



**People and Communities Select Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 January 2022 at 10am
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich**

Present:

Cllr Fabian Eagle (Chair)
Cllr Fran Whymark (Vice Chair)

Cllr Tim Adams	Cllr Paul Neale
Cllr Claire Bowes	Cllr Mike Smith-Clare
Cllr Michael Dalby	Cllr Alison Thomas
Cllr Brenda Jones	Cllr Eric Vardy
Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris	

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Phillip Duigan for Cllr Julian Kirk
Cllr Tony White for Cllr Ed Connolly

Also Present

Michael Bateman (via video link)	Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness
Craig Chalmers	Director of Community Social Work, Adult Social Services
Gavin Cooke	Strategic HR Business Partner - Children's Services
Suzanne Meredith	Deputy Director of Public Health (Healthcare Services)
Paul Wardle	Strategic HR Business Partner, Strategy and Transformation
Phil Watson	Director of Children's Social Care

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Ed Connolly (Cllr Phillip Duigan substituting) and, Cllr Julian Kirk (Cllr Tony White substituting).

2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr Alison Thomas declared a non-pecuniary interest as her daughter was a newly qualified social worker, not working in Norfolk

4. Items received as urgent business

- 4.1 No urgent business was discussed.

5. Public Questions

- 5.1 No public questions were received.

6. Member Questions and Issues

- 6.1 No Member questions were received.

7. Special Educational Needs (SEND): Performance Framework

- 7.1.1 The Committee received the sixth report in a series of reports scheduled for each Committee meeting over a 2-year period, following on from recommendations by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in their 2020 published investigation report. The report contained the outturn figures for Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) performance, the latest EHCP data for both initial assessments and annual reviews, and regular reporting of a range of performance data in line with the LGSCO recommendations.

- 7.1.2 The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness introduced the report to Committee:

- This report was 60% of the way through the 2-year reporting period, which would end in November 2022.
- Progress was being seen across the indicators. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, confirmed that a pattern was observed at the start of each academic year where some figures appeared higher but reduced through the spring term when staff caught up on reporting and arranging provision.
- The final outturn of EHCPs in Norfolk for 2021 was 54%, as shown in the table on page 21 of the report. Figures would be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in January 2022. In May 2022 all local area EHCP data would be published, which would provide the national average for 2021. The current (2020) national average was 58% and indications showed that the 2021 average would be at or slightly lower than this. The Council's outturn of 54% therefore indicated success.
- 46% of cases took longer than 20 weeks for assessment, however improvement in this area had been significant and the department were confident that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) would recognise this.
- In 2022 the publication of the national SEND review and the revisit to Norfolk County Council of Ofsted and CQC were expected.

- 7.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Cllr Claire Bowes asked how many children in the County had come off of the school roll due to Covid lockdowns. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, **agreed** to provide Cllr Bowes with a written answer as this data came under a different director's remit.
- The Chair asked whether any children with SEND had come off the school roll; This had been reported as an issue nationally but the Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, confirmed it had not been recognised as an issue in Norfolk. It was important to note that children "missing education" included those who were moving, and therefore "off roll", in the period between moving from one school and registering at a new school.
- A Member of the Committee queried the final bullet point on page 19 and

queried whether the wording implied there were other factors which might be affecting this data. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness confirmed the figures were attributed to the dynamic described in the report and he would sharpen up language in future reports to indicate where arranging education was outside of the remit of the Council.

- A Committee member asked when the 2021 average of EHCP performance would be available. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, confirmed that Local Authorities would submit their statistical analyses to the DfE in January 2022 which would provide the national average for 2021 which would be published in May 2022.
- The written statement of action set out two critical performance indicators: trying to achieve 60% EHCP performance within 20 weeks by the end of 2021; and a stretch target of 90% EHCP performance within 20 weeks by 2022. The Council was therefore aiming to achieve these performance indicators rather than the national average.
- The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness **agreed** to ensure that language was clearer in future reports and reassured members that communication was ongoing with parents, carers and professionals through parent voice, SEND networks and other organisations, to talk about changes that were being made.
- Officers were asked whether delays to the SEND national review had impacted on service delivery. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, confirmed that officers had worked hard to ensure that there hadn't been an impact for example by moving forward with investment in building special schools and resource bases.
- The data for "average time for arranging alternative provision for children out of education" was not affected by the summer break in the same way as other data sets. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness **agreed** to look at this part of the report to see if further clarity could be provided around this for future reports.
- It was noted that assessments had increased and queried whether capacity for completing these was related to retention or recruitment of staff or funding. It was confirmed that capacity was related to the fact that the staffing team had been modelled on historic stable referral rates of 65 assessments per month, however since this time, assessments had doubled. Additional capacity was required within educational psychology both in Norfolk and nationally. The "grow your own" scheme at the UEA was important to develop staff in this area. It would also be important to ensure that SEND support at schools, colleges and other provision was effective so that referrals for EHCPs would reduce.
- the Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, confirmed that if staff capacity remained the same and referrals increased that achieving the 90% stretch target would be difficult. The number of assessments being completed within 20 weeks was starting to plateau; issues discussed during the meeting needed to be tackled to increase this further. The department had been working with Mastodon C to provide insight into the data and data from the final report would be fed through to the Select Committee once available.
- It was queried whether the increase in emotional and social difficulties seen in children was related to the pandemic and whether, following lifting of restrictions, a reduction in demand would be seen. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Early Effectiveness, confirmed that expansion of special educational provision in Norfolk had been focussed on autistic spectrum disorder and social and emotional needs. Working with

health colleagues on the redesign of child and adolescent mental health services would also be important moving forward.

The Select Committee

1. **NOTED** the ongoing content of the SEND performance framework and agree ongoing reporting at all subsequent meetings through to Summer 2022; 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 Adults and Children's Services – Key Workforce Challenges

- 8.1.1 The Committee received the report summarising the national and local context of recruitment and retention of social workers and setting out current recruitment and retention programmes of work.
- 8.1.2 The Chairman noted the importance of the job that Social Workers carry out.
- 8.1.3 The Director of Community Social Work, Adult Social Services, and the Director of Children's Social Care gave a presentation to the Committee; see supplementary agenda, page A3:
 - The role of a social worker was informed by several areas of legislation; the Director of Community Social Work, Adult Social Services, outlined the role of the social worker as set out on slide 2 and 3 of the presentation
 - Public perception of the role could often be negative with less focus on the positive aspects of the role. The profession had become less popular, with a reduction in people training and applying for roles. Increasing numbers of social workers were considering leaving the profession.
 - A high number of staff had stated that the complexity of cases had increased over the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Feedback from a recent careers fair indicated there was an interest in Norfolk as an area for people looking at relocating however the geography of the county was a barrier for people looking to expand their careers and increasing house prices was also a concern.
 - Officers thanked Human Resources who had ensured that recruitment continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic
 - 2021 saw a fluctuation in staff joining and leaving social work in Norfolk County Council. Turnover increased in children's social work however remained within normal margins for all socials workers, but remain more problematic for FAST safeguarding social workers.
 - Recruitment and retention activities had been undertaken to reduce the reliance on agency staff and this has reduced by 2/3 over time but had now plateaued
 - Both adults and children's social work departments had expanded their social work apprenticeship schemes
 - Refer a friend payments and conversion payments, as well as retention and commitment payments at key points, were now in place for children's FAST social workers.
 - Reasons for social workers leaving the Council were collated through exit interviews and fed into recruitment and retention projects and initiatives
 - The new children's social care deal allowed social workers to work flexibly and reduced bureaucracy to free up time to work with families to make the job more

rewarding and manageable.

- Actions that Members could take to support social work teams were set out in the presentation

8.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Officers were asked what could be done to encourage more social workers to work in Norfolk. The Director of Children's Social Care replied that the shift to relation-based practice had encouraged some agency staff to join the Council; there had been a drive to reduce reliance on agency staff by also introducing an agency worker conversion payment. There had been high interest in the social work apprenticeships, as well as a healthy pipeline of newly qualified social workers, providing other routes for people to enter social work in Norfolk.
- The apprenticeship scheme had been in place for 3 years and there were 30 places in both adults and children's social work. This year, recruitment to the apprenticeship scheme was external and a high level of interest was seen. The supervision required to support apprentices to be successful was high, so it was important to consider this when looking into whether the scheme could be expanded further. Some balance also had to be considered between experience and inexperience in frontline statutory teams.
- Provision of specialist mental health support and supervision for social workers was advocated as important to managing the job. The Director of Children's Social Care agreed and confirmed that in addition to the value of group supervision now practiced in all teams, clinical supervision was being trialled for FAST social workers and teams.
- The national caseload for children's services social workers was 16 and officers clarified this was 16 children, not families. Overall caseloads in the service were similar, but higher in the FAST teams due to continued turnover of staff and remaining reliance on interims exacerbated by the prolonged pandemic period and impact on working and labour market conditions. Caseload numbers were only a guide and needed to be taken on a staff by staff and case by case basis, and supported through discussion in supervision
- A Committee Member asked whether social workers would be expected to be involved in the work with Newton Europe, and if so, if this would be on top of their normal workload. The Director of Community Social Work, Adult Social Services, **agreed** to find out and provide a written response.
- It was noted that 18% of social workers were male which was a reduction from previous years. Officers reported that this was partly due to negative media attention of the role which showed the importance of challenging the narrative.
- A Committee Member asked whether social work as a career was encouraged in schools. The Director of Community Social Work, Adult Social Services, replied that such visits were made to colleges and universities.
- It was noted that the negative perception of social work would need to be tackled at a local and national level by politicians, industry leaders and representative bodies showing how it could be a rewarding profession.
- Noting the lack of peer support of working from home, the challenging nature and emotional impact of the work, officers confirmed that once restrictions were lifted, social workers were encouraged to come back into the office, following covid guidelines, as often as they could. Social workers had access to offices over and above other council staff.
- The Vice-Chair was pleased to hear that clinical supervision was being put in place to support social workers. He noted the importance of working with the media to change the narrative around social work.
- The budget for recruitment and retention initiatives was £300,000.

- The Chair asked whether recruitment or retention was a bigger issue for social work. Officers confirmed that both were important factors to focus on.
- There was an ageing workforce nationally and in Norfolk meaning that it would be important to understand and work with social workers who may want to take early retirement.
- The Chair asked whether non-financial incentives for staff retention were being considered. The Director of Children's Social Care confirmed that other local authorities used financial incentives to help retain staff, so providing these helped the Council remain competitive, but were only part of the solution. Other, non-financial aspects of the role were also important such as work-life balance, peer support and mental health support. Officers would continue to look at other options which would make a difference in retaining staff.
- More detail was requested on budgets for retention and retainment. The Director of Children's Social Care **agreed** to provide this information to the Committee in writing.
- Officers confirmed that Brexit had a small impact on the social worker workforce as social work was an occupation which people could apply for a visa for, but **agreed** to provide more detailed figures on this.

8.3 The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and Appendix A of the report.

9 Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Profiles 2021 – District and Electoral Division – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

9.1.1 The Select Committee received the report setting out a new way of accessing information held on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) using a dashboard which could be updated as data changed and replacing the static profiles published annually as part of the work programme for 2021/22 signed off by the HWB and of a wider project to improve the availability of place-based health and wellbeing information on the JSNA.

9.1.2 The Deputy Director of Public Health (Healthcare Services) gave a presentation; (see appendix B of the report at page 43 of the agenda):

- Members were asked for feedback on the profiles and what they would like to see in future versions.
- The Deputy Director of Public Health (Healthcare Services) talked members through some of the indicators which would be shown on the website
- Different indicators could be selected and shown on a map of electoral division, district or the county
- Each profile showed where the data came from and included definitions
- More data was available on the website than what had been shown on the presentation.
- Additional data and information could also be found by visiting the websites shown in the presentation.

9.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member queried the figure of 4300 people living in NCC nursing or residential care and asked for more information on this; The Deputy Director of Public Health (Healthcare Services) **agreed** to check this and provide a written answer.
- A Committee member suggested that information on these profiles should be part of the training package for Councillors to ensure all knew how to use it

- The Deputy Director of Public Health (Healthcare Services) clarified that some data was available at a Norfolk or district level, however not at a lower level such as electoral division as it involved small numbers, such as with teenage pregnancy rates.
- The data in the profiles was chosen around Health and Wellbeing Board priorities, however, more could be added if needed.
- Cllr Brenda Jones left the meeting at 12.48
- Some Committee Members **agreed** that data on domestic abuse rates would be useful.
- The Chair encouraged Committee Members to email The Deputy Director of Public Health (Healthcare Services) and her team if they thought of anything to include in the datasets.

9.3 The Select Committee **NOTED** the introduction of district and electoral division profiles and promote their use by council members

10. Forward Work Programme

10.1 The Chair confirmed that previously suggested reports on the music service, outdoor provision, access to technology for young people and the response to mental health and bereavement would be added to the forward plan when it was an appropriate time to bring them.

10.2 The Committee considered and **AGREED** the forward work programme with addition of:

- An item to coincide with national social care week
- A report on the Change Grow Live recent inadequate inspection

The Meeting Closed at 12:55

**Cllr Fabian Eagle, Chair,
People and Communities Select Committee**



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