

Children's Services Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 12 March 2019
10am, Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich

Present:

Mr S Dark – Chairman

Mr D Collis

Mr E Connolly

Ms E Corlett

Mr H Humphrey

Mr K Kiddie

Mr M Kiddle-Morris

Mr E Maxfield

Mr J Mooney

Ms J Oliver – Vice-Chairman

Mr M Smith-Clare

Mrs S Squire

Mr V Thomson

Church Representatives:

Mr P Dunning

Chairman's Announcements

- The Chairman welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the Children's Services Committee.
- The Chairman reminded, as always that the Committee that they were there for the good of the children of Norfolk and that must be in the minds of all. It had been a privilege and an honour to serve on the Committee and do the best for the Children.
- The Committee were thanked by the Chairman for their hard work and contributions over the duration of the Committee's existence. Collectively they had achieved a lot during that time.
- The Chairman updated all present that the department had received a significant investment into SEND from the Department of Education of up to £17million. It was an ambitious bid that was submitted and was the largest successful bid to provide a new SEND school for 170 places.
- The department had also received a positive letter from Ofsted expressing that they were pleased with their progress and trajectory.

1. Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr Barry Stone, Mr Ron Hanton and Mr John Fisher who were substituted by Mr Mark Kiddle-Morris, Mr Keith Kiddie and Mr Ed Connolly respectively.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2018

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

Mr S Dark declared an 'other' interest as his sister was a Headteacher at Swaffham and he was a Governor at the West Norfolk Academy.

Mr E Maxfield declared an 'other' interest as he was an employee at a Charity in Norwich which provides services under contract to Norfolk County Council and was a Governor at two schools.

Mrs S Squire declared an 'other' interest as her sons had Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) administered by Norfolk County Council.

Mr K Kiddie declared an 'other' interest as he was a Governor at Diss High School.

Mr V Thomson declared an 'other' interest as his son has an EHCP administered by Norfolk County Council.

Ms J Oliver declared an 'other' interest as she mentors at North Walsham High School

4. Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 There was 1 public question submitted which is attached at Appendix A.
- 5.2 The following supplementary questions was asked;
How are those people reached who not directly engaged already. It is not always the ones who are already involved in Countylines that need reaching.
- 5.3 Officers explained that work was undertaken with District Councillors and other agencies to understand real life experiences and reach wider circles.

6. Local Member Issues/Member Questions

- 6.1 There were 8 Member questions submitted which are attached at appendix A.
- 6.2 The Chairman explained that a Member question had been receive after the deadline which asked for clarity around some issues in the new model of the Childhood and Family Service. Bearing in mind the time restriction to answer the question, the Chairman advised that it would be answered by Officers direct. The

Members concerned if it could be raised under the remit of the Scrutiny Panel in the new Governance Structure. The Executive Director of Children's Services confirmed that all topics for consideration in the new Governance arrangements were being considered by Democratic Services who would put them forward to the appropriate committee in the new system.

- 6.3 Ms Alexandra Kemp asked for clarification around the answer given to her substantive question.
- 6.4 With regards to the question asked by Ms Sandra Squire, Officers explained that the figures given in the answer to her question represented Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) instructions generating payments. The Committee were reassured that there had been no fresh payments instructed by the LGO relating to appeals for the Education Health and Care Plans.
- 6.5 Ms Emma Corlett asked if a mis-match of forecasted data presented to Ofsted for GCSE's results and the realised exam results should trigger a re-inspection. Officers explained that a one-time mis-match would not trigger a re-inspection but a regular pattern may do. One year's results only play part of a picture of the performance of a school and the Department of Education say that Ofsted are best place to judge a school and look far beyond exam results for that year's cohort. However, Officers assured the Committee that they shared the concerns expressed and would be monitoring.

7. Performance Monitoring Report 2018-19

- 7.1 The Committee received the annexed report (7) by the Executive Director, Children's Services which focused primarily on data as at end of January 2019 and in addition to vital signs performance, the report contained other key performance information via the (MI) Report.
- 7.2 The Committee asked about the levels of confidence and if they were going to improve. Officers explained that the target should be 100%. With the changes that had been made to the 'front door' model and workloads were reducing there was more time available for social workers to spend with the children. The monthly target was not cumulative, but the aspiration was for every child to have a plan in place.
- 7.3a Some Members expressed concern about the levels of care leavers not in education, employment or training and that the figures were steadily decreasing. In particular, Great Yarmouth was of concern and some Members wanted to know what was being done to address the situation in that area. Officers explained that although the figure was concerning, it was above the national neighbours. However, there was acknowledgement that those care leavers who were not in employment, training or education needed to be known. More work was being carried out on this with heat maps being developed in conjunction with the Police and the District Councils.
- 7.3b There was concern regarding these carer leavers that they were in secure, supported accommodation and Officers agreed to provide some details on a new

initiative that was being launched. The Executive Director confirmed that every care leaver had support and needs were being met.

- 7.4 The Committee heard that the timescales in which social worker assessments were completed had improved significantly. There were still some localities which were working through their backlog but it had been reduced by two-thirds.
- 7.5 The Committee REVIEWED and COMMENTED on the performance data, information, analysis presented in the vital sign report cards and **AGREED** that the recommended actions identified were appropriate.

8. Budget Monitoring Period 10 (January)

- 8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (8) by the Executive Director, Children's Services which set out the Period 10 (January) financial forecast for Children's Services, and the programme of transformation and improvement that was continuing. The report specifically set out the financial resources to deliver the safer Children and Resilient Families Strategy of Norfolk Futures and the forecast revenue expenditure for 2018-19.
- 8.2 The Executive Director, Children's Services explained that the department had been successful in having an application to transfer 0.5% of funds to the High Needs Block by the Secretary of State approved. Only a small number of applications had been successful, and Norfolk's application was the biggest that was approved. This was thanks to the support of the School's Forum and a number of education professionals who personally wrote to support the application.
- 8.3 Some Members of the Committee were concerned that the overspends were ongoing too long. Officers explained that the transformation programme was a 3-5 year programme. The impact could happen earlier but by summer 2019 there would be a noticeable impact on the finances.
- 8.4 Some Members asked for the percentage variance of the underspend or overspend alongside the actual figures.
- 8.5 The Committee **NOTED**;
- (i) the forecast overspend of £12.786m for General Fund Children's Services
 - (ii) the forecast use of Children's Services General Fund reserves and provisions
 - (iii) the forecast overspend of £5.977m for the Dedicated Schools Grant Children's Services, which:
 - a. Is after utilisation of the additional High Needs Block allocation of £1.803m announced in December for 2018-19
 - b. will need to be carried forward as a deficit, alongside previous years' deficits brought forward of £8.087m, to be recovered in future years
 - (iv) the amendments to and reprogramming of the Children's Services Capital Programme

9. Risk Management

- 9.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9) by the Executive Director, Children's Services which provided the Committee with the Children's departmental risk register, as at March 2019, following the latest review conducted in February 2019.
- 9.2 Some Members of the Committee expressed concern at the amber risk of RM014a - The increasing demand for SEND assessments coupled with the amount spent on home to school transport at significant variance to predicted best estimates. The Executive Director agreed that this would be reviewed as the SEND budget is a concerning budget.
- 9.3 Some Members were concerned that the Looked After Children overspend progress update did not include the early intervention work that was being carried out. Officers would review this risk.
- 9.4 The Committee **AGREED**;
- a) The corporate and departmental risks reported on the Children's Services departmental risk register, in the risk register report (Appendix A);
 - b) that the recommended mitigating actions identified in Appendix A for the risks presented are appropriate (as per Appendix B);
 - c) The background information on risk management (Appendix C).

10. Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) 3 Month Review

- 10.1 The Committee received the annexed report (10) by the Executive Director, Children's Services which set out for the Committee details of the new way of working at the front door unto Children's Services and how that would help achieve key outcomes for the service and meet the Council's priorities.
- 10.2 The Committee heard that schools were pleased to see the changes and the positive results. There were termly meetings with Headteacher's and educational professionals that feedback was gathered from.
- 10.3 Continuous reviews were happening across teams to ensure that correct resources were allocated to meet the demand. Investment was being added in the Quality Assurance team to be satisfied that the work undertaken by the family teams were at the right level and with the correct intervention.
- 10.4 The Committee;
NOTED the review of the new approach to managing contacts and referrals into the Council's Children's Services.

11. Children's Services Transformation Programme

- 11.1 The Committee received the annexed report (11) by the Executive Director, Children's Services, which together with the presentation at appendix B, provided an overview and update on the progress, impact to date and the latest proposals and plans.
- 11.2 There were some concerns expressed by some Members around the voice of the child and the young person. It was felt that they should be included as much as possible to feel that that the programme had been coproduced.
- 11.3 Although it was pleasing to see the recruitment of foster carers as expressed in the report, it was also felt by some that the foster carers panel was not fully represented in terms of diversity and skills and encouraged Officers to amend this.
- 11.4 The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and associated presentation.

12. Meeting Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Performance Update

- 12.1 The Committee received the annexed report (12) which explained the Local Authority duty to carry out the assessment of Education Health and Care Plans within the statutory 20-week deadline and the ongoing plans to improve performance within this timescale.
- 12.2 Members expressed their pleasure in the plans but also felt that coproduction was important and there needed to be engagement with all partners of the plans and work with them, including parents. The plans needed to be good and on time. Although Officers acknowledged this and there was plans to change the stakeholder engagement, the Authority held a statutory duty and could not always do what others would want them to do.
- 12.3 The Committee acknowledged the challenge and urged Officers to get to the target as soon as possible.
- 12.4 The Executive Director confirmed that the staff were completely aware of the challenge, and they care but were feeling overwhelmed and frustrated that they were not able to perform in a way that their values would want them to perform in.
- 12.5 The Committee **RESOLVED**;
1. To understand the duties placed on the Local Authority in relation to pupils with SEND requiring Education Health & Care Plan Assessment (EHCP)
 2. To support current and ongoing plans to improvement EHCP performance within the context of the overall SEND Transformation Programme and draft Area SEND Strategy

13. School and Childcare Sufficiency in Norfolk

- 13.1 The Committee receive the annexed report (13) which set out the proposed strategic response to the growth in pupil numbers across Norfolk. This year's annual report was combined with the statutory report to Members on the published Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

- 13.2 The authority had seen a stability of childcare model compared to what it had been in the past. There was a good relationship held with providers who were invited to submit tender if opportunities arose or helping to ensure sustainability. There was a slight increase in schools taking over nurseries if they had the capacity.
- 13.3 Some Members of the Committee were concerned about the viability of the providers with the increased pension costs and increase of minimum wages. There was sustainability funding available for those providers who found they needed it.
- 13.4 The Committee **RESOLVED** to;
- Adopt the Schools' Local Growth and Investment Plan and the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

The meeting closed at 2.15pm.

Chairman



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CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

12 March 2019

5. Public Question Time**Question from Ms Cate Oliver: (Attending and may ask a supplementary)**

As a mum of four children I am gravely concerned about the growing police presence in my community in response to "county lines" related drug activity and the vulnerability to exploitation of young people in my area. I've heard that the Home Office have given Norfolk some funding for youth work because of this. How much will be allocated to the Suffolk Square area, and when can we expect to see youth workers starting work here"?

Reply by the Chairman:

As part of a suite of projects to strengthen our multi agency response to child criminal exploitation, a detached youth work team of 4 qualified youth workers are being recruited to run a pilot project and link to the existing child criminal exploitation (CCE) team.

The pilot will focus on prevention activity and help to identify the extent to which relationship-based work in locations where young people choose to be has a positive impact in reducing risk of criminal exploitation. The detached workers will be able to respond according to the identified needs of individuals and groups. This would include referral and support to access wider services, including the CCE team.

As part of the project we will be delivering detached youth work training for existing youth organisations in Norfolk in order to develop the workforce.

The team will be deployed across Norwich based on local intelligence of anti-social behaviour, criminal activity and high victim rates within a locality. They will build relationships with groups of young people, explore the risk factors impacting on the group, which might be a lack of positive activities, absence of trusted relationships with adults or professionals, emerging criminal behaviours or CCE related activity.

Recruitment for the team will take place in the week beginning 11/3/2019 and we expect to be able to deploy workers from mid April.

6. Local Member Issues / Member Questions**Questions from Mick Castle, Yarmouth North & Central**

UNDERPERFORMANCE OF BOYS IN OUR SCHOOLS

1. National data shows that boys' performance in British schools is several percentage points worse than that of girls - 60% of boys reaching Stage 2 SATs compared to 68% of girls, 17.1% of boys attaining an A or grade 7 and above at GCSE compared to 23.4% of girls, and 65,000 more women than men attending British Universities. Please can the Chairman tell me if the stats in Norfolk are in line with - or worse - than the national picture? and whether or not the figures for boys in Yarmouth are likewise worse than the County average?

Reply by the Chairman:

There is a gap between boys and girls at every key stage nationally. Our gaps in Norfolk are the same as the national gaps, and not any worse. In Great Yarmouth, attainment for both boys and girls continues to be lower than the national and county average.

2. Does the Chairman agree with me that boys continuing underperformance is blighting the life chances for boys and deserves priority treatment in terms of school curriculum, organisation and strategies specific to boys optimum learning.

Reply by the Chairman

The NCC Achievement and Early Years Service carries out a risk assessment of all Norfolk Schools. This identified under performance of any key group of children. The risk assessment provides challenge to schools and is shared with every school leader, CEO's and Governors. The underperformance of boys in some Norfolk Schools is a key priority for improvement. We work with schools to look at best practice across the county and nationally and encourage schools to engage in successful school improvement approaches. We recognise that positive outcomes for 16-year olds are crucial and we are pleased to see Norfolk Children making slightly better progress than children nationally in the most recent examination results

Question from Cllr Chris Jones:

At the consultation many concerned parents were promised that they would not have to travel any further than they do already for access to Children's Centre services; and the possibility of an on-demand transport service was discussed. Does this transport service form part of the services that the new Children's Centre provider will be expected to supply, or will the Council be providing it?

Reply by the Chairman:

The new Early Childhood and Family Service will be delivered on an outreach basis, with the emphasis on taking services out to families, rather than expecting families to have to travel to access support only within a designated building. We are currently mid process in procuring the new service provider and should be able to announce who this is in April. We will work with this new provider to develop their detailed plans for service delivery in each district area and this will include making full use of a range of venues close to where families live, as well as providing support in families' homes. We will expect the new provider to work closely with a range of partner agencies and groups to explore joint delivery and this may include use of mobile vehicles where these are operated by partners. In identifying suitable community locations to deliver support, the new provider will be expected to take into account the needs of families, alongside the accessibility and suitability of spaces, based on existing public and community transport provision. With the emphasis on ensuring as much of the available funding is used to deliver front line support to families, we are not expecting the new service provider to operate a transport scheme.

Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp: (Attending and wants to ask a supplementary)

Speech and Language Therapy Service in West Norfolk

I drew the attention of full Council and Children's Services a year ago, to the lack of resourcing of the Speech and Language Therapy Service in West Norfolk. Severely disabled children were being put at risk of developmental delay, because of long waiting lists, with parents wrongly being told they would have to pay.

The lack of staffing particularly affected West Norfolk; the service was run from Great Yarmouth. How is the service being improved?

Reply by the Chairman:

On 28th February 2019 the County Council, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and East Coast Community Healthcare presented a joint plan to Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel to

improve the current Speech and Language Therapy service in Norfolk alongside broader developments to improve the overall system of support to children young people and families around speech language and communication needs.

This includes key updates relating to:

- *Plans for prioritising a jointly funded £510k recurrent investment into the service*
- *Development of an SLCN Stakeholder Forum to bring together the collective system and responsibilities for speech language and communication support.*

A link to the report is available here:

<https://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=Likh%2bKqNcKO%2fVncG7NhnII7j%2bx9RadlnV0vEDgl%2fWaBqVo05UIkUDQ%3d%3d&rUzwRPf%2bZ3zd4E7Ikn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNih225F5QMaQWctPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzqA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9IXnlq%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5oIA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3d>

Question from Cllr Sandra Squire: (On Committee)

Following the recent press coverage regarding the Local Government Ombudsmen decisions against this council. How much has been paid to parents in compensation for issues with Special Educational Needs, regarding EHCP's, tribunals and placements, over the last three years, to date, including LGO awarded compensation and any other compensation paid including for reimbursed cost of reports originally paid for by parents and any outstanding compensation payments, not yet paid.

Reply by the Chairman:

We recognise that Education Health and Care Plans have not always been carried out within the government's 20 week timescale. As part of our SEND transformation programme, underpinned by significant council investment, we are looking to address this. A more detailed report on SEND and EHCPs is on the agenda for this committee. Compensation directly linked to LGO investigations are detailed below. Tribunals do not generate compensation payments. Activity costs in relation to tribunal costs have been previously supplied to Cllr Squire. In 2017 we paid £10,150 in compensation payments, in 2019, £16,927 and so far in this calendar year we have paid £0.

Question 1 from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare (On Committee)

Following the decision to turn Great Yarmouth's Alderman Swindell Primary School into a centre providing support for children with Special Educational Needs - and with the high number of local exclusions, will the site now become a short stay school/PRU?

Reply by the Chairman:

The development of this site is part of NCC's £120m investment in more SEND school places. It is not our plan to use the site for a Short Stay School / Pupil Referral Unit. However the plans to develop a new Social Emotional and Mental Health Special School in North Yarmouth, using the old Alderman Swindell Schools site are well under way. Architects have been developing design options for the new school for children who cannot be educated in a mainstream school. Norfolk County Council will share plans with residents before a planning application is submitted. There will be time between an exhibition event and the application to reflect comments from residents and other stakeholders. This event will take place during the next few months leading to an application during the summer of this year. The intention is to work towards an opening date in 2020.

Supplementary question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare (On Committee)

How many care leavers living in Great Yarmouth are currently not in employment, education or training?

Reply by the Chairman:

Out of 76 care leavers in Great Yarmouth, 16 are currently not in education, employment or training.

Question 1 submitted by Cllr Mike Sands:

With the closure of the Footsteps Nursery can the Chair of Children's Services Committee tell me where children in Bowthorpe are going to be able to access 2 year old and 3 year old funded places?

Reply by the Chairman:

Following the announcement of the closure of Footsteps we have been working closely with the current provider to support parents to find alternative provision. We have agreed for additional places to be provided at a local school which will accommodate all children on their waiting list. Other providers have been able to offer places to those families affected. We are also working with 2 local pre-schools regarding increasing numbers in the near future so there are sufficient places in the area.

Supplementary question from Cllr Mike Sands:

Can the Chair also tell me how many Norfolk nurseries have closed in the past 12 months and how many are at risk of closure due to the inadequate government funding for 30 hours provision?

Reply by the Chairman:

For the period 1st March 18 to 21st Feb 19, 19 settings have closed. The reasons for closures are varied but the majority of the closures over the past year have been due to low numbers of children or governance issues. Our take up of funded places is high (94.4% last term) which shows that most parents can and do take up provision. We are aware of the growing financial issues that face early years providers and we provide both financial and non-financial support when necessary, with a focus on business planning to encourage providers to offer provision that meets parent's needs, whether that be for 15 hours or 30.

Question from Cllr Emma Corlett: (On Committee)

Does the Chair share my grave concerns about the performance of the Hewett School, serving my division, in the final revised GCSE data set published by the Department for Education in January 2019. The progress score of -0.53 places the school below the floor standard defined by the Department for Education. The Hewett Academy is one of just two mainstream secondary schools in Norfolk to fall below this standard. Has the Regional Schools commissioner shared concerns with you, or have NCC shared concerns with her and is the RSC obliged to share information with the Local Authority about academies of concern?"

Reply by the Chairman:

We continue to engage positively with all academy trusts operating in Norfolk, including through an annual conversation where we discuss with the trust leaders the performance of their Norfolk academies. We will in this meeting discuss the outcomes at the Hewett Academy in 2018, which followed a promising data set in 2017. We will be very interested to see how they are using the trust's resources and the DfE NLE support to bring about a rapid and sustained improvement in standards for all pupils.

In May 2018, Damian Hinds, Secretary of State for Education set out a new vision to clarify who schools are accountable to, and to ensure that in the future school leaders were clear that Ofsted judged the quality of schools, not the Regional School's Commissioner (RSC). In line with this, the DfE have radically changed their approach to working with schools and academies who are below Floor or meeting the Coasting standards. The current Schools Causing Concern guidance removes the power for RSCs to issue warning notices or issue academy orders based on

standards of performance. The DfE are now only using the Floor and Coasting Schools standards as triggers for an offer of support from a National Leader of Education (NLE).

As an academy judged Good by Ofsted in March 2018 but where 2018 results are below Floor standards, The Hewett Academy has been identified by the DfE as a school that will be offered support of an NLE but is not eligible for intervention. The DfE is currently consulting to go further and remove the floor and coasting data standards.

Questions from Cllr Terry Jermy

Tree Tops Nursery and Kingfisher Nursery are two Thetford nurseries rated as outstanding and good; delivering invaluable provision to the Thetford community. To learn that these nurseries are closing is incredibly sad and worrying news, can the Chair of Children's Services Committee explain where my constituents are going to access two year old and three year old funded places now?

Reply by the Chairman:

Tree Tops Nursery and Kingfisher Nursery are privately owned nurseries, not run by the Local authority.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to undertake regular assessments of the sufficiency of early years places across the county. The most recent report for Thetford (January 2019) shows that we have an over-supply of places, currently 721 places for 425 children. Whilst data is only part of the picture, we are aware that a number of providers across Thetford have vacancies and are able to accommodate any families who wish to take up a place. We are also aware of a number of providers who are interested in setting up additional provision in the area following the announcement of the closures. We will be working with them over the coming months to ensure that any provision that is set up is going to be a viable concern, given the numbers of children in the area.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Terry Jermy:

Can you also guarantee that Thetford's families will receive the same high standard of provision that these nurseries provided?

Reply by the Chairman

Currently 91.4% of private and voluntary providers and 98% of childminders in the area are graded good or outstanding.