

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 4 October 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors D McCabe (Chair), L Mason (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, D Jones, T Mawston, M Nugent and G Wilson

OFFICERS: R Brown, S Calvert, C Cannon, E Cowley, T Dunn, S Lightwing, G Moore, K Smith and R Wilcox

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors M Saunders and P Storey

21/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor A Hellaoui	Non-Pecuniary	Items 4 and 6, member of three governing bodies

21/21 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 6 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 6 September 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/22 **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) - FURTHER INFORMATION**

Officers from the Local Authority and the NHS were in attendance to provide the scrutiny panel with further information in respect of its current review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that the submitted report, which had been circulated with the agenda pack, contained:

- a) key data in respect of special educational needs and disabilities in Middlesbrough, specifically data on type of needs and pupil characteristics and how those compared regionally and nationally; and
- b) a detailed overview of how education, social care and health worked collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level, including information on the SEND Strategy and the SEND Strategic Group.

Members were also informed that a copy of the SEND Strategy had been circulated with the agenda papers. It was advised that the SEND Strategy had recently been updated and shared across the local area. In respect of the strategy, briefing sessions were currently being arranged for October/November and colleagues across education, health and social care would be invited to attend.

Members heard that The Children and Families Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (2014 updated 2015) transformed the system for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), ensuring that services consistently supported them to achieve positive outcomes. The scrutiny panel was provided with a brief outline of the SEND Code of Practice 0-25. The reforms had created a system from birth to 25 through the development of coordinated assessment of a single Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which aimed to improve cooperation between all services responsible for providing education, health and/or social care and giving parents and young people greater choice and control over their support.

Alongside the SEND Code of Practice, the Local Area SEND Inspection Framework had been implemented. In 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Middlesbrough. Following the inspection, the local area was

required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action, focussing on four areas, which aimed to:

- develop stronger leadership and governance at all levels to ensure that the SEND Code of Practice was fully implemented across the local area;
- introduce greater strategic planning for the joint commissioning of services across education, health and social care;
- improve the local offer and its co-production with families; and
- utilise data to drive improvement in provision and promote positive outcomes for children and young people who had SEND in the local area.

The local area was revisited in 2019 and inspectors commented that significant and sustained progress had been made in respect of the four priority areas and the implementation of the SEND Code of Practice. As a result, the local area no longer required formal monitoring from Ofsted or the CQC.

Members were advised that the Local Area SEND Inspection Framework was currently being updated/revised and it was anticipated that the new framework would include children and young people at risk of exclusion and those requiring access to Alternative Provision. It was anticipated that further updates on, and revisions of, the framework would be shared later in the year.

Members were informed that, to ensure the local area continued to meet its statutory duties and responsibilities (as outlined within the SEND Code of Practice), a SEND Strategic Group had been established. In terms of membership, the group had representation from the Local Authority, health, educational settings and parents. The SEND Strategic Group provided challenge and oversight and reported to the Children's Trust on a regular basis. The group had developed a number of work streams, which focussed on areas linked to the key priorities, as identified within the SEND Strategy. Through the work of the SEND Strategic Group, the local area continued to move forward with key developments to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND 0-25 in Middlesbrough were being met.

The scrutiny panel was advised that the key work stream action plans, linked to the key priorities in the SEND Strategy, focussed on:

- Data, Quality and Outcomes
- SEND Sufficiency Planning: Education
- Joint Commissioning
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Workforce Development
- Behaviour Partnership

In respect of each work stream, self-evaluations were undertaken and the SEND Strategic Group regularly shared best practice regionally and nationally.

Members were advised that the key priorities of the SEND Strategic Group were:

- a) To further develop strategic leadership across education, health and social care and identify and remove barriers to learning and support, resulting from COVID-19.
- b) To ensure greater involvement of children, young people and families to support co-production, ensuring that their voices were heard and feedback was used to inform service delivery.
- c) To ensure greater analysis and use of information to provide sufficient local educational provision and to drive improvement in provision through the use of data. In addition, improve systems for capturing softer outcomes for children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities
- d) To further improve strategic planning to support joint commissioning of services across education, health and social care.
- e) To improve processes and opportunities for children and young people in preparation for adulthood.
- f) To have a trained and competent workforce to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

In terms of working across education, health and social care, the scrutiny panel received information on:

- improving support for children and young people with autism;
- COVID-19; and
- The Preparing for Adulthood Conference.

The Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review and the Clinical Officer provided the scrutiny panel with an overview of the work that was being undertaken to improve support for children and young people with autism.

The Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review advised that there was an increasing number of children and young people being identified with autism and in particular, an increasing number of children with autism who had an EHCP and required some form of additional or specialist provision. Members heard that, for that specific cohort of children, there had not been a sufficient number of places to educate them locally and out of area placements were being used. To meet demand, and in light of feedback received from families, work was undertaken by education, health and social care to analyse data in respect of future projections in the short, medium and long-term. Following analysis, it was identified that there was a lack of secondary provision and the number of local specialist education placements needed to increase. It was evident that a secondary autism base, within a mainstream setting, required development to ensure more children and young people could access the support they required within the local area.

To meet demand, work was undertaken to develop an autism resource base at Acklam Grange School and changes were made to an existing base at Outwood Academy Acklam. The development of those bases enabled the Local Authority to build its capacity to educate children with autism within secondary settings. Work had also been undertaken with Abbey Hill School, which was based in Stockton and part of the Horizons Trust, to open a small satellite provision called 'Fairfax Provision'. The provision was set up in September 2020 at Hollis Academy to support young people with autism in Middlesbrough. It was explained that, over a five year period, places available locally had increased up to 75.

As a result of increasing local education provision for those with autism, positive feedback had been received from families.

The Clinical Officer provided the scrutiny panel with information on the needs-led neurodevelopmental pathway for children and young people with autism. Feedback from parents identified that they had encountered long waiting times to receive a diagnosis for their child. In light of the feedback received, it was identified that a focus on needs, rather than diagnosis, was required. Parents had identified the need to access help and support at the earliest of stages. Significant investment had been made to develop a bubble of support and the family support service. There had also been investment in specialist services, such as the joint commissioning of a service to provide speech and language therapy for 0-25. It was added that the service was currently being reviewed/evaluated alongside parents and carers, with an aim to develop/improve support.

Members were informed that the Sunflower Project focussed on occupational therapy and involved delivery of information and strategies. The project aimed to provide parents/carers/educational settings with the ability to delivery lifelong support to children who experienced sensory integration difficulties.

In terms of the key worker service, the service was delivered by Daisy Chain, which was a Stockton based charity providing a range of support services to children and adults affected by autism. It had been determined by the Transforming Care and the NHS Long Term Plan that a key worker would be allocated to children with a learning disability or autism. That key worker support had been widened by the local area to include those children who were demonstrating autistic traits or had entered the SEND pathway. That change planned to meet the needs of those requiring support, at the earliest of stages. Children, from the age of 3, and their families were able to access support from a key worker, such as sleep training and sensory training. The key worker also enabled the family to coordinate and navigate services.

Members heard that the local area had developed a new improved neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway, which had previously sat within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Service (CAMHS). There was now a dedicated Neurodevelopmental Team, who were skilled in the early identification of autistic traits. There was a multi-agency triage panel, which covered specialist areas such as speech and language therapy, psychology, clinical psychiatry and occupational therapy. In addition, an autism coordinator provided direct support to families. The triage panel aimed to ensure that, if a child did not meet the criteria to enter the autism pathway for a diagnosis, the family would be provided with care and support through signposting, key workers and the family support service.

As a result of COVID-19, the local area had identified all those children and young people with EHCPs and undertook risk assessments. That work enabled the identification and sharing of information across agencies. Education, health and social care worked collectively to identify and prioritise children and young people with higher needs, ensuring they received the required support swiftly. By working collectively, a direct and coordinated approach was established to ensure the needs of children and young people were met during the pandemic. Weekly multi-agency meetings were held, with families, to ensure seamless support was provided, without delay. Improved data sharing was also introduced, which had led to a robust data sharing agreement between the provider trusts and the Local Authority. The agreement allowed the long-term sharing of data and information, in respect of needs, at a child-level.

In terms of the multi-agency risk management that had been undertaken by education, health and social care throughout the pandemic, a case study example was provided. The Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review advised that a social worker had identified that, during lockdown, a family had been struggling to cope. The child had significant additional learning needs and was extremely clinically vulnerable. The child was unable to attend an educational setting as the risk to the child's health was too great. The family had reported challenges at home with children being out of school and problems with continence service deliveries. The social worker had concerns that the added pressure was impacting on the relationships within the family home. As a result, the social worker had made a referral to the multi-agency risk management group. Upon receipt of the referral, work was undertaken across all agencies to commission additional Home Support via social care during the day time. That support was provided by utilising funding from education. The group also liaised with the school to support learning and coordinated with the continence service to resolve the issue around failed deliveries. As a result of the group's work, Home Support was well received by the family, the continence service delivery issue was resolved and the family reported being "in a much better place" since the interventions.

In 2019, a Preparing for Adulthood Conference was held for young people. The conference was organised, led and facilitated by young people. The conference delivered a series of interactive workshops to encourage feedback from young people. That feedback was then utilised to inform service delivery and focus improvement work, which was led by the multi-agency Preparation for Adulthood Group. Feedback received from young people indicated:

- the Local Offer website needed to be more young person friendly;
- more employment opportunities were required; and
- more independence in school and college was required.

In light of the feedback received, the Local Offer website was reviewed and its content was improved to include more case studies, diagrams, images and videos. When the website had initially been set-up, it had been receiving approximately 33,000 hits a month, the website was now receiving over 100,000 a month. In addition, the number of supported internship placements, available locally, had been increased. In 2015, there had been three internships that had now increased to 34. Furthermore, feedback was shared with post-16 providers, resulting in the development of the curriculum to include delivery of new courses and modules around independence. Following the conference, young people had commented that they felt their views, opinions and feedback were valued.

At the conference, it had also been conveyed by young people that they wished to celebrate their achievements and success. As a result, a celebration event was arranged - the Young People's Achievement Awards. There were 10 categories and the event provided schools and settings with the opportunity to nominate young people to receive an award.

A Member raised a query in respect of the recent restructuring and reshaping of the service. In response, the Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that the service and local offer had been improved/developed following the analysis and review of

data, the high needs budget, the joint commissioning of services, the changing needs of children and young people in the local area and feedback received from families. In addition, the Clinical Officer commented that the NHS Long Term Plans focussed on the reviewing of pathways, linking with the voluntary sector and improving services to support those with SEND and autism. It was commented that improvements and developments were outcome-based, ensuring families had access to seamless support.

In light of the new inspection framework, which planned to include children and young people at risk of exclusion, a Member raised a query in respect of the number of exclusions. In response, the Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review advised that last year there were five less permanent exclusions than the previous year, which was significant and demonstrated that the new inclusion and outreach model was positively impacting on exclusion rates. It was anticipated that the new model would continue to reduce the level of exclusions.

A Member raised a query regarding signposting and support for English as an additional language (EAL) learners with SEND and their families. In response, the Head of Achievement advised that guidance was translated and circulated by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) and the team provided multi-agency support to ensure the needs of families were met.

In response to a Member's query regarding non-SEND pupils not being accepting of SEND Pupils, it was advised that SEND cohort pupils were very much integrated into mainstream schooling, therefore, to date an instance such as that had never been reported.

A Member referred to the development of the secondary autism resource bases at Acklam Grange School and Outwood Academy Acklam and queried whether additional places were still required. In response, the Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review advised that following the analysis of data it was confirmed that the 75 places would be sufficient to meet local demand in the short, medium and long-term. However, it was advised that there was a need for regular monitoring to future proof the area's sufficiency and local places.

A Member raised a query in respect of data and the possibility of some pupils having unidentified SEND. In response, the Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that the new outreach and inclusion model assisted with identifying needs at the earliest of stages. The Head of Access to Education added that a piece of work was being undertaken to establish ways to better support and provide a fast track approach, with increased flexibility, for Looked After Children with undiagnosed SEND.

AGREED

That the information presented at the meeting be considered in the context of the scrutiny panel's investigation.

21/23

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were invited to consider, discuss and agree the terms of reference that had been proposed for the review, which had been circulated with the agenda pack.

AGREED

That the terms of reference be agreed as follows:

- a) **To examine key data in respect of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Middlesbrough.**
- b) **To identify:**
 - **the range of special educational needs and disabilities that children and young people may experience; and**
 - **the impact of special educational needs and disabilities on the ability of children and young people to learn and achieve alongside their peers.**
- c) **To examine how the Local Authority works with early years providers, schools and colleges to identify and support all the children and young people in Middlesbrough who have or may have special educational needs and disabilities.**

- d) **To investigate how Education, Social Care and Health work collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level.**
- e) **To examine how the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parents are gained and how the child/young person is encouraged to participate as fully as possible in decisions.**
- f) **To identify best practice strategies in supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.**

21/24 **EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY**

The Director of Education and Partnerships advised that:

- as schools returned from the summer break, initially the number of COVID-19 cases had risen;
- cases of COVID-19 were being monitored and managed effectively by schools, resulting in less disruption for pupils;
- the rollout of vaccinations in schools, for 12 to 15 year olds, had begun; and
- contingency plans were in place to ensure the effective delivery of online/remote learning continued.

NOTED

21/25 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

The Chair advised that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, held on 8 September 2021, the Board had considered:

- an update from the Mayor on his aims and aspirations;
- updates from the Scrutiny Panel Chairs;
- the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on Behaviour, Discipline & Bullying in Schools, which was approved and would now be submitted to the Executive on 9 November;
- the Executive Forward Work Programme; and
- an update from the Chief Executive in respect of the Council's response to COVID-19 and other organisational matters.

NOTED

21/26 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

The Chair advised that a member of the scrutiny panel had put forward a suggestion that, at a future meeting, a brief update be requested in respect of the Council's School Meal Service. The importance of a school meals providing nutrition and improving a pupil's ability to focus was outlined. The importance of physical activity being offered in schools was also referenced.

Following discussion, Members were in agreement that the topic of School Meals and Physical Education would be added to the work programme for the current municipal year.

A Member commented that a briefing paper had recently been published on Free School Meals. It was agreed that a copy of the document would be circulated to the scrutiny panel.

AGREED

That the topic of School Meals and Physical Education be added to the work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.