

**Supplement – schedule of questions received for meeting of children and young people scrutiny committee – 7 September 2021**

**Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	
PQ 1		Question deferred.	
PQ 2	Ms B Shore, Hereford	<p>I raised a public question at Cabinet in November 2020 about the use of the term “alleged victim” in the Council’s peer on peer abuse guidance. I set out the arguments and evidence for the importance of using the term victim, rather than alleged victim. In response to my question, it was agreed: “We will ensure that the description “victim” is used in all documentation going forward”.</p> <p>In view of this Cabinet decision, why, 10 months on, does the Council’s published Example Peer on Peer Abuse Policy for Schools continue to use the term “alleged victim”?</p>	

**Response from Interim Director of Children and Families:**

I am sorry this has now been changed. The original guidance issued was always intended to be updated regularly as the national guidance to schools changes. The term ‘alleged victim’ has now been changed to reflect this request. It is being issued to schools as the new term starts with the updated terms. There will be further updates in the coming months also as we see this as a guidance that will require constant updating. The current version has the updated terminology in it. The latest national guidance was updated in April 2021 (this was itself delayed) so we waited for that before updating our own. We apologise for the delay.

**Supplementary question**

Hereford Women’s Equality Group has been working on the issue of peer on peer sexual abuse in schools particularly around keeping victims safe and as such we absolutely welcome the change in the guidance to schools changing alleged victim to victim. This is incredibly important.

The national guidance came out in April this year but it took over four months to make this change and when I submitted the question on the first of September ‘alleged victim’ was still being used in the council guidance to schools.

Why was the word alleged ever used at all given that this committee made a very clear decision in November 2020 to use the word victim in all future documents and why did it take so long to change?

**Response**

The chairperson indicated that a written response would be provided. The importance of a clear action tracking process was highlighted, with a responsible person identified to deliver actions and a date for completion.

**Response received from Children's Services – 22.11.21**

The word alleged was initially used on the back of advice which suggested that, given that most cases involve children and do not reach a legal resolution (ie a court judgement) they remain allegations. However, we recognised that the use of the word alleged was inappropriate for victims and it has subsequently been removed. The delay was because the guidance is updated regularly following national changes. It is usually updated termly.

PQ 3	Ms D Hobbs, Parent Carer Voice Herefordshire	How can you show effective monitoring of SEN provision across the county and within Mainstream Education and then how are you effectively Implementing that this has then been Quality Assured for SEN children?
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**Response from Interim Director of Children and Families:**

There are a number of ways that SEN provision is monitored in both mainstream and specialist educational settings in Herefordshire.

Schools and settings have a responsibility to make provision to meet the full range of pupils on their roll. As such, they are inspected through the Ofsted inspection framework and the LA monitors inspection letters for SEND specific comments and recommendations. All schools are expected to monitor the success of specific groups including SEND within the school or settings and if there are found to be weaknesses, action to address these should be built into the school improvement plan. The members of the Governing Body act as 'critical friends' to the school and in this regard, the SEN Governor is key to challenging the school about the quality and range of its SEN provision.

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the school will hold a meeting to review the plan annually. SEN Officers from the LA will attend a proportion of these annual reviews Annual Reviews and the vast majority of our schools are visited in this way every year. The SEN Officers are in a position to challenge progress being made by the child concerned. In addition, a wide range of council officers from the Additional Needs Service, e.g. peripatetic teachers for sensory impairment or educational psychologists, work directly with children in all schools on a regular basis. Where the officers have concerns, these are raised with senior officers. These are discussed at the monthly 'round table' meetings and where it is deemed appropriate, challenge is made to the school. Other intelligence about SEND provision, e.g. if there are complaints from parents or from other non-Council services is also considered at these meetings.

The performance of SEN children is monitored across the County as a whole and in relation to specific schools on an annual basis by the LA. Periodically, there are reviews of specific types of provision to ensure that quality is being maintained.

There is an action in the latest iteration of the SEND Strategic Action Plan to train expert peer reviewers to conduct peer challenge using a range of SEND indicators similar to those used in the successful 'London Challenge' programme. This work is being supported by the 'Whole School Support for SEND' organisation which is in turn supported by the National Association for Special Education Needs (NASEN).