the webinar she had recently attended she had been made aware of a third sector group named Dentaaid who provide mobile dental units that travel the country with volunteers offering free dental treatment for the most vulnerable people in society. She asked if they could be approached to visit B&NES.

Laura Ambler said that she would pass this information onto colleagues to see if they are able to contact Dentaaid about their work.

Councillor Paul May asked if there was any imminent threat to services for children provided by the voluntary sector, given that those services are provided through the contract held by HCRG which is soon to come to a conclusion.

Laura Ambler replied that the key thing going forward would very much be about looking for stability and said that locally there are many voluntary organisations who are engaged. She added that she felt that there would be no reason for this to change under any new model that is established.

The Director of Children's Services & Education added that B&NES was very fortunate to have a number of well-established Voluntary Organizations locally and would hope to retain that provision in the future.

Councillor May asked what measures were in place to help young people in crisis that were not already receiving care generally or with regard to any mental health concerns.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied quite a lot of work was taking place across B&NES, Swindon & Wiltshire, including a BSW Children & Young People Transformation Programme that has identified areas of priority to be progressed. She added that a new Key Worker role for the ICS has been established which will see that role, when in post, help young people with complex health needs.

She said that the work of the CYP Transformation Programme had helped to expose the challenges and pressures faced by our young people.

The Chairman thanked Laura Ambler for the update on behalf of the Panel.

## 60 EDUCATION LANDSCAPE (INC: EARLY YEARS & PRIMARY DATA - EMERGING PICTURE / REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER UPDATE)

The Director of Education & Safeguarding introduced this report to the Panel and highlighted the following areas from within it.

He explained that this was the first year that schools have delivered formal examinations since 2019 and that the Panel is advised that this is an early indication of B&NES performance and that national/regional data sets are not yet available to provide a comparison in all areas.

He stated that Secondary school performance data is released from the 20th November 2022 and a full paper on education performance in B&NES will be produced in the Spring of 2023.

Compared to 2019 data, there has been a drop in the performance of primary schools in B&NES. However, there has also been a drop nationally. Though worse than in 2019, in the early years and KS1, B&NES's 2022 overall performance is better than the national picture. However, in KS2, the reverse is true with B&NES data, indicating a worsening position of the combined data overall.

### Good Level of Development (GLD) measure - All children

- Pre-pandemic - the Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes for 'all children' in B&NES showed a steady improvement trend, above England comparisons. 74% of children achieved the GLD in 2019 (England 72%).
- In 2022 this outcome lowered to 71.4%, but early unvalidated data suggests this decrease may be comparatively smaller than that in England (65.2%).

### SEND

- GLD outcomes for children with SEND in 2022 appear to have fallen, however, further validation of this data is needed before we can state by how much.

### Free School Meals (FSM)

- GLD outcomes for B&NES children in receipt of FSM have risen to 48% (+2%pts), whilst the outcomes for children not in receipt of FSM have fallen to 75% from 78% in 2019.
- As a result of the combined FSM increase and non-FSM decrease, the FSM/non-FSM gap has narrowed to 27%pts (32%pts in 2019).

### Primary Performance

#### Phonics

- Whilst performance is down on 2019, B&NES's overall phonics results have fared better than the national position.
- However, within this, some groups are concerning. For example, our FSM/PP population of children appeared to have done less well in 2022 than their peers.
- Though performance for children with SEND has dipped in this period compared to 2019, it is not significant or a greater percentage than children without SEND.

### KS1 – Reading, Writing & Maths

- Overall performance is down from 2019, but B&NES has fared slightly better across the three areas than the national position.
- However, again, there are concerns to be looked at. At this stage, our FSM cohort has performed worse than the national rate for the FSM cohort in Reading, Writing and Maths.
- Local data appears to indicate that performance for children with SEND in reading, writing and maths (though results are slightly down on 2019) has held up better in 2022 than non-SEND pupils.

### KS2 – SATS Combined Reading, Writing & Maths

- The combined Reading, Writing & Maths data is a worsening set of results compared to our data in 2019.
- The percentage of girls achieving the expected standard has significantly dropped from 2019, still outperforming boys, but not as significant as in 2019.
- The combined expected performance for children with SEND appears to have dropped comparably with their non-SEND peers in 2022.

Further validation will be needed before we can confidently confirm these figures.

The Local Authority remains committed to achieving the best for all our pupils and officers will attend the meeting of the School's Standards Board next week.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how reliable was the current data that has been received.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that it was as accurate as it currently could be.

Councillor Hardman commented that it was frustrating that the Local Authority was not in control of the majority of its schools and said she looked forward to receiving



further information in March 2023 and urged the Council to participate with Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) as much as possible.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that a representative from the Regional Director's office was open to attending a future Panel meeting and that possibly they could invite a MAT Chief Executive as well.

Councillor Paul May said that he welcomed receiving this report and stated that early intervention in SEND needs to be a priority, especially the SEMH element (Social, Emotional & Mental Health).

Kevin Burnett asked if any difference in results had been seen in KS1 from the seven primary schools that had received input from the St. John's Foundation.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that this had been the first full year of the Primary Empowerment Programme and that an evaluation of the project would take place in due course. He added that the Foundation have indicated that they see this as a long-term commitment.

The Director of Children's Services & Education commented that she understood that an evaluation would take place in January 2023.

Councillor Ruth Malloy asked what the Local Authority / Councillors could do to improve attainment. She also commented on whether the use of volunteers could be promoted to help ease some pressure on teachers in terms of individual support.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that the work of the St. John's Foundation was an ongoing project to improve outcomes for children & young people and that this would hopefully give an indication of how the attainment gap can be improved.

Kevin Burnett asked for reference to be made to the National Tutoring Programme in the report that will be produced in March 2023.

The Director of Education & Safeguarding replied that he could ask schools for their view of the programme.

The Chairman asked for a section on the roles of volunteers within schools to be included in the next report.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note that;

- i) Education performance in our primary schools is down on the last comparable year of 2019. However, in most areas, the performance of our schools is better than the national position. There are areas of concern, particularly in key stage 2 and the results of our free school meal (FSM) & pupil premium (PP) children, that requires further analysis.
- ii) While most schools in B&NES are academies, the LA continues to be actively involved in working alongside the Regional Directors (RD) office (formally

the Regional Schools Commissioners office) in identifying education priorities for the region. This year's results will be looked at jointly with the RD office and common priorities will be identified. A representative from RD has again agreed to come to scrutiny to talk about their work.

- iii) The LA continues to have positive relationships with Academies and Multi Academy trusts, and significant common gaps in academic performance are discussed and tackled at our Schools Standards Board. Scrutiny has previously been advised of the multiple initiatives that the LA/Schools is working on to tackle our attainment gap with the support of the St. Johns Foundation.

## **61 MUSIC SERVICE**

The Director of Education & Safeguarding introduced this report to the Panel and was accompanied by Simon Lock, Music Service and Education Hub Lead. They highlighted the following points to the Panel.

This report builds on the report brought to PDS in January 2022. It proposes further changes to the Music Service, ensuring it meets the DfE's new delivery model for music education, protecting music education in B&NES.

In July 2022, the DfE released its refreshed vision for the governance and delivery of music education in England. This new vision requires a significantly different delivery model to the present and signals the need for music services to radically transform to be viable in the future.

The DfE's model for music education is to fund Music Education Hubs to deliver the National Plan for Music Education (NPME). Hubs are informal partnerships of local music and education organisations operating as a network of providers. Hubs have a Lead Organisation, which receives the DfE grant, and is held to account by Arts Council England (ACE) for the delivery of the NPME. Locally, B&NES, North Somerset and South Glos Council Music Services are all Lead Organisations of the local Hub.

Since 2020, North Somerset and South Glos Music Services have been working in partnership, with a shared management team and increasingly homogenised strategy, development and operations, alongside greater sharing of resources. In March 2021, B&NES Music Service joined this partnership.

The result is that a broader, more universal offer is being achieved because of the efficiencies and knowledge gained by working together. Through partnership, the services are beginning to realise their potential to deliver a bigger and better offer for all young people from the most vulnerable to those who are gifted and talented.

The bidding process will be different to the past in that:

- The grant application process will be open and highly competitive. ACE are proactively encouraging and enabling a wide range of education and arts organisations to bid against us.

- Small LA music services (such as B&NES) are unlikely to be eligible to apply. DfE/ACE are expecting mergers/partnerships, and that organisations will apply for a larger grant representing a wider geographic area.

The future delivery model and therefore fund-holding organisation will also be very different to the present model. DfE/ACE expect to see:

- The grant being allocated to non-LA strategic organisations, largely volunteer led, whose role is to decide strategy.
- This strategic body will then commission other organisations to deliver services.
- DfE/ACE do not wish to see funding being used to support the employment of a teaching workforce.

Establishment of a new organisation outside the LA, becomes the only route we believe is viable to ensure a future youth music provision in B&NES. This new organisation will have LA representation at Board level and will take forward existing services, deliver an aspirational growth plan and ensure a Service which is influenced by, and dedicated to, B&NES' needs and aspirations.

### The Proposal

- For B&NES to merge with North Somerset and South Glos Music Services and spin out of the Local Authority into an independent company; a company limited by guarantee, registered as a charity, with a trading arm.
- The charity will operate as the strategic Hub and will apply for the DfE funding to deliver the new National Plan for Music.
- The trading arm will offer a teaching service, which can be commissioned by the Hub to take forward delivery of existing services.
- Teaching staff will TUPE to the new organisation.

Councillor Rob Appleyard commented that he supported the proposed process to enable young people to continue to access a local music service. He identified that there was an error in recommendation 2.1 and that it should actually read 'Support the proposal that the Music Service form a tri-LA shared service with North Somerset and South Gloucestershire'.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what would happen if the Hub were not successful in bidding for the DfE money and were there any contingency plans for this.

She added that she believed that there are also no plans to introduce individual musical instrument lessons to children in B&NES free of charge. However, she said the Bristol Music Trust plays a significant role in providing musical instrument

lessons to all Bristol children. She asked if there was any value in cooperating with them or learning from their experience.

The Music Service and Education Hub Lead replied that there are three great music services currently and that he believed that they were in a strong position to bid for the funding. He added that they would work together as three equal partners.

He said that he believed that Bristol were happy with their current status and that they do on occasions work in partnership with them.

Kevin Burnett asked if the bid had support from MATs and schools within B&NES and the Council.

The Music Service and Education Hub Lead replied that the bid is supported by and across the three Local Authorities.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Support the proposal that the Music Service form a tri-LA shared service with North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.
- ii) Support the proposal of the shared service being established as an independent organisation outside the 3 Councils, taking forward and expanding a broader, universal youth music education offer on behalf of the 3 Councils.
- iii) Note the positive progress the service has made against DFE KPI's since working jointly with North Somerset & South Gloucestershire Music Services.

## **62 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT**

The Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (Children and Young People) introduced this report to the Panel.

She said that the capacity of the IRO Service is challenging as there is a real demand for it and that this has had an effect on the timeliness of the reviews that have been carried out.

She stated that it has been a challenging 12 months for all concerned, but stressed that the team are committed the care of children and young people within B&NES.

She informed the Panel that the steps taken to strengthen the service and improve recruitment have been positive and have led to three posts being permanently recruited to. She added though that the IRO service will likely have further difficulties in meeting statutory requirements if the number of children in care continues to rise.

She explained that since the summer of 2021, IRO's have returned to seeing children in person, visiting them where they live and spending time with them within their local community. Some children and young people however have expressed a

wish for their reviews to continue to be held virtually and where IRO's feel this is appropriate and in the child's best interests they will accommodate this request.

She stated that the number of children and young people in care in this reporting period had increased by 9%, with there being 197 children in care at the year end. Once again, the number of children coming into care was higher than the number of children leaving care.

She said that due to the challenges with recruitment and retention the service has had some difficulty in allocating children based on their needs with allocation primarily being led by an IRO's capacity. She added that whilst the average caseload of an IRO remains fairly consistent, there were more children coming into care in Q2 and Q4 than leaving and for a small IRO service which is often working at capacity, this creates additional pressure on IRO's and in turn impacts on IRO's being able to review care plans within 20 working days of the child coming into care.

She informed the Panel that the IRO service was instrumental in supporting children to participate in the Bright Spots 'Your Life, Your Care' 2020-2021 survey which was undertaken between February and April 2021. She said that this saw 40 children in care aged between 4-18 years old taking part in the survey.

She stated that in this reporting period there were eight formal escalations and thirty-nine informal escalations made by IRO's. She added that themed audits are to be undertaken with these being identified by the themes emerging from the quality assurance activity within the service and the data reports.

She said that she was proud of the service for continuing to provide support in such a challenging environment.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty said that she felt the challenges that were being faced by the service. She asked how much of a factor was monitoring children in out of area placements, especially those who are unaccompanied, asylum seeking and trafficked children.

The Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (Children and Young People) replied that on average B&NES had been receiving 5-6 children within this category a year, but this is increasing with approximately 16 unaccompanied, asylum seeking and trafficked children being placed in Q1 and Q2 of 2022-2023. She added that children placed out of area should be visited every six weeks by their social worker and that placement stability is always an important consideration within a child's review. IRO's travel to see children in person despite the location of where they live.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she could sense the frustration regarding capacity within the service. She added that she felt the service was doing a fantastic job, but needed more support.

She asked if the numbers of children in care continues to rise were there any contingency plans/risk analysis in place as to how this might impact on the care of

children. She added that if the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children continues to grow are there any contingency plans in place to cope.

The Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (Children and Young People) replied that capacity was not just an issue relating to asylum seeking children, there were also safeguarding matters leading to more children being unable to remain with their families and being placed in the care of the Local Authority. She added that she felt that there was a need to think about how further support can be provided for the service.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to;

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

### **63 DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION - 6 MONTH UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services & Education introduced the report to the Panel and highlighted the following points from within it.

#### Virtual School

It has been a busy but successful year, including a highly positive OFSTED report. We have supported not only our Children Looked After cohort but also expanded to provide support for most vulnerable pupils open to a social worker.

Like our Social Care colleagues, the Virtual School supports a growing number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. The Virtual School has appointed a dedicated officer to oversee this complex area of work to support this work.

#### Schools Standards Board

The Schools Standards Board continues to meet to facilitate discussions on area-wide education priorities with the Local Authority and the Regional Directors Group. The next meeting is on the 15th of November. The agenda will focus on delivering the LA's Safety Valve Plan, along with information on the Poverty Proofing schools, early analysis, and information sharing around education performance.

#### Children Services Workforce

We continue to experience significant demands within Children's Services with regard to increased complexity of family's presenting issues and this is likely to be exacerbated with the cost-of-living crisis.

Nationally, we are seeing significant workforce pressures in relation to the recruitment and retention of child protection social workers, and this is becoming increasingly evident within B&NES. We are working closely with HR colleagues to monitor and review this frequently to stabilise the workforce and minimise any impact this may have for our families and communities.

#### Foster Care - recruitment and celebration

The Children's Transformation Programme includes a Fostering Recruitment and Retention project, which seeks to increase the numbers of in house foster carers, retain current fostering households, and improve on the support and training we provide to carers.

The project has been successful, and we have seen a rise in the number of foster carer households in B&NES. However, this has been offset in part, by a rise in the number of children coming into the care of the Local Authority. The rise in care numbers is a national issue and B&NES continues to be in line with our statistical neighbours and below national averages.

#### Youth Justice

Following a consultation with children and professionals, the Youth Offending Service is renaming itself the Youth Justice Service. This recognises the importance of taking a 'child first' approach and whilst the statutory requirement to prevent youth offending remains in place and is a priority in all our work, retaining the word 'offending' in the organisation's name would not have reflected our focus on children's holistic needs. Use of the word 'justice' also reflects our commitment to those harmed by children and our work to offer them involvement in restorative responses.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty said that she was worried about the pressure on services as a whole and asked if staff were well supported.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that staff were very well supported and that the majority of a senior and middle managers have been retained.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that nationally we are seeing significant workforce pressures in relation to the recruitment and retention of child protection social workers and that this had become increasingly evident in B&NES. She said that as we as Councillors have been informed we will need to cut spending and asked will the resources be available to recruit social workers.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that there are significant recruitment challenges for child protection social workers. Children's Services are currently reliant on agency social workers. However, high quality social worker agency staff are in place. Children's Services are seeking to recruit and retain permanent staff where possible.

Councillor Hardman asked if there are enough resources available for the care experience service in B&NES to provide a service to approximately 100 additional care experience young adults.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the service is submitting a request for additional care leavers capacity as part of the Local Authority's annual budget planning cycle. The service aims to ensure that the care plan of every child or young person is executed as best we can.

Councillor Hardman asked if there are plans in place to deal with the informal escalations raised that are mentioned within the Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that there are and that the escalations process had been put in place by the Council to formally address any concerns raised.

Kevin Burnett asked if there was any update on when Avon & Somerset Police will fully put into place Operation Encompass.

The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that she would contact them regarding progress and any potential date.

The Chairman thanked her for her update on behalf of the Panel.

#### **64 PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the workplan as printed.

The meeting ended at 12.25 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**