



People and Communities Select Committee **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 13 November 2020 at 10am** **on Microsoft Teams (virtual meeting)**

Present:

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

Cllr David Bills	Cllr Thomas Smith
Cllr Ed Connolly	Cllr Mike Smith-Clare
Cllr Ed Maxfield	Cllr Fran Whymark
Cllr Brenda Jones	Cllr S Young

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr David Harrison for Cllr Tim Adams
Cllr Colleen Walker for Cllr Chrissie Rumsby

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
Caroline Horton	Head of Social Work, Children with Disabilities, Children's Services
Rebecca Hulme	Associate Director - Children, Young People and Maternity, Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
James Wilson	Director of Quality and Transformation, Children's Services, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Jonathan Wilson	Psychiatrist and Clinical Lead for Children's Mental Health

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Tim Adams (Cllr David Harrison substituting), Cllr Penny Carpenter and Cllr Chrissie Rumsby (Cllr Colleen Walker substituting).

2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters arising from minutes:

- Item 8.2, bullet point 1; Cllr Maxfield raised that the officer had not answered the question about family carers at home and asked that this point be clarified. The Chair **agreed** that a written response would be sent to Cllr Maxfield.
- Bullet point 1; it was noted that the outcome of the work on resilience in the care market had been requested by the Committee and asked when this would be received; the Chair confirmed this work was underway.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 The following interests were declared:
- Cllr Thomas Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest as he had grandparents in receipt of care packages from Norfolk County Council.
 - Cllr Sheila Young declared a non-pecuniary interest as a carer and as her husband was in receipt of a care package from Norfolk County Council.
 - Cllr Fran Whyman declared a non-pecuniary interest as a foster carer.

4. Items received as urgent business

- 4.1 The Vice-Chair spoke to the Committee about the avian flu protection zone declared for the UK. He noted that as well as impacting on poultry businesses this would also have an impact on people who kept chickens and ducks as a hobby or as pets and noted the importance of practicing good biosecurity with all birds.

5. Public Questions

- 5.1 One public question was received, and the answer circulated to the Committee and published online ([appendix A](#)).

6. Member Questions and Issues

- 6.1 None received

7. Children's Services Transformation

- 7.1.1 The Committee received the report providing an update regarding the Children's Services Transformation programme and to allow Committee to be sighted on the breadth and depth of this work, see the impact to date and steer the future direction over the longer term.
- 7.1.2 The Committee heard a presentation by the Director of Quality and Transformation ([see appendix B](#)):
- It was policy to reduce residential care placements where possible, but residential care was more appropriate for some children and families.
 - Through use of outreach, workers would try to keep children at home and in their communities where possible. Edge of care support helped keep families together in a moment of crisis.
 - Investment in transformation was showing better outcomes for children and financial benefits for Children's Services; a balanced budget was expected this year, 2019-2020.
 - Work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was an area where the Council were now nationally leading.
 - The number of children entering care had fallen monthly since 2019 with 200 fewer children now in care, showing that it had been possible to keep more families together without a change in threshold.
 - The impact of reduced use of residential care had shown an initial impact which had not been able to be sustained. It was hoped that new schemes being brought in would reduce this further.

7.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- It was queried whether predicted demand on core services for the coming years could be met. The Director of Quality and Transformation replied that most metrics for Childrens Services were heading in a more positive direction than in previous years and he did not think demand would overwhelm the system. Social workers were holding fewer cases than 2 years ago, but cases were more complex, so work was being done to free up practitioners to work with families.
- The percentage of looked after children not in education employment or training was queried and how these young people were being supported. The Director of Quality and Transformation reported that there had been a deep dive into this data at the Childrens Services Scrutiny sub-committee and **agreed** to circulate the information to Members after the meeting.
- Cllr John Fisher explained that a sub-group of the Corporate Parenting board were putting into place a model of priority for looked after children and care leavers for training placements and guaranteed invites to interview. This would also be extended to District Councils and businesses in Norfolk.
- Cllr John Fisher confirmed that all looked after children in Norfolk had the necessary ICT equipment they needed to continue with their education.
- Parents and Carers were involved in the design of projects and had co-produced the design of the capital programme. Families felt there was more of a partnership approach in place.
- Officers felt the relationship with family courts had improved. An increase in tribunals had been seen due to the reduced number of educational needs placements, but as new special school placements opened in 2021, these should reduce.
- Officers clarified that although it was policy to try to keep families together where possible, there was no change in threshold for care and for some families it was best for children to be in care.
- A report on provision for asylum seeking and refugee children was **requested** for a future meeting.
- Officers were asked how in-house care provision and foster carers were being increased. Officers hoped residential placements would reduce over time and therefore, in the short-term, reliance on the independent sector would be reduced. Small, dedicated in-house units were being built which would open in 2021 for children with the most acute needs. The Council was recruiting foster carers, in part to replace those who were retiring, and re-commissioning the independent fostering contract to challenge the market.
- Information was **requested** on the achievement rates of young people in care once they reach 16 so that starting points and attainment could be compared.
- The decision taken to close Holt Hall was raised noting the positive benefits of outdoor learning for mental health and wellbeing, and it was queried what research had been undertaken to demonstrate the impact of this on mental health and wellbeing. The Director of Quality and Transformation agreed to provide Cllr Walker with a written response.
- The length of time for an autism diagnosis was noted as a concern and queried whether this was due to the diagnostic process, or whether it was due to money or staffing issues. The Director of Quality and Transformation **agreed** to provide Cllr Jones with a Walker with a response.

7.3 The Committee heard the rest of the presentation ([appendix B](#)) from Caroline Horton discussing phase 1, Springwood and Outreach Service and the phase 2 areas being developed.

- 7.4 The following points were discussed and noted:
- Springwood would be based in Sprowston on the site of another residential site and social work teams.
 - It was confirmed that Covid-19 had impacted on short breaks as the number of children in residential units had to be reduced. Community short breaks had reduced their numbers to meet social distancing requirements. Because of these restrictions, children with the greatest needs had been prioritised. Social workers had continued their visits to families where appropriate and safe, prioritising children's safeguarding. During the second lockdown, face to face visits were continuing for children of most need and where requested by the family, including across primary care and health teams were in contact with families to provide support, such as PPE or extra carers hours.
 - The Programme Director of Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision confirmed that officers worked closely with parent and carer groups and noted that it was an Ofsted requirement to improve communication further.
 - The Head of Social Work, Children with Disabilities, did not know how many staff would be employed to work at Springwood but **agreed** to find out and circulate to the Committee.

- 7.5 The Committee:
- a) **COMMENTED**, in particular on the specific new ways of working and changes of approach highlighted including:
 1. A shift in policy from the provision of long-term residential care to using residential provision as a time-limited intervention which aims to support all children and young people to move into family-based or independent care
 2. Where residential care is used, an increased use of smaller in-house residential provision to support one or two young people with a high level of complex needs
 3. Further extending our policy to help children remain at home, through access to community-based provision and trialling use of specialist outreach teams
 - b) **NOTED** the contents of the report and provide any other comments, to those reference above, to steer the direction of the work.

- 7.6 The Committee took break from 11:50 until 11:55

8. Children & Young People's Mental Health Transformation – update

- 8.1.1 The Committee received the report providing an update on progress made in the transformation of children and young people's mental health services in Norfolk and Waveney.
- 8.1.2 The Committee saw a presentation by The Associate Director - Children, Young People and Maternity, Norfolk and Waveney CCG ([see appendix C](#)):
- Partners were working to align services across the system to all work with children aged 0-25. There were an estimated 34,000 children under 16 and 16,000 over 16 requiring support.
 - There were many factors which could impact on mental health, which would not all be supported by mental health services, for example youth services, peers and school could all provide support.
 - System wide shared outcomes were in place, including more straight forward access to services and referring young people to the right service first time.
 - Mental health support teams were being introduced who could work with up to

8000 children across 20 schools. Children's wellbeing practitioners were in place, and youth workers were available to give advice to young people around housing and other issues which could impact on their wellbeing

- The Kooth service was available to all young people online and helped inform where resource was required.

8.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The measures to be taken to improve poverty and stress in families were queried. the Director of Quality and Transformation agreed that poverty impacted on mental health; work was being carried out to look at deprivation with an aim to look at broader outcome measures. Through reviewing 700 young people, the most common complexity factors driving and impacting on problems they were facing were experience of abuse or neglect, parental health issues or financial issues. A joined-up approach was therefore important to tackle social issues alongside mental health support.
- The model included voluntary sector providers and officers were looking at how they could be included more in providing support across the system. Young people preferred to receive support from family or peers and capacity for more people to have mental health first aid was being developed.
- It was known that around 75% of mental health problems in adulthood were established by age 25 therefore extending the service to age 25 was important.

8.3 The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and provided comments to steer the direction of the work.

9. Special Educational Needs (SEND): Performance Framework

9.1.1 The Committee received the report which was the first regular update to the People and Communities Select Committee, as outlined by the recommendations of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Ofsted/CQC had confirmed our Written Statement of Action as being 'fit for purpose' and, therefore, the performance updates reflected this formal position.

9.1.2 The Programme Director of Special Educational Needs & Alternative Provision introduced the report to the Committee:

- The report looked at performance data as required by the local government ombudsman for the department to bring certain data to the Committee for the next 2 years.
- Officers would also start the process of bringing information on Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs) as prescribed by Ofsted.

9.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Members **asked** that data on the backlog of EHCPs be included in future reports, capacity to process them and what was being done to clear the backlog. Officers **agreed** to provide this in future reports.
- It was confirmed that the family involved in the ombudsman report case had been apologised to.
- EHCP coordinators had been increased from 21 to 37 full time equivalent permanent staff and reviewing officers had increased. The backlog on initial assessments and yearly reviews were being worked through.
- Members **asked** for data on looked after children with EHCPs and children missing education to be included in future reports. It was noted that this data

could include the time lag of children moving between schools, but a more detailed breakdown would be included in future reports.

- There was a priority for looked after children who had been excluded from day one through the Norfolk short stay school and from day six for all other children, and there had been a team providing home tutoring during the pandemic,

9.3 The Committee:

1. **NOTED** the initial content of the new SEND performance framework and **AGREED** 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.

10. Carers Charter Progress Report

10.1 The Committee received the report setting out the important work completed across 2020 towards the Council's commitments in the Carers Charter.

10.2 The Committee:

- a) **ENDORSED** the 2020 Carers Charter progress report
- b) **REVIEWED** the working group's focus areas for 2021

11. Forward plan

11.1 The SEND report would be added to the forward plan for each meeting.

11.2 The Committee considered and **agreed** the forward plan.

The Meeting Closed at 12:51

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



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