

<b>MEETING:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Full Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	Tuesday 9 January 2024
<b>TIME:</b>	2.00 pm
<b>VENUE:</b>	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

## MINUTES

### Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Barnard, Bellamy, Bowser, Christmas, Clarke, Eastwood, Fielding, Green, Hayward, Lodge, Markham, McCarthy, Mitchell, Morrell, Moyes, Murray, O'Donoghue, Osborne, Peace, Pickering, Sheard, Smith, Tattersall, Webster, A. Wray and N. Wright

### 17 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Bowser declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being a member of the Corporate Governing Body

Councillor Clarke declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being Chair of the Family Hub at Kendray and Worsborough

Councillor Eastwood declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being a member of the Fostering Panel and a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Councillor Lodge declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being Trust Governor at The Mill Academy and an employee of Centrepont who deliver training for Young People

Councillor O'Donoghue declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being a Corporate Parenting Panel Member

Councillor Peace declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being the Cabinet Support Member, Children's Services

Councillor Tattersall declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to being a member of the Berneslai Homes Board

Councillor Webster declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to having a family member in current mainstream SEND provision.

### 18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the following meetings were received and approved by Members as a true and accurate record:-

Full Committee – 12 September 2023

Sustainable Barnsley Workstream – 10 October 2023

Growing Barnsley Workstream – 31 October 2023

Healthy Barnsley Workstream – 28 November 2023

## 19 Provisional Education Outcomes for Barnsley 2023

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

- Nina Sleight - Service Director Education, Early Start & Prevention, Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Anna Turner - Head of Service, Education & Partnerships, Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Neil Wilkinson - Projects and Contracts Manager, Employability & Skills, Place, Barnsley Council
- Tom Smith - Head of Employment & Skills, Place, Barnsley Council
- Jane Allen - Service Manager, Education Welfare and Inclusion, Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Tom Oates – Virtual School Head, Barnsley Council
- Kerry Blantern - Senior Performance and Intelligence Officer, Core Services, Barnsley Council
- Angela Lomax, Group Leader, Raising Participation, Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Andy Lancashire - Co-Chair of Barnsley Schools' Alliance
- David Akeroyd - CEO & Principal, Barnsley College
- Cllr Trevor Cave - Cabinet Spokesperson, Children's Services

Nina Sleight provided members of the Committee with a highlight of some of the key details contained within the report. There were positive educational outcomes across early years to post 16 which were as a result of hard work from children, young people and staff working in settings and schools alongside partnership working.

The report overall, was positive in terms of outcomes and how partnerships had come together to address challenges and priorities that had been identified through the Education Improvement Strategy, SEND Strategy and More and Better Jobs Strategy to progress children's aspirations.

Councillor T Cave provided members with a historical context to the report in the fact that around 20 years previous, Barnsley was one of the poorest performing councils in relation to education in the country. This had now risen to better than national average which has been supported by the sector and the Council's commitment of investments into various aspects of helping children and young people such as creating the Barnsley School Alliance, successful engagement with schools, Strategy for SEND and recently the creation of the Family Hub model.

In the ensuing discussion and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted:-

In relation to what support is available for young people who miss their grades for their chosen steps. Members were informed that initially young people received career guidance and their plans would have a built in alternate plans. Work with schools was undertaken around May to collect intended destinations of where young people were thinking of going. For the people who do not get offered a Post 16 learning offer, alternate learning options are looked into in order to make a September Guarantee offer to every young person no matter where it is an offer for.

In August when the grades are known colleges carry out careers guidance sessions for those who either got higher or lower grades than expected. There is a live database to pick up the young people who have been identified as not moving onto post 16 education, employment or training in order to help them get back into some sort of provision.

Barnsley College reported that the vast majority of Y11 pupils in Barnsley schools apply and are successfully offered a place on a programme. It was reported that the remaining cohort would stay at Penistone Grammar School Sixth Form or other provisions out of Borough. Members were informed that young people not receiving their expected grades wasn't a barrier for education at the College and that there was a course for every child in the Borough on offer. It was acknowledged that this may not be the course they initially wanted but it could still lead to their intended goal just via a different path or a one year intervention to retake qualifications such as GCSE Maths or English. No young person was disadvantaged and career guidance was always available.

Concerns were raised that SENDCO staff in schools were being shared and splitting time between schools and classrooms. It was reported that this would be a concern and to report any instances of that to Children's Services in order for them to look into the matter. The Council had invested in a SEND Improvement Team who work collaboratively with Schools to create inclusive settings. Various assessments are carried out to look into school outcomes, attendance, number of children on SEND support and EHCP etc to gain a comprehensive picture of each school. This enables the Send Improvement Team to identify whether there are any specific areas of need to be looked at and supported. This enables the SENDCOs, who are in the best position to support individual children with need, to fulfil their role.

Children not attending full time education is a key priority for Barnsley Schools Alliance. It was acknowledged that there were non-attendance issues such as days off in term time, but the focus of the Barnsley Alliance was on suspensions and exclusions and what factors were at play within that and how the Partnership could address those issues. A commitment had been made between Chief Executives of Multi Academy Trusts to work with the Barnsley Schools Alliance around issues of exclusions and suspensions and how to support staff. Some identified factors were complex issues within communities and families that required additional support. What inclusive practices had been seen in schools, how that works and what steps had been taken to support children to prevent behaviours resulting in suspensions or exclusion. It is a priority to create strategies and plans around schools to support them to be fully inclusive schools with pupils regularly attending and able to thrive alongside schools managing behaviours safely and supporting their right to do that by addressing behaviours.

Education Welfare and Inclusion had data around suspensions and exclusions and would work with schools to ensure a good package of support to identify where the young persons behaviours are being driven from as there will be some unidentified need. The data collated is shared with Leaders in schools for good practice.

Members were concerned that some exclusions and consequences were arbitrary for something as simple as not wearing a specific bag. This could be seen as a hostile environment for children transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7. It was felt that there

was a need for more understanding in schools. In response members were informed that Academies write their own policies, but that negotiations could take place with schools as to what is in the best interests of children and the impact and wider impact that isolation can have on the child and their families. Members heard how a Early Intervention (Green) Panel had been introduced for those children getting repeat suspensions. Secondary leaders bring information to a specific Panel and have those conversations about children and come forward with suggestions and how to approach particular behaviours in order to avoid permanent exclusion.

Members questioned whether it was a legal or advisory rationale to have SEND teachers in school. In response members were informed that each school is required to have a designated SENDCO and large secondary schools have pastoral staff who work under guidance of the SENDCO to support children.

The statistics provided to members around the reasonings behind suspensions, fixed term exclusions and permanent exclusions was from 2018/19. Members enquired whether there was an up to date list to show whether the reasonings for suspensions and exclusions had shown to be for more arbitrary reasonings. Members heard that local data is collected every time a young person is excluded. Work is then undertaken with young people and families to support transition to the next destination, which would depend on the nature of their permanent exclusion. They were able to analyse whether it was a one off serious incident or whether it was an accumulation of different issues resulting in conversations with schools to deal with the issue accordingly.

Permanent Exclusions were defined by strict legal guidance. In terms of fixed term period and suspensions, these would be looked into if the case was brought to the attention of Children's Services. The Committee was assured that as a Partnership, this was a key priority to ensure they impact positively and reduce fixed term suspensions and exclusions within the Borough. When asked why it feels arbitrary there tends to be a wider case, information and other incidents surrounding it.

In terms of school uniforms and sanctions for not wearing it correctly, it was acknowledged that sometimes this can be a rule the young person does not wish to stick by but also that it could be a parental or carer breakdown and not the child's fault. Every family is unique and would be looked into without pre judgment in order to judge each situation and circumstances around the incident.

Education Psychologists were leading on a research piece of work with Children going through the Fair Access Panel due to permanent exclusion to understand how they feel and how it was impacting them. To understand as a system and Partnership, how they could be supported through the next step. The voice of the child, young person and their families is important.

Members enquired whether the education outcomes had improved following most of the schools moving to Academies. Schools in Barnsley had significantly improved but it was difficult to say whether this was due to how services are addressed, how they have come together as a partnership or the move to academies. Benefits of Partnership working with local and national Academy Trusts had already been seen in terms of sharing expertise.

There were no active plans for Penistone Grammar School, who was the last remaining maintained secondary school in the Borough, to be academized, but this was always an option for them.

Members asked how GCSE and A Level results compared to better areas and private schools. In response members were informed that key stage 4 was below national average and whilst this was not where Barnsley wanted to be, it compared to the Boroughs neighbours. Other areas of the Country who had a better demographic were above national average and the details of private schools was not known. In regards to A Level uptake, it was not always the right route for some young people. This needed to be looked at more widely into Post 16 achievement rates which were around 8% higher than national average. Young people are offered a wide and good deal of choice across the landscape of the Borough for Post 16 options.

Members questioned whether anyone in the Borough takes International Baccalaureate, but there were no current plans for this. In terms of Sixth Form provision, Penistone Grammar school offered a limited range of subjects whereas Barnsley College offered a broad range meeting the needs of every young person in the Borough. It was felt that other schools in the Borough did not offer alternate provisions as they would not be financially viable and they would only be able to offer limited courses. Nationally there had been a reduction in Sixth Form provisions.

The numbers of parents and children choosing to electively home educate (EHE) had risen significantly, this area of work is a key priority for the Education Welfare Service. Parents choosing EHE receive significant support and information into what it entails. An Education Welfare Officer carries out a visit at the point of notification of EHE and the children are spoken to alone in order to gather whether it is parents decision or the child's, EWS and existing services involved in supporting the family continue to support families where required including advice to get back onto the pathway into education if they decide to return to school. Early intervention with agencies, families and the school is carried out to try and understand the barriers to remaining in education. Year 11 has the highest cohort and work is undertaken to ensure the children and young people get the most appropriate career advice so as not to be disadvantaged by being out of school based education. Barnsley college confirmed they were working with 100 EHE students on a part time basis due to a funding contract through the Government.

It is a Barnsley priority to be above national average across all Key Stages. The comparison with national statistics and regional neighbours provides a benchmark as to what the threshold is and whether out of step or doing better than areas with the same demographic. Each school and trust has their own action plans in terms of results which was reviewed in Summer as to what can be done different the following year. The Committee was assured that everyone was working hard to get above average.

If a pattern of suspensions and exclusions appears around a particular child, then schools keep a log in order to investigate the possible reasonings behind them by looking at the child in a wider context. Meetings are created with parents and carers to undertake assessments to understand whether there is any unmet need and provide support for that. This preventative work should then prevent further suspensions and the possibility of permanent exclusion.

It was acknowledged that Academies were well placed to improve education outcomes and that it was in Barnsley's best interest to have fewer but better Academy Trusts in the Borough rather than more Academy Trusts. Members heard how it would be more challenging to work with more providers and leaders and governance structures. Less Academy Trusts works hand in hand to improve education outcomes for children and works with the flow of what the Borough is trying to achieve. Members noted that it was the Department for Education that ultimately decides which Trust runs with a school.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) that the witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) that the report be noted;
- (iii) that members would like to know how do schools pick up on as yet unidentified children with SEND?
- (iv) that members would like to know what are the next steps for those children, how are their needs met in the short term and what support is available for parents and children until an EHCP or support plan has been put in place?
- (v) that members would like to know what statistics are collected by the service in relation to SEND and are these benchmarked against other Local Authorities?

**20 FOR INFORMATION ONLY - Children's Social Care Performance Report October 2023 (REDACTED)**

Members were invited to consider a cover report relating to Children's Social Care Performance October 2023. The redacted report was provided for information only.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**21 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that the public and press be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the items so marked because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, subject to public interest.

**22 Children's Social Care Performance Report October 2023**

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

- Matthew Boud, Service Director Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson, Children's Services, Barnsley Council

Members were invited to consider a report relating to:-

6a – Children’s Social Care Performance for October 2023

6b – Monthly Performance Update Data Tables for October 2023

6c – Understanding Children’s Social Care Document

Matthew Boud and Councillor Trevor Cave provided Members with an overview of the Childrens Social Care Performance Report for October 2023. Members heard how the significant investment into Childrens Social Care had led to good outcomes from OFSTED.

A significant amount of work had been undertaken to improve practice across Children’s Services on children’s visits to meet regularly and making the visits into a meaningful record. Work into understanding what a good record and visit looks like was being supported by the Practice Development Hub to ensure the work being carried out was meaningful and purposeful.

In terms of ensuring parents comply with sending their children to school, a whole assessment would be undertaken to look into the circumstances surrounding the child.

Barnsley was not unique in its difficulties of retaining and recruiting qualified and experienced Social Workers. It was important that newly qualified members of staff were made to feel valued and safe in the service which had been reflected in a recent OFSTED and staff survey. A number of initiatives were in place such as apprenticeships and ‘grow your own’ in collaboration with Universities and employing agency workers on a full time basis.

Members enquired whether there would be an offer of something similar to the Hub in out of town areas as these could be difficult for people to visit. It was acknowledged that in an ideal world a Hub in every area would be the hope but this was not possible.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) that witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution; and
- (ii) that the report be noted.

**23 Strengthening Children's Services Quarter 2 2023-24**

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Matthew Boud, Service Director Children’s Social Care & Safeguarding, Children’s Services, Barnsley Council
- Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson, Children’s Services, Barnsley Council

The Service acknowledged that it was important to measure themselves on outcomes from families and children and whether they were delivering sustainable, measurable, achievable outcomes against priorities. It was noted that Barnsley was

not as well funded as other authorities so it was vital that when additional money is received it is important to prove that it is making a difference to the Borough's young people.

Members heard how there was a national crisis in terms of funding for Children's Services, particularly in relation to high placement costs. The Service has a statutory responsibility to fulfil the needs of young people and a priority was to increase in house Foster Carers.

One priority for the Service was to ensure a permanent and stable workforce to ensure that Barnsley's young people are not delayed in their needs and they receive consistency and good relationships.

In regard to placements there had been a growth in Kinship Foster Carers which was expected to grow. Work was being undertaken to address the pressures on short term placements and helping young people to find permanent placements quicker so they aren't in foster care long term.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) that the witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) that the report be noted; and
- (iii) that Officers provide CIPFA comparator tables to demonstrate the cost per capita of Children's Services compared to other Local Authorities.

-----  
Chair