

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>Chairman's response</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"> • 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. • 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). • 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. • 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. <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>Chairman's response</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.