



Title of report: Children and Young People Mental Health

Meeting: Children and young people scrutiny committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 23 March 2021

Report by: Cabinet member children and families

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To provide an outline summary of the mental health and pastoral care in schools for children, including those who are looked after. The report summarises the current initiatives; and also considers the implications for some of the pupils following the lockdown and what could be done further to support them once restrictions ease. The report will also attempt to summarise the pathway of support as these children grow.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The committee reviews the report and the presentation and determines any recommendations it wishes to make to improve the mental health pathway and pastoral care.

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options to the above recommendations; it is a function of the committee to review actions taken in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive and make reports or recommendations to the executive

Key considerations

2. The true extent of the mental health issues facing all children as a result of lockdown's is currently unknown; a clearer picture will develop over the forthcoming weeks and months when an assessment of the resources and services required to address the issues can be undertaken. A further report will be brought to scrutiny later in the year. Herefordshire council currently has 326 Looked after Children in the County and who mainly (but not exclusively) attend Herefordshire Schools. These children are looked after by the Council (their corporate parent) for a wide variety of different reasons; they are not one coherent group and have a range of needs and circumstances. They simply share one characteristic amongst many they will not necessarily share.
3. The presentation (appendix 1) provides an overview of the support schools offer (pastoral support in its widest sense) and whether there is an adequate mental health pathway for children. The need for such a pathway has been evident for some time but this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. We are expecting, when the latest lockdown is over, that all pupils who return to schools and colleges will show signs of mental health issues.
4. The pastoral support for children is tailored to individual need and varies widely between settings and individuals. A summary of the picture is shown within the presentation.
5. The mental health support pathways are not clear cut, this is partly because there is no set pathway; and partly because we do not yet know what mental health needs will be evident as children return to school in the coming weeks. Early mental health support pathways need to be reviewed and developed further for children Herefordshire.
6. We are also aware that lockdown; for some children has not been a problem and they have flourished working from home; we only have anecdotal evidence of this however and need to capture more secure data.
7. The draft Children and young people mental health transformation plan for the CCG includes plans to review emotional wellbeing and mental health provision for looked after children in Herefordshire to inform commissioning priorities for 2022-2023. There is a concern however, that timescales may result in continued unmet need for at least another year and that disparity in service provision between Herefordshire and Worcestershire where the new model will be implemented between June-October 2021
8. There needs to be greater parity in the mental health support offer between Worcestershire and Herefordshire; this discussion is taking place to ensure that there

is equity across the counties. We need to assess the increased need for children who are looked after with mental health needs following lockdown ending for students.

9. Herefordshire Council needs to focus specifically on some key priorities; which may include assessing the increase in self harm and eating disorders in young children (11-18) and those children for whom the blended model of online working and attendance has worked better than expected. Furthermore, we need to discuss what additional support could be offered to children over 18 and how this can help progress into work and further education.
10. The presentation provides an overview of all of these elements and we welcome the opportunity to have a discussion in respect of how children and young people's scrutiny committee can provide their support to develop the support we provide to children with their mental health and pastoral support needs.
11. At the meeting there will be two further presentation by partners. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG will provide a presentation on CYP mental health and the impact of COVID19; the presentation is attached as appendix 2. Healthwatch will provide a presentation on the schools mental health forum and the youth watch; the presentation is attached as appendix 3.

Community impact

12. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance. Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting on actions completed and outcomes achieved.
13. The successful implementation of current initiatives in the provision of the mental health and pastoral care in schools will provide the support that children who are looked after may require and bring about further progress towards achieving the council's priorities of keeping young people safe and giving them a great start in life, contributing to Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024 priorities.
14. Furthermore, enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives; improving access to learning opportunities at all levels and improved outcomes for all children and young people, and those contained within priority two of the health and wellbeing strategy.
15. The families and carers of vulnerable children and young people are experiencing different and improved approaches to service delivery as we continue our implementation of the actions set out in our plan and in the context of the plan's status within the wider children's development plan. This includes looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25.

Environmental Impact

16. Whilst this is a decision on back office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

17. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions:

- have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

18. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The effective provision of pastoral support and mental health pathways for children and assists us to discharge our duties under the Equality Act.
19. The current initiatives support the council in its overall duty to promote equality. In particular, the implementation of these initiatives will improve the outcomes of children and young people, by ensuring their individual needs are assessed and assisting children and young people and their families to access services to meet their needs.

Resource implications

20. There are no resource implications arising from the recommendation. The resource implication of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response to those recommendations

Legal implications

21. There are no specific legal implications of the recommendation of this report.

Risk management

22. The risks associated with the failure to provide mental health and pastoral support means that young children who are or who have been in the care of the Authority are at greater risk of harm, failure to flourish and / or wider disadvantage.

23. The proposed actions will ensure greater coordination across the work of mental health support for children who are or have been looked after by the state and reduce their exposure to mental health problems and wider vulnerability.
24. We recommend that we look to strengthen the pathways and activity already in place to better co-ordinate the initiatives. Regular oversight of the initiatives already being undertaken will allow for a more cost effective and coordinated set of actions and better targeting of support. We recommend a monitoring group to oversee such activity until the impact of the pandemic is better understood and whilst we mitigate against the risks associated with the pandemic.

Consultees

25. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Presentation – Pastoral Support and mental health pathway for looked after children.

Appendix 2 – Presentation – Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG – CYP Mental Health and Impact of COVID19.

Appendix 3 – Presentation – Healthwatch – Schools Mental Health Forum and Youth Watch.

Background papers

None identified