AGENDA SUPPLEMENT (2)

Meeting: **Children's Select Committee**

Place: **Kennet Room - County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN**

Date: **Wednesday 6 July 2022**

Time: **10.30 am**

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on _**28 June 2022**_**. Additional documents are now available and are attached to this Agenda Supplement.**

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This Agenda and all the documents referred to within it are available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

2   **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** _(Pages 3 - 20)_

    6d   **Working together to improve school attendance - update** _(Pages 21 - 24)_

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 4 July 2022

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Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 JUNE 2022 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Mark Verbinnen, Dr John Hawkins and Cllr Adrian Foster (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Dominic Muns and Cllr Suzanne Wickham

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34   **Election of Chairman 2022/23**

Cllr Jon Hubbard was elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year.

35   **Election of Vice-Chairman 2022/23**

Cllr Jacqui Lay was confirmed as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year.

36   **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from:

• Cllr Kelvin Nash
• Cllr Kathryn MacDermid (substituted by Cllr Adrian Foster)
• Dr Mike Thompson

37   **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 15 March 2022, as a true and correct record.

38   **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

39   **Chairman's Announcements**

The following announcements were received through the chairman:

• Members were encouraged to read a summary of the recently published independent review of children's social care. The Corporate Director People explained that Wiltshire Council was completing a self-assessment of whether it was meeting the recommendations of the report. They were also awaiting the government's response to the independent report.
• Thanks were given to the Director of Families and Children's Services, who was due to leave his role to take up a position at Ofsted.
• Congratulations were passed to the Head of Service of Support and Safeguarding, who would be stepping up to be Interim Director of Families and Children's Services.
• It was explained that Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had received a report about proposed changes in the way that it engaged with financial, corporate and organisational matters. The chairman then highlighted the following proposals that had been agreed at their meeting on 19 May:

> ➢ The focus of the Financial Planning Task Group will remain on the council's overall financial position, but it will also review, by exception, the financial implications of the council's biggest contracts.
> ➢ Select committees will continue to focus on the service impacts of proposals but retain their ability to query and flag any financial concerns they identify and to refer them to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for further investigation.

• The committee were encouraged to take into consideration the recommendations when looking at items within its remit.
• The following items in Cabinet's forward work programme were highlighted as relevant to the committee:

> ➢ 21 June – Capital Strategy for Early Years provision
> ➢ Children's Centre Services Contract Extension
> ➢ Public Health Nursing Services: future delivery model
> ➢ 12 July – Wiltshire Independent Living Strategy 2022-2027
> ➢ Domestic Abuse External grant allocation – Year Two (2022-23)

40 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

41 Regular updates

The chairman reminded members that they were welcome to submit questions in advance of the regular updates.

41a Update from Wiltshire Youth Voice Representative

The Child and Youth Voice team manager reminded the committee that the youth council had held elections across 22 secondary schools, as well as for home educated children. He reported that monthly hybrid meetings were taking

place and a shadow youth cabinet had been chosen. He then outlined some of the achievements of the youth council, including an initiative for a 'mufti day' for Ukraine that had helped to raise £13,000. He then went on to outline some of the youth council's plans such as training youth councillors as mental health first aiders

The Service Manager for Quality Outcomes for Children and Families gave an update on the Children in Care Council (CiCC). She explained that care experienced people in the team had been attending recruitment events as well as helping to improve the assessment process for young carers.

Members thanked the managers for the updates, praising the achievements of the youth council and CiCC for helping to embed the voice of the child in decision making. They also noted the importance of reflecting the voices of adopted children in recruitment process.

41b   School Ofsted Judgements

Members were invited to ask questions about the report contained between pages 29 and 32 of the agenda pack. During the discussion points included:

• Members requested a breakdown of the relative performance of schools run directly though the local authority with non-maintained schools.
• It was noted that there was a shortage of leadership candidates for some Catholic schools, but that support was in place for schools with Christian distinctiveness.
• Concerns were raised about the number of Wiltshire schools requiring improvement remained above the English average. The Director of Education and Skills reassured members that work was going on behind the scenes and offered to provide a briefing on the school improvement model.
• Members shared their varying experiences acting as school governors. They then considered the possibility of carrying out a scrutiny exercise into the role of and vacancy rates amongst governors at different types of schools.
• The Director of Education and Skills highlighted that a recruitment campaign was underway for school governors and encouraged members to promote the campaign.
• It was noted that the government had published a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) white paper in April 2022 and that the importance of local governance was discussed in the paper.
• The Portfolio Holder for Education noted that discussions had taken place about how a Local Authority MAT could work in Wiltshire and emphasised that it was important to develop an understanding of what a good local authority MAT would look like.
• Members stated they would welcome the opportunity to scrutinise plans for developing a local authority MAT and to discuss the opportunities that this might bring. The director noted that the deadline for local authorities to register their interest to create a local authority MAT was 31 July 2022, so any scrutiny exercise would need to be carried out within an appropriate timeframe.

Resolved

To establish a task group to scrutinise the development of plans for a local authority MAT.

41c   DfE Changes - Update from Department for Education

The Director of Education and Skills explained that new guidance was being issued to coordinate local authorities, academy trusts, governing bodies, and schools in their work to improve school attendance. She noted that the Targeted Education Head of Service was mapping requirements and a draft implementation plan will be ready for scrutiny in July 2022. She then offered to share information about the deadlines for providing schools with access to high-speed internet by 2025.

The impact of a declining birth rate on basic need funding was discussed and it was confirmed that planned large scale housing development had been considered in budget allocation.

Resolved

To add a standing item on future agendas for a regular update on working together to improve school attendance.

42   **The "new normal" - update**

Directors provided an update on the demand and current workload levels in schools following recovery from Covid. It was reported that the third and fourth terms of the current academic year had been particularly challenging in terms of sickness and staff absence, even when compared with the Covid lockdowns. The high levels of staff absence had also led to challenges in the recruitment of supply teachers. However, there was a general feeling of a return to normality since the lifting of Covid restrictions.

During the discussion, points included:

• Updated Covid guidance had been distributed to schools earlier in the week ahead of an anticipated spike in cases in the autumn.
• Best practice guidance about air circulation was being shared with schools.
• The number of children being home educated had increased by 19 percent since 2019-20, a rise of roughly 80 children. School attendance was broadly in line with pre-Covid figures.
• Exam results for the current academic year would be benchmarked against pre-Covid grades, as the figures from the previous two years were seen as not directly comparable due to the disruption in schools.
• Officers offered to provide additional information about measures to improve recruitment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
• Members raised concerns about the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan reducing, as there had been an expectation of pent-up demand being created during the pandemic. They also highlighted that the number of Children Looked After were around three quarters of the level of neighbouring

authorities and a little over half of the national average at 39.4 children per 10,000.

• In response to concerns from members, the directors reassured them that they carried out detailed analysis of the figures, explaining that audit thresholds were discussed in a performance and outcomes board. They also noted that Wiltshire was a statistical outlier from the English average prior to the pandemic.

• Members expressed an interest in receiving further information about how the referral thresholds were set. The Director for Family and Children's Services explained that the performance team were in the process of writing their reports for the end of the last financial year, which would help to inform the targets for the forthcoming year. Directors then offered to provide a briefing ahead of the July meeting to provide further information on how the targets were being set.

Resolved

To receive a briefing in advance of the committee's July meeting on Wiltshire's numbers of Children in Care and Child Protection Plans compared to benchmarks and expected ranges.

43 **Canon's House and Aspire House - update**

The Director of Families and Children's Services provided an update on the actions being taken to improve the service offered at Canon's House and Aspire House following inadequate Ofsted inspections in February and March 2022. The director reported that a number of concerns had been raised, including over staffing, medical attention, safeguarding practice and record keeping. He then went on to describe the remedial action being taken, including strengthening the relationship between the two homes with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. There was also a greater focus on the recording of suspected injury or illness through an online portal. Furthermore, a new recruitment plan was being put in place for Canon's House.

 The most recent Ofsted monitoring visit to Canon's House had found a significant improvement, with no safeguarding issues identified. One finding was agreed that there had been an overreliance on rate 44 visits. The director also confirmed that Aspire House would only be reopened to offer respite placements. It was explained that the lessons applied would be considered when at tendering process around new children's homes and the operating model. Staffing sufficiency would also be built into this framework.

During the discussion points included:

• Members thanked the director for the update and welcomed the changes around rate 44 inspections.
• It was noted that it had been a disadvantage not having data from Canon's House and Aspire House recorded on the Liquid Logic system, as it limited the line of sight available to managers.
• Observations were made about the importance of only customising data recording systems to a point where they were still compatible with future software updates.

44   <u>**Getting to Outstanding**</u>

The committee considered a draft report outlining the council's roadmap for how to achieve an outstanding rating in children's social care.
During the discussion, points included:

• Members thanked officers for the draft report and welcomed the aspirations set out in the document.
• Directors welcomed requests from members to receive further information about timeframes for the aims sets out in the report so that key metrics could be established.
• In response to a question about whether a target to meet all eligible requests for support from CAHMS could be reduced from 24 weeks, it was explained that the new Integrated Care System would have a focus board on mental health which would consider the issue.
• When asked about recruitment issues in CAHMS, the directors spoke about the importance of establishing reasonable case loads for staff. It was noted that Wiltshire had a lower rate of agency staff than other local authorities in the region.
• The Director of Families and Children's Services noted that there was no definitive timeframe in place, but the aim was to be in a position to deliver the strategy from around Autumn 2022.

Resolved

To set up a meeting of the standing task group to consider this roadmap in conjunction with the service development plans and to determine the best way of reporting to the committee.

45   <u>**Disadvantaged Learners Task Group - Final Report**</u>

Cllr Jo Trigg, the lead member of the Disadvantaged Learners task group, introduced their final report including the recommendations on pages 51-52 of the agenda pack. The lead member explained that Wiltshire had far fewer pupils per capita than the national average classed as Disadvantaged Learners and that this had an impact in terms of the pupil premium funding available to schools. She noted that Disadvantaged Learners within Wiltshire had performance outcomes below the national average, so there was a need to narrow the gap.

Cllr Trigg underlined the importance of the first 1001 days in a child's development and was pleased to report that take up for free education by eligible two-year-olds was at 80 percent, far higher than the national average of 68 percent. The council's intention to promote the links between SEND practitioners and staff supporting Disadvantaged Learners was also welcomed. Highlighting some of the task group's other recommendations, the lead member spoke about the importance of collaborating with colleagues in Public Health to work on the Virtual School attendance strategy and the adoption of the term

educational neglect within Wiltshire Council to reflect the organisation's efforts to tackle the issue.

During the discussion, points included:

• Members thanked the lead member for the update.
• A Co-opted member of the task group endorsed the lead member's comments around early years, drawing the committee's attention to the importance of language skills at the age of five being a key indicator a child's short- and long-term prospects.
• The importance of school improvement advisors was highlighted, and concerns were raised about the impact of a reduction in their funding, particularly on non-maintained schools.
• The Portfolio Holder for SEND and Inclusion welcomed the comments about early intervention within the first 1001 days of a child's life, especially for SEND children.

Resolved

1. To adopt the eight recommendations of the Disadvantaged Learners task group (A-E) as outlined in the attached report.
2. To draw particular attention to recommendations E and H, as requiring action from this committee:

E. That further collaboration takes place between the council's SEND and Disadvantaged Learners teams to further tailor the council's support of Disadvantaged Learners, particularly those with SEND, recognising that quality of teaching is key to both. The Children's Select Committee is invited to add this work area to its forward work programme.

H. That the Children's Select Committee invites a future report from the executive detailing its transitional plans in response to the reduction in funding for school improvement advisers.

46   **Overview and Scrutiny Activities Updates**

The chairman referred the committee to the report about task group activity since the previous meeting. He noted that the standing task group was due to meet on Monday 20 June to discuss the latest report from Traded Services. He also announced that it was planned to start work on the Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Group in the near future.

The chairman thanked Cllr Caroline Thomas for her contribution to the committee over the last year and invited any members interested in replacing her as a member of the standing task group to contact the senior scrutiny officer.

Cllr Belcher left the meeting at 1:17pm.

Resolved

To note the report.

47   **Forward Work Programme**

The chairman referred the committee to their forward work programme and invited further suggestions for topics that members would like to see scrutinised.

48   **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 6 July at 10:30am.
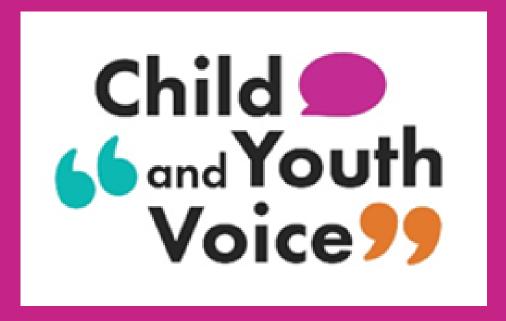
49   **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.25 pm)

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Child and Youth Voice Team

Wiltshire Council

Introductions

- Joe Sutton - Child and Youth Voice Team Manager, Wiltshire Council

- Sara James – Service Manager – Quality Outcomes

Wiltshire Youth Council

- 22 secondary schools took part in elections
- 38 Youth Cllrs and Deputies, including some that are home-schooled were elected
- 13 Shadow Youth Cabinet Positions
- 4,373 young people in Wiltshire took part
- We have monthly hybrid meetings

Youth4Ukraine

- Non school uniform day to raise money and awareness for refugees affected by the war in Ukraine
- Pupils were encouraged to where blue and yellow in support
- Over 30 schools took part
- Over £13,000 was raised by participating schools

Future Work

- Wiltshire Youth Pride
- Supporting Mental Health in Schools
- Schools Self Assessment

Children in Care Council

- New activity programme introduced in February – including a holiday break in July for 14 young people

- Increased engagement of 85% from 27 to 49 young people

- 51 youth voice referrals for CIC activities / Youth Consultancy

- Supported children in care to perform at the Star Awards.

Work With Kinship and Fostering Team

- 3 Foster Carer Applicants have taken part in the Young Persons Fostering Panel.

- We have supported recruitment events

- We have delivered training to aspiring foster carers

Young Carers Consultation Successes

- Better assessments of young carers
- Young carers passports are being developed which enhance multi agency responses
- Providing young carers with free leisure passes
- Better tracking of young carers education attainment
- New portfolio holder for young carers

Wiltshire Youth Council

Child and Youth Voice

Wiltshire Council

Additional projects

- Created a care experienced recruitment panel for the ASYE Social Work interviews .

- Supporting young people to conduct mystery shopper audits of the MASH Service.

Thank you

any questions?

Wiltshire Youth Council

Child and Youth Voice

Wiltshire Council

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

6th July 2022

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Executive summary

The DfE published new non-statutory guidance in May 2022 to help schools, trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance.

The guidance applies from September 2022.

Following public consultation earlier this year, and subject to parliament, the Secretary of State has committed to this guidance becoming statutory when parliament time allows (this will be no sooner than September 2023).

Proposal

That the committee:

a) is aware of the latest requirements for schools, trusts, governing boards and local authorities in maintaining high levels of school attendance, as set out in guidance.

Reason for proposal

The new guidance sets out important, new expectations on what schools and local authorities should do to maintain high levels of school attendance. The committee should be aware of these changes as part of the council's commitment to ensuring the best educational outcomes for Wiltshire children.

Author: Kathryn Davis – Head of Targeted Education

Contact details: kathryn.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Purpose

1. The premise of this guidance is that 'attendance is everyone's business'. It recognises that the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Improving school attendance must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners. All these partners should work with pupils and parents to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and by working together to put the right support in place.

Expectations of Schools

2. To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

- have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school.
- ensure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. Where possible this should include attendance or pastoral support staff (either school based or contracted) who can work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders, the local authority's School Attendance Support Team and other partners.
- not use a part-time timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour.
- regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- ensure academy trustees and governing bodies regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.

Expectations of Local Authorities

3. Individual pupils' barriers to attendance often go far beyond the school gates. Persistent absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life and barriers to attendance are often specific to local contexts. The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.

Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term.

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As local authorities vary significantly in size, organisational approach and demographics, the guidance makes clear that it is right that the specifics of attendance service delivery and how those roles are discharged should be determined locally to meet local needs of pupils, parents, and schools. As a minimum, however, all local authorities are expected to:

- rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on, to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- have a **School Attendance Support Team** which provides the following core functions free of charge <u>to all schools</u> (regardless of type):

    ### 3.1 Communication and advice:
    Regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
    Show leadership and work together with all schools to tackle common issues across the geographical area. This may include agreeing common practices to issues such as term time holidays or follow up for persistent lateness, so that families receive the same approach if they have children at several schools.

    ### 3.2 Targeting Support Meetings:
    Hold termly conversations with all schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.

    ### 3.3 Multi-disciplinary support for families:
    Provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
    Emphasis is placed on voluntary early help assessments as a first line intervention. Multi-disciplinary support should build on the existing early help offer in local authorities rather than requiring additional resource.

    ### 3.4 Legal intervention:
    Take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with. Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together in this regard.

- monitor and improve the **attendance of children with a social worker** through their Virtual School.

<u>Conclusion</u>

There is recognition in the guidance that time will be needed to transition to meet these expectations, including for those local authorities that need to revise, or bring to an end, models of trading or service level agreements. In Wiltshire, attendance support services are currently traded with academies.

Therefore, whilst local authorities should meet these expectations as far as possible for academic year 2022-2023, the School Attendance Support Team should be available to all schools free of charge (and free from any service level agreement) by no later than September 2023.

The Head of Targeted Education and the ATM of the Education Welfare Service have drafted an implementation plan for the local authority School Attendance Support Team which will be presented for scrutiny at Education & Skills SMT on 4th July 2022.

It is recommended that a further update is provided at the next Children's Select Committee.