

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 25 March 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Cliff Woodcraft (Deputy Chair), Andy Bainbridge, Simon Clement-Jones, Tony Downing, Francyne Johnson, Mohammad Maroof, Abtisam Mohamed, Colin Ross and Alison Teal

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Gillian Foster (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)
Sam Evans (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bob Pullin and Ian Saunders, and from Alice Riddell (Healthwatch Sheffield, Observer).

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 RESOLVED: That the public and press be excluded from the meeting after the presentation to be made in Agenda Item 6 – The Council’s Response to Ofsted on the Recent Inspection of the SEND Service, on the grounds that the contents of the draft Action Plan remained confidential at this stage, until such time as it was submitted to, and approved by, Ofsted, and therefore further discussion about the detail within the Plan would need to be continued in private session.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 In relation to Agenda Item 6 (The Council’s Response to Ofsted on the Recent Inspection of the SEND Service), the following declarations of interest were made:-

- (a) Councillor Andy Bainbridge declared a personal interest as a Board Member of Learn Sheffield;
- (b) Councillor Cliff Woodcraft declared a personal interest as a friend of Tim Armstrong (Head of Special Educational Needs); and
- (c) Sam Evans declared a personal interest as a friend of Tim Armstrong (Head of Special Educational Needs).

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 No questions or petitions were received from members of the public.

5. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO OFSTED ON THE RECENT INSPECTION OF THE SEND SERVICE

- 5.1 The Committee received a joint presentation on the development of a Written Statement of Action, which would set out how the Council aimed to respond to each area of weakness identified in the report of Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on the recent inspection of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Service, and which was required to be submitted to Ofsted by 30th April 2019.
- 5.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Jayne Dunn (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), Dawn Walton (Director of Commissioning, Inclusion and Inclusion Services), Tim Armstrong (Head of Special Educational Needs), Joel Hardwick (Head of Commissioning; Inclusion and School Services) and Sapphire Johnson (Head of Commissioning – Children, Young People and Maternity, Sheffield NHS Clinical Commissioning Group).
- 5.3 Dawn Walton introduced the presentation, referring to the seven areas of weakness, and indicating that within each area, there was a broad summary of the outcomes required. Ms Walton stated that work had already commenced on drafting the Written Statement of Action, with a number of consultation meetings having been held with relevant Council Services, external partners and parents/carers, with regard to addressing the areas of weakness. In terms of the presentation, and the seven areas of weakness which had been identified, Joel Hardwick reported on the lack of a co-produced, coherent vision and strategy for SEND in Sheffield, and commissioning arrangements to remove variability and improve consistency in meeting the education, health and care needs of children and young people aged 0 to 25 with SEND. Tim Armstrong reported on communication, clarity and consistency in the relationship between the local area leaders, parents, carers, children and young people; equality and timeliness of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans; inconsistencies in identifying, assessing and meeting the needs in mainstream primary and secondary schools; and securing effective multi-agency transition arrangements for children and young people with SEND. Sapphire Johnson reported on the strategic oversight of SEND arrangements by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), which resulted in unacceptable waiting times for access to specialist equipment and appropriate pre and post-diagnosis support and children and young people's needs not being met.
- 5.4 Members of the Sub-Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-
- The list of people the Council would be consulting with in connection with the Written Statement of Action included families, parents, carers, children and young people, Councillors, the CCG Governing Body and officers, health service providers and voluntary sector representatives.
 - Inspectors acknowledged that many of the issues raised in the inspection were already understood by the Authority, although the pace of addressing these issues had not been fast enough. The delays had been due mainly to the significant nature of the work required to address the change in legislative

requirements, which had also been a challenge nationally. Accountability had not been defined quickly enough. Significant progress had been made over the last year.

- Transitions as a topic of under-achievement generally, across the whole system, and not just education, had been an issue for the Authority as it had, again, nationally. The recent restructuring, and establishment of People Services had helped to address this issue in making progress in the early stages, and a multi-agency work-stream was underway to develop this work more.
- It was very difficult to state accurately how many children and young people had been adversely affected by the issues raised in the report. The overall indication in terms of approximate numbers affected was that approximately 16% of the school population have identified SEND and even then, there was not always consistency in the classification locally or nationally. There was no national framework in terms of measuring how successful improvements were, therefore it was not always easy to accurately measure and benchmark in this area of work. One indication was that there had been a 25% increase in the number of parents requesting EHC Plans, with some waiting up to a year for a Plan, as well as a high number of parents raising concerns.
- There was already a fair understanding of those areas where there were weaknesses in the Service. The Inspectors noted that the Authority and the CCG had started to make improvements in some areas. Progress had been made since the inspection in November 2018, with parent/carer groups expressing some acknowledgement of the progress made.
- Whilst the initial engagement on the Written Statement of Action had been held mainly with the Parent/Carers' Forum, it was accepted that more work was required over the next period to ensure that the parent/carer input had a wider representative make up, including harder to reach groups.
- The Authority was currently looking at implementing a training plan, and had also commissioned a piece of communications work, comprising animations and posters, in order to simplify what was a very complex process for schools and families.
- The Authority continued to communicate with, and provide support to, mainstream schools regarding the exclusion of pupils with SEND. Nationally and locally, children with SEND were more likely to have a fixed-term exclusion. As part of the steps to deal with this issue, the Authority had commissioned additional support and advice to the Inclusion Panels on autism, speech and language therapy and mental health needs. Work had also taken place on the role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO) in schools, in terms of identifying the needs of children and young people with SEND. As this work had only recently commenced, it was likely to take some time to embed across all schools before results would be seen.
- It had been identified that there was a need for reforms in the areas identified

as part of the Ofsted and CQC inspection. The Authority and the CCG were fully aware of those areas that needed to develop, and had commenced work on the Action Plan.

- In terms of improvements and learning lessons, continuous tracking, monitoring and review was considered to be the key to ensure things improved.
- This had been the first time the Authority and the CCG had been requested to produce a Written Statement of Action, so it was considered to be a new experience for everyone involved, and would serve to hold everyone concerned to account.
- In terms of the lessons learnt from this process, it had been identified that there was a need to ‘hit the ground running’ and not be reactive, but more proactive. It was acknowledged that the Authority and the CCG did not have the adequate infrastructure in place at the time, but there were now more effective monitoring systems in place.
- The “Tell Us Once” approach (the principle that children, young people, families and carers should only have to tell their story once to professionals rather than having to repeat themselves to each professional they come into contact with) had not yet been finalised. Parents, children and young people were very clear that this is what they wanted. The Authority and the CCG, working with provider services, were focussing on bringing My Plans and Health Passports together, in partnership with the families and young people as a first step in this process.
- In terms of measures to reduce the number of exclusions of children and young people with SEND, additional resources have been put into the Vulnerable Learner Reviews, which involve reviewing those vulnerable children and young people who, due to their complex needs, or other factors, were more likely to be at risk of exclusion. It was accepted that this needed to go alongside better commissioning arrangements for support. It was considered that prevention was better than reaction, therefore work was being targeted in terms of early identification, and key workers were being appointed to those children and young people with more complex needs, and who would be responsible for co-ordinating any preventative work undertaken, on behalf of the family.
- In terms of additional staffing arising from the Ofsted inspection, a number of new posts had been created, including three Assistant Education Psychologists, seven Support Workers, four Inclusion Officers and five additional staff undertaking Vulnerable Learner Reviews.
- The commission for Learn Sheffield was developing, partly around developing partnership approaches to support inclusion in mainstream schools.
- The CCG used a range of information to support commissioning. This included information from Public Health, children, young people, family and

carer feedback and performance and waiting time data for particular services. It was acknowledged that there was a need to more robustly and systematically monitor and utilise this data on an ongoing basis to help inform commissioning decisions.

- One of the priorities with regard to improving waiting times related to access to wheelchairs, and whilst all children waiting over 18 weeks had now been seen, it had been identified that there was still a need for further improvements in the service, and to monitor and track performance for these arrangements on an ongoing basis. The CCG was currently working with NHS England in connection with improving waiting times with regard to pre and post-diagnostic support for the autism pathway, with the aim of transferring the commissioning of this work to the CCG so that it would take local action in conjunction with the Council.
- Whilst it was envisaged that the work required in terms of addressing the weaknesses would be extensive, it was being driven, with ambition, by Councillor Jayne Dunn, as Cabinet Lead, parents, families, children and young people and carers. There was a very supportive and challenging structure in terms of moving forward, and officers believed that the Authority had the necessary skills and resources to make the necessary improvements.
- As part of the work required, officers would be talking to all providers in terms of moving forward, and there was an awareness that there may be a need to re-tender for certain services. There were no concerns with the current providers, but it was accepted that the children and young people's needs were changing, therefore there was a need to work differently.

5.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information reported as part of the presentation, and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests that the Council's self-assessment document and the list of consultees and responses to the Written Statement of Action, to date, be circulated to Members of the Committee.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.