

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 MARCH 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Nick Holder, Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Fred Westmoreland, Cllr Philip Whalley, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Dr Mike Thompson, John Hawkins, Cllr Pat Aves (Substitute) and Catriona Williamson

Also Present:

Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Laura Mayes and Cllr Tony Jackson

13 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Christopher Devine and Hayley Illman. Councillor Illman was substituted by Councillor Pat Aves.

14 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

15 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

16 **Chairman's Announcements**

Through the Chair there were the following announcements:

The latest Covid-19 update to Cabinet was received on 2 February 2021, with the next update at the meeting on 16 March 2021. The Committee received a briefing prior to the meeting on the latest position in respect of the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people, including preparations for the reopening of schools to all pupils.

An update was provided in respect of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Chairman welcomed the inclusion of some data sets within the update and noted that it would be recommended that the Committee continue to receive updates on the Panel after the May 2021 elections.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman received a briefing on 26 February 2021 on the School Capital Programme, ahead of consideration by Cabinet on 16 March 2021.

To ensure that there would be adequate time to consider all items on the agenda for this meeting, members of the committee had been invited to submit questions in advance of the meeting. These questions, and answers, are included with these minutes.

17 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

18 **FACT (families and children's transformation) programme update**

At its meeting on 10 March 2020 the Committee had requested a further update on the FACT (Families and Children's Transformation) programme at its March 2021 meeting, to be informed of improved outcomes for young people, details of savings and costs, and achievements of the programme such as outcomes of performance reviews.

Simon Thomas, FACT Programme Lead delivered a presentation updating the Committee on development of the FACT programme in the last year, along with Martin Davis, Director of Families and Children.

It was acknowledged that as a result of the impact of Covid-19 some planned projects had not been able to be progressed, but that the FACT programme encompassed a wide range and many had been delivered or developed further, including the launch of the Support and Safeguarding Service, delivery of the Multi-agency Early Support Hub and a new Early Support Assessment in place of the common assessment framework, and delivery of Five to Thrive: Attachment, trauma and resilience training. The Stronger Families multi agency approach to supporting young people on the edge of Care to remain home with their parents, return home after a placement or maintain placement stability was considered.

It was stated the priorities during and following Covid-19 were emotional health, integrated family support, and narrowing the gap for disadvantaged families. A full review was being undertaken of FACT projects to identify key priority projects, with a monitoring framework established for previous projects.

The Committee received the update and that the ongoing FACT work should form part of further scrutiny following the May 2021 elections.

Resolved:

To note the update provided today and recommend that FACT remains an item for further scrutiny as listed in the review of the Committee's work 2017-21.

19 **Youth Voice Update**

At its meeting on 19 January 2021 the Committee received an update on the Youth Voice Team, and requested further information on the impacts of recent national lockdowns, the development of the new team, and actions planned for the future work of the team.

Sara James, Service Manager, Quality Outcomes, was in attendance. It was stated that the Youth Voice Team was expected to be fully operational by April 2021, and would begin consultation with young people and groups in the Spring. It was intended to support young people working with decision makers and assist with research projects, and details were provided of champion, consultant and ambassador roles that were planned.

The Committee expressed disappointment that a detailed action plan including milestones had not been provided, and requested that this be circulated to committee members as soon as possible, given previous plans to improve youth engagement had not been as successful as hoped. Further information was also requested regarding the impact of the youth consultant position which had been previously contracted. It was suggested that the views of young people should be given greater prominence for council decisions generally.

It was,

Resolved:

To note this update and recommend that updates on Youth Voice remain a standing agenda item for the next Children's Select Committee and that the action plan for the Youth Voice team is presented to a future meeting.

To link the work of the proposed youth provision and youth service funding task group with work undertaken by the Youth Team.

20 **Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel - Draft annual report (2020-2021)**

The draft annual report of the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel was presented by Councillor Suzanne Wickham, the Wiltshire Council representative on the panel. As this was the first annual report of panel feedback was sought on its contents and format. The report, once finalised, would then be reported to the Committee after the May 2021 elections along with the six-monthly report from Adoption West and the council's own report on adoption performance.

Councillor Wickham also stated that the panel intended to expand its membership from elected Member representatives to include adopters, adoptees and birth family members in order to provide a broad viewpoint to review the performance of Adoption West.

The Committee discussed the draft report, raising issues around ensuring Adoption West provided detailed and realistic training on the complex issues involved with adoption, the purpose of the panel and its ability to challenge and

ask questions whilst seeking to emulate council scrutiny arrangements with Adoption West . Learning programmes for panel members was also raised as a risk, though it was noted that as the members did not share the same electoral cycles there would not be entirely new membership at any one time.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the draft report of the joint scrutiny panel.

To recommend that the Children’s Select Committee receive the finalised report at its meeting in June 2021.

21 **Executive response to the Final Report of the Youth Transport Task Group**

The Youth Transport Task Group presented its final report to the Committee on 10 March 2021 in respect of public transport options available for young people. As a result of streamlined scrutiny arrangements during Covid-19, the executive response to the Task Group was deferred to this meeting.

The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor Tony Jackson, thanked the Cabinet Member for the Executive Response, noting nearly all the recommendations had been accepted. He noted the situation will have developed further since the report including in relation to budgetary constraints, and raised issues relating to traded services, that future tendering would allow for contactless payment, and that over the last year use of digital wallets for things beyond transport could be of increasing importance.

It was then,

Resolved:

To thank all involved for their work.

To note the executive response and accept the offer of an update to the Children’s Select Committee once the contents of the National Bus Strategy have been fully understood, possibly around July 2021, and at the same time an update on any decision or progress regarding a single ”Wiltshire Youth Card” (Recommendation 5).

22 **Executive Response to the Final Report of the Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education task group**

The Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education Task Group presented its final report to the Committee on 10 March 2021 in respect council services available for schools and provision of outdoor education. As a result of streamlined scrutiny arrangements during Covid-19, the executive response to the Task Group was deferred to this meeting.

The Chairman of the Task Group, Mr John Hawkins, thanked the Cabinet Member for the positive response to the report and acceptance of many of the recommendations. The work undertaken by previous task groups was acknowledged and that some elements of the report could be relevant to the Commercialism Task Group.

It was then,

Resolved:

To thank all involved for their work.

To note the executive response provided and accept the proposal of an annual update to Children's Select Committee on:

- **Progress and development for Traded Services**
- **Development of the Traded Services team**
- **The establishment of a project / governance board**

To forward recommendation 6 to the Commercialism task group for consideration and also invite the task group to consider adding a member of the Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education task group to its membership.

23 **Early Years and Childcare sufficiency**

A report was received on work undertaken by the council to meet the statutory requirement to make available sufficient childcare in the local area as further detailed in the report.

Lucy-Anne Bryant, Lead Commissioner, and Gary Binstead, Head of Commissioning, Families and Children, presented the report, providing details of 848 childcare providers registered with the council, details of percentages of children benefiting from early education entitlement and current levels of occupancy, which had improved in the last year. It was noted that some parents had not been sending children to childminders during Covid-10, and out of school club providers had limited availability which affected financial viability. The full impact on sustainability of providers was not expected to be clear until the late Summer 2021.

The Committee discussed the report and presentation, requesting details of the take up of childcare capacity and further S106 funds provided to expand in future years where this was needed.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

To note the update provided and recommend that the Children's Select Committee receives a report on Early Years and Childcare Standards at least on an annual basis; including in 2021-22:

- **Outcome of campaign to promote childcare as an attractive offer to those who are looking for an alternative career – launched by Wiltshire Council in April 2021**
- **update on the implementation of the SWAP (sector-based Work Academy Programme) course, developed with Jobcentre Plus and Family and Community Learning**
- **update on the county-wide action plan (paragraph 38 of the report refers), latest timescale being July 2021**
- **update on the work with schools regarding “wrap-around care” for school age children**

24 **Children's Select Committee - review of the committee's work (2017-21)**

The Committee was asked to review its work from 2017-21 to provide feedback on key activities, achievements and recommended ongoing work to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 9 March 2021, which would finalise a legacy report for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny after the May 2021 elections.

The report and appendices listing work undertaken by the Committee and suggested topics for briefing, rapid scrutiny exercise, task group or committee work was considered and discussed.

It was proposed that a briefing be included on the Family Learning Service, that additional work be undertaken looking into modelling and addressing demand for children in care and that Children and Adult Mental Health Services required further focus specifically on young people. It was noted that work on the Whole Life Pathway had been deferred due to Covid-19 and that this should be a priority for future work.

The Committee considered that the role of Members as Corporate Parents needed to be emphasised strongly for those who were elected in May 2021. It also noted the lengthy agendas for many meetings, and that it should be considered whether further meetings were necessary, or if some items could be focused upon between meetings and reported, to enable appropriate time could be paid to each item on an agenda.

The Chairman, Councillor Jon Hubbard, and other Members thanked officers, in particular the scrutiny team, for supporting its work, and paid tribute to those Members who were retiring as well as the Cabinet Member, Councillor Laura Mayes, for her engagement with the Committee.

At the conclusion

Resolved:

To approve Appendix 1 as a list of the Children's Select Committee's key activities and achievements during 2017-21.

To approve Appendix 2 to recommend to the Management Committee as topics requiring further work in the new Council, including topics raised during discussion, and stating a reason for inclusion.

To approve the following good practice:

- Information briefings;
- strengthening joined-up working;
- embedding the voice of young people in the work of the committee;
- managing agendas (to ensure each item can be fully considered), including the possibility of small working groups (committee members) to review annual reports ahead of committee meetings;
- shared training.

To note the next steps described in paragraph 17 of the report

25 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 8 June 2021.

26 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 2.05 - 4.10 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

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Questions submitted in advance of, and at, the Children's Select Committee meeting and answers provided as at 08 March 2021.

[Question 1 – home education \(exams\)](#)

[Question 2 – school exams](#)

[Question 3 – mass testing](#)

[Question 4 – return to school](#)

[Question 5 – EHCP](#)

[Question 6 - Agenda item 8 – Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel](#)

[Question 7 - Agenda item 11a Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency](#)

[Question 8 – childcare sufficiency and access](#)

[Information 9 – Elective home education \(update on numbers\)](#)

[Information 10 – school attendance \(update on numbers\)](#)

- 1. Home education - exams. In 2020 those young people who were home educated and due to be taking exams fell through some gaps nationally due to lack of centre assessment. How is that being considered for this year? Do we have a view of numbers in Wiltshire?**

Academic Year 2019-20: We had 6 students where concern had been expressed to us regarding examinations. Parents were advised to speak with the examining body/examination centres.

Academic Year 2020-2021: This year we have 8 students whom we are aware have expressed concerns about accessing exams. One of those does have a tutor who holds a portfolio of work and the education provider is exploring options currently for getting that work assessed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teacher-assessed-grades-for-students>

The above has been published. It provides some answers to what will happen for private candidates (e.g. EHE candidates), parents will already have paid for examination entry to centres such as schools. If those centres don't appear on the "list" that DfE produces clarity is required if parents recover costs or will they have to pay out again.

- 2. School exams. Could we have a reminder of current plans for exams due to take place in 2021? What does the council think could be issues with and / or consequences of this?**

Awarding qualifications in summer 2021

Assessment evidence

Teachers can use a range of evidence to make a judgement of the grade they are performing at. Students should only be assessed on what they have been taught, ensuring sufficient coverage of the curriculum to enable progression. When determining the grade, teachers should reflect the standard at which the student is performing now, not their potential.

Teachers should use the time remaining to balance continued teaching with any assessments they want to undertake. Work done at home can be included as evidence to support a teacher's judgement if it cannot be produced in the school or college environment because of the pandemic, and where teachers are confident that it is a student's own work.

Types of assessment evidence

Teachers can use evidence to determine grades from across the duration of the student's course.

The DfE recommends the following range of evidence is used, where available:

- student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the exam board, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers
- non-exam assessment (NEA) work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed
- student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as exam board materials and have been marked in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes - this can include:
 - substantial class or homework (including those that took place during remote learning)
 - internal tests taken by pupils
 - mock exams taken over the course of study
- records of a student's capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects such as music, drama and PE
- records of each student's progress and performance over the course of study

Making a judgement

Teachers should take account of the standard of any coursework undertaken by students in their overall judgement, including partially completed non-exam assessments where disrupted learning stopped them from completing it. Where this is the case, students should not be penalised.

Teachers should use these non-exam assessments in accordance with exam board mark schemes. Depending on the content they covered, the contribution that the non-exam assessments make to students' overall grade should in the government's view remain broadly similar to a normal year.

Exam boards will publish guidance in March, so teachers have a clear understanding of how to make fair and consistent judgements. Exam boards will also provide schools and colleges with support, guidance, and training on how to minimise the risk of bias and malpractice.

As far as possible, teachers should use the same types of evidence to form a judgment. When assessing different students in their cohort for a subject, schools and colleges should make formal reasonable adjustments for disabled students. If

evidence is produced from assessments taken earlier in the course where formal reasonable adjustments were not in place, centres will be asked to take that into account in their judgement.

Assessment materials

The exam boards will provide **assessment materials at the end of March**. These will include sets of questions organised to help teachers quickly find questions in the topics they have taught.

These questions will be provided with mark schemes, exemplar responses and data on past performance where available, to assist teachers in making fair and consistent judgements of the standard of a student's performance.

Quality assurance

How schools and college will undertake quality assurance

Exam boards will publish requirements for schools' and colleges' quality assurance processes. Exam boards will review all schools' and colleges' quality assurance processes before they submit grades.

The head teacher or principal will submit a declaration to the exam board confirming they have met the requirements for quality assurance.

Schools and colleges can decide the exact timing for when they undertake internal quality assurance, provided they complete the necessary checks before the deadline to submit grades to the exam boards on 18 June.

How exam boards will undertake quality assurance

As well as the checks of schools' and colleges' quality assurance processes, exam boards will complete checks of the evidence for a sample of student grades in a sample of subjects, in a sample of schools and colleges over June and July.

The sample of schools and colleges will take into account centre type and other characteristics of the centre and cohort. The exam boards will also check schools and colleges where concerns are highlighted as part of the initial external process checks. A check will also be triggered:

- if concerns have been raised or as a result of whistleblowing
- if a school or college's results are out of line with expectations based on past performance
- where there have been significant changes in early entries
- where schools have previously received sanctions for malpractice or an investigation is ongoing

Appeals

Every student will have the right to appeal their grade if they so wish. Before a grade is submitted, teachers should make students aware of the evidence they are using to assess them. Students will then have the opportunity to confirm the evidence is their

own work and make their teachers aware of any mitigating circumstances they believe should be taken into account.

If a student wishes to appeal, centres should undertake an initial process review to check all processes were followed correctly and no errors were made. If the school or college finds an error, they can submit a revised grade to the exam board.

If the student still wants to appeal, they will ask their school or college to submit a formal appeal to the exam board for them. The exam board will check the centre followed its own processes and exam board requirements as well as reviewing the evidence used to form their judgement and providing a view as to whether the grade awarded was a reasonable exercise of academic judgement.

If the exam board finds the grade is not reasonable, they will determine the alternative grade and inform the centre.

Results days

Students will receive their results for **A/AS levels** on the **10 August** and **GCSEs** on the **12 August**.

Results for relevant VTQs that are linked to progression to further or higher education, including some BTECs, will also be issued to students on or before these dates. Exam boards will begin to confirm their approach to VTQ results from 25 February.

Following the release of results, there will be a window for students who believe their grade is wrong to raise an appeal.

Exam boards will support schools and colleges in prioritising appeals where their outcome will determine a student's ability to progress to their next stage of education or training.

Vocational, technical and other general qualifications

This year there are 3 groups of vocational, technical and other general qualifications (VTQs) each with a different approach to awarding. Given the diversity of these qualifications, the precise arrangements will differ slightly, but they will aim to provide as much fairness to students as possible.

Ofqual will put in place the technical framework needed to implement the arrangements for each of these groups and the qualifications in scope for each.

Qualifications used for progression to further or higher education

Exams will no longer be going ahead for VTQs most similar to GCSEs, AS and A levels that are used for progression to further or higher education. This will include many performance table qualifications.

These will receive results through alternative arrangements similar to those used for GCSEs, AS and A levels. This also includes other general qualifications such as:

- the International Baccalaureate
- Pre-U

- Core Maths
- Advanced Extension Awards
- Extended Project Qualifications

Qualifications used to enter directly into employment

VTQs used to enter directly into employment, exams or assessments should continue where they:

- are critical to demonstrate occupational or professional competence
- can be delivered in line with public health measures

Exams and assessments can take place in a controlled environment where the risk of transmission is low.

Protective measures should be put in place by schools, colleges or other providers, in line with [public health guidance to support exams](#).

Where the assessment cannot take place safely it will need to be delayed.

Other qualifications

For smaller qualifications that are not like GCSEs, AS or A levels exams and assessment should continue in line with public health measures, or remotely, but with alternative arrangements available for those who cannot access assessments. This includes functional skills qualifications and English as a second language.

3. Mass testing for schools. If they all go back on March 8th are there any concerns regarding all schools being able to manage their testing processes at that point?

The demand on schools to process all the tests within the specified timescale is great. Schools are recruiting personnel to support this process; the Council is offering personnel to support schools over the two-week period.

Schools have some flexibility over the days and can start the testing in advance of the 8th, some schools are using this time to manage the process. Some schools are also phasing the return over the week commencing 8 March.

4. Return to school. What support is the council able to offer schools to help schools and students through the return to school (currently planned for 8 March 2021)

The Council is offering the following support:

- Guidance around reviewing the Risk Assessments
- Continuation of the daily register to support the partnership approach to full attendance
- A new offer from the Education Welfare Service to develop individual plans for pupils at risk of not returning from the 8 March
- Guidance from the Education Psychology service around emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)
- Public Health advice and support around testing and track & trace
- HR advice and guidance
- Curriculum support, adapting the offer to allow gaps to be addressed
- All the School Improvement Advisers are conducting supportive visits

5. EHCP - is the council planning to / able to amend any of its assessment processes, such as requests for EHCPs, bearing in mind that children have spent less time in school since March 2020, therefore probably making it more complicated for schools to prove the need for an EHCP based on “recent” evidence

We recognise the challenge associated with providing up to date information for a young person which has not been accessing in school learning due to the COVID restrictions and will continue to consider requests made on the basis of the evidence detailed in the submission received. Wherever possible, information submitted by a school as part of an EHCNA should be illustrative of a ‘plan, do, review’ approach and reflect contemporaneous information. The timeframe and requirements for EHCNA remain as described in the SEN Code of Practice, these are laid out by statute and as such cannot be adjusted or changed in any way by Wiltshire Council. Whilst temporary legislative changes to this were enacted in 2020, these have not been put in place during the most recent period of school closure.

We have not experienced a decline in the numbers of EHCP requests and the inclusion teams have continued to offer the usual level of support, both virtually and face-to-face.

6. Agenda item 8 – Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel (P33-34) The description of the role of the Scrutiny Panel appears to be self-contradictory. Its constitution prevents it from fulfilling either of its two stated functions:

- **Its role is to ensure democratic accountability. Yet it is not formed by the councils themselves.**

Answer: The panel is indeed commissioned by the Adoption West Board. However, the appointment of elected councillors on the panel is determined by each local authority's relevant overview and scrutiny (or any other committee the local authority has chosen to review the work of the panel).

Each elected councillor on the Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel can report back to the relevant committee of his or her local authority throughout the year, in a similar approach to the task group updates received at Children's Select Committee. That is something that the panel is looking to strengthen next year – regular public reporting / updates to "parent" committees – as part of its work on co-ordinating reporting on adoption for all six local authorities.

Currently, democratic accountability is also provided through the panel's annual report being publicly presented to the committees chosen by each local authority.

- **Its role is also to carry out independent scrutiny of the work of the Adoption West Board. Yet it reports directly to the AW Board which monitors its efficiency.**

Answer: The Adoption West Board monitors the efficiency of the panel through its annual report, however the annual report is independently written by the panel and also presented to public meetings for each local authority. This is a very similar approach to Wiltshire Council's process for task group's final reports.

The decision by the Adoption West Board to develop independent scrutiny of Adoption West's activities is currently seen as a positive step; however should the panel feel that it is unable to provide independent scrutiny because of this, such concerns would be reported to the local authorities.

At that point the local authorities could consider establishing a joint overview and scrutiny body to fall under the banner of 'Overview and Scrutiny' as defined by the Local Government Act 2000.

- 7. Agenda item 11a Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency. Page 77 of the agenda pack, paragraph 40. Numbers do not add up. “There are 13 safeguarding concerns; of which 6 are referred, 5 resolved and 1 ongoing (total 12?) and also 7 resolved (19?). Please could this be clarified.**

There have been 13 safeguarding concerns in 2020 /21. Six were referred to the DoFA, of which five are resolved and one is ongoing. The other seven have been resolved and closed through additional support from the School Effectiveness Team, enabling the setting to reach the required standard.

- 8. Hopefully the provision for childcare we have is in the right places and parents do not need to travel too far. Do we take into account substantial housing developments? Do we have, or plan, sufficient local childcare for these?**

Yes, we do consider any additional housing developments when we are reviewing sufficiency across the county. If demand was to increase, we would look to obtain section 106 funding in order to expand provision in the area if existing provision could not meet demand.

At the last meeting of Children’s Select Committee information was provided on Elective Home Education and attendance at schools during the third lockdown. It was agreed that an update on these would be provided at this meeting as well.

9. Elective Home Education (EHE)

Since the start of the academic year September 2020 up to the end of January 2021 there have been 266 new notifications for EHE.

Compared to September 2019 – January 2020 where there were 174 notifications this equates to a 52.87% increase

10. School attendance – headline data

Attendance Figures: Overall daily attendance snapshot Term 3 2021 (January to February 2021)

	07.01	14.01	21.01	28.01	04.02	11.02	12.02	22.02
Response rate	38%	98%	97%	97%	95%	95%	93%	90%
Total attending	3792	10340	10762	11364	11471	11728	9868	10283

Attendance snapshot

Years R to 11	14.01.21	21.01.21	28.01.21	04.02.21	11.02.21	12.02.21	22.02.21
Total pupils with a social worker	44%	46%	47%	49%	52%	45%	46%
National		41%	43%	45%			
EHCPs	34%	35%	35%	36%	38%	29%	36%
National		35%	36%	38%			
total attendance - primary	23%	24%	25%	25%			22%
National		21%	22%	23%			
total attendance - secondary	4%	5%	5%	5%			5%
National		5%	5%	5%			

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