

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00PM, ON  
MONDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2020  
VIRTUAL MEETING: PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL'S YOUTUBE PAGE**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors D Over (Chairman), G Casey, A Coles, N Day, A Dowson, T Haynes, S Lane, M Nadeem, L Robinson, B Rush, H Skibsted

Co-opted Members: Peter Cantley, Flavio Vettese, Clare Watchorn, Al Kingsley, Rizwan Rahemtulla and Parish Councillors Susie Lucas and Dr Sridhar

**Officers Present:** Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director, People and Communities  
Jonathan Lewis, Service Director, Education  
Toni Bailey, Assistant Director (SEND & Inclusion)  
Nicola Curley, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Helen Freeman, Commissioning Team Manager- Healthy Child Programme  
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Also Present:** Councillor Ayres, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University

**11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goodwin and Councillor Nadeem was in attendance as substitute.

**12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Over declared that he was a Trustee of the Soke Education Trust.

**13. MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**14. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISION**

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

**15. SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION UPDATE REPORT**

The Director of Education introduced the report. The report provided the latest position

on Covid-19 for Education in Peterborough following the reopening in September. The report also covered issues raised by members of the committee at the October meeting.

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

- Members noted that new guidance had been issued from the DfE regarding Elective Home Education. The DfE strongly recommended that LAs worked with schools, parents and carers, and other key professionals (such as social workers) to coordinate a meeting before the parent made a final decision. This would ensure the parent fully considered what was in the best interests of each individual child. This was particularly important where vulnerable children and those at greatest risk of harm were involved. Members wanted to know if additional resources would be forthcoming from the government to support this. The Service Director advised Members that it was unlikely that additional resources would be forthcoming but was confident that the small number of cases coming through could be dealt with within the current resources available. If the guidance became legislation it was hoped that the government would recognise that additional capacity was needed and therefore provide additional resources.
- Members sought assurance that the Covid prevention measures that had been put in place in schools were working. Members were informed that children only spent 13% of their time in school settings and therefore it was difficult to control what happened outside of the school setting. The LA had done very well compared to other Local Authorities in that no school had been closed, however there were areas of concentrated cases, but this was not down to a lapse in or lack of preventative measures being put in place. The Service Director was confident that the risk assessments that had been put in place were robust.
- Members noted that the new regulations regarding staff who were extremely vulnerable had come into force and wanted to know if this had created any significant challenges for school leaders in terms of staffing their schools and providing education for all pupils. Members were informed that so far there had not been a significant impact. School leaders had reported that there had been no gaps in delivering the curriculum. The DfE had not provided additional funding for additional hours and supply teachers and this was placing an additional burden on the LEA. Support was being provided to those staff affected by the new regulations so that they could either work from home or continue to go into school.
- Members noted that the report had stated that the government had reduced its allocated of laptops which were provided for those pupils who were 'digitally' disadvantaged to enable them to access learning remotely and wanted to know if there were any other ways the LEA could support schools. The Service Director advised Members that the allocation had been cut by up to 75% which had been very disappointing, and the LEA were trying to understand the rationale behind this change. The LEA had reached out to charities that refurbish laptops and provided this information to schools. Some schools had bought laptops for Children in Care and the LEA had also provided some for Children in Care. It was a challenging situation which would become more challenging if larger groups of children were to be sent home to work remotely. All schools were however ready to provide printed copies of work for students without access to a laptop. The LEA were seeking support from anyone who would be able to assist with the provision of laptops.
- Members noted that there was a national shortage of Educational Psychologists and that due to funding restraints further recruitment of Educational Psychologists could not take place. Members were concerned as to what impact this would have on the delivery of the EHCP's and statutory assessments. Members were informed that not as much preventative work was being done as was liked but resources were being diverted into delivering the statutory process.
- Members sought further information regarding Elective Home Education and were advised of the following:

- Since producing the report the number of children receiving Elective Home Education had risen to 500. Some parents were choosing to send their children back into school, but the numbers were increasing overall.
- The new guidance from the DfE regarding Elective Home Education had been welcomed and would allow the LEA to intervene and assist with any school / parent disagreements.
- The role of the LEA was still limited with regard to Elective Home Education. It provided a safeguarding role and educational standards role. The LEA were allowed to ask questions about the curriculum being taught but only at a distance. Samples of work could be asked for and a home visit could be requested but only if the parent agreed.
- If the LEA were not satisfied with the education being provided and there was extreme cause for concern a School Attendance Order could be issued requesting the child to attend school.
- Ofsted did check that students were not leaving school at key points in the year e.g. SATs, GCSE's and the LEA did monitor the numbers off rolling to home education. Whilst this was not an issue in Peterborough the new DfE guidance would assist with identifying issues of off rolling at key points in the year.
- It was very difficult to assess if there was an impact on the outcomes of children who were home educated as the LEA did not get to see the results of their exams and their results did not count towards the overall LEA outcomes.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, Skills and University advised the Committee that there had been some concern about Elective Home Education over the past few months. The Cabinet Member had attended East of England Network meetings to discuss Elective Home Education and the possibility of more powers for Local Authorities with hopefully additional funding. Essex County Council had recently conducted a survey and produced a report on the subject. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council would be looking at the report and considering the findings in some depth and putting views forward to the Education Select Committee undertaking an inquiry into 'Home Education'. Parents would need to understand that if a child was taken out of school and home educated that they may not be able to return to the same school if they decide to not home educate in the future. The meetings now in place before the parents made a final decision on home education would ensure that this was understood.
- Members commented that home education was not always a bad thing and could offer a wide and rich education.
- Members wanted to know how recruitment would take place for the National Tutoring Programme and if schools could access enough tutors for the programme. Members were informed that since writing the report Government had made 31 providers nationally available. Peterborough have been working with the Schools Tuition Partnership which was run by an education provider and had provided positive engagement with many of the city's schools. The benefit of this provision was that it allowed schools to register their own tutors directly with them. Existing teachers that were full time could not be used and were not allowed to over recruit teachers. The tutors ranged from fully qualified to graduates. Government paid three quarters of the costs which was a benefit.
- Members wanted to know what support was being provided to Head Teachers. Members were informed that the LEA had provided a huge amount of support to Head Teachers and had also provided Governor briefing sessions on how best to support Head Teachers. The council's Employee Assistance Programme had also been made available to all staff at LA Maintained schools. The school clusters also provided added support. There had been no sickness issues to date but it was being closely monitored during these challenging circumstances.
- Members referred to The Greater Peterborough University Technical College

(GPUTC) and had noted the GPUTC were currently consulting on changing the school's current age range from Years 9-13 to Years 7-13. Members sought assurance that the college would be able to recruit the required specialist staff to provide a broad Key Stage 3 curriculum for year 7 pupils. Members were informed that it had been a challenging opening to the school, but it was now being supported by a strong Multi Academy Trust and were making good progress. There would be a full Key Stage 3 offer available.

- Members sought clarification on what students would do if they decided that they did not wish to continue to Key Stage 4 at the GPUTC and, would this preclude students from other schools joining GPUTC at Key Stage 4 if all places were taken by those who started in year 7. Members were informed that there would be a number of places held back at Key Stage 4 for those wishing to join the college at Key Stage 4 from other schools. In addition, there would be a year 9 and year 10 entry point. The Service Director would provide a response after the meeting with regard to what would happen if students decided not to continue to Key Stage 4 at the college and provide a curriculum map.
- The approach being taken by the UTC was slowly happening across the country although not many had gone down to Year 7 intake. It was an exciting development and would provide a diverse and sustainable offer at the UTC to avoid losing the UTC.
- Members sought clarification as to why Ofsted had reported that 'remote learning was 'not aligned' to the curriculum and wanted to know if this was because resources sent home were different to that being used in the classroom. Members were informed that the Ofsted survey started in September and it reflected back to the period when schools were closed. This was when there had been no lead time into the schools closing and therefore no planning had been done and very little education had taken place between March and June due to the closure of all year groups apart from children of key workers and vulnerable children. There had been no flow in continuity of education at that time, but this had now changed, and the curriculums had been reset and most schools had planned for the term and prepared resources ready for the eventuality of remote learning. There was also a lot more remote live learning happening now.
- The Service Director advised that he would provide a briefing note regarding the criteria for the allocation of Early Years funding.
- Covid had impacted on the Year of Reading but there was no data available to measure outcomes. There was however some qualitative and quantitative data that could be shared and would be reported on in the next Service Director update report to the committee. Adult literacy skills were just as important, and an update report could be provided at a future meeting.
- A small grant had been made available to schools from March to July for exceptional costs which was limited to cleaning if a Covid case was detected, opening in the Easter Holidays and Free School Meal vouchers. Government were being lobbied for additional funding. Covid would cause additional financial pressure particularly in smaller schools.
- Free school meals. If schools were struggling, then they could approach the Hub for assistance but to date no schools had approached either the LA or the Hub for assistance.
- Standardised baseline tests were being used to establish a baseline of what pupils know and could remember post-'lockdown', and what it was that individuals had forgotten or not understood. Subsequent testing could then help to establish how far additional tuition and tutoring had helped to close pupils' learning gaps. Anecdotally what was being reported back was that reading, and writing had suffered more than maths in primary schools and in secondary schools' students were struggling with the curriculum breadth in core subjects and the wider subjects. Further detail would be provided in the next Service Director update report.

- Members wanted to know if the school leaders had found the recent Ofsted visits to be supportive and of value. Members were informed that Ofsted visits had been conducted remotely and their approach had been appropriate and measured and reports had been very brief and tended to concentrate on a school's actions. No feedback on areas of improvement had been provided which would have been helpful.
- Members noted that there were 10 Young People (care leavers) who were studying at university and wanted to know what proportion of the total number of care leavers this represented and how their particular success were being used to inspire young people in care. The Service Director advised that he provide this information in his next service update report.
- Government guidance had been clear that exams would happen next year. Centre assessed grades would be very important along with a solid set of mock examinations. Government had advised that the curriculum would be narrowed in some circumstances but further clarification from the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (*Ofqual*) and Examining Boards on what this would look like had not yet been received.

Members thanked the Service Director for Education for all the support and guidance that had been provided for school leaders during the pandemic.

#### **AGREED ACTIONS**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the position of Education around Covid-19 and comment on areas to review moving forward into a recovery phase.
2. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee requested that the Service Director for Education include the following information in the next Service Director update report:
  - a. The Greater Peterborough University Technical College (GPUTC). Provide information with regard to what students would do if they decided that they did not wish to continue to Key Stage 4 at the GPUTC, including a curriculum map to show what other opportunities there were available to students.
  - b. Provide qualitative and quantitative data on the impact on reading during Covid.
  - c. Provide further information on Standardised baseline tests and what these had shown with regard to the progress of students
  - d. Provide information on what proportion of the total number of care leavers had gone to university and how had their particular success been used to inspire young people in care.
3. The Service Director for Education to provide a briefing note regarding the criteria for the allocation of Early Years funding.

#### **16. WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) - (SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)**

The Assistant Director (SEND & Inclusion) introduced the report which provided the Committee with an outline on the latest position with regard to the LA's response to the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) following the SEND Area Inspection conducted by Ofsted and Health authorities.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary,

key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members noted that the impact of COVID had been massive on the progress of some areas of the action plan which were rated as RED and wanted to know how those areas would be dealt with over the coming months to ensure progress was made. Members were informed that groups of people were working on individual work streams and whilst some had more of a health angle and others an educational or social care angle, all teams were supporting each other. However, those areas with purely a health angle had made less progress due to it being health specific related which meant others could not always assist but the groups continued to support each other where possible.
- Members sought further clarification about the Quality Assurance Framework for SEND and what the main findings of the Quality Assurance had been particularly over the second half of the summer term. Members were informed that a Quality Assurance Officer had been recruited and had started in post in September. Since commencement of the role, the officer had been conducting an audit of the Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) and had produced a report outlining the key strengths and areas of development that needed to be worked on in terms of improving the EHCP's. Generally, the EHCP's were found to be robust, however there were some areas around the co-operation between education, social care and health and how strong each individual element was, which needed to be worked on to ensure the EHCP's were not just about education.
- There had been a number of new posts one of which was the Quality Assurance Officer and three new transition posts which had been intended to come in and support in key areas, such as annual reviews. It was too early to assess the impact of these new positions.
- Members referred to out of area placements and wanted to know if consideration had been given to providing more placements within the Local Authority (LA). The Officer advised that he did not have the current data regarding placements at the meeting but there had been a growth of out of area placements due to the limited amount of placements within the LA at special schools and the mainstream schools. The LA were looking at increasing the number of hubs within the LA for children with increasingly complex needs to try and keep as many children as close to home as possible. This had proved to be a challenge due to the increasing numbers of children with complex needs.
- Members noted that waiting times for secondary aged ASD and ADHD have increased due to the pausing of assessments in response to COVID-19, however, these have now been recommenced and asked if the waiting lists could be quantified as to how they were progressing. The Officer did not have the data available at the meeting and would have to refer to health colleagues. The Executive Director for People and Communities informed Members that requests for assessments had dropped and there was concern that this had been due to the lockdown. Data and narrative around this would be provided to the committee via a briefing note.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to commend the efforts to address all the workstream actions within the Written Statement of Action, especially within a challenging landscape caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee requested that the Executive Director, People and Communities provide data and narrative regarding the waiting times for secondary aged ASD and ADHD assessments which had recently paused due to COVID-19 but had now recommenced and how they were progressing.

**17. UPDATE ON EARLY HELP, OLDER CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND THE BEST START IN LIFE PROGRAMME**

The Assistant Director, Children's Services accompanied by the Commissioning Team Manager- Healthy Child Programme introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the Early Help / Older Children and Vulnerable Adolescent / Mental Health Strategy and the Best Start in Life Programme.

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

- Members referred to the Best Start in Life Strategy and the key challenges listed, in particular *Impact 1, Children live healthy lives* and noted that nothing had been mentioned about the impact on nutrition through poverty and felt that this was relevant for this section. Members were informed that nutrition and healthy lifestyles was a key component of the health visiting offer. Poverty was covered through the broader system. The Commissioning Team Manager advised that this element would be looked at more closely to ensure that the impact on nutrition through poverty was not lost with a view to making the connection in this section stronger.
- Members sought clarification with regard to the Place Based Pilots and how these would work in areas where there were no children's centres. Members were informed that the location of the first pilots were chosen because they were geographically dispersed and areas of high need. Learning would be captured from these pilots so that best practice could be applied to other areas at different types of locations. It was important that Place Based solutions were put in place that were appropriate for each community.
- Members were impressed with the work that had been put in place so far.
- Members sought further information regarding the support being provided to young mothers and people who may not be able to easily access the help on offer. Members were informed that there was some very good practice in place already and this would continue. As part of the Healthy Child Programme there was the Family Nurse Partnership which supported the most vulnerable young parents with more complex needs. There was also the Enhanced Young Parents Offer which provided a named person for young parents to contact and talk to about any issues and included more visits. The Children's Centres also had a duty to offer additional support to young parents including peer support.
- Since the pandemic more families had required additional support. It was anticipated that there would be an increase in deprivation and therefore even more parents would find it difficult to manage as a consequence of the pandemic. Current resources were being maximised at the same time as trying to understand how early help could be better targeted. Best Start in Life was about a supported and universal offer with additional areas of support. As children became older it was about targeted intervention at an early stage to prevent escalation when things started to become difficult for children and their families.
- The Assistance Director for Children's Services acknowledged how flexible and supportive Teachers and Heads of Schools had been during the pandemic and that ongoing support from schools and partners would still be required.
- Members sought clarification on whether the Place Based model would address accessibility in rural areas. The Assistance Director recognised that it was often easier to support people in urban areas and that was why the pilots had been deliberately placed in a variety of locations including a rural area to identify what the different challenges were and how they could be overcome. One of the benefits of the pandemic had been that services had looked to see how their service could be delivered in different ways including virtually.

- Members sought clarification with regard to funding of the BSIL programme and if the programme was at risk due to lack of funding going forward. Members were informed that funding was not currently an issue and that the main issues was capacity and timescales. Some resources had been taken off the programme to work on Covid related issues. The desire to run the programme properly might mean that some pilots may have to run for a longer period of time.
- Measuring success of Early Help was not always possible until sometime afterwards. A further piece of work needed to be done around how the right families could be targeted for help. One of the outcomes would be a much tighter dataset to measure against.
- Members referred to the ISOS Partnership report and were concerned at some of the findings and in particular the following statements and wanted to know plans were in place to remedy the findings in the report:
  - *“In Peterborough the overall financial position has created a situation in which an already small service has been reduced even further. The capacity to carry out direct family work is now around 1 full time worker for every 780 deprived child or young people (excluding the early help element of Targeted Youth Support Service and children’s centre staff).*
  - *In Peterborough this gap was particularly acutely felt as there is currently no lower-level commissioned family support offer for 12 and 13 year olds or direct 1:1 work with young people. (The core family support offer extends to age 11 and targeted youth support works with young people from 14 upwards)”*

Members were informed that funding and resources were an issue. Part of the work of the ISOS Partnership was to look at current resources and what could be done with those existing resources.

- There was an issue around the 12 to 13 year old gap but Members were assured that those children did still receive targeted support on an individual basis, but the thinking and planning around those children was the part that was missing which was currently being looked at to formulate a clear plan and strategy.

## **AGREED ACTIONS**

1. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note and comment on the continued development the Early Help / Older Children and Vulnerable Adolescent / Mental Health Strategy and Best Start in Life Programme.
2. The Committee also requested that the Commissioning Team Manager look at strengthening the Key Challenge, Impact 1, *Children live healthy lives* of the Best Start in Life Strategy to see if it could be strengthened to reflect the impact on nutrition through poverty.

## **18. 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 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**

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.



**19. Work Programme 2020/2021**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report which considered the work programme for the municipal year 2020/21.

**AGREED ACTIONS**

The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the work programme for 2020/2021

**20. Date of Next Meeting**

- 11 November 2020 – Joint Scrutiny of the Budget
- 21 January 2021 – Children and Education Scrutiny Committee

Chairman

7.00pm to 8.49pm