



**People and Communities Select Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 29 January 2021 at 10am
on Microsoft Teams (virtual meeting)**

Present:

Cllr Shelagh Gurney (Chair)
Cllr Fabian Eagle (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Tim Adams	Cllr Chrissie Rumsby
Cllr David Bills	Cllr Thomas Smith
Cllr Ed Connolly	Cllr Mike Smith-Clare
Cllr Ed Maxfield	Cllr Fran Whymark
Cllr Brenda Jones	Cllr Sheila Young

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Ron Hanton for Cllr Penny Carpenter

Also Present

Debbie Bartlett	Director of Strategy & Transformation, Adult Social Services
Michael Bateman	Programme Director Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision, Children's Services
Chris Butwright	Head of Public Health Performance & Delivery, Public Health
Cllr John Fisher	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Melvyn Ruff	Provider Strategy Manager, Children's Services
Chris Sudden	Director of Learning and Inclusion, Children's Services
Hannah Bailey	Policy Manager Health and Wellbeing Board & Adults Wellbeing, Adult Social Services
Sebastian Gasse	Assistant Director Education Strategy and Infrastructure, Children's Services
Emily Woodhouse	Healthwatch Norfolk
Karin Porter	Participation & Transition Strategy Manager, Children's Services
Phillip Belden	Adviser Achievement Service, Children's Services

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Penny Carpenter (Cllr Ron Hanton substituting), Dr Louise Smith (Chris Butwright substituting) and Sara Tough (Chris Snudden substituting).

2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 The following interests were declared:
- Cllr David Bills declared a non-pecuniary interest as a governor of Hethersett

Academy.

- Cllr Mike Smith-Clare declared a non-pecuniary interest as director and co-founder of a provider offering post-16 education services to young people in Norfolk.
- Cllr Sheila Young declared a non-pecuniary interest as her husband was in a care home waiting for a care package.
- Cllr Fran Whymark declared a non-pecuniary interest as members of his immediate family were teachers.

4. Items received as urgent business

- 4.1 A request had been received from the Scrutiny Committee for the Select Committee to add a piece of work to their forward plan; this would be discussed under item 10, Forward Work Plan.

5. Public Questions

- 5.1 No public questions were received.

6. Member Questions and Issues

- 6.1 No Member questions were received.

7. Post 16 Education - Summary Report

- 7.1.1 The Committee received the report providing key updates on post 16 provision, quality and outcomes and the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on providers so far.
- 7.1.2 The Assistant Director of Education Strategy and Infrastructure, Children's Services, introduced the report to the Committee:
- There had been contraction of the market and some companies providing work-based training had left the market.
 - Officers would continue to work on strategy to ensure provision was flexible.
 - Norfolk was in line with national benchmarks on most outcome measures but slightly lagging in 3 of them; all providers were judged good or better at that time.
 - The rates of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training had reduced over the last three years; data was not available on rates during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Participation in Norfolk was slightly behind national performance as there was slightly larger proportion of young people who chose to go into work without training than nationally
 - A decline in uptake of apprenticeships had been seen in Norfolk and nationally.
 - Education institutions were providing remote learning for young people during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 7.2 The following points were discussed and noted:
- The Assistant Director Education of Strategy and Infrastructure, Children's Services, was not aware of any specific schemes at Norfolk County Council to employ students on a part time basis during the school holidays.
 - The ability of students in rural areas to access education, and the possible impact of further consolidation was queried. The Assistant Director of Education

Strategy and Infrastructure replied that there was a strong transport network in Norfolk and alongside this, the national drive for young people to take up apprenticeships provided an opportunity for young people to work locally. Higher proportions of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training were seen in Norwich and urban areas despite more provision been available in these areas.

- Officers were asked if there were sufficient resources in Norfolk to provide the post-16 service. The Director of Learning and Inclusion, Children's Services, replied that the resource was system wide; therefore, bringing the system together and steering it in the right direction was fundamental.
- The post-16 education team worked closely with young people to ensure they were supported, and as a result, the number of young people whose location was unknown was low and good compared with Norfolk's regional neighbours.
- Post-16 transport consisted of a system of core routes; if a young person could get to a core route, they could access a post-16 education facility. The Assistant Director of Education Strategy and Infrastructure asked Members to let him know of any areas with a barrier to young people accessing this transport.
- A discussion was held about young people who relied on seasonal employment which preventing them from entering post-16 training because of the lag between the end of seasonal employment and the start time of post 16 education; it was queried how this issue would be addressed. Officers confirmed that the principals of East Coast College and East Norfolk Sixth Form were mindful of this issue and further talks would take place with providers to develop strategies within post-16 education. The apprenticeship route could also support these students.
- If young people were accessing education through an educational facility, then this provider was responsible for helping them with access to technology and associated issues with this equipment. The library, central service IMT department or adult education services could support families and young people with access to technology.
- The Chair asked about funding for router and broadband connections for young people and families. All schools had been asked about access points and officers would continue to ask education facilities about this. Families could access the Norfolk Assistance Scheme for help with telephone bills and broadband connection, among other things.
- The possible impact of the reduction in the budget for home to school transport was raised.
- The Assistant Director Education of Strategy and Infrastructure clarified that the transport policy was looked at annually but a wider review including public consultation had not been carried out since 2012; a Member of the Committee was concerned by the fact that families had not been consulted about the service for 9 years.
- Officers worked closely with the apprenticeships team and were mindful of green energy apprenticeships; the Assistant Director of Education Strategy and Infrastructure **agreed** to find out whether apprenticeships were provided on County Farms and report back to the Committee.
- Approximately 320 apprentices were employed by Norfolk County Council at that time.
- The Government white paper on Post-16 education was noted, and officers were asked to what extent organisations in Norfolk would shape the County's policies. Officers confirmed that Norfolk County Council were looking at the implications of the white paper and its responses to it. Businesses in Norfolk were represented through the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a

stakeholder group was in place who helped drive development of post-16 and skills provision across Norfolk.

- Officers were asked what policies had impacted the most on the decreasing rate of apprenticeships. The Participation & Transition Strategy Manager, Children's Services, clarified that the reduction had been seen in response to national moves such as the apprenticeship levy and changes to how apprenticeships were assessed and examined which had affected level 2, intermediate apprenticeships, and had a higher impact on young people.
- Officers worked closely with apprenticeship providers and colleges to look at intended destinations of young people and ensure progression pathways were in place.
- The Assistant Director of Education Strategy and Infrastructure assured Members that regular discussions were held with young people through discussions with institutions, the Help You Choose system and surveys of young people's intended destinations.
- Members asked whether Norfolk County Council would use the kickstart scheme; officers confirmed that they would seek to make use of this including as a gateway provider to enable smaller businesses to club together.
- In response to a query about the September Guarantee, officers reported that guidance and young people's advisors followed up with young people without the right level of offers or those at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training. These teams were more active in 2020 as young people had less contact with educational settings; despite this reduced contact, only a slight decline in young people offered a place and in participation was seen in 2020.
- Members requested the data for numbers of looked after children who were Not in Education, Employment or Training. Officers reported that 49% of looked after children and care leavers in Norfolk were Not in Education, Employment or Training at the end of November 2020. Nationally at that time, 39% of care leavers were Not in Education, Employment or Training. It was noted however that the number of young people for who the status was "not known" was 10% nationally and 0% in Norfolk.
- Education providers were flexible and accommodated young people finding the right course for them; in the first term, providers expected that some young people would change their course. Colleges would welcome people who wanted to return to education in most instances. Moving forward there would be more support for over 18s to upskill, including going back to college where appropriate
- Officers did not collect data on how many young people had no access to the internet. Responsibility for understanding whether students had access to the equipment they needed to allow them to access learning rested with education institutions, who received government funding and provided funding to students via the bursary scheme. Assistance schemes for families from Government and Norfolk County Council included the option of including the cost of a broadband router.
- Cllr Fisher acknowledged the concerns about the length of time since the last review of the transport policy.
- Cllr Smith-Clare **requested** that an item was added to the forward work programme looking at the number of looked after children and care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training and how this was being addressed; the Chair was also concerned about this statistic and agreed it would be added to the forward plan.

7.3

The Committee **NOTED** that Norfolk County Council will:

1. **work** with the EFSA to press for targeted resources where flexible funding is

- required to jointly commission provision to address gaps.
2. **work** with education, training, and transport providers to carry out and consult on a policy review to create a more integrated and innovative transport system in the County.
 3. **provide** leadership for the development of post 16 education and training in the County:
 - a. As an employer and working with other public sector employers establish public sector pathways into work including prioritising care leavers and other vulnerable groups
 - b. Work pro-actively with both our in-house provider and other partners to establish new provision targeting specific groups of young people.
 - c. Continue work with the Education and Training Strategy Group and the LEP Skills Advisory Panel to foster collaboration across Education, Training and employer sectors.
 - d. Continue to contribute to the forthcoming Norfolk County Council Apprenticeships Strategy.

8. Education Health and Care Plan Dashboard Update

- 8.1.1 The Committee received the second report on a developing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) performance framework in a series of reports scheduled for each Committee meeting over a 2-year period. The requirement to provide regular reports followed on from a recommendation by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the current improvement work linked to our Written Statement of Action with Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- 8.1.2 The Programme Director of Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision, Children's Services, outlined key data in the report:
 - September 2020 would be used as the baseline in future reports
 - 20% of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were now completed within the 20-week timescale, up from 8%, and Norfolk was now the second best performing of the 10 lowest performing authorities, which was an improvement,
 - The number of cases outside of the timescale had reduced from 500 in March 2020 to 200 before Christmas 2020.
 - In 2019 there was a large backlog of nearly 900 cases, but now nearly all of these had been cleared.
- 8.2 The following points were discussed and noted:
 - The most common categories of complaints received were confirmed as being about the delay in waiting for initial assessment and the wait time for specialist placement. The construction of additional specialist provision and work to reduce the case backlog would help to reduce the number of complaints.
 - Officers were asked whether they felt the stretch targets were achievable. As these targets had been set by Norfolk County Council, set out in the improvement plan and signed off by Ofsted as fit for purpose, the Programme Director of Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision, Children's Services, was confident that they could be achieved.
 - Additional staff had been recruited into the EHCP team and now that they were all in post, officers were confident it would be possible to achieve an increase to 60% of EHCPs being completed within the 20-week timescale.
 - When the new specialist education provision had been built, officers would seek feedback from families and schools to see if need more was needed; however, it

was important to ensure a focus on local inclusion as well.

- The Programme Director of Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision encouraged Councillors to sign up to the SEND newsletter to receive regular updates on development of specialist provision; Members could contact him to sign up for this newsletter.
- Officers were asked how the quality of EHCPs was being improved and maintained. It was reported that data on quality would be included in future reports gathered using a newly purchased online audit tool.
- Data was **requested** on the number of appeals lodged, the outcomes of these and comparison to previous years. The Programme Director of Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision **agreed** to include this information in future reports.
- Through extra investment secured in 2020, additional management in the EHCP team and EHCP coordinators had been recruited. Before this, EHCP staff had coordinated 350 cases each on average. The average was now 225 cases each which was more in line with the expected caseload.
- Annual review figures would be included in the next report; so far these figures had shown better performance from early years and primary schools returning annual reviews identifying that attention should be focussed on older age groups.
- Concerns were raised by Cllr Rumsby from parents who had written to her about difficulties they experienced during lockdown, limited respite placements being available during the Covid-19 pandemic, and querying whether funding for equipment would carry over into the new financial year. The Programme Director for Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision **agreed** to take the concerns raised by families to the working groups looking into issues related to short breaks and to find out if the funding would carry over.
- Information had been requested at paragraph 9.2 of the minutes of the meeting of 13 November 2020; this data would be included in the March 2021 report to Committee.
- The Director of Learning and Inclusion clarified for Members that children missing education may include children not on a school roll because they were medically unfit and being educated in a different way, those who had been excluded, or who were missing from a school roll in the period between being withdrawn from school and becoming home educated. A team was in place to track where these children were and how they were being educated. A home visit would be carried out by the social care team if there were concerns for a child's wellbeing.
- 25-50% of complaints were upheld, and officers took a "lessons learned" approach to all complaints.

8.3 The Committee

1. **NOTED** the ongoing content of a new SEND performance framework and agree ongoing reporting at all subsequent meetings for a period of two years in total; complying with the outcome of the LGSCO report.
2. **AGREED** that the range of performance measures will directly assist with decision making regarding any policy changes needed over time as part of the range of SEND improvement programmes.

8.4 The Committee took a break from 12-12.10pm. Cllr Fran Whymark left the meeting at 12pm.

9. Healthwatch Norfolk Report

- 9.1 The Committee received the report and saw a presentation by Emily Woodhouse of Healthwatch Norfolk (see appendix A) detailing the results of research commissioned by Norfolk Adult Social Services and carried out by Healthwatch Norfolk to hear the voices of people in care homes about the impact of Covid-19:
- Paper and easy-read versions of surveys were provided
 - A good response was received to the surveys, especially given the pressure that care homes were under during the pandemic.
 - Not being able to see facial expressions or people's mouths underneath facemasks had created communication difficulties for care home residents.
 - Some families felt they were not communicated with well or had received inconsistent information.
- 9.2 The following points were discussed and noted:
- The Director of Strategy & Transformation, Adult Social Services, discussed that it would be important to evaluate how well technology use in care homes had gone during the Covid-19 crisis and agreed this was an area to develop outside of the pandemic.
 - The Chair raised her concerns about the wider picture regarding loneliness in the elderly population in Norfolk as well as care home residents.
 - Concerns were raised about the high number of Covid-19 outbreaks at care homes.
 - The Director of Strategy & Transformation **suggested** that a report was brought back to a future meeting to see progress on the issues raised in the surveys to care homes. The outcome of surveys had also been shared with leaders in the care home sector.
 - It was discussed that work would be needed to follow up on the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of care home residents and what could be done to support this.
 - Concern was raised about some end of life providers not being able to access care homes during the pandemic, impacting on the health of care home residents and about a lack of bereavement support being available. The Director of Strategy & Transformation **agreed** to feed this back, and the concerns around loneliness and isolation so the Council could consider how they commission or support this provision.
 - It was suggested that the impact of the last months on services in care homes and community care be drilled down into further.
- 9.3 The Committee:
- a) **COMMENTED** on the findings and recommendations which will be presented
 - b) **SUPPORTED** the recommendations and share the report once circulated
 - c) **AGREED** to help to amplify the voice of care home residents and staff and to assist Norfolk County Council fulfil its role in developing and supporting the care home sector

10. Forward plan

- 10.1 The committee considered the forward plan.
- 10.2 Select Committee Members requested the following reports were added to the forward plan:
- A report was requested looking at the number of looked after children and care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training and how this was

being addressed, as at paragraph 7.2 above.

- A report was requested on access to technology for young people in education and ensuring issues with devices are addressed.
- A recommendation had been received from Scrutiny Committee for the Committee to look into next steps of the Cabinet decision relating to 'Adult Social Services Charging policy for non-residential care – next steps following the Judicial review'. The Chair would look into progress of this policy review and then confirm which month's meeting this would be added to.
- A report was requested on the response to mental health and bereavement provision across council services.
- The Chair would discuss whether the annual report would be included on the March 2021 meeting with officers after the meeting.

10.3 The Chair recognised that departments reporting to the Select Committee were working hard on their responses to Covid-19. Therefore, to ensure that officers were able to prioritise providing services to the community over providing reports to the Select Committee, the Chair informed Members that agendas may have fewer reports for the next few months.

10.4 The Committee considered and **agreed** the forward plan with the addition of the above suggested items.

The Meeting Closed at 13.05

**Cllr S Gurney, Chairman,
People and Communities Select Committee**



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Building safety and resilience in Norfolk care homes during COVID-19 (Oct 2020)

Emily Woodhouse

Targeted engagement: why care homes?

- Norfolk's care homes look after some of the most clinically vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Difficult for families who have not been able to spend time with their loved ones, as well as staff, many of whom are experiencing high levels of fear, anxiety and confusion relating to COVID-19.
- HWN were commissioned by NCC to capture views from care home residents, their friends and families and the workforce.

Aims

1. To collect feedback and experiences during the pandemic
(Impact, Communication, Resilience and Recovery)
2. To identify what was working well.
3. To gather ideas and make recommendations on where care experiences could be improved.

What were the results?

- We heard from a total of 152 people about their experiences.
 - 94 residents
 - 29 staff
 - 35 relatives or friends.
- Received information about 41 different care homes in Norfolk (through friends and relatives survey).
- 13 responses from participating care homes.



Impact: how have changes impacted residents, their families and staff?

- Most residents noticed changes within their care home, but less than half said that these changes had affected their daily routine.
- Both staff and friends/family said that residents' mental health has been significantly affected, particularly due to restricted visits.
- Whilst using PPE was recognised by residents as a change, and by staff and friends/family as a positive due to enabling better infection control, many staff struggle wearing it all day and find it more challenging to communicate with residents.



Impact (Continued)

- Some staff feel that changes made as a result of COVID-19 have created a greater team bond.
- Some staff noted difficulty arranging care for residents from healthcare professionals such as psychiatrists, GPs, care coordinators and dentists because of delays caused by COVID-19.

“We have come together as a stronger team, with our service users at the centre of our care”

“To see a staff team gel together, work so admirably and go about their business whilst all clapped for the NHS and gave little recognition to the work they do was amazing to see.”

“As a team it has made us stronger and even closer. Helping out wherever necessary, in different roles”



“Felt much more of a team, great support from everyone”



Messaging: how well informed do people feel?

- Residents were kept informed of changes. Residents were most likely to have been told about changes via their care home rather than through friends or family, or other means, (*e.g. leaflet or letter*).
- Friends/family had very varied experiences of being kept informed by their loved one's care home, ranging from regular updates to feeling very out of the loop.
- Whilst staff generally feel well-informed about the changes in their place of work, sharing this information to residents in a user-friendly format is difficult especially for those with dementia.



Resilience and recovery: what has helped people to feel safe during the pandemic?

- The majority of residents said that the staff had helped to make them feel safe.
- Even though the normal programmes of entertainment have stopped, most staff stated that they are trying to help residents cope with the changes through organising their own internal activities.

“Instead of live music we have COVID Karaoke, where the manager travels to each residents room to sing them a song and gets them to join in. We have played Lockdown Bingo with our residents where they sit in the door ways of their bedrooms while the numbers are called out by the manager”



Resilience and Recovery (Continued)

- Friends/family shared mixed opinions about whether they have confidence in their loved one's care home in the event of a second wave

“It is a well run care home and my relative is as safe there with the professional care as they would be anywhere”

“Everything dealt with in a friendly practical way. Wonderful staff.”

“I worry about agency staff coming into the home. I would like to know how often all the staff are tested and would like for all agency staff to be tested before entering the home.”



Actions to consider

- i. NCC should continue to supply care home providers with links to relevant guidance and legislation as well as signpost to key information and new developments. Care providers should provide accessible information to residents, staff and family/friends.
- ii. Share best practice where possible, including this report, to promote quality in the care home sector.
- iii. NCC should continue to provide care home providers with links to updated advice/guidance about visits from family members or external contacts. Care providers should seek to improve how decisions about changes to visiting are communicated to family and friends, as many of those we surveyed expressed confusion regarding this issue.



Actions to consider (*Continued*)

- iv. Care providers should ensure that communication with family and friends is easy and efficient. NCC should, where feasible, consider supporting homes that have not adopted effective remote communication tools to invest in necessary technology and platforms.
- v. Work with local Primary Care providers and mental health trusts to explore how care homes can best support residents whose mental health has suffered as a result of COVID-19.
- vi. The local health and care system should continue working with care homes to ensure that the care of residents is the best it can be. In particular, HWN recommend undertaking work to identify the most urgent gaps in integrated care provision. Key practitioners involved in the wider healthcare of residents should be involved in conversations aimed at reducing delays and improving efficiency in multidisciplinary working. This includes psychiatrists, GPs, care coordinators, chiropodists and dentists.



Mini Donks



As part of this project we collaborated with the Miniature Donkeys and paid for 5 participating care homes to receive a visit from the Mini Donks when they could in the future.





**Any
questions?**