

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JULY 2023 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Caroline Corbin, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Kathryn Macdermid, Cllr Antonio Piazza, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Mark Verbinnen, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Dr Mike Thompson and Cllr Trevor Carbin (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Peter Hutton and Cllr Jane Davies, Matt Hitch, Jen Salter, Lucy Townsend, Professor Katy Burch, Simon Thomas, Cate Mullen and Joe Sutton

61 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following committee members:

Cllr Helen Belcher OBE (Substituted by Cllr Trevor Carbin)
John Hawkins

Apologies were also received from:

Cllr Laura Mayes
Cllr Suzanne Wickham

62 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 6 June 2023, as a true and correct record.

63 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

64 **Chairman's Announcements**

The chairman informed the committee that the meeting would run in a different way to allow the time necessary for the committee to consider item 6 on the agenda. Therefore, a short recess between 11.30 and 11.45 was to be included.

65 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

66 **Safeguarding processes - outcome of the review by the Institute of Public Care**

The chair informed the committee that Wiltshire Council had commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University to undertake a follow up review of Support and Safeguarding Services across the county. The review was undertaken between July 2022 and February 2023 and the summary findings are presented in the attached report.

Jen Salter (Director for Families and Children) and Professor Katy Burch (Assistant Director, Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University) were invited to present the report.

The review looked at 4 key areas:

- Child and family presenting needs and overall 'demand' for support and safeguarding.
- Thresholds and families getting 'the right help at the right time'.
- The quality and effectiveness of Support and Safeguarding Services.
- Supports for effective practice.

Key points raised:

Interviews were conducted regarding decision making with people working at Wiltshire Council and key partners.

There had been a re-growth in contact being made with the local authority, and even though rates of looked after children remained lower than geographically neighbouring authorities, rates when compared to 'outstanding' local authorities had a similar proportion. There was however a downward pressure in demand, largely due to a reduction in re-referrals.

When looking at the nature of demand, factors relating to poverty, unwillingness to return to school and substance misuse were identified.

Other characteristics were identified including disability - 14% had a diagnosed disability, mainly ADHD. This increased to 1/5th when looking at the whole child journey and up to 1/3rd of front door referrals was linked to a disability.

Key questions about families getting the right help at the right time were asked, including the rates of threshold criteria being met and when to refer a child.

It was found that all staff and partners interviewed were aware of the council's threshold documentation and had received training on it. Most staff thought thresholds for targeted support service were clear.

There are key indicators of success in Wiltshire Council's handling of Safeguarding and Support. Child protection investigations had been reduced and a tendency for better early help and prevention in the community. Partners felt reassured they could challenge the Council and ask questions when necessary. Referrals had timely handling and efficiency. Oversight was noted as being particularly strong and positive. Practitioners also felt listened to and that they could challenge approaches. It was witnessed that children were not having to repeat their experiences at multiple stages which was a major positive.

There are ongoing challenges to recruit and retain social workers, however Wiltshire Council was identified as having experienced family support workers that provided consistency and good quality assessments and reports with significant detail. Analysis was also seen as strong and contributed significantly to key decision making.

Although overwhelmingly positive, some areas where further improvement could be made were identified....

The responsiveness of commissioned services (particularly substance misuse and domestic abuse) had dropped off. Families coming into the Council's safeguarding process are vulnerable and some need in person support, not just online as this is not always suitable.

Gaps around adult mental health and wellbeing were identified, specifically around criteria for help being too high.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - support for suspected ADHD children was described as needing improvement and the level of need described as overwhelming. The burden of work in the area was mainly falling on family support workers to fill. Support workers end up filling lots of roles and may not have specialist training. Some children with less complex Special Educational Needs had fewer options than before and the offer of activities during school holidays had been reduced. However, getting a diagnosis was seen as the biggest stumbling block.

It was summarised that the majority of areas were extremely strong with good staff and practices. A small number of areas including early help for children have been identified for improvement.

Debate

During debate a number of clarifications and points were raised:

The committee thanked the Director for Families and Children and Professor Katy Burch Assistant Director, Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University for report and welcome positive findings.

Youth services are involved in key decision where appropriate. For the most part safeguarding decisions often involve police and social services.

The importance of including community led partners in feedback was stressed.

A support worker previously employed at Wiltshire Council was quoted as saying they felt prevented from attending the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and giving insight since leaving even though they had set up a charity that works with children with mental health difficulties. It was clarified that partners would be invited to strategy discussions where relevant, and that the Council would not want people to feel they haven't been treated like professionals.

On the use of Area Board funding for supporting work with children on their mental health, it was reminded that there is a youth provision in Area Board grants but the ongoing task group surrounding this may decide to make a recommendation shortly about interfacing with partners.

The Council is aware of the needs of young people regarding mental health and have worked closely with the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The model is being reviewed and a workshop was held specifically on children's mental health.

Looking at schools' contribution to early support is important and when a review was made over 3 years ago it was found that schools were more enthusiastic to refer children to services and less so in taking a lead role themselves compared with currently. Schools are not begrudgingly accepting step downs from statutory support plans but rather are remaining supportive and understanding of children's ongoing needs.

It is not unusual for schools to find their referrals accepted for support plans more often than other partners as the police are more likely to refer for a safeguarding issue whereas schools are more likely to refer cases when not an out and out safeguarding issue. This hasn't been considered a concern.

The benefits of having Oxford Brooks conducting a review was emphasised and the need to compare to other local authorities to understand progress and to learn was stressed.

It was clarified that the report shared at the committee was only a summary report and that more detail could be provided. The report shows that Wiltshire Council are doing well and should be seen as a significant positive and congratulation to Children's Services. All local authorities are different in providing children's services, but comparisons yielded similar positive statistics which indicates good practise.

Actions to tackle substance abuse and mental health issues are going to be drawn from the recommendations of the report and be used with the Service Delivery Plans. This will be brought back to the committee to consider.

It was clarified that post 16 transition from NEET was not included in the report as it wasn't a strong feature and wasn't being focused on in the context of looking at all features of support and safeguarding across the county. NEET figures were not looked at due to the theme of the report being safeguarding.

When asked about the rates of Looked After Children per 10,000, it was emphasised that the report had focussed on comparing Wiltshire with outstanding local authorities in rural areas, rather than those in large urban areas. When compared directly with outstanding rural authorities Wiltshire's rates were broadly in line and supported the conclusion that good practice was taking place.

The Chairman believed the report marked a milestone Wiltshire's journey of improvement over the past decade. We now have a report which show we deliver for young people in Wiltshire.

The full report can be found in the agenda pack.

Resolved

To consider the recommendations again in an update report within 6 months.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 and was resumed at 12:00

67 **Community Health Services**

The Chair informed the Children's Select Committee that at its meeting on 4 July 2023, the Health Select Committee received an update on the progress of the Integrated Community based services Programme, including an outline of the aim and purpose of this programme, the link to the Integrated Care Partnership strategy, and key milestones/timelines. The information provided can be accessed on the [meeting's recording](#) and the written briefing is attached.

It was also clarified that officers had not been requested to attend the meeting but was an opportunity for committee members to ask questions and / or consider whether this is an area for further scrutiny for this committee.

It was clarified that the Children's Select Committee was being asked to consider how health services across BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire were being commissioned. Wiltshire Council had an integrated service for children's community health provided by HCRG including a public health nursing element which had now been commissioned by Wiltshire Council by themselves going forward. The Children's Select Committee was seen as an important committee to cite on the process and would be updated accordingly.

Resolved

For the chair and vice-chair to receive a joint briefing with the chair and vice-chair of Health Select Committee before the next update is taken to Health Select to determine whether this should be an area of work / interest for the Children's Select Committee.

68 Corporate Parenting Annual report - outcome of review by the Children's Select Committee's Standing Task Group

The Chair informed the committee that the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Panel was considered by the Children's Select Committee's Standing Task Group on Monday 26 June, ahead of the annual report being finalised by the Corporate Parenting Panel on 27 June and being presented to full council on 18 July 2023.

The findings of the Standing Task Group were being presented to the committee alongside the Corporate Parenting Panel's annual report – both are in Agenda Supplement 2.

The chair stated that he thought it was a robust and detailed review by the Standing Task Group and was glad to see that some of the suggestions had already been implemented by officers.

It was specified that it was for the committee to review the findings by the Standing Task Group and decide whether to endorse the recommendations. It would then be for officers to offer a response to these recommendations when the finalised report is presented to full council on 18 July 2023.

Peter Hutton, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, was invited to comment and stated that the Head of Children in Care and Young People and he had attended the task group meeting referred to. It was echoed that the report was robust and detailed and was already being acted on by officers. Focus on providing narratives to data going forward was highlighted.

It was asked that as certain members of the CPP take on specific responsibilities, that those members might attend and inform the committee of their roles.

Resolved

To endorse the report of the Children's Select Committee's Standing Task Group and accordingly the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report.

69 FACT (Families And Children Transformation programme) - interim report

The chair reminded the committee that it had received a report on FACT at its meeting on 25 October and requested a 6-months update, which is the attached

report, to review the data set that had been created and how the Family Help programme had been implemented.

The full report can be found in the agenda pack.

The FACT Programme Lead and Director of Families and Children's Services were invited to comment.

The programme is a 2-year programme in its early stages and some elements are operational whilst others are yet to be launched. In response to questions at the last committee report it was highlighted that information regarding the development on the outcomes framework and information on stakeholder engagement in Warminster and Westbury had been included to reassure members that that work is robust. It was noted that FACT is working with Oxford Brookes Institute of Public Care.

Debate

During debate a number of clarifications and points were raised:

The FACT activity that is laid out in the report was fundamentally about the whole partnership approach to early-stage intervention and prevention. Family Hubs are one area of this and the development of them is integrated within the Family Help Strategy and thus rooted within its monitoring and evaluation. It's a national framework with set principles and objectives that will be delivered.

Presentations had been delivered to Warminster and Westbury Area Boards and the contacts list is constantly growing. FACT is open to inviting individuals to conversations. Local members were highlighted as important participants in such discussions and more effort would be made to include them by default.

The reason for headings in terms of themes is due to the overall strategy, which is fundamentally a strategy of social mobility and the link between education and opportunities in later life. This is the reason for the link between education and wealth in this way and is not judgemental at all. It is also related to the terminology and Health and Wellbeing categories within the strategy.

The integrated front door manager line manages the pilot coordinator to allow family help workers to link with the locality team in Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), therefore avoiding duplication of services and/or families being missed by both teams.

The committee expressed its willingness to receive a further update in 12 months.

Resolved

To note the report

The chair informed the committee that the attached report provides an update on the building developments at Silverwood School, a co-educational special school for children and young people aged 4 to 19 years, formed in September 2020 with campuses in Rowde, Trowbridge and Chippenham (former schools of Rowdeford, Larkrise and St Nicholas).

Cllr Jane Davies (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Transition and Inclusion) was invited to speak on the report.

It was stated that the desired outcome did not just revolve around the buildings but the excellent education of the children.

The delays were noted but it was stressed that positives have been seen in the offers of support from Longfield, Hardenhuish and Paxcroft Schools. Specifically Paxcroft was singled out for high praise given the agreement of a ten year lease on some outdoor space to reduce physical constraints on Silverwood School in Trowbridge and the lease of a temporary classroom for a year whilst the transition is completed.

A risk was highlighted in paragraph 25 that couldn't be fully controlled but was being closely managed.

The Head of SEND and Inclusion gave a PowerPoint presentation that can be found in the agenda pack.

Key points from the presentation included:

Demand for a specialist place is extremely high. Places are increasing from 340 to 460 across Silverwood School.

The new build has had 40 weeks of construction delays, however £10,000 per week was received from the developer as compensation for this.

Transitional developments are in place and solutions have quickly been implemented, including the hosting of a satellite provision from Bellefield School for the past 2 years. Satellite provisions are being prepared at Paxcroft, Longfield, Longmeadow and Hardenhuish Schools.

Delays to phase 3 have had implications for phase 4, with phase 5 being the retention and investment in Chippenham and Trowbridge and are in the early stages of building plans.

The overriding intention is for the Silverwood leadership team to have as smooth a transition as possible.

The need to manage a growing number of students at Silverwood given the ongoing work was stressed.

Silverwood had its first Ofsted inspection recently which will be shared when the report is available.

Debate

During the debate the following points and clarifications were raised:

The delays are predominantly down to weather issues. The biggest risk for the project was ensuring that the delivery of the electricity sub-station for the new building was completed by October 2023. Delays are being managed and additional support is being provided where needed. The most important thing is mitigating the effects of any delays.

The committee expressed its delight at the teamwork shown by the surrounding Trowbridge Schools mentioned in the report.

Financial liability for damage to materials lies with the contractor Wilmore Dixon and the contract with them is well-crafted.

The committee expressed its concern at the additional costs from the delay. It was clarified that although money was being received from the contractor for the delays there is a shortfall against the additional cost.

It was clarified that some of the additional cost was due to mobile classrooms having doubled in priced and become more difficult to source.

The committee requested a written answer regarding paragraph 25 and the issues of SSE once the correct legal advisors had been consulted with for information.

Cllr Piazza left at 12:52pm.

Resolved

- 1. To note the report**
- 2. To request a written answer on the risks associated with the delivery of the electricity substation to be provided by SSE.**
- 3. For a briefing to be given to the chair and vice-chair in early February 2024 to update on the planned move to Rowde classrooms from April 2024. At that time the chair and vice-chair will consider whether an update on the whole programme should be presented to the committee at its meeting on 12 March 2024.**

70a Child, Youth and Family Voice Team Annual Report, 2022-2023

The chair informed the committee that this agenda item was to consider the attached Child, Youth and Family Voice Team Annual Report, 2022-2023

covering work for the past year and the future plans of Families and Children's Services, Children in Care Council, and the Wiltshire Youth Council.

The Head of the Child and Youth Voice Team presented a PowerPoint which can be found in the agenda pack.

Key points from the presentation:

Children In Care Council (CICC) had run since April 2021 and 48 children have participated in sessions. The last year has mainly been aiming to build connections and a community feel.

'Mind of My Own' App has captured the views of children and young people to share with workers. Just under 100 times it was used by children to share views with workers and can raise safeguarding concerns which helped to get support quicker.

A fostering consultation panel has been used to provide a 2-way discussion and provide lived experiences to allow positive and constructive feedback.

Forward thinking includes recruiting voice ambassadors to use their lived experience to deliver recruitment and feedback.

The use of the bright spot survey that many Local Authorities use was highlighted to help understand the wider cohort in care and pinpoint areas to develop.

Debate

During the debate the following points and clarifications were raised:

Resources for the Youth Council would be looked at once a managerial replacement is made. A decision about how to resource the team going forward would depend on its role and how it aligned with other council initiatives. They were looking for alternative venues as the Studley Children's Centre was closing.

The CICC are very happy with the amount of participation from the children in care and stated that Wiltshire had far higher numbers than other Local Authorities.

The Youth Council have had specific targets. The amount of resource required to support the shadow cabinet had been underestimated and they would use the lessons learned and apply them in the next Youth Council electoral cycle. The Chair expressed his wish for more engagement with the youth representative on the Children's Select Committee.

Pride events and the need to look into resources and coordination for youth involvement was highlighted.

Resolved

To note the report and welcome a future report for 2023-24.

71 **Regular updates**

71a School Ofsted Judgements

The written report was noted.

71b DfE Changes - Update from Department for Education

The written report was noted.

72 **Working together to improve school attendance**

The written update was noted.

It was clarified that emotionally based reasons for non-attendance would come under illness figures but wouldn't capture all young persons but mainly those where a conversation had taken place regarding the young person.

A DfE attendance advisor is meeting with Wiltshire Council to give advice on the national picture and actions Wiltshire Council can take to improve attendance. The committee expressed its interest at seeing the advice that is given.

The Vice-Chairman left the meeting at 1:24pm.

Cllr Corbin left the meeting at 1:25pm.

73 **Schools Forum**

The written update was noted.

73a Corporate Parenting Panel

Nothing further was added from the report given earlier in the meeting.

74 **Directors' update**

Lucy Townsend (Corporate Director – People) stated that Ofsted inspections were expected shortly. There had also recently been a peer review from LGA on SEND and the report was due shortly.

Cllr Jo Trigg wished to highlight that as a governor at Studley Green School she was extremely grateful for the support given by Corporate Director People and her team and from educational psychologists that had been exemplary. The committee echoed Cllr Trigg's recognition and thanks.

The chair wished to add that he had met an individual from the new music service and wished to pass on the comments of the great work they had been

doing. Concern was raised at the possibility that Wiltshire's service could be regionalised and lead to a lower quality of service. Therefore, it was asked that the issue be taken away from the meeting to be considered.

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

Cllr Peter Hutton, Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding, mentioned work that had taken place in the Youth Justice Service, including on anti-social behaviour.

76 **Chair's update**

An update on the Food, Unity, Energy, Laughter (FUEL) Programme was given in that it would be going ahead with a new company and thanks were given to officers for their work.

It was highlighted that Wiltshire Council had featured at the recent Local Government Association conference.

Ben Stevens had been appointed the Better Value Project and was looking at the deficit in the High Needs Block.

77 **Forward Work Programme**

Was noted as being attached to the agenda and praised for being in a more readable format.

78 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting of the Childrens Select Committee is Thursday 21 September 2023.

79 **Urgent Items**

The chair stated his wish for an organisation under the Wiltshire Community Foundation that brings together youth services to be invited to send a non-voting representative to sit on the committee. No objections were raised on this proposal.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.35 pm)

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