

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held at Online on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr C Beart, Mr A Brady, Mr G Cooke, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms S Hamilton, Rich Lehmann, Ms M McArthur, Mr A Sandhu, MBE and Dr L Sullivan

OTHER MEMBERS:

OFFICERS:

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

17. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Manion and Mrs Dean for whom Mr Streatfeild is present.

18. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

19. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2022
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 10 May 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chair.

20. Performance Monitoring
(Item 5)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence; Stuart Collins, Director – Integrated Children's Services- Early Help Lead; and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

2) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- There were no waiting lists for educational psychology assessments. However, there were still EHCPs that were taking longer than 20 weeks. Performance had dropped since the published information. This was due to pressures around finding suitable placements to name on final EHCPs. The SEN service was going through consultation for restructure, and this may have had an impact.

- It was thought that the reoffending rate has been affected by the closure of the courts during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Social work caseload rates were high, but the caseloads were being managed well and there were strategies in place around recruitment to increase social worker numbers.
- There was a rise in exclusions in secondary education. Close work was being undertaken with schools to understand the reasons and challenges that had come from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Department for Education (DfE) had issued new guidance around attendance and exclusions.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

21. Ofsted Update
(Item 6)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence was in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

22. Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services
(Item 7)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE was in attendance for this item

1) Ms Hammond outlined the report. Members were reminded that the inspection related to Children's Services but did not relate to open access services, SEN, schools or the Youth Offending Service.

2) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- Mr Brady raised concerns that staff needed to be engaged with, be able to contribute to service improvement and feel reassured that their concerns were heard.
- An anonymous staff survey of CYPE staff had been conducted at the end of 2021 and had over 1500 responses. The responses from CYPE staff had improved on the responses from the previous year, particularly with regard to senior leadership engagement and feeling able to give their honest opinions about being CYPE staff. There had also been a separate survey for social work staff. The survey results showed communications with staff from senior management was well received.
- There had been issue nationally with the retention of qualified social workers and many had left the profession. KCC was working hard on the retention of social workers but it was acknowledged that it had been difficult for social workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ofsted had looked at supervision files for social workers during their inspection and they had seen that social workers had been personally supported as well as there being communication from senior management.
- Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) had capped caseloads of no more than 10 cases and were to be given the less complex cases. Therefore,

recruitment of NQSWs did not have the same impact as recruiting experienced Social Workers. Work was also being undertaken to recruit experienced Social Workers and this would be aided by the outcome of the inspection rating.

- Since the Covid-19 pandemic, cases had become more complex and 'throughput' of cases was slower. Social workers conducting visits had not had the same ad hoc supervision due to the pandemic and other partner agencies involved with children had not been as available.
- No union or staff representative had raised concerns with Ms Hammond or to her knowledge, any of the Directorate's Management. Social work staff were treated with parity of esteem. It was recognised that KCC was able to recruit excellent but diversely qualified staff into Early Help work. Social workers had to be qualified and registered to deliver statutory social work.

3) Mrs Chandler said that the judgement of the inspection did not mean that KCC was not going to continue on the journey of improvement. Members had shown their appreciation to front line staff during the debate and this was echoed. Thanks and congratulations were given to staff for their work.

4) RESOLVED to note the report.

23. SEND Update *(Item 8)*

Mark Walker, Director of SEND and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE were in attendance for this item.

1) Further to comments and questions, it was noted:

- Demand for EHCPs had remained high. Work was being undertaken to make sure all children with SEN were receiving support so that this would reduce the requirement for EHCPs. The redesign of the service would improve performance.
- There were challenges in identifying placements for EHCPs.
- There had been a staff consultation on the redesign. Staff were engaged in face-to-face and online sessions, an inbox was set up for questions, staff were able to submit comments anonymously and the consultation was extended to allow further feedback and engagement.
- Parents and carers were being urged to make their applications for school transport linked to new EHCPs. 38% had not made their application for school transport, some of whom would not require this service but those who did were urged to make their application as soon as possible.

3) RESOLVED to note the update.

24. Review of Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2022-26 *(Item 9)*

Nick Abrahams, Area Education Officer (West Kent) was present for this item.

1) Mr Abrahams outlined the report. The report was a review of the previous year's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision (KCP), assessing forecasting

accuracy and outlining any changes in short-term commissioning intentions to the KCP.

2) Further to questions and comments, it was noted:

- 778 SEND places were being commissioned and the report said 40 had been allocated for September. However, places had been brought forward and 106 specialist places were to be commissioned for September.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

25. The Responsibilities and Support Services for Kent's Children Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET)
(Item 10)

Stuart Collins, Integrated Children's Services (Early Help Lead) and Helen Cook, Senior Commissioner were present for this item

1) Mr Collins introduced the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- The greatest numbers of young people dropped out of education at October half-term. In order to address this issue, work was being done to increase the number of Further Education entry point times.
- The Education People were tracking the young people and the impact of Covid-19. KCC was performing contract monitoring. The biggest challenge was with NEETs who were not engaging with support services.
- The prevention of NEETs started in reception, building children and young people's aspirations and was about celebrating school.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

26. North Kent Serious Youth Violence Programme; Contextual Safeguarding work
(Item 11)

Hayley Bodiam, Practice Development Lead; Stuart Collins, Integrated Children's Services (Early Help Lead); Ben Watts, General Counsel and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for CYPE were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Collins introduced the report.

2) Further to questions and comments, it was noted:

- The Contextual Safeguarding work was Kent Police led and evidence-based approach and practice framework. It helped build understanding of the extra-familial risks to adolescents. It was overseen by the University of Bedfordshire. A report on Serious Youth Violence Programme was commissioned due the need which was identified within data. The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) was police-led but some KCC staff had been

seconded into the VRU to work alongside police. These pieces of work were linked but also separate. The Contextual Safeguarding work was with young people looking at places and spaces and making those safer, which had positive impacts on the community.

- One of the reasons for the increase in the re-offending rate was thought to be the delays that had happened with the criminal courts as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that indicators for Gravesend, Sevenoaks and Swale were RAG-rated red. It was noted that there were different challenges in different areas.
- There was no key decision linked to this work. Further work would be undertaken outside of the meeting to ensure due diligence in regard to governance.
- A pilot had taken place in Maidstone and consultations had taken place with partners.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

Dr Sullivan asked for it to be noted that she did not support the motion.

27. Headstart
(Item 12)

Angela Ford, Programme Manager; and Stuart Collins, Integrated Children's Services (Early Help Lead) were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Collins introduced the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- All staff had appropriate future plans or roles to slot into and the learning from HeadStart would assist with taking forward the Thrive programme.
- Data showed that the aims and goals from Headstart had been met. What success would look like had been agreed with young people and schools had been supportive of the work that had been done. The KPIs had been developed at the beginning of the programme and many of them exceeded. It was a 'test and learn' programme.
- Social media advertising had been used to promote the two websites linked to HeadStart, Kent Resilience Hub and Moodspark
- 21 Emotional Wellbeing Teams, funded by NHS England were going to be working in Kent. KCC was project-managing the implementation of the teams on behalf of NHS Kent and Medway. Kent's plan was to roll out Emotional Wellbeing Teams in 50% of schools, whereas nationally only 35% of an area would be rolled out.
- The sustainability details for HeadStart were contained within the report.
- Mrs Chandler said the schools' and community awards were particularly valuable and young people who were parents themselves had said that Headstart had helped them with their own children.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

28. SACRE Agreed Syllabus
(Item 13)

Katy Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer was present for this item

- 1) Ms Reynolds introduced the report.
- 2) RESOLVED to agree to note the report.

29. 22/00065 - Multiply Project
(Item 14)

Terry Burgess, Head of CLS; Jude Farrell, Operations Manager – Skills for Life and Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) were present for this item

- 1) Mr Burgess introduced the report.
- 2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - The work on numeracy would be with Further Education Colleges and there was engagement with possible partners. There would be 10 types of intervention (as outlined in the report).
 - It was hoped that the reach would be increased through the engagement and procurement process. The aim was that more adults achieve Level 2 qualifications, functional skills qualifications in maths and as a result, employers would report less gaps in numeracy skills. It was hoped that adults would gain confidence through numeracy skills to access work or move up within the workplace. Outcomes from the project would be tracked.
 - This was new funding and participants will be working in a 'greenfield area' for this work.
 - Children's Commissioning were to assist the lead officers on the project to ensure there was no duplication of work.

3) Mrs Prendergast said thanks to officers for their work on the project. It was acknowledged that a lack of basic numeracy skills was an obstacle in all sorts of ways including at work and in domestic life, running a household.

- 4) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations outlined in the report.

30. 22/00057 - Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Correction 2022/23
(Item 15)

Craig Chapman, Head of Fair Access was in attendance for this item

- 1) Mr Chapman introduced the report.
- 2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - The Kent Wheels 2 Work scheme was not implemented within Fair Access. It was lack of interest which had resulted in the closure of the scheme.
 - A funding source would need to be identified if a new scheme for psot-16 transport was to be put into place.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations outlined in the report.

31. Update on the 16-19 review and future plans
(Item 16)

Christine McInnes, Director of Education was in attendance for this item

1) Ms McInnes introduced the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:

- A Member said that it was a well thought out review and all reviews should follow the same methodology. The collaborative approach taken, engaging with stakeholders was praised.
- There were 30 focus groups of young people identified through providers and also, NEET young people were involved. There were around 5 young people in each focus group.
- Concerns were raised about the availability of apprenticeships in Kent. Issues around apprenticeships and quality were being addressed.
- The cost of travel was important but it was identified that young people needed good careers information and guidance. Parents were key influencers in the choices their children were making in the post-16 sector but choices were made based on what parents and children were familiar with, as the information parents had was quite confused.
- There were 2 pilot schemes (in the Gravesham and Dover areas) of joint planning between post-16 providers to try to get more of a spread within local areas.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

32. 22/00055 - Proposed Expansion of Maidstone Grammar School for Girls
(Item 17)

1) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

33. 22/00059 - Proposal to permanently expand Highsted Grammar School, Highsted Road, Sittingbourne, ME10 4PT from 120 places to 150 places for September 2023
(Item 18)

Marisa White (Area Education Officer – East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms White outlined the report. Following a redesign of the project after Planning Pre-Consultation and increase in prices due to inflation, the cost of the project had increased.

2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

34. 22/00060 - Governing Body proposal to make prescribed changes to Laleham Gap (Foundation) Special School from September 2022
(Item 19)

Marisa White (Area Education Officer – East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- When the school was built, a residential block was built next to it. However, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been a consultation and numbers requiring the residential places had been low so it had not been feasible to continue to offer this.
- It had been identified that a small number of pupils required targeted support or an extra year to get them ready for college and to prevent drop out. A consultation had been undertaken and the changes were supported

2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

35. 22/00061 - Proposal to establish a new 15 place Special Resource Provision at Copperfield Academy, Dover Road East, Gravesend DA11 0RB, for September 2022
(Item 20)

Ian Watts (Area Education Officer – North Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Watts introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation in the report.

36. 22/00066 - Notification of an increase in costs to install adequate water supply and hydrants for the proposal to expand Gravesend Grammar School, Church Walk, Gravesend, Kent, DA12, as previously determined by the Cabinet Member on 22nd July 2020 by Decision No 19/00083
(Item 21)

Ian Watts (Area Education Officer – North Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Watts introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation in the report.

37. 22/00067 - Proposed forecast expenditure of projects exceeding £1m within the Annual Planned Enhancement and Modernisation Programme
(Item 22)

Joanne Taylor, Head of Capital Delivery was in attendance for this item

1) Ms Taylor introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

38. 22/00068 - Refurbishment and reprovisioning of dining facilities at The John Wallis Academy, Ashford
(Item 23)

Lee Round, Area Education Officer was in attendance for this item

- 1) Mr Round introduced the report.
- 2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

39. 22/00069 - Proposal to agree funding to expand Meopham School, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent DA13 0AH by increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 140 places to 200 places
(Item 24)

Ian Watts (Area Education Officer – North Kent) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Mr Watts introduced the report.
- 2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - Travel to school areas were much wider for secondary age children. There were 'dot maps' showing where pupils were travelling from.
 - Bus facilities had been enhanced on site. Over the first 5 years after the project was completed, the bus infrastructure would be reviewed and work undertaken collaboratively with colleagues in Highways.
- 3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation in the report.

40. Decisions Taken Outside of the Cabinet Committee Meeting Cycle
(Item 25)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of CYPE and Craig Chapman, Head of Fair Access were in attendance for this item

- 1) Further to questions from Members, the following points were noted:
 - A significant number of parents had not yet applied for SEN transport for September. Those that had applied were in the assessment and allocation system and would have transport allocated to them.
 - Concerns were raised regarding transport for children in transition between schools.
 - Cabinet members and officers were working over the summer period on the transport issues.

- 2) RESOLVED to note the report.

41. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 26)

- 1) Mrs Prendergast said the first key stage 2 attainment statistics since 2019 had recently been published, covering the attainment of year 6 pupils. Sadly but not

unexpectedly, 59% of pupils were assessed to be meeting the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths, down from 65% in 2019.

The Schools Bill had proved to be controversial, with a significant number of amendments made as it has progressed through the House of Lords. KCC was submitting an expression of interest in participating in the “test and learn” phase of the government plans to promote Local Authority established Multi Academy Trusts. Whether KCC was successful or not, during the autumn term officers were work with the Kent Association of Headteachers to engage the range of providers in the education sector to consider options related to the Schools Bill.

There was an update on the locally commissioned review of 16-19 provision - Pathways for All. Members were encouraged to read the summary if not the document in full.

Mrs Prendergast met with Simon Cook, Chief Executive of Mid -Kent college and visited their campus in Maidstone where she learnt about the breadth of their offer, future plans and was able to talk with some students.

The three Kent FE colleges educate 25,470 students and like other education settings, had to support them both during and post pandemic. A letter from Lucy McLeod, Chief Education Officer at the EKC Group, was received about the very positive impact of the Covid Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) funding which was distributed across Kent last year. They expanded 1:1 and group counselling, established a wide range of additional clubs, alongside trips and visits for students to engage in and trained Mental Health First Aiders. Thanks were given to Lucy for taking the time to feedback the impact of the funding on supporting students.

KCC’s Reconnect programme was still working with schools, and the second in a series of hackathons last month saw nine school teams focusing on ways to improve health, wellbeing and the ability to engage with learning within their school communities. Mrs Prendergast spent some time talking to pupils as they formulated their ideas and the presentation. The three overall winners were The School of Science and Technology (Maidstone), St Peter’s CEP School (Folkestone), and Lady Joanna Thornhill PS (Ashford). Congratulations were given to them and to all those who took part.

Behind the scenes, officers were continuing to drive improvement in a variety of ways and thanks were given for this good work.

The Transport Eligibility team in Fair Access had streamlined the way parents secure free school transport for their children. Secondary transfer mainstream families were contacted to advise them of their child’s eligibility status, reducing the administrative burden of processing two and a half thousand applications. This allowed the team to focus on the assessment of SEN pupils applications, which could be fully automated to allow consideration of each child’s individual circumstances. This placed KCC in the best possible position to meet the challenges of finalising school transport against a backdrop of a pressured transport sector and record high fuel prices.

Some bus services which serve schools are being withdrawn from September. This was unfortunately due to a combination of bus operator service withdrawals and the reduction in bus subsidies that KCC provided to keep certain services operating.

The challenges that had led to these service withdrawals included lower passenger numbers combined with expensive fuel costs, driver shortages and rising inflation affecting the cost of maintaining vehicles. Colleagues in Public Transport were in direct communication with schools who were to be affected by service withdrawals, and communications were being distributed to Kent families and on our website.

KCC would ensure that travel options were provided to pupils who are eligible for free school transport, fulfilling our statutory duty to do so. A child's entitlement to free school transport was not dependent on the mode of travel they currently use, which unfortunately meant that pupils would not become entitled to free school transport as a result of the changes. A dedicated resource was available on Kent.gov.uk to advise parents on what they could do if they found themselves affected by the changes. KCC was to provide refunds to any parents who have bought a Kent Travel Saver bus pass which could not be used because services had been withdrawn or were to be later this year. KCC was also working closely with other bus operators to see if they were able to offer any services to those being withdrawn but it was recognised that all operators are facing the same set of challenges.

It was acutely understood how difficult these changes would be for families across Kent and every effort was being undertaken to reduce their impact, however, KCC alone was not able to balance the impact currently being felt nationally across the transport sector.

Last week, two burst water mains on the Isle of Sheppey resulted in residents and schools being left without water for two days. Schools and settings had to close as they could not operate safely.

A Red Alert weather warning had been issued for the first time for the week beginning 18 July 2022. Officers disseminated DfE advice and guidance to schools, which was to stay open if possible and to take sensible precautions and very small number of schools closed, if, for example, their air conditioning had broken down. Thanks were given to school colleagues in continuing to work and ensure schools remained open for children and young people.

On related matters, at the beginning of May, Internal Audit reviewed CYPE's Business Continuity Plans. CYPE's engagement was managed through the Directorate's Resilience Forum and the Directorate received the highest possible Audit rating of "high assurance" with prospects for further improvements being deemed "very good".

On 4 July, a webinar covering Emergency Planning, Business Continuity Planning and Prevent was held for all schools to highlight the Council's roles and responsibilities in planning for and responding to incidents and emergencies and to highlight the services on offer to support schools. More than 200 school colleagues participated and gave positive very feedback and we have seen increased contact from schools seeking advice and support. The webinar recording was still available on KELSI for those who did not attend the live event.

Thanks were given to all the education leaders and staff across the county that have worked with children, young people and adults through a very challenging year.

2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- There had been a technical issue with the website for Kent Saver Bus Pass applications but this had been resolved.

3) Mrs Chandler said that the preliminary work had begun on the 0-5 Strategy and there was an intention to set up a 'Task and Finish Group' to start in September.

The KCC response to the SEND green paper was to go to the meeting of Cabinet on 21 July 2022. While the response was from KCC, Mrs Chandler and Mrs Prendergast had been holding stakeholder events and speaking to children and young people, parents, head teachers and deputy head teachers, SEN coordinators, primary and secondary schools, to formulate the response.

Mrs Chandler was looking forward to attending Virtual School Kent's evening event for its young people in care in years 12 to 13. The Greatest Gala was being held at Detling Showground and was to bring young people together from around the county to celebrate their achievements over the past year. 250 nominations were received, with 200 receiving awards and 14 receiving top awards. A special award was to be presented in memory of Mrs Ann Allen and her contribution to the community.

42. Work Programme *(Item 27)*

1) Members noted the work programme.