

CHILDREN'S HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT:- Councillors Barbara Parry (Chair), Matthew Courtliff, Oladapo Ibitoye (Vice-Chair), Nick Martin, Carol Shelley, Bazil Solomon, Nadine Watts and Alison Paul

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fay Howard.

1. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Barbara Parry made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest as she worked for Ridgeway School.

Councillor Carol Shelley made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest as she was a governor of Swindon Academy.

Councillor Basil Solomon made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in his capacity as a part time teacher.

2. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

3. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2020, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Engagement/Participation of Young People

With the agreement of the Committee this item was adjourned to the next meeting in order to allow representatives from young people to attend.

5. Appointment of Co-opted Members

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Legal Officer in respect of the appointment of co-opted representatives on the Committee during the Municipal year 2020/21.

Resolved – (1) That Liz Townsend be appointed as the Church of England Diocese representative on this Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21.
(2) That the following non-voting representatives be appointed to serve on the Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21:

- Alison Paul (Swindon Association of Special School Headteachers).
- Spencer Allen (Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers).

- Steve Colledge (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteachers).
- Steve Henderson (Equalities Advisory Forum).
- Jacqui Watt (Swindon SEND Families Voice).
- Vanessa Scott (Healthwatch).

(3) That the appointment of a Catholic Church Diocese representative and a Parent Governor be appointed as and when nominations are received.

6. Recovery Report/ the Covid response and plans for school returns from September

The Head of Skills, Employment and Lifelong Learning providing details of (a) the Covid-19 response and plans for schools reopening for all pupils from September as outlined in the Education, Skills and Learning Recovery Plan, (b) the government's approach to grading of GCSE and A level outcomes in 2020 with a summary of the draft results, and (c) an outline the plans for formal assessment and examinations in 2020/21.

The Head of Skills, Employment and Lifelong Learning introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the following issues:

- The provision data for O Levels and A Levels for the Borough for 2020 with all schools except the UTC having provided details of their results.
- Initially it was intended results would be based upon predicted results predicted by teachers to provide the centre assessed grade and then standardised.
- During the week of the A Level results, it was decided that students would be awarded the highest grade either predicted by their teacher (centre assessed grade) or that awarded by standardisation.
- A summary of the A Level grades showing a 2% improvement in young people entries achieving A* to E grades compared to 2019, a 14% improvement in entries awarded A* to B and a 10% improvement in entries awarded A* to A.
- All settings had small increases at A* - E with one setting achieving a significant increase. All settings had significant increases in grades at A* - B and A* - A.
- That nationally 36% of grades were downgraded by one grade and locally this was 8%.
- Attainment 8 performance (a pupil's average grade across a suite of 8 GCSE subjects) had increased to 49.7% which is a 3% improvement on last year and showed a three year improvement.
- There had also been significant improvements in English and Maths with a 9% improvement at grades 5-9 and an 8% improvement at grades 4-9 (Grade 5 being a strong pass, grade 4 a standard pass).
- Preparations within the recovery plan for reopening all schools within the Borough which was achieved at the beginning of September with some staggered starts of classes within schools.
- That all schools had updated their risk assessments and contingency plans as part of the reopening process in line with available guidance.
- Briefings and weekly information bulletins for headteachers, especially those in the SN1 and SN2 postcodes.
- Work to establish and maintain good communications with schools, nurseries

and further education establishments.

- Recovery plans planning and delivery plans overseen by a Council Bronze Group (and task groups) and in liaison with the Council's Public Health Team.
- Actions to contain a small number of outbreaks in educational settings including risk assessments and controls to be followed including additional support if the Borough was identified as an area requiring additional government support.
- Early indicators of school attendance in the first couple of weeks with 85% of all children in school and 96% of children looked after in school with robust work supporting this and reflecting the staggered starts of schools.
- Data in respect of elective home education requests which had increase over the same period in 2019 (225 to 285); this was being monitored, this included the reasons for requests (19 were Covid 19 related).
- The process for discussing elective home education, its implications and parental duties with schools and the local education authority prior to a decision being made and to ensure an informed decision.
- Work to monitor of attendance and ensuring vulnerable children were in school including any barriers to prevent attendance.
- Where attendance was under 85% additional work and support by the local education authority with schools would be undertaken with details of vulnerable children maintained by group.
- Details of work to return vulnerable children back to school was monitored regularly by staff across the Council and partners.
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Members' considered the report and scrutinised Officers in respect of:

- The continued trend in narrowing the local achievement with that nationally with significant improvement locally with higher grades.
- The quality of education within the Borough and within specific schools.
- The robustness of the recovery plan which had been in place since May and which had been refreshed in September.
- The four current educational priorities, (i) Are Children in School (ensuring measures are in place to allow children to attend school), (ii) Achievement and Skills (to minimise the risk of achievement due to COVID and to support those in NEET), (iii) wellbeing (ensure good communication to prepare children to return to school and support to families), and (iv) Services working together to be inclusive (in particular work with SEND and education health and care plans).
- The testing of teachers and children and how priority might be given to those displaying potential symptoms.
- The effect on schools of teachers absence through COVID and the effect on children who have been kept out of schools with non-covid related symptoms (then being kept out of school until they had been tested).
- The anxiety of children taking exams in October in respect of potential further lockdowns and how examination papers might be graded.
- The flexibility of school's contingency plans to prepare children and to deal with future changes in circumstances.
- How schools would finance the additional measures being put into place to

ensure pupils can return to school and how the additional work being undertaken by the Local Education Authority was funded, including government funding which was available.

- The number of young people classed as NEET in Swindon (just above the national average) and the percentage of youth unemployment in the Borough, both of which were increasing.
- The positive work undertaken by schools to deal with individual cases of COVID and the guidelines from the Public Health Department as to when children should be sent home.
- The national issues on COVID testing and replacement of testing kits for schools if they need to use their allocated stock.

Resolved – That the report and work being undertaken under the recovery plan be noted

7. Motion from Council - Provision of Mental Health Services for Young People

Esther Schmidt Children's Commissioning Lead, BSW CCG Swindon Locality and Katie Currie, Public Health Consultant, Swindon Borough Council gave a presentation on the joint response to Minute 22 of Council (Motion - Provision of Mental Health Services for Young People) highlighting the following key issues:

- The timeline of joint mental strategy which commenced prior to the BSW CCG merger and which had subsequently been continued.
- The delay in public consultation arising from the COVID lockdown.
- The mental health services available in Swindon and how these were commissioned through the CCG, Council and through other providers.
- The TAMHS service provided by the Council for mild to moderate problems and CAMHS services provided by Oxford Health Trust who dealt with moderate to specialist interventions.
- Other services such as the Swindon Advocacy Movement which was being supported by Zurich.
- How individuals and families could obtain advice on mental health issues and were sign-posted to services through the Anna Freud system which didn't require a tiered approach of TAMHS prior to CAMHS to best provide help required through a tailored approach with 46 partners engaged.
- The work of the Trailblazer Project provided through Barbados as the lead provider pioneering mental health support in 40 schools within the Borough with the Borough being successful in bidding for additional funds.
- Feedback from young people that they preferred to receive help from family and friends prior to referral to professional services.
- Work on the evaluation of phase 1 of the Trailblazer project which was expected to be completed by March 2021.
- That service provision had continued through the pandemic although reporting had ceased during this period to allow resources to be used to tackle COVID.
- A break-down of referrals which had dropped during lockdown although the service had continued online under the Trailblazer Project and work undertaken with young people in a neutral setting outside of the school environment.

- The creation of a single referral and triage system for TAHMS and CAMHS to allow joint working on service allocation and provision which included the Early Help Service to ensure the right service was delivered in a timely manner.
- The creation of inter-care alliances by CCGs by 2021 which would through partnerships create the Integrated Care System which was focused on people getting the right assistance through multi-discipline teams.
- That since COVID there had been a 125% increase in mental health presentations at the Great Western Hospital.
- That all NHS contracts were held by NHS England until March 2021 when new service specifications would be in place.
- Available data from Oxford Health and the TAMHS service and data cleansing work to enable better comparative information in the future.
- The crisis support line operated by the Council for children and young people created during the current pandemic period and the provision of digital services.
- A case study of a young person accessing mental health services in Swindon.
- Prevention and Self-care services available to young people and how this fitted within wider service provision and the local offer for SEN.
- Swindon Town Football current provision is to children with SEND, in Care, at risk of offending, Premier League Kicks 8-18 inspiring children and young people to improve their health and wellbeing, commissioned by the Council.
- Due to Covid arts work was just re-starting and Create Studios in Swindon having secured CCG funding from a national project to produce short videos of and for young people accessing mental health services.
- Key messages in respect of (i) not all young people need clinical help-It is important to recognize that ups and downs in life are normal, (ii) that professional services can't "fix" young people- trickiness of puberty and physiological challenges of adolescence, and (iii) the majority of young people choose access support from family and friends before wanting to speak to a professional.
- Future work plan to improve and deliver mental health services within the Borough, including the re-procurement of mental health on-line services and Creation of a strategic mental health framework for Swindon by January 2021.

Following the presentation Members challenged officers in respect of:

- Waiting times for TAMHS and CAMHS services prior to and during the pandemic.
- The reduction in waiting time for services, with an additional 2.1 staff funded through the CCG, although there were concerns moving forward as to the effect of COVID on service provision.
- The operation of the Kooth online system and the positive response of young people to it.
- The accessibility and use of services to the BAME community and different age groups during the current crisis.
- The increase in accessing different types of support services for young people during the pandemic.
- The standard time of service provision for mental health services.

- The priority given to Children Looked After (including those placed Out of Borough) and waiting times for mental health services, many of who due to trauma suffered required specialist services.

Resolved – That the officers be thanked for their presentation and full response to Members' questions and the presentation be noted.

8. Children's Social Care and Early Help Summary of Performance 19/20 Outturn and Quarter 1 2020/21

The Interim Director of Children's Social Work submitted a report setting out (a) an overview of performance in children's, services for 2019/20, (b) the direction of travel for the first quarter of 2020/21, and (c) key performance information and additional service context and interpretation of data. The Interim Director of Children's Social Work introduced the report drawing Members' attention to:

- The effect of services during the period of the pandemic with service provision being undertaken through on-line engagement and remote working.
- A risk assessment of those families requiring physical visits with appropriate safety measure in place.
- With the lockdown there was a significant reduction in contacts with the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub and child protection referrals with more families being sign-posted to support services.
- Since June there has been an increase in referrals and in the number of families requiring a safeguarding response because of a family crisis.
- A summary of the key elements of the recovery plan including (i) plans to deal with an expected increase in demand due to family stress, and (ii) an increase in direct contact with children and families.
- A summary of key points in respect of early help, and community health services with more families helped through the troubled Families Programme and a new service providing additional family support where a child might otherwise enter care and a family led approach where appropriate.
- On-going issues in respect of recruiting health visitors, which was also a national issues, and due to this an issue with the number of home visits undertaken.
- Continued improvement in performance in key areas relating to Children Looked After and Care Leavers including placement permanence and adoption, Care leavers classed as EET in comparison with comparator local authorities, and completing health assessment for young people in care.
- Further work to improve services in relation to placement stability for Children in Care again which was also a national issue which could be due to the complexity of need or the availability of a suitable initial placement.
- The successful campaign for Foster Carers with twelve volunteers identified during the pandemic and who were currently being assessed.
- Work with other care providers in the region in areas such as children home provision and supported housing option in Swindon.
- Elective home education and children missing education and actions to ensure children's educational needs are met and the tracking of children not currently in school.

Following the presentation Members' scrutinised:

- The number of permanent and locum social workers employed by the Council with an increase in the number of permanent staff joining the Council in September and October.
- The current situation relating to domestic violence and the multi-agency response to such reports with the majority of reports to date being classified as lower risk.
- That there were no Serious Case Reviews outstanding and there had been one rapid review of a potential case.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted and the Interim Director of Children’s Social Work be thanked for her informative presentation.

(2) That an update on the outcomes for troubled families be added to the Committee Work Programme.

9. Education/Exclusion/Persistent Absence

The Additional Provision and Reintegration Manager submitted a report concerning information on fixed term and permanent exclusion from schools, the reasons for those exclusions and the actions being taken and school attendance providing an update on the latest data. The Director of Inclusion and Achievement drew Members’ attention to the following points:

- Headline figures for exclusions with a reduction in permanent secondary exclusions when compared to 2019/20.
- A slight increase in the number primary exclusions in years 2, 3, 5 and 6.
- Early intervention work to reduce the number of exclusions which had been largely positive and had led to a number of withdrawn exclusions.
- The use of Fair Access Panel meetings to allocate excluded pupils a place in a different school, if appropriate, and to reduce the need for exclusions and to support children and young people with a strong focus on early intervention and avoidance of permanent exclusions.
- Data sharing with schools which formed a key element of the strategic improvement plan.
- Established performance and attendance forums to look at managed moves between schools for pupils should this be necessary prior to permanent exclusions where this was beneficial for the pupil and the school.
- Improved partnership working, including training relating to behavioural improvement.
- The differences between permanent and fixed term exclusion and the use of data to look at lineal links between fixed term and permanent exclusions and trigger points.
- Work to identify support for young people with behavioural issues to reduce the risk of exclusions.
- The identification of challenges in the family life of young people which could manifest as challenging behaviour.
- An increase in the capacity of the pupil referral unit to support pupils and offer intervention.
- The challenge of CQC and OFSTED Written Statement outcomes and priorities which was being addressed by the local authority as the lead with support from partner organisations.
- Children with education and health and care plans in primary schools in

Swindon was below the national average but exclusions were higher than the national average. In secondary schools the average of pupils with education and health and care plans was above the national average as was the fixed term exclusion rate and the proportion of pupils with a fixed term exclusion.

- Data showed that pupils identified with SEN was a significant factor in exclusions for Swindon which was the key of work to identify unknown SEN needs in pupils to help reduce exclusions.
- The embedding of the Fair Access Protocol and work on developing behavioural hubs and collaborative work to reduce exclusions with a graduated approach.
- A comparison of Swindon and statistical neighbours, as set out in the report, and the progress made in reducing persistent absence in primary schools.
- That the position on persistent absence in primary schools had been stable since 2016 and work was necessary to show significant improvement in line with Priority 7.
- The development of an attendance charter based upon Dfe guidance, amending attendance policies in liaison with the Council's Safeguarding Team, and learning from case study reviews relating to persistent absence.

Following the officer presentation Members' challenged officers in respect of:

- The significant rise in primary fixed term exclusions and the identification for this trend and support for schools to reduce this number.
- That data relating to exclusions should be included with the context of the size of schools to enable a better understanding of the information provided.
- The importance of reducing persistence absence to improve the educational attainment of pupils.
- The variance of the attendance policy to take account of COVID related issues.
- The use of the attendance policy on a consistent basis across schools with the Borough and measures available to schools and the local education authority to deal with persistent absence.

Resolved – (1) That the key performance messages in relation to the 2019/20 outturn position, as well as the latest performance for quarter 1 of 2020/21 for Children's Early Help be noted.

Social Care services.

(2) That the officers be thanked for their informative presentation and their full response to Members' questions.

10. Work Programme 2020/21

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Legal Officer on the proposed work programme for the Municipal Year, 2020/21.

Resolved – (1) That, subjected to (2) below the work programme be approved.

(2) That (i) an update on the outcomes for troubled families be added to the Committee Work Programme, and (ii) the item on Engagement and Participation of Young People be submitted to a future meeting.