

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00PM ON  
THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2021  
VENUE: SAND MARTIN HOUSE, PETERBOROUGH**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors G Casey (Chair), I Ali, A Dowson, T Haynes, S Hemraj, D Jones, N Moyo, L Robinson, B Rush

**Co-opted Members:** Sameena Aziz, Parish Councillor June Bull, Peter Cantley, Flavio Vettese, Al Kingsley

**Officers Present:** Lou Williams, Director, Children's Services  
Jonathan Lewis – Service Director, Education  
Kathryn Goose, Head of children and young people's mental health commissioning and transformation (C&PCCG)  
Carol Anderson, Chief Nurse, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group  
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Also Present:** Councillor Lynn Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University  
Councillor Ray Bisby, Cabinet Advisor to Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University

**19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fenner, Councillor Imtaiz Ali, Cllr Lane and Councillor Hussain. Cllr Hemraj attended as substituted for Cllr Imtaiz Ali.

Apologies for absence were also received from Co-opted Member Mohammed Younis.

**20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations received.

**21. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**22. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS**

There were no call-ins received at this meeting.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Chief Nurse accompanied by the Head of Children and Young People's mental health commissioning and transformation introduced the report. The report provided the committee with information regarding mental health services provided to children and young people.

The committee were informed that since the pandemic there had been an unprecedented increase in the number of referrals for mental health services. The children being presented were also acutely unwell and much sicker than they had previously been, children's mental health was complex.

The Children's Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHST) had provided continuing and valuable support during the pandemic. By the end of 2024 there would be ten teams in place across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

YOUnited a new early intervention service had started on 1st July 2021. It was a jointly commissioned service between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. YOUnited was a partnership between Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation NHS Trust, Cambridgeshire Community Services, Centre 33, and Ormiston Families. The service had a central referral hub by which professionals could refer children and young people for a range of mental health concerns.

There had been a significant increase in young people presenting with eating disorders which had been a reflection of the national picture.

A revised delivery model for the children's crisis service commenced in April 2021. It has provided mental health crisis support for those aged up to 17 years who were at immediate risk to self or others, those at risk of a mental health hospital admission, those experiencing an acute psychological or emotional distress that was impacting significantly on their daily activities. The service provided assessment for those children and young people in a mental health crisis in either the emergency department or in the community.

In addition, a home treatment team was being development to provide more intensive home support for a defined period of time. The aim of the team was to provide support for up to 4 – 6 weeks following assessment. The team was currently being recruited to and once there was sufficient staff in post the service would commence delivery.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members noted that there were lots of different organisations involved and wanted to know who was co-ordinating the service provision and where the budget for recruitment came out of. The Head of Children and Young People's Mental Health Commissioning and Transformation advised that part of her role was to work with the various organisations and providers. The website 'Keep Your Head' was used to keep all of the information together in one place and one of the small charity organisations was commissioned to keep the website working and up to date. However, information on the links to other individual organisations websites was reliant on them keeping their own websites up to date.
- Funding was complicated and sat in different places and the priority was to ensure that the voice of children and young people was heard. There were elements of

recurrent and non-recurrent funding, some of which was pump primed and had to be bid for. Some small schemes were non-recurrent funding and were put in place due to a current pressure and therefore would not be needed going forward.

- Members sought further clarification on data for eating disorders. Was there a metric around timeliness of referrals and what was the average response time? Members were informed that all routine referrals that came through YOUnited were screened within 48 hours to assess the risk and if the case needed to be escalated. The ambition with YOUnited was that all young people would be assessed within 4 weeks. NICE guidance stated that urgent cases for eating disorders should be seen within a week and routine cases within four weeks. Currently urgent cases were being seen within ten days, but the challenge was that the routine cases were having to wait longer than four weeks and nearer to eight weeks and those that were initially routine were becoming more poorly, and therefore becoming urgent. The service was therefore looking at different models that might include the use of various technology to support families during that time and also group support.
- Members wanted to know what percentage of referrals were deemed urgent compared to non-urgent referrals. The Officer advised that the information was not at hand and would respond after the meeting.
- Members sought clarification on the status of the current Local Transformation Plan (LTP) with regard to the challenges of population growth, diversity, deprivation and mental health ratios now that mental health cases had risen considerably. Members were informed that the Local Transformation Plan would come to an end this year. A link within the report provided a summary of where the work had got to on the LTP. Work had commenced on what work needed to be done next and data was being collected on all areas that the councillor had identified. There was also a need to think about inequalities and how standards could be raised for those groups affected. There would be a period of consultation with all groups and the voice of young people and what they wanted would be key.
- Members referred to neurodevelopmental pathways and wanted to know how well the system was performing under the current pressures and if it had been impacted by Covid. Members were informed that Covid had impacted waiting times. Peterborough had worked with a range of online providers to see if they could assist with delivering services online, some of the parenting programmes were being delivered online. Some of the neurodevelopment assessments had to be done face to face which had proved to be a challenge during the pandemic. The waiting time had not reached two years as yet.
- Members referred to Schools Based Support and wanted to know if there had been any schools which had been identified as exemplars for best practice in promoting the health and wellbeing of their staff and pupils and sharing what they did. Members were informed that there had been exemplars of good practice and in particular a school in Cambridgeshire who had a very good protocol and thought about the whole school approach. This was where the Mental Health Competency Framework came from.
- Were there any updates on the work that the Peterborough YMCA were doing in collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust and the personal, social, and health education service (PSHE) to develop a training programme for staff, and teaching resources for staff to use with pupils with eating disorders? Members were informed that the YMCA work was being led by Public Health and an update could be provided after the meeting.
- It was up to individual schools to come forward and ask for support from the Mental Health Support Teams (MHST). There were some national elements required to be

in place like space and being a supervisory school but also the willingness to engage in the process.

- Tier 4 Mental health inpatient beds were commissioned on a national basis and managed by a regional network of providers called a Provider Collaborative, this included children inpatient eating disorder beds and child and adolescent mental health inpatient beds, as well as some adult mental health provision. If a bed was not available locally then one would be sought as close to home as possible depending on the needs of the individual and bed availability at the time.
- Short term funding support had been given to some voluntary organisations who had been struggling through the pandemic.
- Transition workers were available to assist young people transitioning from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to adult services.
- Members wanted to know what was being done to capture accurate data and measure the impact of the pandemic to ensure this was fed into the Mental Health Strategy to ensure the best possible support for children and young people in the future. Members were informed that a lot of research was being conducted and that it was still too early to understand the true impact of the pandemic. The longer term impact was still being assessed as was the rise in eating disorder cases and whether this would decline after the pandemic or was this the new normal.
- Members commented that the BAME community had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and wanted to understand what was being done regarding a culturally sensitive approach to support young people whose family had been affected by Covid. Was the team working with these communities reflective of the ethnic backgrounds? The Officer advised that she would have to check with the service providers as to what the cultural diversity was in their teams. It was hoped that the workforce of local charities would be more reflective of their communities. NHS workforces must report annually on age, demographics and diversity of their workforce and the results of this would be published in March. Officers advised that services had historically been delivered in a standard way and needed to be adapted more to suit the needs of the communities to which they were being delivered. Covid had assisted in moving this forward and allowed some services to be delivered in a more flexible way.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending the meeting to present their report and for answering questions from members of the Committee.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report along with the transformation and challenges that were facing children and young people's mental health provision.
2. The Committee requested that the Head of Children and Young People's Mental Health Commissioning and Transformation provide the following information:
  - What percentage of referrals were deemed urgent compared to non-urgent referrals, and;
  - Updates on the work that the Peterborough YMCA were doing in collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust and the personal, social, and health education service (PSHE) to develop a training programme for staff and teaching resources for staff to use with pupils with eating disorders.

## 24. ANNUAL CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS REPORT 2020/21

As the Customer Service Manager was unable to attend the meeting the Director of Children's Services introduced the report which had been brought to the committee to allow Members to scrutinise complaints received under the Children's (Social Care) Services statutory complaints process.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members noted that there had been a significant reduction in Stage 1 complaints during 2020/21. It was also noted that to relieve pressure on services during the first lockdown most complaint processes had been put on hold during this period. Members sought clarification as to how the figures were being compared with previous years. Members were informed that it had been difficult to compare to previous years due to the impact of pandemic and the figures should be treated as standalone for this year.
- Members sought clarification as to what training had been offered to staff on such things as showing empathy, using stereotypical language or being abrupt. The Director of Children's Services explained the different complaint category types and advised that they were set categories. The figures for staff attitude and conduct had been lower than in previous years. The nature of a social workers role required empathy however if a member of staff had consistently been the cause of complaint, then further training would be provided, and monitoring put in place. The role of a social worker included continuous learning.
- Members noted that there was a budget for complaint handling and a budget holder that managed it and wanted to know if the system was robust. Members were informed that the Customer Service Manager was the budget holder. Very few complaints went through to the Local Government Ombudsmen. The level of investigation costs and compensation payments could fluctuate dependent on the number of complaints and their outcomes and at times the budget may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- Members were pleased to note that the number of compliments had exceeded the number of complaints and the number of complaints had decreased. Members noted the following statement within the report *"in Peterborough we see a higher proportion of complaints coming from children and young people than many other councils. This illustrates that there is clear signposting of young people in care to the complaints process and to advocacy services by our social workers"*. Clarification was sought as to whether this meant that sign posting was less in other councils or that it was indicating an underlying systemic issue. Members were informed that the process was intended to make it easier for children and young people to come forward with complaints. There was no evidence of any systemic issues. There were many ways of knowing if the children and young people were okay, one of which was through the visits of the Independent Review Officers who were usually long serving employees. An Independent Review Officer was allocated to a child in care and stayed with that child throughout their time in care, they also managed their case reviews. If there was any indication that the child was unhappy the Independent Review Officer would escalate the issue immediately. The Children in Care Council was also very active and would have the opportunity to highlight any issues on behalf of other children. There was also an Independent Advocacy Service for children in care.
- Members were informed that there were a number of ways that learning was taken from the complaints process. Quarterly performance meetings were held and themes

from complaints were looked at and discussed to see what lessons could be learnt and training that might be needed.

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report and made no further recommendations for further scrutiny.

### **25. SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT, EDUCATION INCORPORATING THE PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION, SKILLS AND THE UNIVERSITY**

The Cabinet Member introduced the report accompanied by the Director for Education and Cabinet Advisor.

The purpose of the report was to outline the latest position on Education in Peterborough and provide a progress report on the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and University portfolio. The challenge of Covid-19 remained but the report also outlined other key areas of progress in the continual focus on improving educational outcomes.

The Cabinet Member advised that she had not been allowed to visit schools due to Covid but had attended many meetings online and had been constantly kept up to date. The Cabinet Member had been very impressed with staff in both children's services and the education service and wished to note her thanks for their dedication and hard work during these challenging times. Many social workers had continued with face to face work even during Covid which had been challenging. Education staff had been sending out daily emails to assist and support schools during Covid.

The Director for Education gave a brief overview of the report.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members referred to the Survey of Schools which was conducted every three years and the feedback received which had shown significant improvement in the creditability of the LA, but also highlighted a number of areas for further development. Members referred to paragraph 4.17 which had listed the 10 questions with the lowest scoring responses which seemed to refer to SEND and the most vulnerable people. Clarification was sought with regard to the numbers within the tables giving an example of 2.4 listed against *"The effectiveness of your LA's co-ordination of the admissions process"* for 2021. Members were informed that the survey was based upon the former Audit Commission survey of LA education services which had graded questions on a 4-point measure e.g. 1 for Poor, 2 for Adequate, 3 for Good and 4 for Excellent. Each statement in the survey was graded on one of the 4 points, the scores were then averaged to provide an overall score. Whilst the areas highlighted had low scores, they had shown some improvement since the last survey but there was still more work to be done.
- Members referred to the School Improvement Strategy and the work being done on school to school support and sought clarification as to whether this support also applied to academies. The Director for Education advised that it did apply to academies and that working together was key and the way forward.
- Members referred to the Written Statement of Action for SEND and noted that one of the areas for improvement was noted as *"Early support is well embedded for children in early years but does not follow through in all areas of the lives of children and young people as they get older. It takes too long for children, young people and families to get the support they need"*. Members praised the wonderful team of staff supporting

children with special educational needs but noted that it was a small team. Members were concerned that the current rise in demand for the service may continue and that the current team may not be able to cope and wanted to know how they would respond. Members were advised that the increase in demand was related to Covid and there had been an increase in complexity of need that had not been seen before. It was a trend that needed to be planned for and some work had already been done on growing trajectories one of which was severe learning difficulties. The plan was to increase capacity in teams where demand was high.

- Covid-19 Response. The Director advised Members that the LA had been working closely with the vaccination provider looking at areas where either consent was low or where there would be challenges. Data was available on who had received the vaccines but there was no data available yet on those that had had Covid to match those who had had the vaccine. The main focus was to improve the vaccination rates and information was being sent out to parents to advise them on this and where vaccinations could be provided.
- Members referred to the section on “*Demand for Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)*” and noted that some wards had got zero places available and sought clarification as to why. Members were informed that research had taken place on demand and what types of activities parents were looking for and looked at existing providers and what they could offer. Unfortunately, some areas of the city did not have existing providers, youth clubs or school provision which had meant limited availability in some areas. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) would be supporting this for two years which will enable the programme of activities to grow. The most deprived areas were being looked at to see how activities can be provided going forward.
- Members referred to the School Improvement Strategy and wanted to know what was new in the strategy that would make a difference to drive schools to make the necessary improvements to bring the outcomes to above national average. Members were informed that the strategy made it very clear as to what the LA responsibilities were. The previous version lacked clarity on how the LA would intervene, but this was now much clearer. There was also a section on the LA’s focus and priorities.
- Members were concerned to note that as a result of retirement and recruitment challenges in a highly competitive market, the LA had been unable to recruit to a number of key roles, including the Assistant Director School Improvement and Educational Psychologists. Members wanted to know what impact this was having on current provision and reaching this year's targets as stated in the report. Had temporary appointments or secondments been considered? Members were informed that recruitment had been incredibly challenging and the vacancy for the Assistant Director role had been vacant for approximately two half to three years. An Ofsted Inspector had been seconded into the role for a year which had made a difference but since then the service has had to manage without anyone in post. Another advert had gone out recently and there had been a strong response so hopefully the position would be filled in the near future. A lot of work was being done with the HR teams and resources were being shared with Cambridgeshire CC and a more targeted marketing approach was being looked at for the more challenging roles that needed to be filled.
- Members sought clarification as to what approach was being taken to ensure that educational buildings were carbon neutral by 2030 and how this would be pursued at strategic and operational level. The Director advised that Peterborough was an environmental city and the educational buildings that had been built had always had a strong element of carbon management and environmental features but acknowledged that it would be a challenge going forward under the current financial situation. The councils Climate Team were working with and sharing resources with

schools to ensure that the curriculum included information on climate change and carbon management.

- Members noted that SEND needs and mental health challenges were emerging and that the LA would need to respond to support this and broker additional services to support children but that no additional funding was available. Was data being captured to understand this and would this be reflected in the School Improvement Strategy going forward. Members were informed that it had been difficult to capture accurate data during Covid as schools had not been consistent in their approach. The LA had a good track record of collecting data on progress, performance and expected outcomes and this will be collected in January and brought back to the committee at a future meeting. A lot of the schools had engaged with a DfE funded programme to monitor the progress of children during Covid and that had shown that there was a gap in reading and a bigger gap in maths.
- Members noted that the School Improvement Strategy provided support to schools if needed at a cost and sought assurance that the system was fair for schools that may not be able to afford the support. Members were informed that maintained schools were offered a basic school improvement service to them all. Where a school was of concern their financial situation would be taken into account and more support would be offered accordingly. There was a contingency in the budget to allow for this.
- Members noted that the current year 11 intake would be the first year to sit exams since the start of the pandemic and wanted to know if their grades would be adjusted to take account of their disrupted education. How would this be reflected in the tables of achievement for Peterborough. The Director informed Members that it would be very difficult to predict as Covid had affected different parts of the country in different ways. Data had been received throughout Covid based on teacher assessments. Ofqual had advised that examinations would take place in the summer of 2022 but that schools would be required to continue to collect information on students' performance and progress and create a portfolio to allow for the situation where children may not be able to access the exams.
- Members wanted to know if discussions had taken place with Higher Education establishments about the acceptance of students who had had their education disrupted due to Covid. The Director advised that discussions had taken place and schools were focussing on skills, the gap would most likely be knowledge. The Government had therefore announced that they would be putting more money in to 16 to 18 catch up. There would also be a catch programme at universities in the first year.
- Members wished to note the dedication and good work of the School Governors especially during Covid. The Director acknowledged this and felt that their role had been critical during Covid and had been understated.
- Members noted that the multipliers used to calculate demand for school places from children living within new developments underpinned the forecasts for pupil numbers. The forecasts then formed the basis for either negotiation with developers as part of a S106 agreement, to support the Council's case for its infrastructure requirements to be funded via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), or for bids into DfE capital funds. Members sought clarification as to why the average number of children that might reasonably be expected in individual properties was then taken rather than the maximum to allow for growth. The Director responded that he would need to get a formal response from the officers who dealt with this.
- Members referred to paragraph 4.5 of the Peterborough Education Organisation Plan which referred to "*What are the pressures? How are we responding?*" Members noted that The Cambridgeshire Post 16 Review which was published in September 2020 investigated where school leavers in Peterborough continued their Post 16



education and approximately 2% were classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET). Members wanted to know what the impact Covid had had on those not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Director for Children's Services advised that this fell within his remit and would provide a briefing paper.

- Members wanted to know if the measures in place to protect the most vulnerable learners and young people during school holidays were constantly under review. Members were informed that the measures in place were reviewed constantly, and that the Peterborough area was now classed as an enhanced response area which gave the LA additional ability to do more to support the most vulnerable, which included additional support for families during the holidays.
- The Director advised that during the pandemic there had not been much migration into the city but the October School Census would provide accurate information. It was however anticipated that the current baby boom would need to be factored into school place planning in four years' time.

The Chair thanked the Director for Education for all of his emails to schools and the support that had been provided over the last eighteen months which had been greatly appreciated by all schools and school governors.

### **AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the position of Education around Covid-19 and wider activities and comment on areas the committee may wish to review moving forward as we move into the next stage of recovery.
2. Provide feedback on the School Improvement Strategy, the updated School Organisation Plan and the Sufficiency Strategy for early years.
3. The Committee requested that:
  - a) The Director for Education provide information on the calculation used to calculate demand for school places and why the average number of children that might reasonably be expected in individual properties was then taken rather than the maximum to allow for growth.
  - b) The Director for Children's Services provide a briefing note on the impact Covid had had on those not in education, employment or training (NEET) Post 16.
  - c) The Director for Education to arrange a training session for the committee on the school funding formula, followed by a report to the committee on school finances at a future meeting.

## **26. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, containing decisions which the Leader of the Council anticipated Cabinet or Cabinet Members would take over the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Forward Plan and where appropriate identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

### **AGREED ACTIONS**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions which identified any relevant items for inclusion within their work programme.

**27. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022**

The Chair introduced the report which considered the work programme for the municipal year 2021/22 and asked the committee if they had any further items that they would wish to be considered for the work programme. No items were suggested at the meeting. The Chair therefore suggested that if items were forthcoming in between meetings that they could be directed to the Senior Democratic Services Officer who would add them to a list for discussion at the next Group Representatives / Agenda Setting meeting.

**AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the work programme for 2021/2022.

The date of next meeting was noted as being:

- 20 January 2022 – Children and Education Scrutiny Committee

Chair

7.00pm to 8.50pm