

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 Council Chamber on Wednesday, 12th October, 2022.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr D Beaney, Mr A Brady, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Rich Lehmann, Mr S C Manion, Ms M McArthur, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Dr L Sullivan, Mr A Weatherhead (Substitute) and Mrs P T Cole

Virtual Attendees: Ms K Moses

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Canon Dr Q Roper, Mrs S Hamilton for whom Mrs P Cole and Mr G Cooke for whom Mr Weatherhead was present.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 19 July 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chair, subject to it be noted:

Dr Sullivan said she was not satisfied with the accuracy of the parts of minute item 22 relating to communication from union representatives and Mr Brady said that he was not satisfied with the completeness of points in minute item 30, relating to Kent Wheels 2 Work.

4. Performance Monitoring
(Item 5)

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

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report and updated Members on areas of change since the report had been produced. The caseloads for Children's Social Work

Teams (CSWT) in the data produced for August 2022 had reduced and there had been improvement in the summer term take up of the 3 Free for 2 nursery funding.

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

- There was variation in the numbers of permanent Qualified Social Workers holding caseloads across districts in the county due to circumstances within teams such as staff leaving, recruitment of agency staff, any long-term sickness, etc.
- There were 63 Newly Qualified Social Workers and their caseloads would be less. Overall, there had been a reduction in social work caseloads and there were strategies in place to further reduce caseloads.
- There were two issues that affected the issuing of EHCP within 20 weeks. The first was the availability of Educational Psychologist advice within 6 weeks and the second was that the availability of placements for children which could delay the issuing of the EHCPs. The backlog had been significantly reduced in the last year.
- There were 3 schools in the Swale area with higher numbers of permanent exclusions. 'Wraparound' support was going into these school settings.
- There had been a request that the number of first entrants into the Youth Justice system be included in the report. This was included on the Activity page at the front of the report.
- A scoping exercise to research was being scoped out to better understand the root causes of school non-attendance post-Covid.
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) shared information with Department of Education about families that were eligible for 3 Free for 2 nursery funding but information was only able to be kept by local authorities for 6 weeks. Work was being done to look at families who registered in the system but did not take up the entitlement.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

5. **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

6. **22/00078 - Special Educational Needs - Commissioning External Tuition Services** (Item 7)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services, Alison Farmer, Job title and Jamie Brooks were present for this item.

1) Ms Holden outlined the report. Slippage in the schedule meant that work was being undertaken for the framework to commence in April 2023 and not in January

or February as stated in the report. The cost of procurement of the framework was just under £49,000.

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

- There was an internal model housed by The Rosewood School. KCC was looking at the levels of eligibility, what they were able to deliver and what would need to be delivered private sector. The Service Level Agreement had been established in September 2021 but this would not be at full capacity until 2023. In the longer term, work was to be done to look at tuition with SEN and whether it could be delivered fully in house. It was felt that the proposed decision would stabilise the market, introduce 'due diligence' and would help KCC to establish whether the services could be delivered in house in the future.
- A Member requested that the recommendations in the report be expanded to include greater detail at part A)
- This matter could come back to Cabinet Committee and there was provision for early termination of contract.
- Tuition for a child was decided on the basis of what was in Section F of their EHCP, which contained special educational provision.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report subject to further detail being added at A).

7. SEND Update (Item 8)

*Alison Farmer, Assistant Director/Principal Educational Psychologist
Special Educational Needs, and Christine McInnes were in attendance for this item*

1) Ms Farmer and Ms McInnes outlined the presentation (slides attached).

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

- Members expressed disappointment that the SEND transport report was not an item on the agenda. Members were advised that the report which had been brought to Scrutiny Committee was to be considered by Governance and Audit Committee.
- The Kent Commissioning Plan was due to come to Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee and there was to be a more substantial section in the plan on place planning for children with SEND. A lot of work had been done on pupil projections, looking at more strategic decision making to ensure a spread of provision across the county and clear, consistent pathways.
- It was recognised that parents were increasingly anxious in the current climate and KCC wanted to give parents the confidence that the best was being done for their children.
- EHCP were reviewed annually and the child's needs were considered in the review. Special schools were to be used primarily for the children with the most complex needs. There was partnership working to forward the message that there was suitable education in mainstream schools.

Transition points were being looked at with KCC's partners to ensure the development of a more balanced approach.

3) Mrs Dean asked for it to be noted that she wished to propose and Mr Brady wished to second a motion.

Advice was given through the Chair that the SEND update was for noting only and that therefore, the motion should be withdrawn.

4) RESOLVED to note the update.

8. 22/00091 - Alterations to the Academic School Year 2022-23
(Item 9)

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

1) Ms McInnes introduced the report.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

9. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 10)

1) Mrs Chandler said that Ofsted carried out a revisit of Kent's SEND services from 27 to 29 September, looking at how the county had progressed since the last inspection in 2019. It was not possible to share the outcomes of the visit to all Members at the meeting due to the Lead Inspector stipulating that the feedback received during the final meeting was to be kept confidential until the publication of the Ofsted judgement. A full update was therefore to be provided at the next meeting on 29 November.

In 2015 the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) was established to try and alleviate some of this pressure on Kent and other local authorities at the forefront of receiving Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. At that time the protocol was that no authority should have more than 0.07% of its total child population as UASC. The scheme operated on a voluntary basis until December 2021 when it became mandatory.

The then Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, Kevin Foster, announced on 24 August 2022 that the percentage threshold under this scheme was to rise from 0.07% to 0.1%. This was the first change in the threshold since its introduction. The change took KCC's quota from 242 to 346 children. KCC was already over capacity at the 0.07% level and was actively making preparations to accept the additional children into our children in care service. The Safe Care and Reception Service was still being operated from which children and young people are allocated to other local authorities through the National Transfer Scheme, for an additional 120 young people.

It was noted that not all local authorities have reached even the 0.07% level yet, so KCC was urging the government to ensure the allocations are spread more evenly.

The government also announced that the ten-day deadline for transfers of UASC not currently in local authority care had been reduced from ten to five working days.

For transfers between local authorities, this was to remain at ten working days. This had been designed to reduce the need for using hotels, however, due to increasing numbers, a new hotel specifically for receiving minors had been opened in Coventry to help alleviate any additional pressure.

As of 7 October, there had been 1090 UASC referrals in 2022, which was already more than the previous record set in 2015 which saw 927 for the entire year. The largest proportion of arrivals was from Albania (around 80%), but because some are not claiming asylum status, they were not counted in the UASC statistics, but KCC retained responsibility for their welfare. Furthermore, KCC retained a safeguarding responsibility while waiting for UASC to be relocated by the Home Office from hotels. This created additional workloads in the event a child goes missing for example. When this occurred, KCC worked closely with the police to minimise the risk of these children becoming victims of exploitation.

It should be noted that Ukrainian children placed into local authority care were not to be included in the UASC threshold and existing local authority obligations to UASC under the NTS continue to apply.

The terms of reference for the 0-5 Strategy Task and Finish Group had been drawn up and were to be circulated to committee members following the meeting. The Task and Finish Group was to focus on important topics such as the best start to life agenda, the rise in EHCP applications and the promotion of free childcare. It was expected to commence in November and was to meet fortnightly for a period of 3 months. This was to be cross-party, and each group was to be contacted to nominate Members to participate.

On Friday, 30 September Mrs Chandler attended the SE7 Leaders and Chief Executives Board on the Leader's behalf, which was attended by Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

The geography of the proposed Regional Care Co-operatives was not likely to be prescriptive and authorities were to be free to choose partners. From KCC's perspective, this would grant the ability to form partnerships with the London Boroughs placing children in Kent, which would be extremely valuable. Regional Agency Staff Banks were also touched upon, and it was hoped this would provide a route towards greater resilience in ensuring KCC had access to the staff needed, when they were needed.

It was agreed that a draft paper was to be drawn up, covering what both Regional Care Co-operatives and Staff Banks might look like and how they might operate. This was then to be taken to the Department for Education to discuss further.

Mrs Chandler attended the Reconnect Celebration Event last Thursday evening, and thanks were given to all of those who contributed towards making the Reconnect Programme such a fantastic success. Thanks were given to Kent's 12 Local Children's Partnership Groups, the many voluntary groups from across Kent, Kent's charities and community interest companies, schools, the business sector, and all KCC's partners and staff from across KCC, district councils, and the emergency services.

During the course of the Reconnect Programme, there had been £2.5 million in grants awarded to more than 600 local groups, organisations and clubs to enable

them to deliver additional opportunities to children and young people in their own communities. To list just a few of the highlights of Reconnect - there had been over 1 million free bus journeys, access to free learning resources such as GCSE and A-Level podcasts, writing challenges, holiday activity and food programmes, six-month paid work placements through Kickstart, and targeted support for young carers.

Mrs Chandler said that she had been proud of the incredible effort made by every part of Kent's communities, and it had been great to see so many people sharing our ambition that Kent should be the best place in the Country for children to grow up and thrive.-

2) Further to Mrs Chandler's verbal update, Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- There had been an evaluation of the work of the Reconnect Programme and results would be reported at a future meeting.

3) Mrs Prendergast offered her congratulations to all pupils who received their GCSE, BTEC, A Level and T Level results the first set of exams after what had been an incredibly difficult couple of years.

Detailed statistics for results in Kent were not yet available. This data was being collated and was expected to be available in November and would be reported at a future meeting.

Mrs Prendergast wished Kent's young people, whether they had stayed on in further or higher education or embarked on a work-based apprenticeship programme every success for the future.

Thanks were given to all primary school staff and pupils for their work in preparing for and taking the SATs in the summer, as well as early years staff for their work with our youngest children.

A total of 18,298 pupils sat the Kent Test on Thursday, 8 September and Saturday, 10 September. Families were to receive their child's results on 18 October so a very swift turnaround and again, the outcomes were to be reported at a future meeting.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme was to fix gas and electricity prices for all firms for six months from 1 October. The scheme was to apply to fixed contracts agreed on or after 1 April and variable and flexible tariffs and contracts. This was to include schools, nurseries and children's centres. The equivalent support was also to be provided for non-domestic consumers who used heating oil or alternative fuels instead of gas.

The SEND Transport lessons learned review had been published and discussions took place at Governance and Audit Committee. KCC regretted the distress to the families whose transport was impacted during the Spring Term. Work had been undertaken within CYPE and with GET colleagues to make improvements for the start of the new academic year in September. The recommendations in the report was to help in consolidating improvements, in positively addressing long standing structural issues and establishing clearer lines of accountability.

In the lead up to the new academic year, transport teams had completed 1,954 requests for new or amended transport. Over 99% of those applications submitted by the deadline were completed before the start of the academic year, so this is testament to the hard work of all the staff involved, having faced unprecedented pressure to offer transport to so many Kent families.

Work continued to stimulate the school transport market, but as had been acknowledged nationally, Covid had impacted the workforce negatively and securing the capacity needed to meet growing demand continued to be a priority.

There were 6,591 children and young people within the SEN cohort who were entitled to transport, with 216 new requests having been received by the Public Transport Team since 1 September. As of Monday, 10 October, the Fair Access team had just 86 applications outstanding, the oldest of which was from 15 September.

Whilst not coming under the CYPE portfolio, Mrs Prendergast acknowledged the significant impact of proposed bus service cuts. KCC's Public Transport Team had been working tirelessly to protect as many services as possible by working with commercial providers and had achieved some success through means such as diverting existing school bus services to cover areas that would otherwise be left unserved.

However, given the large number of commercially operated services that were being cut, it was not within KCC's means to protect every service. Assurances had been given to Mrs Prendergast that KCC would be able to provide alternative transportation for every child eligible for free home to school transport where they were left without access to a bus as a result of the cuts.

Due to a combination of labour and skills shortages, there were not enough people to fill all jobs. A lack of skilled people was holding back the Kent economy and improving what and how we deliver the necessary training was a priority.

In order to target missed opportunities due to gaps in provision or duplication, through the Helping Hands Fund, a new project had been commissioned. The project was to develop a plan in collaboration with partners so that resources were made the most of for the benefit of Kent residents, particularly those who needed help to get a job or progress in their current job.

Mrs Prendergast was to report with more details about KCC's progress with ambitions for adult learners at a future meeting.

The Multiply Numeracy Project was discussed at the July meeting of CYPE Cabinet Committee where KCC was to receive £7.5m between 2022 and March 2025 from The UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The National Programme aimed to transform the lives of adults aged over 19 by improving their functional numeracy skills through free personal tutoring, digital training and flexible courses.

The Key Decision included permission to commence a procurement. A Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was the most suitable procurement option chosen to allow more Providers to join as the Project progresses across the County. It was designed to welcome national providers as well as smaller local Voluntary Sector

providers and aims initially to scope the level of need that can be immediately met as well as highlighting gaps and further areas of focus.

The tender opened on 10 October 2022 and was to run to 8 November 2022. There was then to be a period of evaluation with initial confirmation of those who have successfully joined the DPS in December. The tender was to re-open on 7 December 2022 following the same criteria and evaluation and was to be a rolling process until full coverage of services was confirmed across the County.

The appointment of Dr Tony Breslin as the chair of the 16-19 Pathways for all Board had been announced. The Board was to drive the development of a more cohesive 16-19 education and training offer across Kent, implementing the recommendations made in the *Pathways for All* review published earlier in 2022. Dr Breslin was an experienced, widely published and nationally profiled educationalist with extensive experience in the school, FE and Adult Education sectors.

4) Further to Mrs Prendergast's verbal update, Members asked questions and the following was noted:

- Parents and carers were being contacted to advise them if their children were entitled to school transport. Families were able to seek advice if they needed any assistance in filling out application forms for SEND school transport.
- There had been close work with between CYPE and GET to ensure that there was signposting on the website for the changes to commercial bus services.

10. Decisions taken outside of the Cabinet Committee meeting cycle *(Item 11)*

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

- A forward plan of contracts was being produced and was to be maintained.
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2) RESOLVED to note the report.

11. Work Programme *(Item 12)*

1) Members noted the work programme.