

Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 14 June 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Chair)
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jo Barker
Councillor Brett Beetham
Councillor Barbara Brown
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Brian Hammersley
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Justin Kerridge
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince

Officers

Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Chris Baird, Interim AD for Education
Rachel Barnes, Health and Wellbeing Delivery Manager
Helen Broughton, Commissioner (Vulnerable People)
Andy Carswell, Democratic Services Officer
Jo Davies, Service Manager (Practice Improvement)
Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director - Governance & Policy

Others Present

Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education
Councillor Jeff Morgan, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families
Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for External Relations and Overall Strategic Partnerships
Chris Evans - General Manager, Mental Health Services for Children & Young People at Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust

1. General

(1) Apologies

There were none.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 11 April 2022 and 17 May 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.

2. Public Speaking

None.

3. Question Time

(1) Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders

Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince said primary schools in the Rugby district had been asked to consider bulge classes for Years 4-6 from September, and secondary schools had been asked to consider bulge classes for Year 8. She asked if the sufficiency strategy could be reviewed, as she considered it too close to the start of the next academic year for schools to be asked to consider bulge classes. Councillor Kam Kaur said this was not a situation that was unique to Rugby. The sufficiency strategy was in the early stages of being reviewed and the district and borough councils were being consulted as part of this, to learn more about where development was taking place and where future schools needs would come from. The Chair said a Task and Finish Group looking at this issue had been proposed. He said he had seen figures in relation to this topic and informed the Committee that he had questioned the robustness of these figures.

(2) Updates from Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Assistant Directors

Councillor Jeff Morgan reminded members of the policy of trying to increase the number of children's homes in Warwickshire. He said that the home in Stratford was now ready to be occupied, while accommodation in Leamington would be forthcoming in a few months. The property was currently occupied, with the tenant due to move out shortly. A third children's home that would be adapted for children with disabilities was planned to open in Nuneaton. An offer on the property had been accepted but the purchase had not been completed.

Councillor Morgan said the Council was trying to get the District and Borough Councils in the county to sign to a pledge to help care leavers by providing things such as housing, access to leisure facilities and guaranteed job interviews. Councillor Morgan said the pledge was being reviewed by the chief executives of the various councils but the response had been mixed. He said all councils had a corporate parenting responsibility, and asked members to contact the chief executives of their district or borough council if they had close connections to them.

Nigel Minns said Ofsted and the CQC are establishing a new SEND inspection framework, and the Council had agreed to take part in a pilot inspection. It had begun the previous day and was being run virtually over a two-week period, before an in-person visit. Nigel Minns reiterated this was a test run of the new methodology to be used and was not a formal

inspection, although some feedback would be provided.

4. Approach to Levelling Up

The item was introduced by Nigel Minns, who reminded members that levelling up was a key national priority. Work was now underway to shape a countywide approach to Levelling Up, which would be presented to Cabinet for approval in July.

Nigel Minns told the Committee that the Levelling Up White Paper had four objectives: to boost productivity, pay and living standards by growing the private sector; improve public services and spread opportunities, particularly in places where they were weakest; restore a sense of community and local pride; and to empower local leaders and communities. Additionally there were 12 national missions to help achieve these objectives; one of these was devolution. There would be a national measurement and accountability framework to monitor achievement of the objectives. The notion of levelling up was a long-term aim towards 2030 and beyond. The emerging countywide approach envisaged a dual focus on specific communities of place and communities of interest (particular cohorts and groups of people where levelling up would be most relevant) for levelling up.

Members were told the national Levelling Up missions, and how they would shape the policy for Warwickshire, were; to share the Council's commitment to Levelling up with its communities; to complement everyone's organisational plans and strategies; to influence current and future strategies; to recognise and build on the power of Warwickshire's communities, partnerships, networks, and forums; and to inform the future collective work on devolution. Nigel Minns said this would complement existing strategies and help influence future strategies. The approach has been shaped through engagement with key partner organisations, and would identify targeted places, cohorts and priorities for levelling up that affected the whole county or certain places, including those at a hyper-local level.

Of the 12 national missions, three had been identified as being particularly relevant to the scope of the Committee. These were to significantly increase the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths; narrowing the gap in healthy life expectancy; and increasing the number of people to have completed high-quality skills training.

Members' attention was drawn towards the various existing strategies and areas of work and how they would link in the Levelling Up programme, and what funding streams were available. Some of these were very specific, such as the Nuneaton Education Strategy and the Tackling Social Inequality Strategy.

Six principles for levelling up had been identified. The first of these was to take a holistic approach and involve partner organisations. Nigel Minns said this was about levelling up Warwickshire; it was not a project specific to Warwickshire County Council and partnership working would be important in shaping the Levelling Up programme. Some of these partners would be from outside the county. The second principle was to take a long-term approach and improve things for future generations. The third principle was to identify root causes of issues, particularly the complex ones that created longstanding inequalities within communities. Nigel Minns said it was acknowledged that had this project been run 20 years ago then the same issues being identified now would have been the same then, which demonstrated that the root causes had not been adequately addressed. The fourth principle was to use the strengths of individuals, communities, places and

interest groups to improve their quality of life, whilst not holding back other places or groups. Each area or group would have different strengths and it was important not to take a one size fits all approach. The fifth principle was to use data to monitor progress and evolve the approach to levelling up. The final principle was to prioritise the communities of place and communities of interest, which had been identified through the use of data, that needed the most support. Rob Powell said it was important to acknowledge there was no one size fits all approach to levelling up across the county.

A 'working definition' of what levelling up meant for Warwickshire had been created and four pillars to support it had been identified. These were increasing opportunities and social mobility; reducing disparities; building community power; and creating sustainable futures. Members were shown a diagram outlining how the 12 missions fitted in with each of the four pillars.

Members were told the Voice of Warwickshire residents' panel had taken part in an exercise specifically relating to levelling up. It had been noted that levels of pride in local area were typically lower in Nuneaton and Bedworth than elsewhere, but levels of happiness were generally higher. In larger urban areas residents' sense of 'place' was their immediate neighbourhood, whereas for rural residents it would be their village. The panel had identified access to health provision, levels of safety and the quality of high streets as its priorities for improvement. In addition to parks and open spaces, the panel had however also identified levels of safety as one of the three things that made them proud to live in their local area. There did not seem to be a link between how safe an area was and how important safety was to residents. The panel considered the three most important things for a great place to live as being parks and outdoor spaces, shops and local facilities and education provision/schools. Healthcare provision had been noted as an issue amongst residents living in rural areas.

Members' attention was drawn to the evidence base that would be used towards shaping the strategy, such as indices of multiple deprivation and the results of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment's State of Warwickshire report.

Councillor Pete Gilbert said there wasn't anything in the report that could be disagreed with. However it was important action was taken and the report did not remain a series of platitudes. Councillor Gilbert said actions should be driven locally. He disagreed with the assertion levels of pride in Bedworth with low, stating pride levels should be tapped into to help develop the policies relevant to Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Councillor Brett Beetham said he represented one of the most deprived wards in the county, and stated that residents and children living there had been failed over the years. He said this had been caused by longstanding issues. Councillor Beetham said it was the job of elected members to get involved and make a difference, and not just to say they supported the proposed policy and be a tick in a box. He said some of the findings of the State of Warwickshire Report in respect of children's educational attainment in Nuneaton and Bedworth were harrowing. Councillor Beetham said the aim should be to improve achievement and attainment in areas where it was poorer, rather than decrease standards elsewhere.

Councillor Brian Hammersley said Bedworth was traditionally an area where most jobs were in manual labour and there was still a desire to seek employment in those sectors. Referring to the three most important aspects for residents' happiness, Councillor Hammersley suggested that having a job and an income was also key to making people happy.

Councillor Marian Humphreys said there was a lack of school places in the north of the county, and in her area all schools had lengthy waiting lists. She said during school holidays she would be inundated with calls from parents who had not obtained a place at their preferred school, asking when their child would manage to get a place. She stated this was due in part to the lack of Section 106 funding contributions from developers. Councillor Humphreys said the lack of school places was particularly affecting children who had special educational needs but were unable to access the education they required.

Nigel Minns accepted the point Councillor Hammersley made about low-skilled jobs, but stated many people in such employment were in low income households and in relative poverty. The issue that needed tackling was ensuring low skilled jobs did not necessarily mean low pay. Issues relating to attainment levels at school were down to sufficiency and quality of education. Nigel Minns said that although not everyone would be able to go to their first preference of school, that did not mean a child's education attainment would be less if they attended a different school. Councillor Morgan said providing people with their first job opportunities was important for stimulating the economy.

Councillor Beetham said he would be interested in receiving a more detailed breakdown of responses to the Voice of Warwickshire survey. Noting in the report that town and parish councils would be engaged with as part of the strategy, Councillor Beetham said he lived in a district where there were no town or parish councils.

Councillor Gilbert said there was no provision for grammar school places for children in Nuneaton and Bedworth, despite an ambition for some. The Chair said he concurred with the view there was a desire for grammar school provision in the north of the county.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse said the Devolution Working Party had met for the first time the previous day. He said the group had been told work was taking place regarding early years provision, but issues around attendance and attainment linkages had not been addressed when there was a requirement to do so. He said an NSPCC report released the previous week had highlighted an increase in the number of cases of neglect. Councillor Roodhouse stated his belief that making decisions by leading on issues was the best approach to take. He highlighted the priority families scheme as an example of a project that had done this well, as it had helped bring together services relating to pupil premium and free school meals. He added he had recently had a meeting with representatives of Warwickshire College, which ran a number of vocational qualifications, and they had asked to have an input into the Levelling Up agenda.

Nigel Minns said engagement with a number of partners was being sought. Regarding education he said the subject of grammar schools was a political issue, but on a factual basis he was able to confirm that it is currently against the law to establish a new one. Nigel Minns said he was unsure if there was a detailed breakdown of the Voice of Warwickshire feedback but said this could be circulated if it was available.

Councillor Jo Barker said she was a supporter of the new T Level qualification and said these could be a way of improving educational attainment for less academically-minded pupils. She stated her belief there was a perceived snobbery towards professions such as bricklaying and plumbing, even though there was a shortage of providers and people in those job areas were able to make a healthy wage. Nigel Minns said communities of interest – where there were groups

affected by a common issue but were not bound by geography – was an area that had been highlighted as a priority. He said one community of interest was children living in a low income household.

Councillor Simpson-Vince said her ward contained a further education college that was within easy reach of many pupils, but there were insufficient secondary school places. Families were being impacted further during the current cost of living crisis as they were unable to afford either a bus pass to get their children to school, or the fuel to drive them. Councillor Simpson-Vince said it was important the strategies were worked on in full so money wasn't wasted on schemes that it was later discovered did not work properly. Councillor Kerridge said it would be important to engage with as many community and social groups as possible and ensure they had the resources and investment needed to take part in the levelling up agenda. Nigel Minns said it was expected that more detail on how the strategy would be developed would be included in the full report that went to Cabinet. He said Community Powered Warwickshire was engaging with the different groups and this was helping to develop a coherent strategy.

Councillor Barbara Brown said there were some issues that the Council did not have a great deal of direct control over, or, in the case of schools, its control was diminishing. Councillor Brown asked what would be expected of the delivery of the strategy in 12 months' time. Nigel Minns said more detail of anticipated timelines would be included in the report to July's Cabinet.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe said the Levelling Up Approach was not a quick fix, but a strategy that would shape what it was hoped Warwickshire would look like in ten years' time. It was important to ensure that what was hoped for was viable to achieve, with an aim to reduce inequalities and build opportunities.

Resolved

That the Committee considered and commented as above on the proposed approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire ahead of its consideration by Cabinet.

5. SEND Written Statement of Action

The item was introduced by Chris Baird, who reminded members that an inspection of SEND provision across the whole of Warwickshire – not just in schools and education settings – had been undertaken last year. Weaknesses had been identified in a number of areas, so a written Statement of Action outlining how these would be addressed was required to be produced. The draft statement had been signed off by Ofsted and the CQC, which recognised the action plan that had been developed and how services would be developed over the course of several years. Monitoring meetings had been taking place with the Department for Education and NHS England, the most recent of which had been on 17 May. At this meeting the positive progress that had been made, and the pace at which it had occurred, had been noted.

Rachel Barnes said there had been good levels of input into the Written Statement of Action from parents and carers, including those from the newly relaunched Parent Carer Forum. Rachel Barnes reminded members there had been five areas of significant weakness that had been identified. The first of these was in relation to waiting times for autism diagnosis. Rachel Barnes said waiting times were reducing, and there had been increased staffing capacity to make diagnoses. There had been improvements to the self-help offer, including a conference that had

been well attended. An e-booklet was due to be launched soon. A new model of assessment to streamline current processes was being piloted.

The second area of weakness related to communication with parents and carers. A new monthly SEND newsletter had been launched, as had a Facebook page specific to the SEND Local Offer, which had more than 500 followers. The main website on the Local Offer contained a section titled 'You Said, We Did' to show what progress had been made. Additionally a series of webinars and online workshops had taken place, which had been well attended and good feedback had been generated. Nearly 100 members of staff had received training in restorative practice, which was aimed at building trusting relationships with families and schools.

Areas three and four were closely linked to each other, regarding inclusion and workforce development in schools. Rachel Barnes said 'change champions' had been allocated within each school consortium to lead on this and help develop an inclusion charter. A new inclusion framework aimed at providing earlier interventions was being trialled within 17 schools in Rugby. Another trial regarding children with behavioural challenges was taking place within a further five schools, based on the work of Dr Ross Greene. Rachel Barnes said feedback on this had been positive and it was intended to roll this out to another 25 schools this year. The fifth area of weakness related to the Local Offer webpages. Rachel Barnes told the Committee these had been relaunched and traffic to them had increased by 50 per cent. Additionally literature had been provided to schools, children and family centres, libraries, and also GP surgeries and presentations has been made to various groups. The Committee was told there had been two monitoring meetings with Department of Education and NHS England so far and a third was planned to take place in October 2022.

Councillor Beetham said the improvements made to date had been impressive. He noted the longest wait time for an autism diagnosis was four years, and the target was to reduce waiting times to 13 weeks. He asked if this target was on track, and asked to see projections to see how this could be delivered. Regarding the improved communication on the Facebook page, he noted that on 8 June there had been seven posts and then the day before the meeting there had been two posts within a short space of time. He stated his belief it would be better if posts were better spaced out, as there was a possibility some of them would be missed by users. Rachel Barnes said she would share this feedback. Regarding the reduction in waiting times, she said this was a target to be implemented by the end of March 2024. She was happy to share the methodology with members outside of the meeting.

Councillor Simpson-Vince asked if the improvements meant the service was now at a level where it ought to have been, or if they had gone further than that. Chris Baird said the focus had been on addressing the five identified areas of weakness, but a change improvement plan had been implemented at the same time to look at a wider range of issues. There would be areas of increased pressures, such as the number of referrals for children with an EHCP, and these would need to be kept under review.

Responding to a question from Councillor Kerridge about reducing the timeframes for autism assessments, Nigel Minns said there would be short and medium term aims to be implemented to drive this. For example different teams of professionals could be employed to undertake them; although it might take time to commission this, once it was implemented it would help speed up the process of getting the assessments done. Nigel Minns said there had been an increase in capacity in child psychologists to do this work. Additionally there were a range of short and long term

funding streams available. Nigel Minns highlighted the longest waiting times prior to Covid-19 had been two to two and a half years, and the pandemic had exacerbated waiting times.

Rachel Barnes said there needed to be increased communication to highlight the fact there was a misconception that families were unable to access autism services without a diagnosis. In fact families are able to access support without a formal autism diagnosis.

Councillor Seccombe highlighted that a third of the funding for autism services came from the Council and the remainder from the health service, highlighting the need for collaborative working. Of the areas of concern outlined in the report, Councillor Seccombe said the first two required the intervention of medical professionals. By getting the rest of them right, it would remove the stigma in young people's minds of needing medical or professional help. Councillor Seccombe said that by getting the support levels right as outlined in the third and fourth areas of concern, the issues raised in the first and second areas of concern would be allayed. She said it was important for children to remain in their regular school and community environments.

Responding to comments from Councillor Roodhouse, Nigel Minns said there were challenges regarding recruitment. External service providers were also having difficulties with recruiting and retaining staff. He reiterated the point raised earlier about communicating the fact services could be accessed without requiring an autism diagnosis; otherwise families would be in the situation of potentially waiting four years for a diagnosis, only to realise they had unnecessarily waited that time to try and access services they were eligible for. However it was important to make sure children were accessing the correct treatment pathway for their particular needs.

Councillor Humphreys said in cases where a class contained a child who was being disruptive, this would have a bearing on the learning or not just that child but the others in the class if there was no additional assistance. She did not want to see children excluded from classes but said more resources were needed to help children with behavioural issues. Rachel Barnes said there was a pilot scheme whereby teachers could receive a manual that would help them address the root causes of disruptive behaviour. It was expected that results from the pilot scheme would be ready within a few months.

Responding to a question from the Chair, Nigel Minns said there were considerable differences in how headteachers addressed autism and wider special educational needs, despite there being a good variety of training schemes available. Some schools had a more inclusive approach than others. This disparity had been noted by the CQC. Nigel Minns said the Schools Forum had been asked to help with funding for training, but they had decided against doing so following additional pressures to overall funding. Chris Baird said when a new headteacher came into post they would be informed of the various training available to them. He said Ofsted had noted in its inspection that SEND provision varied amongst different areas and on an individual level. Rachel Barnes said feedback was being gathered from the Parent Carers Forum, as well as capturing feedback before and during the intervention process. The responses would then be used to form key messages that could be circulated out.

Responding to points raised by Councillor Hammersley, Nigel Minns said the provision of special schools in Warwickshire remained high. As well as the special schools themselves, there were a number of specialist units within mainstream schools that could meet children's additional needs and the Council commissioned places in independent special schools where appropriate. Pupils made good progress so long as they were provided with the required levels of support and schools

were asked to make reasonable adjustments rather than to go above and beyond in terms of additional support. Nigel Minns said that studies showed that children in the past who had not received the support they needed had achieved poorly in adulthood; for example research showed a higher prevalence in the prison population and unemployment rates.

Responding to a question from Councillor Brown, Rachel Barnes said there were 471 children in Warwickshire currently not on a school roll, excluding those being electively home educated. These figures had been submitted to Ofsted as part of the pilot of the new inspection framework. Regarding the monitoring of the level of education provided to children being home schooled, Chris Baird said the Council did have some duties but the specifics in terms of delivery was down to the parents and carers. This was their legal right, although this was being examined in the Schools White Paper.

Rachel Barnes said there had been a lower engagement rate with parent carers from the north of the county, and alternative ways of engagement were being looked into.

Resolved

That the Committee endorsed the progress made to date to deliver the Written Statement of Action.

6. The Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People

The Chair stated his belief that the report should have been entitled 'the impact of the response to Covid-19'.

The item was introduced by Chris Baird, who drew members' attention to the three main topics that were summarised in the report. These were school attendance, missing education and attainment; mental health; and the children and families service, including social care. Chris Baird said it was important to recognise that schools had been open throughout the pandemic unless there had been staffing issues. However it was noted there were instances of attendance falling. Patterns of attendance – and the implications for children moving from an early years setting to an infant or primary school, or from primary to secondary – was outlined in the report. It was recognised there had been delays in development, or children were not at the level they would have been expected to be at had the pandemic not occurred. In particular it had been noted some children were behind in terms of language and vocabulary, as they had not been exposed to social and word-rich environments. However there had been additional impacts on a range of areas affecting how children performed at school and how they were learning. This was a position that had been reflected in national studies. Chris Baird said this had been recognised by schools, who were working through this with the help of services being supplied by the Council.

Helen Broughton told the Committee that there had been a significant impact on demand for mental health services for children. There had been an increase in incidents of self-harm, suicides and suicide attempts. Rates of self-harm were already high in Warwickshire before the pandemic, and figures suggested during 2021 it had been 33 per cent higher than the national average. The demand for services relating to eating disorders was also extremely high and there were issues around recruiting staff for specialise fields such as this. Helen Broughton said during the pandemic there had been issues relating to young people transitioning between services for children and

those for adults. The RISE mental health service had managed to help by providing some services online during lockdowns and throughout the pandemic.

Helen Broughton said a strategy group had been formed to look at transforming services for children presenting in crisis, with a workshop bringing together various partnership organisations being held the previous week. Additional funding had been awarded for services relating to eating disorders, and to roll out the provision of Mental Health Support Teams into schools. Initially this would be taking place in the south of the county before a further rollout in Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire. The final rollout in Rugby would take place next year. In regard to suicide prevention, Kooth had been commissioned to provide young people with support online including online counselling and peer support chats. A countywide Suicide Prevention Strategy was currently out for consultation. In relation to the transitions work, Helen Broughton said a working party had been established and a peer mentoring support service had been commissioned, which would be delivered through Coventry and Warwickshire MIND. This was a pilot project that was due to be completed by Christmas.

In relation to the impact on children and family support services, Jo Davies told the Committee that the Council had continued to provide services to children and families, balancing the risks for young people against the safety risks associated with making home visits during the pandemic. It was noticed that some young people struggled to adapt to the boundaries associated with lockdowns and there were increased instances of anxiety due to not being in school. Jo Davies said there were challenges relating to increased complexity of need, including possible risks of exploitation, and younger adults being more likely to be affected economically by the pandemic as they were the ones who were most likely to be furloughed or lose their job. However there were also a number of key strengths relating to service provisions and these were set out in the report.

The Chair stated his belief that lockdowns had not worked and created some mental health problems in young people where they had not existed previously. Councillor Humphreys said one of her grandchildren had started secondary school during the pandemic and provision of online learning had been poor; on occasions lessons had not taken place and it was hard to get feedback from teachers. She said she was concerned that not all schools had access to mental health services provision. Helen Broughton reminded members there was an intention for this to be rolled out in due course. Chris Evans, Assistant Director of Operations, Mental Health Services for Children & Young People at Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, said the mental health in schools team was borne out of a government Green Paper designed at providing low-level interventions. It was likely there would be lessons learned from the first phase of the rollout to schools in the south, enabling a better understanding of what was required for the second phase in the north. All schools would have access to the support programmes and the professionals who would be providing the service. Chris Evans said it would be important to listen to young people and research what support could be given to them, as they were in a unique situation where they had not been able to rely on peer to peer support to regulate their emotions. He said this had been the intention of the Kooth service. Councillor Humphreys said provision of this was particularly important in rural areas, where some young people found it harder to see their friends. Councillor Roodhouse also endorsed Kooth as a good service.

Councillor Kaur said the report was comprehensive and showed what had worked well and what had not. She said some parents had raised with her the issue of online learning, with some saying it had not been good enough.

Councillor Barker said she supported the Chair's earlier statement that the report should have been entitled 'the impact of the response to Covid-19'. She stated her belief that lockdowns had not worked and the rise in demand for mental health services caused by young people being in lockdown could have been easily predicted. Councillor Roodhouse pointed out that schools remained open throughout the pandemic, providing in-person education for children of key workers, and teachers and teaching assistants were physically present in schools. Jo Davies said additional resources had been provided to youth services as part of the transformation plan. An extra £800,000 had been allocated to community organisations as part of a joint virtual offer. Jo Davies said not all youth groups had been able to provide virtual support and the some of the funding had been intended to help the community groups as much as possible.

Jo Davies said suicide cluster meetings had been taking place with health colleagues looking at psychological support in relation to young people with suicidal ideation and self harming. Critical incident meetings had been held, some of which had escalated to safeguarding reviews. Some of these were in relation to young people in supported accommodation. Jo Davies said multi-agency learning considered the impact of Covid-19 and the relevant reviews will be available to view on the Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership website.

Chris Evans said RISE now had scope to continue delivering services online for those who wanted to access them in this way. Learning exercises had taken place so that services could continue to be delivered in the event of future health crises. It was noted that residential placements had been impacted by Covid-19 as it was not possible to deliver this service, as the units were commandeered for other purposes during the response to the pandemic and in any case there were no staff available to man them as residential units. Chris Evans said a values-based approach was in the process of being embedded; the ethos was now based on how services could be delivered rather than where.

Councillor Beetham noted the report stated young people were most anxious about infection rates of Covid-19 due to being in school, rather than contracting the disease itself. He stated his belief that appropriate levels of support should be in place to enable young people the chance to bounce back from having their progress through school put on hold as a result of the pandemic. He said it was important the Committee received regular updates on the progress that was being made. He said he would like to see some more statistics in relation to transition services in particular, stating this had been a problematic area pre-pandemic. Regarding the families who received help through the provision of laptops and vouchers, Councillor Beetham said he would like to see a detailed breakdown of which geographical areas were provided with them. Chris Evans said the transition service for people aged 18-25 was a key part of both the Council's commissioning strategy and the NHS England strategy. A peer support programme was an integral part of this. However there were difficulties in resource allocation. For example those with eating disorders had been disproportionately negatively affected by lockdown, due to being unable to access external help and the food they needed. There was a training programme based around eating disorders being developed, along with programmes relating to mental health in schools.

Councillor Morgan noted a tutoring and catchup programme had been mooted by central government. Chris Baird said he was unaware of the progress of this but would find out and circulate an answer to members. Councillor Barker said she was aware of a school where, in her opinion, the coaching had been implemented too early. Chris Baird said it was for the schools to decide on an individual basis when to introduce it.

Resolved

In accordance with standing order 28.7, as the meeting had lasted for three hours members held a vote on whether to continue the meeting. Members voted unanimously to carry on.

Councillor Kerridge said it was important to note that not all children had suffered hardship as a result of lockdowns and the pandemic in general. Regarding rates of suicides and self-harm, he asked if it was possible for the figures to be delivered in numbers rather than percentages, as these could sometimes be misleading. Councillor Kerridge said he had attended a meeting of the children and families response team and had been impressed with the work that was taking place.

Chris Evans said it was important for people to talk about their feelings, adding there was a perceived stigma around emotional difficulties. Although anxiety in itself wasn't a clinically diagnosable condition and was a normal human emotion, sometimes support was needed in cases where people were unable to stabilise their feelings. If left unchecked it could lead to a situation requiring intervention.

Councillor Simpson-Vince said although there were disparities in the quality of online learning that was delivered, teachers had been thrown in at the deep end and were expected to find new ways to deliver lessons in a very short space of time. Additional disruption was caused by teachers being ill and having to isolate, meaning they could not deliver lessons. Chris Evans said a study had suggested 79 per cent of pupils surveyed said they felt they would be OK when restrictions were lifted. However it was important to help children feel confident and supported, as some had shown signs of being emotionally dysregulated.

Chris Evans said there was a perception that people's lives needed to return to normal as quickly and safely as possible. Warwickshire was leading the national response to the trauma suffered by children and young people during the pandemic. In this instance the trauma or anxiety affecting the sufferer did not mean they were mentally ill.

Councillor Hammersley asked if teachers were on full pay when they were off ill due to Covid, and therefore some would be reluctant to teach classes as a result. Nigel Minns said teachers' contractual arrangements varied so he could not provide an answer, but he was happy to provide Councillor Hammersley with a sample of teachers' conditions and sickness arrangements. Nigel Minns reiterated that throughout the pandemic all schools remained open for vulnerable children and those whose parents were key workers, and teachers and teaching assistants were in class teaching. It was accepted the quality of online teaching did vary.

Members asked for updates on the progress that was being made. Nigel Minns said that in terms of educational attainment it would be unlikely there would be a significant update before the autumn term. In terms of an update regarding healthcare provision, Nigel Minns said he would liaise with colleagues at the CCG about suitable timeframes for an update.

7. Work Programme

Members noted the content of the work programme. It was noted there were a number of items scheduled for the next meeting, and there may be a requirement to schedule an additional meeting.

8. Any Other Business

There were no other items to discuss.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

Members noted the dates of forthcoming meetings.

The meeting rose at 1.22pm

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Chair

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