

AT A MEETING of the Children and Young People Select Committee of  
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held virtually on Monday, 28th September,  
2020

Chairman:

- \* Councillor Kirsty North

Vice- Chairman:

- \* Councillor Ray Bolton

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| * Councillor Jackie Branson  | Councillor Gavin James                  |
| * Councillor Ann Briggs      | * Councillor Neville Penman             |
| * Councillor Zilliah Brooks  | * Councillor Robert Taylor              |
| * Councillor Fran Carpenter  | * Councillor Bill Withers Lt Col (Retd) |
| * Councillor Peter Edgar MBE | * Councillor Jackie Porter              |
| * Councillor Pal Hayre       | * Councillor Michael Westbrook          |
| * Councillor Wayne Irish     | * Councillor Malcolm Wade               |
|                              | * Councillor Bruce Tennent              |

\*Present

**Co-opted Members:**

- \* Ian Brewerton, Secondary School Parent Governor Representative
- \* Gareth Davies, Primary School Parent Governor Representative
- \* Robert Sanders, Church of England Schools Representative
- Kate Watson, Special School Parent Governor Representative
- VACANT Roman Catholic Schools Representative

**Also present with the agreement of the Chairman:**

- Councillor Patricia Stallard, Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People
- Councillor Roz Chadd, Executive Member for Education and Skills
- Councillor Jonathan Glen, Chairman of Policy and Resources Select Committee

139. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Gavin James, and Councillor Bruce Tennent was in attendance as the substitute member. Apologies were also received from Kate Watson, the Parent Governor Representative for Special Schools.

**140. 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 Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 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 at this point in the meeting.

**141. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2020 were agreed by the Committee as a correct record of the meeting.

**142. DEPUTATIONS**

The Committee did not receive any deputations.

**143. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman highlighted the recent serious accident in Winchester involving a Stagecoach bus carrying children to Henry Beaufort school. On behalf of all Members of the Committee, the Chairman extended the Committee's best wishes to all of the children injured or otherwise affected in the accident and wished them all a speedy and full recovery.

The Chairman also highlighted that at the July Select Committee, Members agreed an additional recommendation in relation to Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Covid-19 impact and response for the Childcare Sector. Members will have received by email a copy of the letter sent to Vicky Ford, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Children and Families in relation to this.

**144. COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an update on Covid-19 in relation to different Service areas (Item 6 in the Minute Book) following on from the update received by the Committee at their July meeting.

In relation to Children's Social Care, the Committee were reminded of the three phased approach which was detailed on page 4 of the presentation slides, and Members heard that the service was now delivering 90-95% face to face visits with children and families, as well as face to face assessments. It was noted that appropriate Covid safety measures were being implemented when doing so, as well as the use of PPE equipment where necessary. It was explained that all children within the service would receive a face to face visit by the end of September. Officers also drew Members attention to the importance of staff being brought together in a Covid secure way to ensure emotional support and wellbeing amongst staff and their peers.

Page 5 of the presentation slides detailed the month on month comparisons for referrals, and the complexity of recent work in relation to neglect and child abuse was explained. Figures showed an increase in children subject to child protection plans as well as an increase in children in care, and it was explained that these numbers may continue to rise for some months to come. Close working with partner agencies and schools to ensure vulnerable children attended school during lockdown was also highlighted. Page 8 of the presentation slides detailed how the service would respond as the Covid situation evolved, which included the establishment of multi-agency hybrid meetings for families, examining ways to enable staff to work at Covid secure offices and enabling staff to have Covid secure face to face contact with peers.

An update on Education and Inclusion was presented to the Committee and Members heard that over the summer holidays, work was undertaken with schools to implement hygiene advice, staggered school start and finish times and the creation of 'bubbles' within schools. Work was also done to ensure that initial classroom-based lessons were at the right level for children, assessing where children were with learning as well as a focus on wellbeing. It was heard that in relation to attendance, Hampshire was performing well.

In relation to GCSE and A-levels, it was heard that over the summer, students and parents had had access to careers services which had offered guidance, and colleges and universities had worked hard to ensure most students had a college or university place of their choice. Members attention was drawn to page 13 of the presentation slides which highlighted positive case management. It was heard that currently there were 2/3 positive Covid cases a day in Hampshire schools affecting both students and staff and the school improvement team work closely with Headteachers and public health in supporting the school and ensuring affective isolation of the right students, as well as handling media enquiries. Officers also highlighted the work involved in preparing schools for remote learning if bubbles have to self-isolate, and drew attention to a DfE scheme which would ensure any disadvantaged children in that bubble would have access to a laptop within two days to assist with remote learning. Members heard that there were a number of services such as specialist teacher advisors and education psychology which were now back in schools and providing face to face services in a Covid secure way. It was noted that there would be a focus on vulnerable students and persistent absence, and Members were updated with current figures which highlighted that 90% of primary children with a social worker were now back at school. Work involved with recovery curriculum and catch-up strategies were explained and it was noted that £350 million was being

made available to schools in Hampshire to assist with catch-up. Members also heard that the government were funding a wellbeing programme throughout all local authorities and Hampshire would receive £190,000, and further details in implementing this were explained.

Officers provided details around Home to School Transport, and it was explained that DfE guidance for this was issued on the 11 August which only provided a short timeframe to implement this for the re-opening of schools and colleges in September. It was noted that additional funding from government had been given to provide additional buses, double running routes and enhanced cleaning and risk assessments. Members heard that a rapid, flexible approach had been implemented by the department and daily meetings were held in case arrangements needed to be flexed. Members attention was drawn to page 18 of the presentation slides which detailed key headlines, which included 383 double runs agreed as well as 221 parental mileage allowances agreed in place of commissioned transport.

An update on Early Years was also provided to the Committee and it was heard that there were no sufficiency issues to report. Members noted that 99% of group settings were now open with attendance at almost pre-Covid figures. It was explained that in relation to out of school childcare, challenges were still presenting in this area in relation to risk assessments and outside companies delivering this service on school sites, but ongoing support was being offered to this sector.

In response to questions, Members heard:

- That it was important that managers ensure staff take leave and time off in lieu, as well as supporting staff to manage home/work balance.
- That throughout July and August there had been an increase in work in the children and families service area, and contingencies have been put in place to support this financially which has included keeping on agency staff where needed.
- That an increase of referrals was seen at the start of September which coincided with the return to school, and it was explained that this could be linked to family breakdowns during lockdown. Unemployment and adult mental health could also be linked in some cases.
- That digital interaction may stay in place in some instances going forward, but it was important to maintain some face to face visits with children, families and social workers.
- That there has been an increase in foster carer enquiries during the pandemic, which could be explained by people having time to reflect on their life and ways they can offer help to others.
- That in relation to waiting times for EHCP's, it was confirmed that approximately 150 EHCP's were now being completed a month, and by the end of September the backlog of these should be cleared.
- That there have been issues with parents congregating at school gates in groups, and school communications were ongoing with parents to prevent this occurring.
- That as well as schools being able to offer disadvantaged children a laptop in the occurrence of a sudden switch to remote learning, schools

would also be able to provide a dongle too if required, which would ensure broadband access.

- That there have been issues with teachers having to wait a few days for Covid test results, and it was explained that in such instances some teachers have continued to teach remotely from home to a classroom of children, with additional support staff in the classroom with the children.
- That the DfE has provided information to schools which in turn has been provided to parents, on the differences between the symptoms of Covid and the common cold.
- That with regards to free school meals and voucher scheme, children who were eligible for these were receiving these in lockdown, but it was doubtful whether this would be provided in half-term.
- That evaluation of different working practices would be undertaken at the end of the pandemic, and lessons learnt so far would feed into the forthcoming months.
- That a blend of different teaching approaches has been proven to work well for remote learning, with a mixture of project-based work and also teacher led remote teaching.
- That every school in Hampshire has been given an allocation of 10 Covid tests they can use for teaching staff, with schools being able to request another 10 tests every 21 days.
- That as home to school guidance was not issued by the government until mid-August, this presented challenges in the issuing of bus passes, number of buses needed and determining of routes. It was explained that parents and schools had received correspondence to explain that children could still use buses if there was a delay in receiving their pass, and operators were also aware.
- That parental mileage allowances were optional and for parents who don't take up this offer for their children, transport was provided as well as passenger escorts if needed.

The Chairman thanked Officers for the presentation and extended the Committee's thanks to all staff in Children's Services for their ongoing hard work during the Covid pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Young People noted the update provided in the presentation.

#### 145. **AUTISM ASSESSMENT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Committee received a presentation from Matt Powell of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership of Clinical Commissioning Groups providing an update on Autism Assessment Services for Children and Young People (Item 7 in the Minute Book). This followed a previous update to the Committee on 18 September 2019.

The presentation was introduced by highlighting key issues and challenges and the Committee heard that there were significant delays for autism assessments with an average waiting list of around 1,750 assessments with a waiting time of

around 3 years. Members noted that this was significantly outside of the current guidance of 13 weeks for an assessment from referral. It was highlighted that piecemeal investment over the last two years had also poorly managed this waiting list.

Members attention was drawn to page 2 of the presentation slides which explained the need for a cultural shift in schools from being diagnostic reliant to a focus on interventions such as sensory support and anxiety management. It was heard that once interventions have been provided then a diagnosis can then be sought if necessary. Page 3 of the presentation slides highlighted the other demands and the impact of Covid-19 which had disrupted commissioning plans, and commissioning remained at 2019/20 levels. It was explained that there was a need to look at longer term procurement to future proof the Service. It was also highlighted that there had been significant changes to senior leadership during November and December 2019 and the effect of this on procurement planning was explained. Members heard that short term commissioning arrangements needed to be extended, and Covid lockdown had also affected the delivery of face to face autism assessments, and it was heard that the decision was taken to award the delivery of this to two providers who would be able to provide non face to face assessments for an initial 12 months. Page 4 of the presentation slides also highlighted the progress that had been made by the Service in recent months which included a rapid deep dive and diagnostic to assess waiting lists, the agreement of additional funding in July 2020 for completion of 250 assessments in 2 months and the completion of an options paper on commissioning and budgets.

Page 5 of the presentation slides highlighted that 'wicked' refers to the situation in hand and how best to solve the crisis, and this was explained to the Committee in term of a multi-faceted phased approach. It was heard that on the Isle of Wight, an 80% reduction was seen after these interventions had been put in place, and Members heard that there was confidence that this could work in Hampshire but would need to agree a funding regime for this.

Members heard that appropriate intervention as early as possible was the best solution and continuing to invest in assessment only service will promote families seeking diagnosis rather than support, with a risk of misdiagnosis for some children. In concluding, Members attention was drawn to the services that the Commissioners recommended for development and implementation which included: Social and Emotional Mental Health Service, Therapeutic Intervention and ongoing work with schools and parents in changing culture and understanding around diagnosis.

In response to questions, Members heard:

- That children on the waiting list, approaching 18 years of age, would be prioritised for autism assessment diagnostics, to ensure that they received this before adulthood.
- That work was underway to try and change the diagnostic culture. It was heard that to reduce a reliance on diagnosis would be a huge undertaking, but would also reap huge benefits, and this needed to happen to reduce the waiting lists for assessments.

- That adjustments and techniques can also help and a shift was needed towards more preventative and intervention measures, with relevant support mechanisms in place. It was explained that every child did have a right to a diagnosis, and in some cases in relation to housing requirements, this was needed.
- That in relation to rising Autism figures, a national party across England was looking at Autism, and the South of England was looking to frame an Autism pathway for all children. Schools have also improved in identifying children who may need to be referred for a diagnosis, but it was important to ensure that interventions were put in place before a diagnosis to provide support, so a diagnosis could then be carried out at the appropriate time.
- That on the Isle of Wight, Occupational Therapists provided social, emotional and mental health training to colleagues in schools to better understand the needs of children. It was explained that with better use of appropriate interventions, Officers were hopeful that a reduction in waiting lists of at least 50% could be achieved in Hampshire.
- That it was hoping to get through the waiting list backlog within two years, but this would be difficult given the competing demands for money within the financial framework, and Officers were seeking support from the Select Committee with this.
- That liaison with all partner agencies to look at modelling was taking place and waiting times was a significant issue nationally.

An additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor Kirsty North and seconded by Councillor Fran Carpenter:

*'That the Chairman of the Select Committee writes to the 5 Hampshire CCGs asking them to commission a preventative model of funding for Autism Assessments as has been tested on the Isle of Wight here in Hampshire.'*

It was confirmed that co-opted members of the Committee were not eligible to vote on this recommendation. A vote was held, and this recommendation was agreed by Members.

A further additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor Jackie Porter and seconded by Councillor Malcom Wade:

*'That the Select Committee receives a written report for every meeting until the Committee are satisfied that the service has caught up and is providing a timely service for children, parents and schools and proof that the service is making progress.'*

Councillor Porter raised the importance of continuing to support the Service but also that the Committee needed the opportunity to also challenge and ask questions, as the issue of long waiting times for assessments had been ongoing. Councillor Wade stressed that it was important to support the Service and to keep a strong focus on this and receive frequent updates.

Some Members were concerned about the frequency of receiving written reports for every meeting and the pressure this would put on Officers.

It was confirmed that co-opted members of the Committee were not eligible to vote on this recommendation. A vote was held, and this recommendation was agreed by a majority of Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Young People Select Committee:

- i) Received and noted the update provided.
- ii) That the Select Committee receives a written report for every meeting until the Committee are satisfied that the service has caught up and is providing a timely service for children, parents and schools and proof that the service is making progress.
- iii) That the Chairman of the Select Committee writes to the 5 Hampshire CCGs asking them to commission a preventative model of funding for Autism Assessments as has been tested on the Isle of Wight here in Hampshire.

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

The Committee received a presentation and report from the Director of Children's Services on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 0-25 Reforms Update Report – SEN Performance and Joint Working (Item 8 in the Minute Book).

Members of the Committee were led through the presentation slides and the context to the SEND reforms which were launched in 2014 was explained. The Committee heard of the strengthened focus on SEN support, joint planning and commissioning of services and a strengthened focus on parents and carers as well as children and young people. It was explained that a new Ofsted/CQC framework had also been introduced which measured how local authorities responded to SEND reforms. It was heard that the inspection which took place in Hampshire in March 2020 was a positive inspection and, unlike over 50% of areas, Ofsted/CQC felt they did not need to re-visit to check progress against the Council's development plan. Members attention was drawn to some of the outcomes of the inspection which were detailed on page 5 of the presentation slides.

Officers highlighted that since the reforms were introduced, there had been a significant rise of 95% in the number of EHCP's in Hampshire and currently the service is maintaining 10,000 EHCP's. Page 7 of the presentation slides detailed to the Committee the growth in EHCP's since 2014 and the breakdown by age group was also highlighted. The impact of SENSA removal was also

explained and Members noted that as a result of the cessation of the scheme, a short term bulge was seen which resulted in an additional 435 EHCP requests which in turn affected the timeliness of assessment completion. Officers highlighted that priority was given to work through this backlog and outstanding EHCP's were due completion by the end of the week.

Members noted the SEN performance through phased transfer work and the investment in staffing also helped to ensure a high percentage of these were being completed on time with 98% of year 2 phase transfers meeting this deadline. It was explained that Covid has had an effect on some year 11 phase transfers as these children may need further time to decide future plans. Attention was also drawn to the work of the digital EHCC hub and the work of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network. In relation to outcomes for children and young people with SEN, it was heard that at early years stage, children were performing well at school and above the national figure. Members noted that whilst SEN support had increased from 17% to 21% at key stage 2, this was below national figures of 25% and work was focussing to improve this figure, and at key stage 4.

It relation to SEN out of county placements, it was heard that there were 482 children and young people with special educational needs accessing support in non-county placements, but this should only be the case if was in the best interest of the child. Attention was drawn to place planning strategy to provide sufficiency of specialist provision as set out on page 17 of the presentation slides and key areas of this were explained. It was noted that SEND capital funding of £6.4 million had been received from the DfE for 2017-2020 as well as HCC capital funding which would support new school places and suitability, and Members heard of plans to create over 300 additional specialist places in Hampshire by September 2023.

Members heard of work in connection with independent living and preparation for adulthood, as well as work of the Independent Futures Team. Members also heard of the close working with the NHS SEND designated clinical officer as well as with other NHS health colleagues, and the establishment of Integrated Care Systems was highlighted as well as the Joint Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local transformation Plan. In concluding it was noted that appeals in Hampshire were stabilising and officers worked closely with parents to try and resolve cases before reaching the stage of tribunal hearings.

In response to questions, Members heard:

- SEND support was an area where work was being undertaken in Hampshire to encourage greater school performance and Ofsted were pleased with the improvement made, but there was still work to be done in this area.
- That a focus of the Hampshire Futures Team was on young people with special educational needs, particularly under the September guarantee to ensure young people post-16 had moved into employment, education or training, and as a result were anticipating a low proportion of children who were NEET. Work within the Kickstart scheme was also highlighted and specifically with helping young people with special educational needs.

- That there have been four new employability hubs commissioned in colleges in Hampshire which would help to provide support and encouragement for students in accessing college courses that would lead to work.
- That a significant number of children entering Reception year will have had their EHCP finalised when starting school.
- That there will always be a need to place some children and young people in the independent sector because of either a limited number of specialist places in Hampshire, or that these independent providers offer unique support which would also be offered to a number of other local authorities.
- That Officers would check whether 'In all our talents' would be taking place this year because of Covid.
- That Ofsted examined action plans in relation to areas for improvement that had already been identified by the Service and were satisfied that these action plans were high quality and did not require a repeat inspection
- That in relation to the Tribunal system, the SEN service works closely with families to find a compromise and to try and avoid disputes and Tribunals, but sometimes a Tribunal was inevitable.
- That views of parents were sought in various ways which included the Hampshire Local Offer, contact through schools and annual reviews. It was noted that membership of the Hampshire Parent Carer Network was increasing also, with greater accessibility to meetings as a result of them being held virtually as a result of Covid.
- That it was appropriate for Autism Spectrum Conditions to move from the CAMHS portfolio into the special educational needs and disability portfolio.
- That students who find work challenging may be more affected by having to take time off school due to Covid.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Young People Select Committee noted the update.

#### 147. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Transformation and Governance presented the Committee's work programme (see Item 9 in the Minute Book).

A Member question was raised about the timing for the written updates on Autism Assessments in relation to the additional recommendation agreed at Item 7, and the Chairman confirmed that this would be received at the next scheduled meetings in November and January.

A question was also raised about the scheduling of the Fostering update, and the Chairman highlighted the full agendas of the next two meetings, but Officers would explore the scheduling of this update.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme, subject to any amendments made during the meeting, was agreed.

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Chairman,