

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 27TH MARCH, 2023

Present – Councillors Donaghy (Chairman), Grant (Vice-Chairman), Connor, Finney, McKeon, Murray, Mort, Priest, Radcliffe, Rimmer, Sherrington and Walsh (as deputy for Councillor Abdullah)

Co-opted Members

None in attendance

Also in attendance

Councillor Galloway	- Executive Cabinet Member – Children's Services
Ms B. Brown	- Director of Children's Services
Ms G. Whitehead	- Assistant Director of Children's Services – Inclusive Education and Learning
Mr I. Walker	- Assistant Director of Children's Services - Social Care and Early Help
Ms S. Green	- Safeguarding Officer
Mr N. Smith	- Independent Chair - Bolton Safeguarding Adults Board
Ms D. Butler	- Strategic School Improvement Primary Lead
Ms H. Shearer	- Head of Start Well, Strategic Lead Early Years
Ms K. Berwick	- Connexions Careers Service Manager
Mrs. V. Ridge	- Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Abdullah, Hill, McGeown and Sanders and from Canon Bracegirdle (Church of England Diocese representative)

Councillor Donaghy in the Chair

22. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved - The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 30th January, 2023 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

23. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Borough Solicitor submitted the Committee Work Programme for 2022/23 which had been formulated following the informal meeting of this Committee held on 29th June, 2022 and which would guide the work of the Committee over the course of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the 2022/23 Committee Work Programme, as now submitted, be noted.

24. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND OUTCOMES INCLUDING NEET

Ms G. Whitehead gave a presentation on educational attainment and outcomes including young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Members were provided with various graphs which demonstrated the percentage of primary, secondary and special schools that were good or better and gave a comparison to the national picture.

Ms H. Shearer provided members with an update on the Early Years Foundation Stage results for 2021/22.

In summary:

- the introduction of a new national assessment Framework for 2021/22 which was not a like for like comparison with 2019;
- areas of learning were the same but Early Learning Goals had changed;
- Good Level of Development was calculated in same way;
- no exceeding judgements;
- no statutory Local Authority moderation requirement for new EYFS Profile;
- Bolton with GMCA facilitated the core team of moderators delivered through 10 clusters - 97 schools attended;
- There were some areas of contention particularly phonics/maths - additional criteria being created making assessment harder for some children to achieve; and
- the spread of attainment in Bolton was 20% - 89%.

A graph was provided outlined Bolton's performance in comparison to the national picture.

With regard to Early Years SEND support, members were advised:

- all Early years providers followed the SEND Code of Practice and had an appointed Special Education Needs Coordinator ;
- all followed the graduated Approach and SEN support Start Well service support including training packages and briefings;
- Early Years Single Point of access where providers referred for support including Start well outreach teacher, Ladywood Outreach and Education Psychologist support;
- Early years inclusion fund was available to support funded children aged 2,3 and 4 in nursery schools and classes, private or voluntary settings or with Childminders – it was for those children who already had identified needs and had agencies working together to support them;
- Early Years High Needs Bases provision - SEND Base provision offered places for children aged 2-5 years with

High Needs SEND within an environment that would meet their learning and development needs, enable integration and be staffed by practitioners able to offer specialism; and

- transition for children with SEND including support and access to funding whilst Education Health and Care Plan was pending at the beginning of Reception Year.

The presentation also provided details of the following numbers of children:

- Early Inclusion Funding 2021/22:
296 children funded over the year
- Early years Single Point of Access 2021/22:
161 children were referred of which 22 received Social Worker Outreach teacher support, 80 received Ladywood outreach, 39 received Education Psychologist support
- Transition Fund numbers:
2021 – 24 children were successful in receiving this.
2022 – 14 children were successful in receiving this.
- High Need bases places
2012-2022 – 28 children were placed in the High Needs Bases provision Bolton.

Ms D. Butler provided members with details and statistical graphs of Key Stage 1 and 2 results for 2021/22 including SEND and disadvantaged pupils. It was noted that the 2022 data was the first data set since 2019 due to the cancellation of statutory testing during the pandemic. The DfE had stated that performance data for 2022 should not be directly compared with 2019 and earlier or between schools. This was because schools may have been affected differently by COVID-19.

There had been pleasing outcomes overall with Bolton in line with the national average for RWM combined. Reading outcomes were in line with the national average at both the expected standard and greater depth.

Whilst outcomes had dipped following the pandemic, the outcomes for Bolton had not dipped to the same extent as they had nationally.

The presentation went on to summarise the Key Stage 4 and post 16 results including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The progress of students in Bolton in the context of 2022 was better than student progress in Bolton in the context of 2019. Progress and attainment of students in Bolton was typically just the below national average.

With regard to disadvantaged students:

- progress in Bolton in 2022 was better than the average of disadvantaged students in England;
- the average attainment 8 in Bolton was broadly in line with the average in England;
- the percentage of disadvantaged students in Bolton gaining a strong pass (5+) in English and Maths was higher than the average in England;
- the percentage of disadvantaged students in Bolton gaining a standard pass (4+) in English and Maths was in line with the average in England; and
- the percentage of disadvantaged students being entered into the full suite of Ebacc subjects was lower in Bolton than the England average.

In relation to SEND results:

- the progress of students in Bolton with SEN in 2022 was typically less than the average of students in England with SEN; and
- the percentage of students in Bolton with SEN gaining a strong pass (5+) in English and Maths was higher than the average in England for students with an Education Health and Care Plan but lower for SEN Support students.

With regard to Post 16 students:

- the attainment of students in Bolton on 'A Level Qualifications only' was typically just below the national average when expressed as average points per entry or expressed as a grade; and
- the attainment of students in Bolton on 'Applied General Qualifications' was typically in line with the national average when expressed as average points per entry or expressed as a grade.

Ms K. Berwick informed members of the numbers of 16–17 year-olds who were not in education, employment or training and gave comparison of figures between 2019 and 2022.

With regard to NEET and Not Known performance

- NEET figure - gap between Bolton and England was decreasing;
- a reduction in Not Known destinations;
- ESF NEET and Youth Employment contract - Jan 2022 – Sept 2023 - 230 young people signed up to programme out of a programme target of 403 - 166 young people having addressed significant barrier to learning and/or progressed to a positive outcome; and
- active member of Bolton, Bury Apprenticeship, GM Careers and Participation group, Princes Trust - influencing local provision.

Following the presentation, members made the undermentioned comments/observations:

- the impact of the Covid pandemic on results and social development;
- the importance of partnership working and collaboration with schools which was strong in Bolton;
- the benefits seen from multi-agency working;
- the prioritisation of support for SEND children;
- the work being undertaken with secondary schools;
- the recommissioning of the Ladywood outreach provision;
- behavioural support services; and

- narrowing the gap on results for Looked after Children.

Resolved – (i) That Ms Whitehead, Ms Shearer, Ms Butler and Ms Berwick be thanked for their informative presentations.

(ii) That a copy of the Virtual School Executive Summary Report be forwarded to members of the Committee.

25. WORK PROGRAMME OF BOLTON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ASSURANCE ACTIVITY

Mr N. Smith and Ms S Green gave a presentation on the role and function of the Bolton Safeguarding Children Partnership.

An annual report on the work of the Partnership had been produced in 2022 which:

- demonstrated the transparent and accountable safeguarding arrangements;
- shone a light on Partnership's work in 2022;
- outlined what was working and where further development was needed; and
- identified priorities for 2023.

The presentation explained about complex safeguarding which involved a range of safeguarding issues that children faced from outside their family home and provided a summary of how the Complex Safeguarding Team (CST) was working well to identify risks and how working together strengthened the responses.

- Working Well - involved the timely identification of exploitation as a risk and appropriate referrals to the Complex Safeguarding Team. The right partners were actively involved in developing the CST assessment and there was good attendance at multi-agency meetings. Practitioners understood the complex lives that some children experience and the push/pull factors that made them vulnerable to exploitation.

- Working Together to Strengthen - involved the use and analysis of data about children, including a better understanding of their health needs. Peer mapping and association maps were underdeveloped which were important as they supported the identification of key people in a child's life. The promotion of language that recognised and was sensitive to children's trauma experiences.

The presentation also referred to child neglect which was the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and was the most common form of child abuse.

- Working Well – development and launch of a comprehensive neglect toolkit with contributions from children. The completion of a partnership Neglect Audit and Review. The offer of a challenge to the Children and Young People's Board where progress had stalled. Information sharing project was underway.
- Working Together to Strengthen - strengthen data and performance reporting in relation to neglect. Review and update partnership neglect assessment tools and align with early help pathway. Complete neglect pathways with Bolton at Home. Continue to evaluate the impact of cost of living for children and their families.

The presentation described safeguarding thresholds and supporting practitioners to provide consistent safeguarding responses at the earliest opportunity.

- Working Well - Four partnership briefing sessions with over 400 practitioners, managers and leaders attending. Created and launched a single agency training pack for delivery by designated safeguarding leads. Challenged partners to report to the partnership the work they had completed to embed the arrangements. Practitioner survey and feedback on the effectiveness of the model.
- Working Together to Strengthen - review thresholds in response to local learning and national changes following

the Government response to Star and Arthur. Work with the Early Help Steering Group to strength guidance and support on early help processes and pathways. Continue to offer practitioner development sessions support use of thresholds in practice.

Members were then informed of the priorities that had been identified for the Bolton Safeguarding Children Partnership in 2023:

- to launch and implement revised arrangements for information sharing in Bolton;
- to review and evaluate safeguarding arrangements;
- to evaluate the impact of the Partnership threshold document; and
- to track the impact of learning from Partnership audit and review.

Following the presentation, members made the undermentioned comments/observations:

- the role of elected members as corporate parents and the need for training of newly elected Councillors on this aspect of their duties as part of the induction process; and
- the importance of the neglect toolkit and ensuring it was accessible; and
- the complexities of keeping in touch with Looked after Children once they had left the care of the Authority.

Resolved – That Mr N. Smith and Ms S. Green be thanked for their informative presentation.

26. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee received the minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- the Executive Cabinet Member for Children's Services held on 6th February and 6th March, 2023

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Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.20pm)