

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Healthy Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday 25 March 2025
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Stowe (Chair), Barnard, Bellamy, Booker, Bowler, Bowser, Fielding, Green, Hayward, Holling, Lodge, Mitchell, Morrell, Moyes, Osborne, Pearson, Sheard, Tattersall and P. Wright together with co-opted member L Iles

54 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received.

55 Declarations of Interests on matters contained within the Agenda

Councillor Lodge declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute 58 as a family member works in a primary school within the Borough.

Councillor Osborne declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute 57 as the Cabinet Support Member Environment and Transport.

56 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025 were received.

57 Councillor's Call For Action - Recent Disruption to Waste Collection Services

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Matt O'Neil, Executive Director Growth & Sustainability
- Gill Charters, Head of Waste, Recycling, and Neighbourhood Services, Barnsley Council
- Cllr James Higginbottom, Cabinet Spokesperson, Environment and Transport, Barnsley Council

Councillor Lodge formally moved the Councillor Call for Action and in doing so provided the Committee with an overview of the reasons for bringing the Call for Action and welcomed responses from invited Officers and the Cabinet Spokesperson Environment and Transport. In addition to the reasons highlighted within the published Councillor Call for Action, Councillor Lodge also raised concerns around the delay to green bin collections and the cost implications for recovery as a result of the prolonged disruption to waste collections which had been stated within the position statement provided by the Service.

The Cabinet Spokesperson Environment and Transport provided the Committee with an overview of the position statement provided in response to the Councillor Call for Action. Members were provided with some context that 115,000 bin collections were carried out on a weekly basis with 72 staff members and 24 vehicles. The adverse weather for the week commencing 4 January 2025 had resulted in around 100,000 missed bins. This alongside the implementation of the Safety and Quality Programme in December 2024 had affected services further. The Council acknowledged the significant disruption to services and issued an apology. The decision to postpone the resumption of green waste collection had been made in order to enable wider services to be stabilised.

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

Concerns were raised about the cost of replacement bins that had been damaged by the lorry resulting in refused collections. In response members were informed that wheelie bins were manufactured to an industry standard to work with the bin lifts on the collection vehicles and came with a five year warranty. Compromised bins were not deemed safe to present compromised bins for emptying creating a hazard for both bin crews and members of the public. The policy to charge delivery to replace bins had been in place for around 10 years. Members enquired as to what had been communicated to residents informing them of the change in policy around picking up damaged bins. Members heard that this was part of the Safety and Quality Programme and information was provided to customers on the website. Members were informed that damaged bins were tagged with a note informing residents that their bin was unable to be collected due to being damaged. Practices in the waste industry had changed significantly across the Country in order to provide a safe environment to work in and for residents.

In relation to the delayed green bin collection, members were informed that residents would be unable to leave additional bags to be collected as this was not in keeping with the policy. The decision to delay the green bin collections had been made in order to increase crews and recovery for the mandatory collections. Green waste bin collections were discretionary collections funded by the council.

Officers confirmed that the grey bins were on schedule and collections were up to date, aside from any that could have been missed due to a variety of reasons such as streets being inaccessible due to inconsiderate parking, road closures and breakdowns. Missed bins could be reported online or through members enquiries and would be added to a collection round as soon as was possible.

The Committee heard how residents and members all had a role to play to facilitate safe bin collections. This included bins being presented correctly and being considerate when parking on smaller streets. It was noted that if a street continually encountered issues with accessibility, notes would be placed on windscreens informing them of the hindrance and there was also the option to put a smaller vehicle on the route. It was also reiterated the importance of considerate parking as if a waste bin vehicle struggled to access certain areas and streets then emergency vehicles would also have the same issue.

Officers confirmed that the reported £40,000 costs incurred due to the backlog was a definitive figure and included all expenses related to the additional services required to catch up.

Officers reported that they were open to any suggestions in relation to improving communications to 115,000 residents if a similar incident should occur in future. It was felt that social media, press releases on local news outlets and updates to the website were able to reach most residents.

Members were informed that the service had many moving parts and that contingency plans were continually under review and crews were updated at daily briefings and updated by undertaking training to operate safe and efficiently. Members were informed that most weather impacts were included within the plan but that extreme icy conditions had recently been added due to this experience.

It was acknowledged that the introduction of the Safety and Quality Programme had been difficult for some members of the workforce to adapt and change to a different way of working. Work would continue with members of the Team and Unions to ensure the safety of the operatives and residents. 72 accidents had been recorded in the previous 3 years at Barnsley, however compared to Bradford who had implemented the programme the previous year, no accidents had been reported. The workforce was acknowledged for doing an excellent job, working hard by walking 13 miles a day in all weather conditions.

Members were informed of the abuse and threatening behaviour that frontline crews had received as a result of the disruption resulting in the Police being called out to some incidents. It was acknowledged that residents may have felt frustrated but abuse and threatening behaviour was unacceptable and would be dealt with appropriately. There had also been abuse towards staff through comments on social media who were at the time managing extremely difficult and challenging circumstances. The opportunity was taken to thank staff for their hard work.

Members heard how waste crews and frontline staff received welfare checks on a regular basis through Welfare days in order to ensure staff were happy and healthy. These visits by a number of agencies covered a variety of checks such as blood pressure, stop smoking services and Andy's Man Club for those who may find talking about personal feelings difficult within the depot.

It was reported that the waste collection industry was one of the most dangerous industries in the UK and that the accident in Coventry resulting in a fatality had been foreseeable. This had led to the Safety and Quality Programme and the Be Safe, Work Safe, Target Zero initiative being implemented. It was hoped that as a result of this programme and initiatives no other families would face similar events.

Councillor Lodge commented that he had brought in the Councillor Call for Action as part of his duty as an Elected Member sitting on the Committee set up to be a critical friend. Residents wanted answers and it was hoped going forward members and officers could work together for a safer and right first time service and for operatives to go home at night.

RESOLVED that the Councillor Call for Action be received and noted and witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution.

58 Special Education Needs and/or Disability Provision in Barnsley

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

- Nina Sleight Service Director Education, Early Start & Prevention, Barnsley Council
- Beverley Bradley, SEND Improvement Manager, Barnsley Council
- Sue Day, Head of Service SEND and Inclusion, Barnsley Council
- Kwai Mo, Head of Service Mental Health and Disability, BMBC
- Karen Rose, Interim Head of Service for Children's Commissioning, Barnsley Council
- Jamie Wike, Deputy Place Director, Barnsley Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Hermione Rostron, Designated Clinical Officer, Barnsley Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Angela Lomax, Group Leader Raising Participation, Employment & Skills, Barnsley Council
- Cllr Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson Children's Services, Barnsley Council
- Andy Lancashire, Independent Chair of Barnsley's Schools' Alliance
- Carlene Devereux, Head of Children and Family Social Care, Barnsley Council

Nina Sleight provided members with an overview of the progress in supporting children, young people, and families across the Borough. The report detailed the importance of the Local Area Partnership's efforts to maintain high standards to meet the needs of children for positive outcomes in education. There was significant pressure from central government and locally, however there was confidence that the Partnership was responding to challenges and doing the best for the children in Barnsley.

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

Members were informed that tracking children's health and education was challenging. It was reported that sometimes health and education data are not linked and therefore it was not always easy for health services to identify children and young people receiving SEN support or with an EHCP unless this was identified in the referral. Health outcomes need tracking across all services for SEND and disabilities. And there is a joined up approach across Health and Social Care and collaboration across the services. Each child and young person has an annual review as part of the process for EHCPs on an individual basis and this includes reviewing health and education information to assess outcomes for each individual child. In Barnsley, an integrated data dashboard had been developed with health, social care, and education information to track overall improvements in health outcomes for those with SEND.

The Department for Education (DfE) had confirmed that the national free school programme was on hold until a national review had been carried out. No timescales

or further information was available from the DfE. It was hoped that the free school programme would be recognised by the DfE as necessary to meet local area sufficiency needs. Due to the pause in the programme plans were being looked into with current providers in Barnsley in terms of mitigation. All schools in Barnsley and trusted partners had been written to as to who may be willing to create additional capacity so children and young people of all needs could be educated in their local communities and in where necessary in specialist provision. It was hoped that confirmation of those additional places would be in time for September 2025 however it was acknowledged that this would be ambitious.

The success rate for SEN and EHCP children was measured on how well those receiving it were supported and how their outcomes improve. There had been a growth nationally and locally in the numbers of children receiving support and it was due to a range of factors including whether this was due to cohorts, children moving through primary to secondary or just particular places in the Borough and country. It was noted that a whole range and combinations were factors which was why there had been a growth in numbers. It was reported that early intervention with SEN support was effective and EHCPs were issued in line with the legislative framework. The service worked to a strict legislative framework to identify and support need and there was confidence that the council met the needs identified in the most appropriate way. Members were informed that the National Audit Office and ISOS Group had identified that the SEND systems was not a sustainable system and a Government review around what the SEND system should look like moving forward nationally was being undertaken.

Effective SEN support hinges on the early collaboration with parents, carers, and families, ensuring that concerns are identified and needs are addressed from the beginning. Establishing strong relationships with public health nurses or other trusted individuals within the community, as well as family hubs or broader family support services, was essential. First and foremost, parents should be supported however it was recognised that it was important to equip the workforce with the tools to identify needs effectively, utilising statutory checks starting at two years old and continuing onwards. Partnerships within the local area should work together to understand emerging needs within the system. Some needs could be identified in hospitals at the earliest opportunity, working alongside hospital staff, public health nurses, and council services where children are recognised. Responses to these needs should be evidence-based, with specialised teams providing support when necessary. The structure of communication and information sharing must ensure that all parties, including those in the community, family homes, universal settings such as schools, and health and social care services, were well-informed to provide comprehensive support around each need.

The waiting lists for the assessment of autism and neuro diverse conditions were significant and numbers were increasing. Work was being carried out collectively with hospitals, community colleagues and schools to ensure the model meets the needs of students based on need. Collaboration had been undertaken over the past few months with various services to ensure information was available to parents and carers on the local offer website. Work was also being undertaken to identify children on the waiting list, regardless of the pathway they were on, to assess the support they received once referred, regardless of diagnosis. It was important that families were offered support with strategies to support their children in the best way

whilst waiting for a formal assessment by health services. Training was provided to support all settings to ensure the offer extends to teachers in schools while waiting for specialist services.

Members enquired as to what support was in place for families and children identified with additional needs from birth or before starting nursery at 3 years old. It was reported that children with needs were being picked up from the 2 to 2½ year checks and were supported at a universal level at that point, if not earlier through universal health services or early years settings. Work was undertaken with nurseries in early identification and Portage services were in place for pre school children and their families with SEND and disabilities.

Targeted information and advice guidance was provided to children from Year 9 in school on an EHCP in order to prepare for their Post 16 education, employment and training options. The EHCP Team and Social Care collaborate to conduct consultation processes in Year 9 to determine the right path and included parental preferences to ensure young people's needs were met. The focus was on the individual young people to help them reach their potential. Even after plans expire at the end of the period, there was an offer of ongoing assistance for their future endeavours.

It was vital that the young people and children's wishes and feelings were taken into account and central to support and next steps. In order to do this there were a number of mechanisms in place to gather the voices of children and young people including:

- A SEND Participation Group for children in both primary and secondary schools to understand lived experience and how to help and shape experiences.
- Annual reviews of EHCPs to make sure provision was continuing to meet need
- A Young Commissioners Group had been established to shape capital schemes and programmes
- A programme called PINS (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools) to support the education and health of children in schools

Members asked how they could contribute as elected officials to support the SEND system in Barnsley. They were advised that a crucial aspect would be to raise awareness of the local services and offerings available in communities designed to assist children and families. Also being a supportive voice for families in feeding back to the Service any areas where they were falling short in order to deep dive into a particular situation. Support via contacts in Central Government for national reform would also be welcomed.

It was acknowledged that it was only right for parents and carers to have the right of appeal in the EHCP process. There was a desire to see fewer families feeling they needed to go to tribunals, it was noted most of the disagreements were around placements.

Members heard how the Service learned from ombudsman reports and individual complaints, ensuring quality assurance by trying and testing in various ways.

Nationally and locally, if a decision was made specific to a family, learning and action were traced through the services. Sometimes this required a multi-agency response and was tracked through to outcomes, showing evidence of actions or recommendations being addressed. This applied whether it was from an ombudsman or local formal complaint system to the Local Authority. Actions or recommendations would then be assigned to particular individuals who would be accountable for reaching conclusions, sometimes involving teams on how to improve moving forward. There were less formal checks and balances within the system to avoid escalation, building that structure, checking and supporting. Conversations with families could move into formal email exchanges, but often issues would be resolved before escalating. The quality assurance programme helped to prevent escalations that impact children, ensuring things are put right quickly and easily. More fundamental issues may involve local area partnerships when necessary.

Members raised concerns around the rising numbers of children requiring SEND support in schools increasing pressure on teachers possibly resulting in delivering substandard education. In response they were informed that it was not believed that substandard education was being delivered. Efforts were ongoing to develop inclusive education. Improving outcomes was a key priority with a sense of purpose untied across the Alliance and Children's Services. There was confidence that strong foundations could be built within Barnsley's schools and Academies. Support for reasonable adjustments in mainstream classrooms was welcomed without the need for outside educational provisions.

Members were informed that a regional group of Heads of Service regularly came together to share information around best practice. It was noted that Barnsley was not the only area facing challenges in terms of sufficiency, quality and parental satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Good practice internally was by regularly bringing in schools to the Barnsley Alliance to share practices to outward facing services and SENDCOs. There was access to a DfE send advisers with a national perspective who identify areas of success and common challenges. They often share insights and connect people, sometimes recommending successful practices from one authority to help another. It was crucial to leverage this network to gain both a national overview and local insights. Barnsley schools have an alliance sector-led improvement with a peer challenge model. Three schools collaborate for the review, providing essential feedback. Through the Association of Directors of Children's Services' regional challenge event, three Local Authorities share data, information and self-evaluations. They challenge each other's assessments, resulting in significant learning through this process.

RESOLVED:-

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

Chair