

**Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at Committee Room 1 - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Monday 4 December 2017 at 10.15 am**

**Present:** Councillor CA Gandy (Chairman)  
Councillor FM Norman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mr A James, JF Johnson, MD Lloyd-Hayes and MT McEvelly and D Summers

Co-optees: Mr A James

**Officers:** C Baird, J Coleman, M Evans, C Jones and A Scott

**21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors JA Hyde and A Seldon and co-optee members Mr Burbidge, Mrs Fisher and Mr Sell.

**22. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor D Summers attended as a substitute for Councillor A Seldon.

**23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor FN Norman declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 – Children and Young People Mental Health Partnership and agenda item 8 – Children's wellbeing self-assessment 2017 – update as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**24. MINUTES**

The committee noted a correction to the minutes. Hazel Braund's title in the minutes required amendment to state she represented Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the correction above, the minutes of the meeting on 2 October 2017 are agreed as a correct record.

**25. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 7 - 8)**

A copy of the Member questions and written answers is attached to the minutes at Appendix 1.

## 26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 10)

A copy of the public questions and written answers is attached to the minutes at Appendix 2.

## 27. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

The committee received a report and presentation from Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) concerning the updated Herefordshire Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Transformation Plan 2015 – 2020 and the response of the CCG to the recommendations arising from the task and finish group on Mental Health Services for Children and Young People. Jade Brooks, Deputy Director of Operations, Herefordshire CCG provided the presentation with Katherine Smith, Service Delivery Manager, Hereford CAMHS, 2gether NHS Foundation Trust. The work of the partnership was outlined and the refresh of the transformation plan. With respect to the recommendations of the task and finish group it was confirmed that they had been accepted and implemented in the action plan to the transformation plan.

The committee made the comments below in the discussion that followed:

- The incorporation of the recommendations of the task and finish group was welcomed and it was noted that further work was required to develop plans around perinatal care.
- The question was posed as to where the perceived weaknesses existed in the partnership. *Jade Brooks responded to explain that maintaining the energy of the agencies involved in the partnership was a challenge and ensuring the successful recruitment and retention of staff within our workforce. Furthermore, the resources of the NHS were currently directed towards addressing the highest levels of need but it was hoped that funding could be released to focus on early intervention and prevention programmes. A particular challenge concerned the ability to secure mental health inpatient admissions and she reminded the committee that there were no inpatient children's beds locally and securing beds in the West Midlands placed a pressure upon the operation of the service.*
- The committee queried transition between the Children and Young People Mental Health Partnership and adult mental health forums. *Katherine Smith explained that the current national NHS programme, Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN), included a focus on transition arrangements. It was confirmed that very few children transferred from CAMHS to adult mental health service.*
- The focus of the partnership on children and young people was recognised and understood. A query was raised regarding what account was taken of the impact on families and whether services were in place to address the wider impact of mental health disorders. *Katherine Smith explained that time-limited support groups had been established by CAMHS to provide support to parents with children suffering mental health conditions.*
- The training sessions provided to schools regarding mental health conditions were raised and the importance of securing a budget for the continuation of the training. *Jade Brooks confirmed that the national offer of training had been provided to secondary schools and a provider had been appointed to conduct the*

*training. It was important that the messages communicated during the training were fed into other local bodies and agencies concerned with children's mental health. It was hoped that there would be further clarity around the provision of the training in the recently announced green paper.*

- The statistics in the report concerning Herefordshire acknowledged that incidence of social problems, including self-harm, alcoholism and teenage pregnancies, were higher than the national average. There was an obvious impact on the mental health of children and young people and it was felt greater work should be undertaken to understand and address the causes of these issues. *Jade Brooks explained that the data could only provide a limited picture of cause and effect and it was the voice of the family that could provide the broader context. CAMHs looked at dominant themes and issues in local communities to understand the impact on mental health and it was important that agencies continued to share intelligence relating to such issues.*
- Initiatives undertaken in schools and the use of technology to reach children suffering from mental health problems was raised. The use of the pupil premium to support emotional wellbeing in schools was also raised. *Jade Brooks and Katherine Smith confirmed that the Strong Young Minds project was undertaken in schools and it was intended that once improvements to broadband reception across Herefordshire was completed, initiatives to make use of technology would be investigated. The Director Children's Wellbeing confirmed that the use of the pupil premium could be used for activities that supported the raising of attainment which could also benefit the pupil's emotional wellbeing, schools needed to account for how the money would be spent and demonstrate its effectiveness.*
- Queries were raised regarding the cost to schools of psychologists; an assessment of spend relating to autism and Asperger's would be of interest when the committee considered the draft Autism Strategy; and it was requested that service users were involved in the presentation of the item to committee. A query was raised regarding the new duty workers and their credentials. *Jade Brooks explained that CAMHs was free at the point of delivery and it was understood that some schools used educational psychologists. Although the roles were complementary, the services existed for different purposes. It was confirmed that the new duty workers were qualified NHS staff.*
- A query was raised regarding the location of the place of safety in Hereford. *Jade Brooks confirmed that a location close to the general hospital.*

Councillor CA Gandy proposed and Councillor DA Summers seconded the recommendations below. The committee agreed the recommendations unanimously.

That the committee:

- supports the response of the CCG to the task and finish group recommendations;
- supports the objectives of the Herefordshire Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Transformation Plan 2015 – 2020; and
- requests an update report on the implementation of the plan in 2018.

**RESOLVED – that the committee agrees the recommendations set out in the minute above.**

The committee adjourned at 11.45 a.m. and reconvened at 11.49 a.m.

## **28. CHILDREN'S WELLBEING SELF-ASSESSMENT 2017 - UPDATE**

The committee received a report concerning the updated Children's Wellbeing Self-Assessment, copy appended to the minutes. The Director of Children's Wellbeing

introduced the report and advised the Committee that the document had been updated since it was presented at the September meeting. The document had been used in the West Midlands Association of Directors of Children's Services self-assessment and peer challenge work in November 2017. Feedback had been received which informed the council's improvement work and would inform the next iteration. The self-assessment provided a comprehensive overview of children's services at the council outlining the current improvement journey, positive outcomes for children and elements which required attention.

In consideration of the self-assessment the committee raised the comments below in the discussion that followed:

- A recurring theme within the document concerned difficulties encountered with the software Mosaic. *The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help confirmed that Mosaic had been introduced to replace Frameworki. As with any new system there was a period of adjustment where challenges were encountered however the introduction of Mosaic was a positive step as clarity had been brought to the element of the system concerning Looked After Children (LAC);*
- There were concerns that the recruitment of experienced social workers was a challenge. *The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help explained that a new HR Business Partner had recently been investigating recruitment strategies including greater use of social media. The Director of Children's Wellbeing explained that a regional grouping of children's services was exploring ways of improving recruitment and retention of social workers and this would be complemented by a localised approach that was being developed by the HR Business Partner.*
- The self-assessment had highlighted the need for a cultural change in respect of safeguarding; it was queried how this would be achieved. *The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help advised the committee that the Safeguarding and Review Team were responsible for overseeing how services were delivered to LAC and also provided a quality assurance function. The team would focus on how to ensure consistency in its operations and define its role. The positive work of the team would be developed and embedded across the council.*
- Detail had not been provided in the self-assessment as to how the high rate of reoffending would be addressed. *It was explained that the recent consideration of the Youth Justice Plan at Full Council had included detail of the strategies to address reoffending rates.*
- The report referred to the poor physical environment for CAMHS but there was no detail regarding potential improvements. *The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help explained that the new CAMHS offer would address this and there was an intention to move away from a permanent location for the service to place an emphasis on meeting where services users preferred.*

The Director of Children's Wellbeing provided some feedback on the self-assessment which had been received from the West Midlands regional group. This included: confirmation that improvements in education and care had occurred; challenges persisted around LAC but there was acknowledgment that there had been a significant reduction in the number of children subject to child protection plans and that audit work had been carried out to reflect on this change; the voice of the child required more consistent emphasis; more information concerning current initiatives would be welcome; and the style of the document could have a more consistent approach.

Councillor CA Gandy proposed and Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes seconded the recommendations below. The committee agreed the recommendations unanimously.

That the Committee:

- endorses the self-assessment in its current form; and
- agrees that the comments raised by the committee are circulated to the cabinet member.

**RESOLVED: that the committee agrees those recommendations as set out in the minute above.**

## **29. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The committee considered the latest version of the work programme, copy appended to the minutes. The chairman introduced updates to the work programme which included the following:

- the LGA training session on 11 December had been rescheduled to 2.00 p.m.; and
- the next meeting of the committee would take place on Monday 5 February at 2.00 p.m. This meeting date had been rescheduled from the original date of Monday 22 January.

## **30. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was Monday 5 February at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm

**Chairman**



## Appendix 1 - Questions from members of the council and responses

| Question Number  | Questioner            | Question   | Question to  |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| MQ 1   | Councillor SM Michael | Parents with children on the autistic spectrum are being turned away from the named designated schools within our county. Will the committee commit to scrutinising what provision is being made to ensure these and future children do not have to seek schools outside the county or have to home educate as this can have a detrimental effect on both the children and the families? | Chairman of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee |
| <p><b>Chairman's response</b></p> <p>The Council seeks to fulfil its duty to provide sufficient and suitable education for all of its children and young people including those with SEND. Although there is not a specialist designated school specifically for children on the autism spectrum, there are specialist resource bases for children on the autism spectrum at Hampton Dene Primary School and the Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat School. Our designated special schools for learning difficulty (Barrs Court, Blackmarston and Westfield) only admit children with a primary need of severe learning difficulty, profound and multiple learning difficulty as to admit other children would not provide a suitable education in line with the Council's statutory duty. Council officers are not aware of children meeting the criteria for the special schools who are not being admitted. Occasionally, the Council does have parents expressing a preference for a special school place where children do not meet the criteria. It is appropriate for the school to refuse to accept the child for this reason. The Council always consults with the school in line with parental wishes. In a very small number of cases, where children have very specialist needs as part of their autism condition, we have to seek specialist setting and some of these are in neighbouring counties. However, all of these are within 10 miles of the Herefordshire border. If parents choose to electively home educate, which they have a right to do, the Council would still need to determine whether they are in a position to offer a suitable education taking into account any specialist needs that the child might have. The Council also has a duty to keep SEN provision under review. The all-age autism strategy is currently being re-drafted and will contain a commitment to review educational provision for autism in line with this duty.</p> |                       |  |  |





## Appendix 2 - Questions from members of the public and responses

| Question Number   | Questioner            | Question   | Question to  |
|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| PQ 1  | Mr Mansell, Hereford  | I would like to ask the scrutiny committee if it would commit to scrutinising the Council to ensure that it is meeting its statutory obligations to provide an education to children with special needs including autism, Asperger's and behavioural problems within the County? | Chairman of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee |
| <p><b>Chairman's response</b></p> <p>The Council (rather than the Scrutiny Committee's statutory duty) seeks to fulfil its duty to provide sufficient and suitable education for all of its children and young people including those with special educational needs and disability (SEND).</p> <p>I have been provided the following by the head of additional needs, Les Knight:</p> <p>The majority of children with SEN have their needs met through their local mainstream school either at SEN Support or with a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Mainstream schools provide additional specialist advice from educational psychologists, behaviour/autism outreach teams, specialist teachers for hearing and visual impairment and a range of specialist therapies provided by Wye Valley Health Trust. The Council also commissions specialist provision for the full range of needs in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist resource bases for children with language and communication needs (includes those on the autism spectrum including Aspergers) at Hampton Dene Primary School and the Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat School for children who are able to access mainstream but require significant additional support.</li> <li>• Special schools for learning difficulty (Barrs Court, Blackmarston and Westfield) for children with a primary need of severe learning difficulty (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD).</li> <li>• A special schools for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs (Brookfield) for children with a primary need of SEMH often associated with challenging behaviour.</li> <li>• Specialist independent schools and colleges - In a small number of cases, where children have very specialist needs, we have to seek specialist setting outside of Herefordshire. Ideally, these are in neighbouring counties depending on the type of need.</li> </ul> <p>The Council has a duty to keep SEN provision under review to ensure that it meets the changing pattern of need. For example, Blackmarston Special School was rebuilt/remodelled in 2013/14, the resourced base at Hampton Dene Primary School had an additional class for autism added in 2015/16 and The Brookfield School had an additional classroom built to for the academic year 2016/17 to meet additional demand for primary-age children. Council officers believe that the council is fulfilling its duties regarding children with special educational needs</p> |                       |  |  |
| PQ 2  | Mrs Mansell, Hereford | I would like to ask the Scrutiny Committee if they could provide information as to how many children are currently home educated and if they know what the reasons are for doing this?   | Chairman of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee |
| <p><b>Chairman's response</b></p> <p>There is no legal requirement for parents to inform the local authority that children are home schooled children therefore it is not possible to provide accurate figures regarding the numbers of children. The main reasons given by parents are to do with their own lifestyle, cultural preferences and/or philosophical beliefs; some parents also state that they have made the choice because their child was unhappy at school; some parents have also chosen to home educate due to attendance at school issues (which may occasionally also involve prosecution considerations); some parents have stated they have chosen to home educate due to the emotional and behavioural difficulties of their child not being met. However the most common reason is the first reason regarding lifestyle, culture and/or philosophical beliefs.</p>   |                       |  |  |

I have asked officers to provide the latest report on the matter to scrutiny members and we will consider if the matter is something we should focus on in our scrutiny work programme.

PQ 3

Debbie Hobbs

Today's (29 November) report from the APPGA recommends that every local authority assesses whether it has the correct portfolio of schools in their area to meet the full range of needs of children and young people on the autism spectrum and to prevent children having to be sent to more distant and costly school placements. Will the committee scrutinise the council to ensure that the recommendation is implemented?

Chairman of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

**Chairman's response**

I have set out the council's position regarding provision for SEN and children and young people on the autistic spectrum. The council is committed to reviewing education provision for autism as part of the renewing of the all age autism strategy and when that comes forward Children's Scrutiny will consider it as part of the scrutiny work programme.