



Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 16 January 2019

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)
Cyril Randles
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Celia Hibbert

Co-opted Members

Wolverhampton Youth Council

In Attendance

Cllr Lynne Moran

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Employees

Emma Bennett
Adrian Leach
Earl Piggott-Smith

Director of Children's Services
Head of SEND
Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:

Cllr Obaida Ahmed
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Clare Simm
Cllr Rita Potter
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded.
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (14. 11.18)**
Minute 11 – Secondary Expansion Programme 2019-20 and Primary School Provision

The panel agreed to amend the minutes to include a note that the Head of School Organisation had given an assurance that there were sufficient resources within the Council to deliver the secondary school expansion programme.

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018, subject to the agreed changes, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5 Update on SEND Transformation

Adrian Leach, Head of SEND, introduced the report which gave an update on developments in the provision and services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) since the summer 2018.

The Head of SEND advised the panel of the legislative responsibilities that require local authorities, education providers and health services to transform the way they work with children and young people with SEND and their families. The Head of SEND outlined the governance structure and the work being done to build strong partnerships.

The Head of SEND outlined the performance measures that will show the effectiveness of the SEND Strategy delivery and the work done to respond to the findings of the Joint Area SEND Inspection, which identified areas for improvement.

The Head of SEND outlined the range of work done to refresh, refocus and update the SEND Strategy for Wolverhampton and invited members to comment on the progress.

The Head of SEND advised the panel that the recommendations from a review of short break provision will be completed in March 2018.

The panel discussed the opportunities for young people to be involved in developing the strategy. The Head of SEND welcomed the involvement of Youth Council to contribute ideas to help improve the offer to children and young people needing emotional support.

The Head of SEND also advised the panel of work planned to involve different groups in the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and it would be helpful to involve youth council members in the consultation about the transition to different support services. Further work needed to improve autistic diagnostic support that is available.

The panel discussed the exclusion from school of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The Head of SEND advised that a report on the number of temporary and permanent school exclusions for children with EHCP will be presented to Children and Families Together Board.

The Head of SEND advised the panel of the work being done in preparation for a future inspection of the service. The inspection is done over a five-day period and will involve taking evidence from across the different partner organisations and also from parents and children.

The Head of SEND outlined the risks detailed in the report and the work being done to reduce them.

Councillor Lynne Moran, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, commented on the work done to break down silos between the different agencies involved. The Cabinet Member commented on the high quality of work delivered by people working in GEM centre and praised their commitment to improving the lives of children and young people referred to them.

The Cabinet Member praised the leadership and people working in the SEND service for their efforts to transform the service.

The panel queried details of the outcome measures for the SEND Strategy that will be used to assess the impact and progress. The Head of SEND advised that a report with baseline measures will be presented to the SEND Commissioning Partnership Board in March 2018. A copy of the findings will be shared with the panel. The Head of SEND advised that the findings will also be shared with parents to get their views.

The panel queried how complaints from parents and carers about the performance of the service is used to inform the development of the strategy. The Head of SEND outlined the process for dealing with complaints and advised that where necessary they can be referred to the Director if the issue needs to be escalated.

The panel requested data on educational attainment results for children and young people with an EHCP at Key Stages 2, 4 and 5. The Head of Service agreed to send the report to the panel.

The Head of SEND advised the panel of the current educational performance against regional and national benchmarking standards for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The panel queried the findings of the Joint Area Inspection Report and the specific concern about the below average number of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks. The Head of SEND commented on the reasons for the low numbers.

The Head of SEND advised the panel of the support available to children who have been excluded either temporarily or permanently.

The panel queried the impact of the new inspection framework reported in the media which suggests that there will be less focus on performance data and more emphasis on the substance of education and what matters most to learners and practitioners.

The Head of SEND advised the panel that Ofsted are still consulting on the new framework and that meetings have been held with Ofsted Regional Inspector to discuss the implications. The panel were advised of work ongoing with local schools to prepare for the introduction of the proposed changes in the inspection framework.

The panel acknowledged the quality of the work delivered at the GEM centre but queried the level of consistency of practice at all areas and the work done to check that strategies and policies are being properly implemented at the local level. The Head of SEND accepted that the scale of the challenge of dealing with mixed quality practice but added that there is a responsibility on schools to support staff as part of their workforce planning in order to improve the quality of SEND provision.

The Head of SEND commented on the work done to build capacity among schools and the use of peer challenge networks to help drive up standards.

The panel expressed concerns about the shortage of educational psychologists and the impact on families wanting an assessment of a needs of a child or young person. The Head of SEND commented on the national shortage of educational psychologists and the difficulties caused. Emma Bennett, Director for Children Service, commented that this service is part of a traded service that schools can choose to purchase from the Council. The Director of Children Service commented on the difficulty in recruiting people.

The panel queried how a young person or parent could apply for a personal budget. A personal budget is a statement of the amount of money needed to meet your eligible social care needs. The Head of SEND commented on the different criteria used to award a payment. The Head of SEND added that was an issue about the take up of personal budget has been much lower than originally expected, but the council is committed to giving control to a person where possible. This issue is part of the wider discussion about short breaks allocation.

Youth Council expressed concern about the high number of exclusions from schools and referred to the positive contribution to the Changing Lives. Changing Lives is a programme working with families in Wolverhampton and Walsall to identify and meet their needs. The Head of SEND suggested youth council members could be part of the challenge board which could look at this issue and agreed to discuss this further with members of the Board.

The Head of SEND advised that the service will question school where a child or young person has been excluded from a school for persistent disruptive behavior. The Head of SEND referred to a recent seminar where a Headteacher from Leeds talked about the change in school culture and the impact on behaviors which meant that no child had been excluded during the previous five years. The importance of a whole school approach to changing behavior was highlighted and the acceptance that culture drives exclusions.

The panel discussed the important role of Learning Schools Assistant and a concern was raised about variations in the level of pay and responsibility across different schools. The Head of SEND commented on the training workforce opportunities available and the work done with schools to improve the quality and consistency of this provision. The Director for Children commented on range of schemes, such as mental first aiders, aimed at supporting schools and their staff.

The panel requested details of the number of complaints about SEND provision and whether any complaints had been made to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can investigate a complaint that a council has failed to deal properly with a child's special educational needs (SEN). This includes delay in assessing a child and issuing an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and failing to implement a statement/EHCP or carry out an annual review.

The Head of SEND advised that the number of complaints are very low but agreed to share the details for 2017/18.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to endorse the direction of travel that City of Wolverhampton Council and the SEND Commissioning and Partnership Board are taking in meeting duties in the 2015 Code of Practice.
2. The Head of SEND to provide details outcome measures detailed in the report for the SEND Strategy that will be used to assess the impact and progress.
3. The Head of SEND agreed to provide the panel with details of educational attainment results for children and young people with an EHCP at Key Stages 2, 4 and 5.
4. The Head of SEND to advise youth council of how they could be represented on the challenge board to support the work and review policies aimed at reducing school exclusions
5. The HEAD of SEND advised that the number of complaints received about the service for 2017/18 and the number and outcome of any cases referred to the Ombudsman.

6 **Children's Services Practice Week Overall Report November 2018**

Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Services, presented the findings of the practice week, that was held in November 2018. The Director outlined the aim of practice week and the findings. The Director outlined the areas that needed to improve and the next steps. A key change to the next audit will be that the next planned practice week will take place over a longer period

The Director explained the objectives of new format of auditing and invited panel members views on this. The panel were advised that the last case audit was completed in September 2018 and the approach was based on how Ofsted would do their inspections. In total 96 case files were audited, and 35 practice observations took place.

The Director commented on the benefits of the approach in helping to improve practice and providing real time feedback.

The panel thanked the Director for the report and the positive findings from the practice week.

Resolved:

The panel agree that the new format has achieved its stated objectives and would like to thank all those involved for the work done and progress made to improve the quality of services to children and young people.

7 **Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children and Adults Board**

Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Services, introduced the report and explained the reasons for publishing the safeguarding statement. The panel was advised that this was presented as pre-decision scrutiny and the comments would be included in the report to Cabinet meeting on 20 March 2019.

The panel were invited to give responses to questions detailed in the report asking for comments on their preference between the different versions.

The panel preferred the shorter version of the draft with images included. The panel would like the standards listed at the start, and also links rather than explanations.

The Director for Children's Service agreed to note the comments of the panel.

Resolved:

The panel comments on the draft document to be considered in the report to be presented to Cabinet on 20 March 2019.

8 **Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel 2017/18 Draft Work Programme**

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the draft work programme for comments. The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that a report on the Youth Justice Plan 2019/20 had been added to the agenda for the meeting on 19.6.19. The members of Adult and Safer City Panel would be invited to attend the meeting.

The panel agreed that the issue of home education should be added to the work programme.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to add Youth Justice Plan and Home Education as future topics for the panel to consider.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm