



Task & Finish Group Report

**Review of Pupil Referral Unit
(PRU) referrals**

February 2019



Review of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Referrals

Chairperson's Foreword

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed the formation of a task and finish group to undertake a review of the level of referrals to the PRU.

The group met on two occasions and with the expert input of officers was able to produce recommendations around the functioning of the PRU, work between the PRU and mainstream schools and opportunities for those pupils leaving the PRU.

We would like to place on record our thanks to all who contributed. The manner in which officers presented a complex and technical subject with clarity and conciseness was a great assistance in facilitating the understanding of the task and finish group.

I would like to offer my own personal thanks to all who contributed to and supported the work of the group for their professionalism, dedication and hard work.

I must also thank my fellow group members: Cllr Chris Chappell and Cllr David Summers.

Councillor Mark McEvilly, February 2019
Chairperson of the Review of PRU Referrals Task and Finish Group

1 Executive Summary

1.1 The establishment of a task and finish group to focus on referrals to the pupil referral unit (PRU) in Herefordshire was agreed by the children and young people scrutiny committee on 16 July 2018.

1.2 The task and finish group was established to assess the level of referrals to the PRU in Herefordshire and the reasons for the current trends. The scope of the task and finish group, as agreed by the committee at the meeting above, is attached as appendix 1.

1.3 The group examined evidence of referrals to the PRU and determined that there were a high level of referrals to the PRU. The group considered reasons for the high levels of referrals and potential actions which could be undertaken to reduce referrals.

1.4 There is agreement in the group that the summary of our findings are a true reflection of the discussions undertaken which can be condensed into 11 topics. The recommendations focus on:

- 1) Representatives on the PRU Management Committee
- 2) Closer working or integration of PRU Forum and the In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) Panel
- 3) Designated senior lead for mental health and training for schools
- 4) Permanent exclusions from mainstream schools
- 5) Post-16 opportunities for PRU leavers
- 6) Academic outcomes and vocational courses
- 7) Primary to secondary school transition
- 8) Re-integration of pupils returning from the PRU
- 9) Cost/social benefit analysis of alternative provision
- 10) Perception and reputation of the PRU
- 11) PRU training of secondary school teachers

2. Composition of the Task and Finish Group

2.1 Members of the task and finish group were:

Councillor Mark McEvelly (chairperson)
Councillor Chris Chappell
Councillor David Summers

2.2 Lead directorate officers – Lisa Fraser and Les Knight

3 Context

Why did we set up the group?

3.1 The review looked at: pupil referral units in Herefordshire; current referral levels; recent trends in permanent exclusions (PEX) and referral levels including comparative data nationally and regionally; national and local policy.

3.2 The group looked at current trends around referrals to the PRU and if an increase had been recorded. The group sought to understand the reasons behind any recent trends in referrals; and gain assurance that effective co-ordination between the Council, the PRU and local schools exists to address increases in referral numbers.

What were we looking at?

3.3 The group's objectives were to:

- develop an understanding of the structure of the Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service and the Hereford Integrated Behaviour Outreach Service (HIBOS);
- learn about policies and guidelines (and local interpretation) which support schools to determine when referrals to the PRU are appropriate;
- learn how the Council works with HIBOS (a multi-Academy Trust) to address concerns regarding referral levels;
- assess trends in the level of permanent exclusions and pupil referrals to determine any recent increases. Compare such trends against regional and national statistics;
- engage professionals in the sector to determine the reasons behind recent trends;
- investigate any impacts on referral numbers resulting from changes to the educational landscape e.g. academies and free schools; and
- consider statistics relating to the success of pupils who transition from the PRU to mainstream schools in Herefordshire.

Who did we speak to?

3.4 Between November 2018 – February 2019, the group convened two meetings. At the first meeting the group engaged the following officers:

- Lisa Fraser, Assistant Director Education, Development and Skills.
- Les Knight, Head of Additional Needs

3.5 At the second meeting the group engaged the following witnesses:

- Head teacher of the PRU
- Head of the St David's Centre
- Three former pupils of the St David's Centre
- Acting principal of Earl Mortimer College

What did we read?

3.5 The group looked at the information below to undertake this review:

- Work of the Pupil Referral Unit - presentation 20 November 2018
- Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service – Report for Children's Scrutiny – January 2019

What did we ask?

3.6 In order to undertake the review the task and finish group agreed the lines of questioning below:

- What are the current level of referrals; are there any discernible trends in the level of recent referrals;
- Where are referrals originating; is there an even distribution across maintained schools, academies and free schools;
- How does the Council coordinate/liaise with the PRU and schools (maintained and non-maintained) to ensure there is alignment and consistency;

- How long do pupils remain at the PRU and how successful are transition arrangements for pupils leaving the PRU; how many return to the service;
- What thresholds/policies/guidelines are in place for schools to follow to undertake referrals for those pupils not permanently excluded; and
- Has there been any impact upon referral numbers as a consequence of academies and free schools in Herefordshire?

What did we find from our research?

3.7 The task and finish group developed an understanding of how Alternative Provision (AP) and in particular PRUs (as a sub-set of AP) is defined; *'education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour'*. (Alternative Provision, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, January 2013)

3.8 The group learned of the legal basis around PRU which included:

- Each LA has a duty under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to provide 'suitable education' for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend school'. PRUs were the response.
- Statutory Guidance on 'Alternative Provision' (Jan 2013) replaced earlier guidance.
- Full-time education for permanently excluded pupils must begin no later than the sixth day of the exclusion; there is no limit for non-permanently excluded pupils. Schools have the same duty for fixed-term excluded.
- No requirement on local authorities to have or to establish a PRU - may discharge their duties by other means. However, only LA can establish a PRU. LAs have a power (not a duty) for provision for 16-18 year olds.
- The term 'full-time' is not defined in law, should receive the same amount of education as they would receive in a maintained school. Full-time can be made up of two or more part-time provisions.
- There is separate statutory guidance for 'children who cannot attend because of health reasons' (May 2013)
- Other areas covered in the legislation include the opening or closing of PRUs, commissioning and that PRU can become AP Academies.
- PRUs are required to have Management Committees.
- Schools have a power to direct students off-site to improve their behavior.
- There is a requirement for a clear admission criteria and reintegration plan for individual pupils.

3.9 PRU Management Committee is the equivalent of a Governing Body, the PRU is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) as a maintained school and has students on roll. The management committee has a strategic role in setting/monitoring aims and objectives to keep students safe, meet need and ensure a good standard of education. Since 2013 it has had full control over budget and staffing; the LA is the employer of staff as other community schools. The composition of the management committee includes parent, staff and community representatives.

3.10 The group learned of the principles which defined good alternative provision:

- good attainment on par with mainstream schools – particularly core subjects – with appropriate accreditation and qualifications;
- personal, social and academic needs are properly identified and met in order to help

- them to overcome any barriers to attainment;
- improved pupil motivation and self-confidence, attendance and engagement with education; and
- the next steps following the placement such as reintegration into mainstream education, further education, training or employment.

3.11 The group learned that historically there had been three separate PRUs (KS3 Aconbury Centre, Hereford; KS4 Priory Centre, Leominster and St David's Centre, Hereford). There was also a primary intervention class at Brookfield School. There had been an amalgamation into a single PRU and modernisation in 2014 under the Executive Head from Brookfield. The management committee had been re-shaped to meet new requirements from 2013. A contract had been entered into with HIBOS (Brookfield) for three years from Jan 2016 to manage the PRU. The DfE challenged HIBOS about compliance of contract and it was re-established as a maintained school in Sept 2018 with a management committee. The current arrangement consisted of a single PRU, Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service (Ofsted Good in 2017): KS3 Aconbury Centre (24 Places mix of long/short stay places); KS4 St David's Centre (56 places); Primary intervention class at Brookfield (8 short stay part-time places).

3.12 A current review triggered by Consultant Report commissioned by Schools Forum due to pressure on High Needs Block of Dedicated Schools Grant had produced the following recommendations:

- a. Build consistent and more effective SEMH responses across all mainstream schools
- b. All schools should seek to identify and train a designated senior lead for mental health
- c. Review of exclusions and sharing of strategies to maintain learners in school
- d. Status of the PRU should be re-established so that it conforms with statutory guidance
- e. Partnership arrangements for commissioning and delivering AP in Herefordshire should be strengthened
- f. Admissions to PRU beyond PEx should be based on need, set against agreed criteria and independently managed by IYFA panel.
- g. The Brookfield School should cater for girls, at a capacity aligned to local need.

3.13 Recommendation e above, *Partnership arrangements for commissioning and delivering AP should be strengthened*, specified:

- Be clear about LA responsibility for a proportional number of places for PEx – its statutory responsibility – Estimates 50 based on comparators (Currently 80)
- Consider paying a slightly higher rate per pupil
- Be clear about school responsibility to commission and pay for all other places. School remains responsible for student outcomes
- Greater emphasis on 'revolving door' short stay model
- A more active role for secondary leaders in the shaping of services to meet the latter
- A wider range of responses to meet financial and geographical challenges

3.14 Recommendation f above, *Admissions to PRU beyond PEx should be based on need, set against agreed criteria and independently managed by IYFA panel*, specified:

- Placement is in student's best interests
- Greater use of IYFA arrangements to regulate entry to PRU and ensure criteria are adhered to
- Peer-to-peer challenge to ensure all steps (outlined in Herefordshire graduated response) have been taken by a school before seeking a place
- Peer-to-peer challenge on intervention pupils not returning to host school

3.15 Current issues with the PRU which needed to be solved included;

- Reducing demand/cost in the PRU Sector
- Clarifying the responsibilities of LA and Schools
- Reinforcing the criteria for PRU entry
- Making the local system more responsive to school need
- Improving outcomes for students (academic and wider life outcomes)

3.16 Some Key Considerations

- This would be a change from current philosophy
- Strength of partnership working is critical including IYFA
- Financial, curriculum and staffing sustainability of the PRU
- Deprivation is a factor
- Herefordshire's rurality and transport links
- Current split site PRU
- What are reasonable yet challenging expectations for outcomes for our most vulnerable damaged learners? GCSE, alternative qualifications, attendance, exclusion, wider life outcomes?

3.17 The group learned of the increasing number of individual registrations to the PRU between 2014 – 2018 and the increase in the number of terms of education provided by the PRU. The group also learned of the proportion of pupils from each national curriculum year that were entered to the PRU between 2014 - 2018; Year 7 – 8.8%, Year 8 – 14.8%, Year 9 – 23.9%, Year 10 – 32.4 % and Year 11 – 20.1%.

3.18 The Herefordshire pupil referral service received a 'Good' Ofsted inspection in July 2017 which stated that:

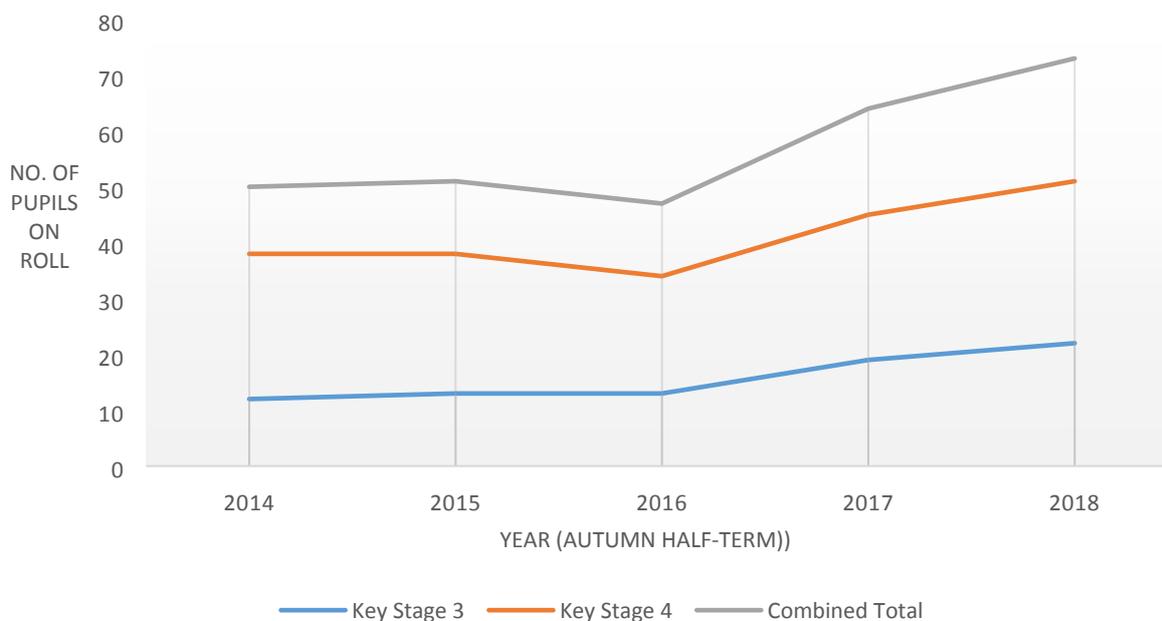
- Strong, nurturing relationships that exist between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. Pupils behave well at all three centres. They understand and respect the clear rules and expectations which are shared with them when they join
- The commitment of all staff in supporting pupils to achieve the best outcomes is evident across the service
- Pupils receive and outstanding level of support for their personal development and welfare. This enables them to build their resilience and confidence in a safe environment.

3.19 The group learned of the current numbers and the trend in referrals to the PRU between 2014 and 2018, as below:

THE ACONBURY (KS3) 24 pupils	ST DAVID'S (KS4) 56 pupils
22 on roll Sept 2018 – largest number to start an academic year in its history.	50 on roll Sept 2018 – largest number to start an academic year in its history.
As of the date of printing there are 24 on roll. (January 2019) The makeup of the students is continually changing but the trend points towards an increase in pupils with Educational Health Care Plans (8) and less pupils successfully returning to mainstream school (3).	As of the date of printing there are 55 on roll. (January 2019) Pupils at KS4 remain for the duration. There has been a steady increase in the complexity of pupils and their needs.

There is an increase in students who are permanently excluded or permanently placed at the Centre. In May, 68% of the students were either permanently placed or permanently excluded.

HPRS Pupil Numbers from 2014-2018



What did we find from talking to Officers and witnesses?

3.19 The group questioned the provision for 16-18 and understood that the High Needs Block was under significant pressure and current provision to age 16 could not be extended. A project had existed to support pupils moving out of Brookfield and the PRU into training opportunities. This project involved providing activity across the summer after pupils had left the school up to the following March but funding had now ceased for the initiative. The group identified a need to consider how support could be provided to young people with significant challenges to move into work. A consideration of how to provide advocates for young people leaving the PRU post-16 was required and how they could work with local employers and education providers.

3.20 The group considered the composition of the PRU management committee and the emphasis on the involvement of secondary school representatives to allow local schools to drive the provision offered by the PRU. It was understood that there had been an absence of heads of secondary schools attending the management committee; representatives of the senior management team attended but it was not felt that the secondary schools were influencing the provision of the PRU as effectively as they might or challenging its performance. The group learned that progress was being made in this issue.

3.21 The group queried the involvement of parents and pupils in the provision offered by the PRU and learned that engagement with families/pupils could be improved. Good engagement was reported with carers who had cared for a number of children in attendance at the PRU. It was understood that there were parent representative places on the management committee but attendance could be limited to 1 or 2 meetings before the pupil left the PRU. There had been some thought about extending this role to carers whose

charges had attended the PRU. It was confirmed that legislation had intended that parents would have a strong voice in the operation of PRUs.

3.22 The group discussed the definition of 'good AP' and understood this was defined as achieving outcomes on a par with mainstream schools. The group appreciated that this was a very challenging objective with attainment at 4.5% against national benchmark of 65% for attainment of 4-9 in English and Maths. The group felt that poor academic outcomes for pupils at the PRU required different pathways to be considered such as vocational courses. In addition the group felt that it was important that provision was made for post-16 support to ensure that pupils leaving the PRU would not become NEETs. Such a service would need to involve a multi-agency approach and could not be provided by Herefordshire Council alone.

3.23 The group learned about the PRU forum which assessed referrals and provided an oversight of the history of pupils referred to the PRU and the reasons for their referral. It was explained that an excess of referrals resulted in difficulties integrating new pupils into the PRU quickly. Peer-to-peer challenge from schools was important, as contained in the recommendations from Mark Whitby. It was recognised that the PRU and IYFA panel have previously operated independently from one another. The Group supported closer working relationship or integration between PRU Forum and IYFA Panel.

3.24 The group considered the Mark Whitby report and the recommendations that he proposed. The Group supported the challenges to mainstream schools contained in recommendations a-c which sought to make improvement to universal educational provision. The strengthening of partnership arrangements between the PRU as outlined in recommendation e was supported. The extended role of the IYFA Panel in recommendation f to consider all admissions to PRU was also supported. The Group considered how training for the mental health lead in schools (recommendation b) would be implemented and how it would build on the range of training currently in place. It was understood that an overall strategy was required to develop a toolkit for schools with input from local agencies. In order to avoid gaps or overlaps the toolkit should take account of training from CAMHS and Public Health England and training modules undertaken by educational psychologists.

3.25 The group questioned how effectively apprenticeships were being rolled out and the ease of access to colleges for pupils at the PRU. The Group also noted that the establishment of the new university which offered vocational courses could provide opportunities for pupils from the PRU. It was understood that across the Council there was a push to increase the number of apprenticeships but there had been challenges engaging with some local colleges offering vocational courses. These challenges demonstrated the importance of advocating on behalf of pupils from the PRU.

3.26 The group noted statistics which showed a doubling of permanent exclusions over the course of the last 3/4 years which was attributed to a decreasing level of flexibility in mainstream schools. It was queried whether there should be an expectation for pupils to move onto alternative schools rather than always directly into PRUs and it was confirmed that schools used to offer a second chance more often.

Witnesses

3.27 The group queried the number of teaching assistants required at the PRU and the impact of the exclusion policies of schools. The group learned that it was intended that there would be an increase in intervention placements to enhance the return to school process. Intervention placements were undertaken for a defined period of time and focused on re-integration back into mainstream school. Permanent exclusions resulted in pupils being permanently based in the PRU.

3.28 The group queried how the council could demonstrate that an adequately/properly funded alternative provision/PRU service could produce savings in the long-term. It was explained that a costs savings calculation was a difficult undertaking and was difficult to prove once intervention was introduced. It was acknowledged that the higher needs budget was struggling to meet basic demand. Each year cuts were applied to the higher needs budget whilst demand increased.

3.29 The group asked former pupils of the St David's Centre what could be improved at the PRU and they explained that pupils who went to the PRU should not be told that it was the end of all their opportunities and be told that they could still be successful. The stigma attached to the PRU and its reputation were not deserved and there should be greater positive detail provided of what the PRU could offer to pupils who were referred. The group heard anecdotal evidence of schools telling pupils that St David's was the 'end of the road' and to threaten pupils with referral to the PRU.

3.30 The group asked about problems with recruiting members to the governing body/management committee. It was felt that arrangements should be considered for former pupils to sit on the management committee or to find a way for former pupils to feed-into the body.

3.31 The group learned of the interests of mainstream schools for a greater outreach programme focused on increasing the level of training to key staff to have the same skills as those staff in the PRU.

4. Summary of our findings

4.1 Representatives on the PRU Management Committee

The group received details of the PRU management committee and the emphasis on the involvement of secondary school representatives on the committee. The involvement of secondary schools was intended to allow local schools to drive and influence the provision offered by the PRU. It was explained that there had been an absence of heads of secondary schools attending the management committee although representatives of senior management teams attended and provided valuable input. It was not felt that the secondary schools were influencing sufficiently the provision of the PRU or challenging its performance as effectively as national guidance suggested. The group felt that it was important that a proper partnership between the PRU and local schools was developed and the management committee was central in efforts to realise an effective relationship. To understand and address trends, such as high levels of referrals to the PRU, and develop constructive working relationships the group felt it was essential that head teachers of local mainstream secondary schools (particularly those with a high rate of referrals to the PRU) attended the PRU management committee. (Note: This has been much improved since September 2018)

The group queried the involvement of parents in determining the provision offered by the PRU. It was explained that the PRU was short-stay provision and not the same as having long-term parents on a governing body. The Aconbury Centre had demonstrated that it could be responsive to the wishes of parents (Ofsted feedback 2014). The group was told that engagement with families and parents remained an area that was hard to tackle locally and nationally. There should be a parent representative on the PRU management committee but attendance could be limited to one or two meetings before a pupil left the PRU. The group felt that the involvement of parents on the management committee was of central importance to allow alternative provision to take account of the needs of pupils.

The group heard that there had been that there had been good engagement with carers/guardians who had cared for a number of children in attendance at the PRU. It was

explained that there had been some consideration to extend the role of parent representatives on the management committee to carers/guardians who had looked after pupils attending the PRU. The group supported the notion of including carers/guardians on the PRU management committee as parent representatives. Where carers/guardians had experience of multiple children in their care who had attended the PRU the group felt that through their experience they could make valuable contributions and provide an informed perspective to the management committee. Following the witness session involving former pupils of the PRU it was felt that arrangements should be considered for former pupils to sit on the management committee or to find a way for former pupils to feed-into the body.

4.2 Closer working or integration of PRU Forum and the In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) Panel

The group learned of the governance structure in place around alternative provision, including the PRU Forum and the In-Year Fair Access Panel. The PRU Forum assessed referrals, provided an oversight of the history of pupils referred to the PRU and reasons for referral. It was understood that the Forum had only recently been re-established which was seen as a positive step in establishing arrangements to oversee the admission of pupils to alternative provision and assess the levels of referrals.

The group learned of the role of the IYFA Panel to consider the needs of 'hard to place' pupils and to determine if their needs warranted admission to the PRU. The group noted the recommendation from Mark Whitby that admissions to the PRU, not resulting from permanent exclusion, be based on need, as defined by criteria, and that such admissions be assessed by an independent Panel. The group also noted the intention of the Executive to ensure that the Executive Head of the pupil referral service would also chair the PRU Forum.

The group were welcoming of the intentions of the Executive to strengthen and co-ordinate the governance arrangements for admissions to the PRU. The group discussed greater integration between the PRU Forum and the IYFA Panel and considered whether the two bodies could be merged or the PRU Forum made a sub-group of the IYFA Panel. Ensuring that all bodies with a responsibility for overseeing admission arrangements to the PRU worked as closely as possible and were co-ordinated would assist in the identification of increases in the levels of admissions, the reasons for such increases and the agreement of actions in response.

4.3 Designated senior lead for mental health and training for schools

The group raised in discussions the government green paper: Transforming children and young people's mental health provision. The group supported the intention of the green paper to encourage schools to have a designated senior lead for mental health. It was also noted that a recommendation from Mark Whitby was supportive of schools identifying people to take on the role.

The group was supportive of the role of the designated lead for mental health, as outlined in the green paper, to establish a whole school approach to mental health and emotional well-being, including preventative activity and promotion of good mental wellbeing and resilience among pupils (and staff). The group felt that in some cases this would enable schools to address difficulties experienced by pupils before any potential referral to the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs school or PRU would be considered. The role of the designated lead for mental health in schools could potentially be a very valuable contribution to early intervention strategies and avoid admissions for some pupils to alternative provision.

The group considered how training for the designated mental health lead in schools would be implemented and how it would build on the range of training currently in place. The Group

noted that an overall strategy was required to develop a toolkit for schools with input from local agencies. In order to avoid gaps or overlapping responsibilities the toolkit should take account of training from the Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Public Health England and the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and training modules undertaken by educational psychologists.

The group recommended that the executive should encourage all schools to make arrangements to identify a designated lead for mental health, although it has to be recognised that no additional resource has yet been identified to support already hard-pressed schools. It was also recommended that a survey of schools should be undertaken to determine what preparations had been made to make appointments to this post.

4.4 Permanent exclusions from mainstream schools

The group discussed statistics which showed a doubling of permanent exclusions from mainstream schools over the course of the last 2 years. Officers explained that this was identified as part of the cause of increases in the level of referrals to the PRU. The group heard that the increase in permanent exclusions could in part be explained by decreasing flexibility and resource in mainstream schools. Evidence was also offered to the group to suggest that schools were less likely to offer students a 'second chance'. It was queried whether pupils who were permanently excluded should be moved into alternative mainstream schools rather than directly to the PRU.

The group recommended that the executive engages with those schools with a high level of permanent exclusions to determine if behaviour and exclusion strategies were in place. If schools could also offer pupils a 'second chance' it was felt that there could be a decrease in the level of referrals to the PRU. It was felt that in appropriate circumstances this would be preferable for the education and development of the pupil whilst helping to reduce the number of referrals to the PRU.

4.5 Post-16 opportunities for PRU leavers

The group were interested in what provision and support existed for young people aged 16-18 who were leaving the PRU. Details of a project which had run previously were outlined to the group to support pupils leaving Brookfield School and entering training opportunities but funding for this initiative had now ceased. The group was concerned that there was a possibility that without the right support pupils leaving the PRU could become young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). It was felt that work should be undertaken to consider strategies to support young people into work or training who were leaving full-time education with significant challenges. It was acknowledged that such strategies could not be developed in isolation by Herefordshire Council but required a multi-agency approach.

The group felt that local advocates or champions for young people leaving the PRU post-16 could play a valuable role in helping them to avoid becoming NEETs. It was felt that such individuals could engage with local colleges and employers on behalf of young people to attempt to secure future opportunities for their development.

The group learned that there was an initiative at the Council to encourage apprenticeships and it was felt that access to these opportunities should be facilitated by the Council and promoted to pupils leaving the PRU.

The group also noted that the establishment of the new university provided a potential opportunity to post 16 PRU leavers. It was felt that the vocational courses at the university could provide valuable opportunities and the Council should seek to engage with the

university to identify suitable opportunities for PRU leavers and investigate arrangements to facilitate access to such opportunities.

4.6 Academic outcomes and vocational courses

The group was told that one piece of national guidance described good alternative provision as that which 'achieved outcomes on a par with mainstream schools' however academic performance at the PRUs nationally was well below the national benchmark attainment level. It was understood that the principle of parity of outcomes was a positive objective for the service but in practice it was recognised that this was very difficult to achieve. It was felt that the current level of academic outcomes for pupils at the PRU required an investigation of alternative educational pathways. The executive was recommended to work with the PRU to identify a wider range of vocational courses which could improve outcomes for pupils.

4.7 Primary to secondary school transition

The group heard evidence during the witness sessions that the transition for pupils from primary to secondary schools could be problematic. It was recognised that in Herefordshire there were small primary schools with small classes in which pupils with problems could be managed. When pupils transitioned to larger secondary schools they could struggle in a new much larger environment. This issue was acknowledged by secondary schools and the PRU received more referrals from year 7 than any other year group.

The group was concerned at the level of referrals arising from pupils in year 7. It was reported that a variety of approaches existed to try to ease the transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools. This included an example of inviting pupils from local schools from as early as year 4 for science days.

The group felt that the executive should work with schools across Herefordshire to identify transition arrangements which represented best practice. By ensuring that pupils were familiar with their new surroundings at secondary school and comfortable in new environs it was hoped that the high level of referrals from year 7 would be reduced.

4.8 Re-integration of pupils returning from the PRU

Through the witness session the group heard evidence regarding the difficulty experienced by pupils attempting to re-integrate into mainstream education after a period of referral at the PRU. It was reported that success with integration was limited; pupils had become familiar with the smaller scale of the PRU and close contact with teaching staff. Limited timetables for returning pupils were used but pupils could struggle upon return to a much larger educational setting where they also could become acquainted with old friends and return to old behaviours.

The group heard of the work that was ongoing between the PRU and Earl Mortimer College to dedicate part of the school to intervention work conducted by the PRU. Part of the work of this intervention pilot would provide placements to focus on re-integration into mainstream schools.

The group felt that in order to address high referral rates in the county effective methods of reintegrating pupils returning from the PRU to mainstream schools were required. There was support for the work ongoing between the PRU and Earl Mortimer College and it was recommended that the executive should seek to make resources available to assist the pilot. It was recommended that the executive examine the outcomes of the pilot to determine if the model could be implemented in other parts of the county. If the pilot was effective in re-

integrating pupils back into mainstream schools it was felt this would assist efforts to reduce referral levels.

4.9 Cost/social benefit analysis of alternative provision

The group discussed the value of alternative provision and the work of the PRU to the broader community. It was felt that alternative provision that was adequately resourced was able to make a significant difference to the lives and outcomes of young people. The benefit to society as a whole by improving the life chances of young people and helping to divert them from detrimental lifestyles, with social and financial implications to the community, was obvious. The group acknowledged the role that the PRU played in this regard and its value to the community.

The group were informed of the financial pressures under which the higher needs budget in the Herefordshire was placed. It was confirmed that cuts to higher needs budget had been made over the course of a number of years whilst demand had been increasing. It was felt that a calculation of the social and financial benefit of having a well-resourced PRU should be undertaken to strengthen the ability of the council to lobby central government for increased levels of higher needs funding.

4.10 Perception and reputation of the PRU

During the witness session the group heard from former pupils of the St David's Centre and asked them what improvements could be made to the PRU. The pupils in attendance spoke eloquently about their concerns regarding the manner in which mainstream schools portrayed the PRU and how this influenced parents and pupils perception of the PRU. Pupils had been told that the PRU was the 'end of road' and the prospect of being referred to the PRU was used as a threat.

Referral to the PRU, on the part of those pupils giving evidence, had been perceived as the removal of opportunities and prospects for success due to the reputation and stigma attached to the PRU. Once the pupils were at the PRU the opportunities available to them had become apparent and their earlier apprehensions had been misplaced.

The former pupils were clear that the reputation of the PRU and the manner in which it had been portrayed to them ahead of their referral was very negative and not accurate. An improvement which the former pupils raised was that mainstream schools should not threaten pupils with referral to the PRU or portray referral to the PRU as a removal of opportunity for success in life.

The group were concerned by this testimony and acknowledged the positive work that the PRU undertook. The group felt that the executive should work with mainstream schools to reduce the stigma attached to the PRU.

4.11 PRU training of secondary school teachers

The group heard from witnesses that it would be of value to teachers in mainstream schools to learn from teachers at the PRU regarding the methods and practices they adopted to cope with challenging and disruptive pupils.

The group supported training for teachers in mainstream schools in the methods used by teachers in the PRU or to undertake observation of teaching in the PRU. It was felt that if teachers in mainstream schools were equipped with the same skills as those in the PRU to address and overcome challenging behaviour this could assist in efforts to reduce the number of referrals to the PRU.

It was felt that the executive should work with mainstream schools and the PRU to explore the prospect of providing training concerning coping with challenging behaviours.

5 Summary of Recommendations

From our findings, the task and finish group would like to make the following **11 recommendations** to the executive and ask that they are given appropriate consideration:

5.1 Representatives on the PRU Management Committee

Recommendations –

– The executive considers methods to encourage head teachers of local secondary schools to provide input into the design of alternative provision including sufficient numbers attending and participating in the PRU Management Committee.

– The executive continues to consider methods to encourage parents and extended family to attend the PRU Management Committee and investigates methods to allow former pupils to contribute feedback.

– The executive considers broadening the role of representatives on the PRU management committee to include carers/guardians.

5.2 Closer working or integration of PRU Forum and the In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) Panel

Recommendation –

– The executive considers how to ensure closer working between the PRU Forum and IYFA Panel, including an assessment of the benefits of integrating the two bodies, with any changes in operation being recorded and agreed by all schools within a revised In-year fair access protocol.

5.3 Designated senior lead for mental health and training for schools

Recommendations –

– That the executive encourages all schools in Herefordshire to make preparations to identify a designated, qualified mental health (wellbeing) lead and undertakes a survey of schools to assess what progress is being made to appoint to this post.

– That the executive works with partners, including the CCG, CAMHS, Public Health England, 2gether NHS Foundation Trust and schools to develop a framework of training packages for schools including the designated mental health leads.

5.4 Permanent exclusions from mainstream schools

Recommendations –

– That the executive engages schools with a high level of permanent exclusions to identify whether strategies to prevent exclusion are in place.

– That the executive reviews the In-year fair access protocol to gain agreement to YP being offered a second chance for certain types of first-time permanent exclusion.

5.5 Post-16 opportunities for PRU leavers

Recommendations

– That the executive considers how to broaden opportunities and enhance the prospects of pupils leaving the PRU post-16 and considers alternative means of providing the resource to offer ‘scaffolding’ to encourage former PRU pupils to move into employment, education and training.

– That the executive considers how local advocates or young people champions could work with local employers and further/higher education providers locally to increase opportunities for pupils leaving the PRU post-16.

– That the executive considers how apprenticeships at the Council can be provided to young people leaving the PRU.

– That the executive works with the New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMiTE) university, and all Higher Education providers in Herefordshire, to identify where opportunities may exist for post 16 PRU leavers and investigate arrangements to facilitate access to such opportunities.

5.6 Academic outcomes and vocational courses

Recommendation –

– That the executive considers working with the PRU to consider how to develop a wider range of vocational courses for pupils.

5.7 Primary to secondary school transition

Recommendation –

– That the executive considers the impact of the transition from primary to secondary school on referrals to the PRU and examines models of best practice to share with all schools.

5.8 Re-integration of pupils returning from the PRU

Recommendations –

– That the executive considers any resources it could make available to assist the intervention pilot at Earl Mortimer School.

– That the executive examines the success of the work of the pilot to re-integrate pupils following return from the PRU and if the model could be replicated at other schools across Herefordshire.

5.9 Cost/social benefit analysis of alternative provision

Recommendation –

– The executive is recommended to work on the production of a broader community and social cost-benefit analysis of alternative provision and the PRU for the purposes of lobbying.

5.10 Perception and reputation of the PRU

Recommendation –

– The executive is recommended to work with mainstream schools to reduce the stigma that is attached to the PRU.

5.11 PRU training of secondary school teachers

Recommendation –

– The executive is recommended to work with mainstream schools and the PRU to explore the prospect of providing training concerning coping with challenging behaviours.

Appendix 1
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
PRU Referrals Task and Finish Group – Scoping Document

Title of review	PRU referrals
Scope	
Reason for review	The cabinet member has suggested that the current level of referrals to the PRU should be reviewed by the scrutiny committee
Links to the corporate plan	<p>The review contributes to the following objectives contained in the Herefordshire corporate plan and other key plans and strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life; and • Secure better services, quality of life and value for money.
Summary of the review and terms of reference	<p>Summary:</p> <p>The review will look at: pupil referral units in Herefordshire; current referral levels; recent trends in permanent exclusions and referral levels including comparative data nationally and regionally; national and local policy.</p>
	<p>Terms of Reference:</p> <p>The task and finish group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop an understanding of the structure of the Herefordshire Pupil Referral Service and the Hereford Integrated Behaviour Outreach Service (HIBOS); • learn about policies and guidelines (and local interpretation) which support schools to determine when referrals to the PRU are appropriate; • learn how the Council works with HIBOS (a multi-Academy Trust) to address concerns regarding referral levels; • assess trends in the level of permanent exclusions and pupil referrals to determine any recent increases. Compare such trends against regional and national statistics; • engage professionals in the sector to determine the reasons behind recent trends; • investigate any impacts on referral numbers resulting from changes to the educational landscape e.g. academies and free schools; and • consider statistics relating to the success of pupils who transition from the PRU to mainstream schools in Herefordshire. <p>Membership (to be determined):</p>

	Group leaders will be contacted to fill any remaining vacancies following initial recruitment of members on the committee.
What will NOT be included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of individual cases.
Potential outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine current trends around referrals to the PRU and if an increase has been recorded; • To understand the reasons behind any recent trends in referrals; and • Gain assurance that effective co-ordination between the Council, the PRU and local schools exists to address increases in referral numbers.
Key Questions	<p>To consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current level of referrals; are there any discernible trends in the level of recent referrals; • Where are referrals originating; is there an even distribution across maintained schools, academies and free schools; • How does the Council coordinate/liase with the PRU and schools (maintained and non-maintained) to ensure there is alignment and consistency; • How long do pupils remain at the PRU and how successful are transition arrangements for pupils leaving the PRU; how many return to the service; • What thresholds/policies/guidelines are in place for schools to follow to undertake referrals for those pupils not permanently excluded; and • Has there been any impact upon referral numbers as a consequence of academies and free schools in Herefordshire?
Cabinet Member	Cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing
Key stakeholders / Consultees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal – education officers concerned with additional needs. • Head teacher/representative from management committee – PRUs • Head teachers from schools with high permanent exclusion/referral rates • Management Committees at PRUs • Governing Bodies at maintained schools • Parents of permanently excluded children or at PRU
Potential witnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Teacher from PRU • Management Committee members • Governing bodies members
Research Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics relating to permanent exclusions and referral numbers; current data and previous years to determine any trends; • Comparative referral data – national and regional; • Policies and guidelines issued to schools to manage permanent exclusions and referrals.
Potential Visits	
Publicity Requirements	Following the conclusion of the task Report back to the children and young people scrutiny committee.

Outline Timetable (to be determined): (following decision by the children and young people scrutiny committee to commission the Review)	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
Confirm approach, Terms of Reference, programme of consultation/research/provisional witnesses/meeting dates	Committee meeting – 16 July 2018
Present final report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	

Group Members	
Chair	
Support Members	
Support Officers	J Coleman M Evans