

AT A MEETING of the Children and Young People Select Committee of
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Wednesday
10th November 2021

Chairman:
p Councillor Kirsty North

p Councillor Neville Penman	p Councillor Gavin James
Councillor Prad Bains	p Councillor Lesley Meenaghan
p Councillor Jackie Branson	p Councillor Arun Mummalaneni
p Councillor Ann Briggs	p Councillor Jackie Porter
p Councillor Christopher Donnelly	p Councillor Jacky Tustain
p Councillor David Drew	p Councillor Malcolm Wade
p Councillor Juliet Henderson	p Councillor Bill Withers Lt Col (Retd)
p Councillor Zoe Huggins	

Co-opted members

Robert Sanders - Church of England Schools Representative
Kate Watson – Parent Governor for Special Schools

Also present with the agreement of the Chairman: Councillor Jonathan Glen

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore, Members were mindful that where they believed they had a non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

No declarations were made.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. **DEPUTATIONS**

The Committee did not receive any deputations.

15. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman noted that Members would recall that at the September Select Committee, Members requested additional information in relation to the schools participating in the MHST programme. Members have received by email a copy of the spreadsheet from Tim Davis, Associate Director: Children's Mental Health Transformation (Frimley CCG for NEHF) providing this information.

The Chairman went on to state that the co-opted parent governor representative for secondary Schools vacancy had been advertised but received no responses. Nominations will be sought again in due course.

16. **UPDATE ON AUTISM SERVICES COMMISSIONING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HAMPSHIRE**

The committee received a report and presentation from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership of Clinical Commissioning Groups providing an update on Autism Services Commissioning (see Item 6 in the Minute Book). This was part of the regular updates provided to the committee as requested in September 2020 to inform it of progress made towards improving access to Autism Spectrum Condition assessments and the supporting services.

The committee received a background to the situation and noted that in November 2020 significant investment was identified which enabled the procurement of a long term assessment service alongside a service specification redesign.

This service is provided by Psicon Ltd and commenced on 1 October 2021 with a 2.5 year contract with the option to extend. The committee heard that waiting lists had dropped from c.1750 to c.1000 and waiting times have reduced from c.35 months in September 2020 to c.11 months. It was noted that referral rates continued to be high and so additional support services had been commissioned. The committee were also informed of the other services being made available; the Wellbeing Support Service, Autism Hampshire Workshops & Barnados Parenting.

The committee acknowledged that the main issues facing the service moving forwards was the high referral rate and expectations of the families involved. Additionally, it was identified that there were challenges resulting from the diagnosis led culture and inclusivity of educational settings.

In order for Autism Commissioning Services to continue to improve, it was identified that robust monitoring was required with a focus on waiting times alongside the securement of long term early intervention support services. There were also plans to develop a multidisciplinary referral panel to reduce referral rates and re-establish the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Adult's Social Care Transformation Group.

In response to questions members heard that:

- Services were moving towards allowing access if individuals were displaying the relevant traits, in lieu of a formal diagnosis (although this was still required for Housing).
- That c.120 referrals were received each month, an increase of 20%, which had an impact on services ability to manage.
- Funding per head had remained consistent in light of the increased numbers, but diagnosis remained within the expected limits of 2.8-4% of the population, despite the increase in referrals.
- Those on the waiting list were assessed for urgency with waiting for Military families, Looked After and Adopted Children etc. There is a requirement for two agencies to refer each individual.
- The SENCO role should act as a resource for each school to support and refer those who present as possibly on the Autistic Spectrum. Hampshire Autism are also working to help equip schools with the tools required on this and female masking of Autism.
- There was an underlying issue surround the number of professionals available for the roles needed to meet demand but that this was a national issue.
- Services were located based on previous CCG localities, making use of community buildings such as libraries.
- The service had estimated it would take three years to reach the national targets in relation to waiting times.

On behalf of the committee, the Chairman thanked the Associate Director for the presentation and the regular updates provided over the last year.

RESOLVED: That the Children and Young People Select Committee note the update.

17. **ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT – CHILDREN’S SERVICES 2020-21**

The committee received a report and presentation from the Director of Children’s Services providing opportunity for pre-scrutiny of the Annual Safeguarding Report for Children’s Services (2020-21) ahead of its consideration by Cabinet (see Item 7 in the Minute Book).

It was noted that this report would be informed by several national developments, most notable of which was the pandemic but also in relation to Child Exploitation and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

The committee heard that temporary changes to statutory guidance and regulations because of the pandemic provided the department with some flexibility in certain circumstances and when necessary. This included the ability to carry out home visits and meetings online. However, the department met all the statutory timescales and did not move from Phase 1 of its three phase plan.

The committee also received an overview of the work of the department in relation to child exploitation and those children who are trafficked and/or go missing. This included a summary of the work of Hampshire’s Willow Team.

Members heard how the majority of UASC had been assessed to be c.17 years old and arrived in Hampshire either spontaneously or via the National Transfer Scheme. Numbers had decreased but were expected to return to previous levels once the circumstances in relationship to the pandemic have improved. The number of Children in Care has not increase dramatically but UASC Care Leavers has increased by 164% since June 2017.

Members noted HCC's Children's Services involvement in the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership alongside Hampshire Constabulary and five CCGs. All partners hold a strategic role with their organisations and can commit to matters of policy and hold their organisation to account.

Following the overview of these key areas, the committee received an update on the performance and activity levels of the following areas.

- Contacts and Referrals – contacts have increased 7.6%, following a 11% increase the previous year. The 2020-21 number is an increase of 61% on the 2015-16 number, indicating the continuing pressure reflected nationally. The proportion of referrals from each agency have remained consistent for three years, but the Police overtook Education to become the most frequent referrer, reflecting a year with periods of school closures.
- Assessments and Child Protection Investigations – Investigations which lead to an initial CP conference have remained consistent which implies that thresholds are being consistently applied by social work teams. The timeliness of completion for Child & Family Assessments has also remained high and significantly above the national average.
- Child Protection Plans – there has been an increase in the number of CP conferences resulting in a CP Plan because of the risk of significant harm. This increase is a result of additional pressures on families as a result of the pandemic. Neglect remains the main course for these plans, being identified as the key factor for 60-70% of plans. A low percentage of plans are lasting for longer than two years or resulting in a repeat plan within two years, this indicates productive work.
- Full Time Children Looked After – the trend for the last two years is downwards which is indicative of the success of the department's transformation programme. However, the national picture shows demand continuing to outstrip supply of placements and therefore the prices continue to rise.

The presentation to the Committee concluded with a summary of the local developments being led by Hampshire. This included several measures being undertaken to improve recruitment and retention of staff and an update on the Transforming Social Care Programme.

In response to questions members heard that:

- The majority of UASC children are placed in Independent Fostering Agencies and a significant number are placed outside Hampshire to better meet their cultural and individual needs.
- Approximately 30% of UASC will not be given leave to remain in the UK and as such will have 'no recourse to public funds' requiring the local

authority to entirely fund all of their living costs until they reach 25 years of age or are deported.

- The age assessment process is not simple and does not currently use medical evidence. The LA has a duty to support these children in line with other Children in Care.
- UASC are initially placed by the Home Office, and it is unclear what criteria they use.
- Poverty does not lead directly to an increased likelihood of social work intervention, but it does worsen other issues which can contribute.
- There was a move towards considering children who were brought to the attention of the service as 'Children experiencing vulnerabilities', rather than 'vulnerable children'.
- The Willow Team work closely with Hampshire Constabulary's Violence Reduction Unit and other agencies to share information and undertake disruption techniques.
- There are still several issues expected to come because of the Pandemic. It may be that the full economic impact has not yet taken effect, however Financial Resilience Meetings are held frequently.
- There is a degree of co-operation with neighbouring authorities in relation to agency pay to help prevent authorities competing.
- There is a scheme of work looking at the RSHE curriculum to teach acceptable behaviour within schools in relation to toxic masculinity.
- The Prevent scheme is extremely well embedded into the County's services.
- The rules in relation to 'double jabbed' workers does not apply to children's settings and there is no sign of this shifting.

RESOLVED: That the Children and Young People Select Committee note and support the recommendations being proposed to Cabinet.

18. **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) 0-25 UPDATE REPORT - SEN PERFORMANCE AND JOINT WORKING**

The committee received a report and presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an update on SEND performance and joint working (see Item 8 in the Minute Book).

The committee heard that since the reforms to Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) in 2015, there has been a 135% increase in the number of plans maintained. This growth has accelerated in 2021 and as of the end of October Hampshire maintains over 12,000 EHCPs. This presents as an average of 186 requests per month.

The committee noted that the three month rolling average for both the decision to assess and the decision to issue had improved dramatically in 2021. This means that the service should be in line with the national average by the end of the current academic year.

Members received an overview of the service's SEN Support Strategy which

included revised guidance for schools with a drive to ensure strong practice in every classroom in every school.

Members also received an update on the SEN Capital Place Planning Strategy. There are currently 1745 primary and 2040 secondary places available in specialist settings. There is funding being made available to increase these places but it is currently unknown how much Hampshire will receive.

In response to questions members heard that:

- EHCPs have a significant impact on a school's budget and the funding of each one is complex. The school identified by each plan is driven by parental preference.
- There is a financial impact on the 18-25 age range of the increased number of EHCPs and so employment hubs have been established around the county with positive early signs.
- It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of an EHCP as the culture is currently that they remain in place. There may be a need to look at progress measures or review if the plan is still needed. Parents like the reassurance of the plan being in place but over a long period a plan could be considered a detriment.
- The number of specialist places required is increasing exponentially and is an issue the DMT are very aware of.
- There is a tribunal process to resolve disagreements in relation to EHCPs.
- There are several Hampshire children with EHCPs placed outside Hampshire for several reasons such as residential or therapeutic needs. This has a significant financial impact on the authority.
- Support is available for schools with a high number of EHCPs but there is a need for these schools to carefully consider their budgets.
- There is a system in place to monitor the use of 'reduced timetables'. They can be a positive intervention but can be used for too long.
- Alongside training for Specialist Educational Needs Co-ordinators there are networks set up around the county which meet every half term to share best practise etc.

RESOLVED: That the Children and Young People Select Committee note the update.

19. **HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME - SUMMER DELIVERY**

The committee received a report and presentation from the Director of Children's Services on the summer delivery of the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme (see Item 9 in the Minute Book).

The committee received an overview of the HAF programme, and its aims followed by a summary of the summer delivery of the programme.

The committee noted that places and venues were mapped to match the distribution of benefits eligible free school meal children and young people around the County. In total 20,601 primary aged and 2,651 secondary aged children and young people attended an event, reaching 33% of free school meal eligible children in Hampshire (an increase from 28% for the Easter programme).

The committee heard that through the positive engagement with partner organisations there was a continually evolving and developing process of signposting to other services to support the families involved. The feedback to the events has been very positive and the committee received some examples alongside case studies of participants. The programme will be continuing for the Christmas break, learning from previous experience, and considering the unique challenges in relation to the time of year.

In response to questions members heard that:

- While the programme was specifically targeted towards benefits eligible free school meals children and young people, there were some spaces available for others who would benefit. There is a chance that 2022 programmes may be more flexible with this.
- There are plans to target the older age range and support families in rural areas to increase uptake of available places, however it is largely dependent on the location of providers.
- Future programmes will look at issues surrounding food poverty/waste and sustainability.
- There was no geographical restriction on which venues families could attend.

On behalf of the committee, the Chairman thanked all involved for their efforts in relation to the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Children and Young People Select Committee note the progress made in delivering the HAF programme to benefits-eligible free school meal children and young people across Hampshire.

20. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive presented the Committee's work programme (see Item 10 in the Minute Book).

There were no additions made to the work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and approved the work programme.

Chairman, Children and Young People
Select Committee