

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2022 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Kathryn MacDermid, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Mark Verbinnen and John Hawkins

Also Present:

Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Tony Jackson and Cllr Laura Mayes

80 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Cllr Kelvin Nash
- Cllr Caroline Corbin
- Dr Mike Thompson – Clifton Diocesan RC Representative
- Nikki Barnett - Further Education Representative

81 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 20 September 2022, as a true and correct record.

82 **Declarations of Interest**

The chairman declared a non-pecuniary interest that he was a trustee of the 4 Youth charity.

83 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

84 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

85 **FACT (Families and Children's Transformation) programme**

The Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme Lead explained that they were a multi-agency initiative focusing on the principles of early intervention and prevention. He introduced a report on their key priorities, as well as the governance and systems in place for monitoring and reporting on their projects. He outlined the three key projects they were currently working on namely, Early Support Assessment, Transitional Safeguarding and Family Help, including further detail about the timeline for the delivery of these projects, as shown in paragraph 48 of the report.

The programme leader elaborated on the goals of the Family Help project, including joining up services to improve the consistency between different agencies and making a central database of information for the public. He noted that they would report at the end of March 2023 to review whether the changes made had improved outcomes. He explained that as part of this project a pilot study was being run in Warminster and Westbury, to explore a local delivery model where local groups would work closely with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) to coordinate services.

During the discussion key points included:

- Members thanked the programme lead for the report and stated that they admired the ambition of the project to improve practice, systems, and culture.
- The governance of the FACT programme included a multi-agency operational board, which the chair of the Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum sat on, to ensure that local groups were involved in the delivery of the services.
- The committee emphasised the value of working directly with local groups such as town and parish councils, the Wiltshire Community Foundation and Community First.
- The members of Warminster and Westbury Area Boards present at the meeting highlighted that they would welcome close engagement with the pilot study in their areas. They stressed the importance of working with local youth clubs and considering transportation issues in rural areas. The chairman of Warminster Area Board also invited representatives from the project to attend one of their meetings.
- The project lead noted that they had looked for examples of good practice in other local authority (LA) areas and that most came from urban conurbations. They had been working closely with Research in Practice, a national charity that had put them in touch with useful contacts.
- Oxford Brookes University would assist with the evaluation and monitoring of the Family Help project and would play a role in establishing short term performance indicators.
- Members noted that they would like the opportunity to review an interim report on the indicators in advance of the publication of final report on the Family Help programme in 2024.
- In response to a question about how it would be ensured that a central online directory for the public would be kept up to date, the project lead explained that Wessex Community Action's Wiltshire Together platform would be used, and that funding was in place for its development and maintenance. The site would allow organisations to advertise their events and opportunities. Online

workshops would also be set up to inform groups how to revise information and reminders would be sent to check that information was being updated.

- The project lead stressed that anyone working with children and young people would be able to access the website. The Director of Family and Children's Services reported that the ambition was that none of the partners within FACT would be replicating information on each other's websites, other than third party sites or where it was a statutory requirement.

- The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services Education and Skills highlighted that the Wiltshire Learning Alliance would play a role in spreading the good practice learnt from the project throughout schools.

Resolved

1. To thank the programme leader and director for the report and note the update provided.

2. To invite officers, as part of their stakeholder events, to engage with local members, relevant Area Boards, and town councils to share information about the pilot project in Westbury and Warminster.

3. For FACT to liaise with the different groups in Westbury and Warminster, funded by Wiltshire Community Foundation and Community First, that support children and young people.

4. To invite officers to consider a mechanism where signposting to other services is led centrally and kept regularly updated.

5. To receive a further update in a year's time including on the progress towards the key milestones identified in paragraph 48 of the report.

6. To receive a report on the outcome of the Family Help Programme, including the Westbury and Warminster pilot project, by September 2024.

7. To receive an interim report as soon after March 2023 as practical to review the data set that has been created and how the Family Help programme was being implemented.

86 Children and Young People's Mental Health

Provision Part-Funded Through Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

The Executive Place Director for Wiltshire at BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Integrated Care Board introduced a report about how Wiltshire Council, together with partners, commissioned targeted and specialist CAMHS provided by Oxford Health. The Associate Medical Director at Salisbury Community CAMHS explained that they received referrals to a single point of access (SPA) where families could then be signposted to the relevant services. She highlighted the impact of the services being delivered, noting that they met regularly with young people to hear about their experience of CAMHS. She mentioned that waiting times for services were broadly in line with the national average and was pleased to report that around 50 percent of all children achieved a full recovery, compared to the national averages of between 34 and 44 percent.

The Associate Director at Thames Valley CAMHS also provided an update, stating that there had been an increase in the number of mental health referrals for young people since the pandemic, particularly in relation to eating disorders. In response to this, they were in the process of enhancing their Crisis and Resolution Home Treatment Service, so that additional resources were put into treating people in the community. The changes involved working closely with schools and had led to a reduction in the number of admissions to in-patient or residential units. Part of the additional investment had been running a pilot study for young people with eating disorders called Hospital at Home. As part of this study people that had been referred for an in-patient bed were instead being treated at home. Of the 26 young people receiving treatment at home in the past year, in only one case was it necessary to transfer their treatment to hospital. Due to the success of this study, the Hospital at Home programme was being expanded and an equivalent service would also be set up for people with learning disabilities and autism.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Members thanked the directors for the report and welcomed the inclusion of information about the impact of the services provided.
- It was noted that an Assessment and Liaison Paediatric In-patient with Eating Disorder (ALPINE) model pilot study was being undertaken to reduce the use of tube feeding in treating young people with eating disorders.
- Although the average waiting time for a mental health assessment was nine and a half weeks, the directors clarified that all children referred to the SPA were signposted to the relevant service within 24 hours.
- The Associate Medical Director at Salisbury Community CAMHS noted that they were improving collaboration with partners in the voluntary sector to provide interventions at an earlier stage. She also confirmed that children requiring an emergency appointment would be seen within 24 hours. In addition, work had been undertaken to review recruitment, which had been increasing in recent months.
- The Associate Medical Director also reported that they were working on an equivalent to the Sleepio App, a treatment for insomnia, which they had been running successful trials with.
- When asked about the figure of 96 percent of patients being allocated a hospital bed within their catchment area, it was confirmed that the catchment area for Wiltshire residents was Berkshire, Oxford and Swindon. The nearest CAMHS in-patient centre was Marlborough House in Swindon.
- In response to a question about what was being done to improve mental health provision in schools, the Executive Place Director explained that they were working with their educational colleagues to get their views. Work was also being done at a national level including around the issue of exam stress in schools.
- When asked about why the percentage of Children Looked After in Wiltshire whose emotional wellbeing was a cause for concern was above the national average, the Director of Families and Children's Services noted that mental health was the most significant issue facing children in Wiltshire and that it had been discussed at a recent transitional safeguarding event.

- The Associate Medical Director explained that 50 percent of young people that had a diagnosable mental health disorder fell below the threshold for having a diagnosable disorder after receiving care via Oxford Health. The support available after receiving care would depend on the level of recovery of each individual patient.

Wiltshire Council Funded Mental Health Services for Children and Young People

The Interim Head of Service for Whole Life Commissioning introduced a report about the impact that the bespoke mental health services, commissioned directly by Wiltshire Council, were having on young people. She noted that the council were reviewing the services that they commissioned to ensure value for money and to avoid duplication of services. As examples, she highlighted two of the current contracts, with Rethink and Bernardos, that were due for renewal over the next couple of years. The interim head of service also explained that they were developing mental health first aid training skills within the council. She felt that the review of commissioned services had been a valuable activity in building their strategy and reported that there was still lots of work to do over the next financial year. Wiltshire Council were keen to work with partners such as Healthwatch Wiltshire and Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living to ensure that the views of young people were considered.

During the discussion points included:

- Members thanked the interim head of service for the update.
- It was noted that a review was ongoing about whether the Primary Mentoring In-house Service was duplicating the Kidscape Rise Transition Programme.
- In response to queries about the statistical discrepancies in paragraph 91 of the report, including in the number of people starting and completing the Rethink service in 2021-22, the interim head of service explained that they would clarify the figures with Rethink and discuss the way in which they provided figures.
- Members noted that they would welcome a detailed statistical analysis of the impact of the Rethink programme. The Director of Procurement and Commissioning reassured the committee that a formal meeting would be held with the provider in November and consideration was being given to alternative options for the contract going forward.
- It was noted that around 9,000 young people in Wiltshire had a diagnosable mental health condition, so reassurance was sought about the level of support that was available. The Director of Procurement and Commissioning explained that the services outlined in the report were part of wider services being offered. The Executive Place Director for Wiltshire at BSW Integrated Care Board reassured the committee that any individual who came through the SPA at Oxford Health would get support and there were not referral thresholds.

- The Interim Head of Service for Whole Life Commissioning noted that lots of work was being carried out as part of the Independent Living Strategy to find suitable accommodation for young people.
- The Director of Procurement and Commissioning offered to ask officers to provide a report on the Parenting Programme funded through the Supported Families Initiative, including information about the outcomes of the STOP Parenting Programme.
- Members observed that they would appreciate further information about the level of need and impact delivered through Bernardo's Early Mental Health Service, as well as information about the level of service received after the early intervention. The interim head of service noted that they were seeking further information through contract monitoring and said that the contract was due for tender in the forthcoming year.
- Members welcomed the review of the contracts and stated that they would be grateful for further details about clawback agreements within contracts.
- The Director of Procurement and Commissioning noted that they would submit a report to Cabinet before the next tranche of contracts went to tender, outlining the expectations about contractual management arrangements.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services Education and Skills observed that it would be useful to collate all of the information about the mental health services commissioned together to give an overview of the overall demand and provision. The chairman endorsed these comments and stressed the importance of looking at early intervention.
- The Director of Procurement and Commissioning highlighted that there was an ambition to develop a Wiltshire Council strategy for emotional wellbeing to give further direction to the commissioning of services. Conversations were ongoing with health colleagues about whether some of the funding earmarked for CAHMS after 2025 could be directed towards early intervention.

Resolved

- 1. To thank the Interim Head of Service for Whole Life Commissioning for the report.**
- 2. To express concern about the lack of information on key performance indicators provided by some of the key contractors.**
- 3. For the Children's Select Committee to scrutinise the expectations of contractors before the next tranche of contracts go out to tender.**
- 4. To receive a report on the Parenting Programme funded through the Supported Families Initiative.**

87 Capital expenditure on school buildings

The Head of School Place Commissioning gave an update about the School Capital Programme approved by Cabinet in February 2022, including an overview of Wiltshire Council's statutory responsibilities. She explained that the council was responsible for the maintenance programme for community, voluntary controlled and foundation schools, but not for academies or voluntary aided schools. However, as the council was ultimately responsible for the provision of a sufficient number of school places, it did finance expansion of all schools regardless of type. The head of service noted that a portion of the

budget was always held back each year in order to respond to emergency maintenance issues. She also highlighted the impact of inflation of building costs on the capital programme.

During the discussions the following points were made:

- It was confirmed that Section 106 money from developers could only be used for additional building and not for the maintenance of schools.
- Members sought reassurance about whether delayed work might place too high expectations on the building programme for the following year. In response, the head of service noted that they undertook a rolling five-year programme of condition surveys and spent approximately £3 million per year on maintenance to manage the demand. However, she did note that the school estate was aging which was increasing demand over time.
- The head of service highlighted the importance of ensuring that there was sufficient funding left for maintained schools as a greater number of schools became academies up until 2030.
- It was reported that an extra surveyor had been recruited to the school team.
- It was confirmed that an academy would be technically responsible for ensuring school places were available for their children if they had a maintenance issue preventing a school from opening. However, the head of service reassured the committee that Wiltshire Council would be involved in supporting efforts to ensure that alternative provision was available.
- The Leader of the Council noted that crisis management was not a traded service, so it would not be possible to guarantee that costs of providing support could be recovered.
- The head of service clarified that when a maintained school became an academy the school building would be transferred on a 125-year lease that would specify the maintenance requirements for the building. Once all schools had become academies by 2030 then Wiltshire Council would no longer receive maintenance funding from government for school buildings. All schools would continue to undergo an annual assessment by Wiltshire Council's Health and Safety team.
- The head of service noted that when schools became academies it would be prudent for Multi Academy Trusts to keep some reserve funding to deal with maintenance emergencies, but this might be more challenging for some smaller trusts.

Resolved

To thank the Head of School Place Commissioning for the update and note the report.

88 Adoption

The chairman noted that the Standing Task Group had recommended that the different reports linked to adoption were presented to the Children's Select Committee simultaneously to enable committee members to have a holistic overview of adoption in Wiltshire.

Wiltshire Council Adoption Service: 2021-2022 Year End Report

The chairman referred the committee to the suggestions of the Standing Task Group as outlined in the report.

Adoption West Annual Report 2021-22

The chairman reminded members that he was the chairman of the Joint Scrutiny Panel. He reported that the panel had met on 19 October to consider the report, which it felt was positive. He highlighted that one key newly developed area of work, undertaken by the Birth Link team, was a pilot group in Bristol supporting birth families.

Adoption West Joint Scrutiny Panel Annual Report

Cllr Carole King, Wiltshire's representative on the Joint Scrutiny Panel, explained that she felt that the success of the organisation was built upon partnership, being equally owned by six LAs and representing a diverse population. She was pleased to report that the number of Wiltshire's children being placed outside of Adoption West's geographical area had reduced since the previous year. She also highlighted that the organisation had achieved a good Ofsted result earlier in the year. Although there were now fewer adopters, the support in place for people adopting children had improved including a website with detailed information.

Resolved

- 1. To note the three reports provided and the overall adequate performance of the council with regards to adoption, as well as the performance from Adoption West.**
- 2. To refer this item to the Children's Select Committee's Standing Task Group to engage with the three report's authors to develop an overarching cover report introducing each of the three reports – this should enable simplification of each report (not having to reference the other two reports) as well as clarifying the relationship between the Local Authorities and Adoption West, and the responsibilities for performance at different stages of the adoption journey.**

89 **Regular updates**

The chairman reminded the committee that they were invited to indicate in advance of the meeting if they would like further information or have questions on these regular updates, so that relevant officers can be invited to attend the meeting.

89a Update from Wiltshire Youth Voice Representative

The chairman introduced the report and stated that he was looking forward to engaging with the Child and Youth Voice Team, and the young people they

work with, during the relevant forthcoming task groups and rapid scrutiny exercises.

89b School Ofsted Judgements

The committee was pleased to see that Wiltshire was slightly above the regional average for the number of pupils attending a good or outstanding school. Members welcomed the report but sought clarification about the figures in tables 3 and 4 in the report. They also stated that they would appreciate feedback about how confident schools were about forthcoming A level exams given the disruption caused by the pandemic to the current Year 13.

89c DfE Changes - Update from Department for Education

The report was welcomed by members. The chairman did raise concern about the increase in the number of young people vaping and spoke about the importance of educating children about this issue through their schools.

90 Working together to improve school attendance

The chairman reminded the committee that The Department for Education (DfE) had published new non-statutory guidance in May 2022 to help schools, trusts, governing bodies and LAs maintain high levels of school attendance. He also welcomed news that Wiltshire was performing well in terms of school attendance. A question was asked about the catching up that children had to do after a period of exclusion.

90a Schools Forum's update

The report was welcomed by members. The chairman noted that the committee would receive a briefing on school budgets, which was likely to be split into two sessions.

91 Corporate Parenting Panel update

The committee received an update highlighting key items from the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

92 Directors' update

The Director of Family and Children's Services reported that they had had a positive visit from the DfE the previous week where the DfE had complemented the cross-council work done to support care leavers, including in housing provision. She also mentioned that an annual discussion with Ofsted was expected to take place by the end of November and a corporate peer review was due to take place shortly.

She then reminded the committee that her team had reviewed the use of Aspire House within the council's Stronger Families Service and found that an outreach model had been more effective than the continued use of Aspire

House. The Aspire House building would now be used as part of the tendering process for services, as a new children's home, to enable more Children in care to be housed within the county.

93 **Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holders' update**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services Education and Skills made the following announcements:

- She reminded the committee that it was National Care Leavers' week. She explained that cabinet members had been challenged to live off of Carer's Allowance, £57 per week, which she was doing that week.
- She would, along with the chairman and officers, be attending the National Adult and Children's Conference in Manchester, which would be a useful event allowing Wiltshire to compare its practice to other LAs.
- A Dyslexia awareness event had recently been held in County Hall and work was going on with schools to achieve the British Dyslexia Quality Mark.
- The Leader and she were due to meet representatives from Wiltshire Youth Council later in the afternoon.
- Discussions were due to commence the following week to prepare the budget for the following year.

The Leader noted that he was waiting for further detail from central government about plans for LA Multi Academy Trusts, but that Wiltshire's bid was still being considered.

94 **Chair's update**

The chairman highlighted that he had met with officers to organise a briefing about school budgets to be brought to the committee, as noted in the earlier School's Forum item.

95 **Overview and Scrutiny Activities Updates**

The chairman advertised vacancies to the following task groups and rapid scrutiny exercises:

Rapid Scrutiny Exercises

High Needs Block Funding – 9 November
Road Map to excellence – 1 and 9 December

Task Groups

Children and Young People's Mental Health
Youth Provision and Youth Service Funding
Access to Post-16 Education

He also noted that options for a rapid scrutiny exercise into Wiltshire Council potentially establishing a Multi Academy Trust would be discussed when further information was available.

96 **Forward Work Programme**

The chairman noted that the vice-chairman and he would be meeting on 1 November to shape the Forward Work Programme for the forthcoming year and invited suggestions from the committee for items that they would like to see added.

97 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next ordinary meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 17 January, at 10:30am.

98 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.35 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Matt Hitch
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