

# Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 18 June 2024

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Committee Members

Councillor Marian Humphreys (Chair)  
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi  
Councillor Barbara Brown  
Councillor Piers Daniell  
Councillor Justin Kerridge  
Councillor Chris Mills  
Councillor Tim Sinclair  
Councillor Dave Humphreys

#### Officers

Johnny Kyriacou, Assistant Director for Education Services  
Nigel Minns, Executive Director for Children and Young People  
Dr Shade Agboola, Director of Public Health  
Shinderpaul Bhangal, Corporate Parenting (Team Leader - Participation)  
John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families  
Rachel Jackson, Head of Education Strategy and Transformation  
George Shipman, Head of Safeguarding Communities

#### Others Present

### 1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and read out a statement relating to the pre-election period, prior to the upcoming General Election.

#### (1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Michael Cowland and Phil Johnson, Co-optees, Councillors Kam Kaur, Sue Markham and Penny-Anne O'Donnell.

Councillor Heather Timms attended representing the Cabinet Portfolio Holders.

Councillor Dave Humphreys substituted for Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince.

## **(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

There were none.

## **(3) Minutes of the Previous Meetings**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 April and 14 May 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to an amendment to the attendance.

## **2. Public Speaking**

Gurpreet Dulay addressed the meeting on his experience of the complaints process.

Mr Dulay stated that he was angry with the process he had experienced over the past 18 months, involving nineteen upheld complaints, across seven different teams. He referred to Safeguarding initially, stating that progress should be clear by the first review meeting if actions were not likely to be met, were too broad, unrealistic and needed to be amended as per Council policy. He referred to six meetings in six months, resulting in the same actions and recommendations being identical to those from meeting one to meeting six. With Early Help he had been promised support multiple times but this was only delivered after he chased and submitted complaints, this help had not been provided earlier but later taking months.

Secondly, Mr Dulay referred to management and the complaints policy which he felt was failing with the Council team regularly telling him they were under-resourced. In his experience, the two-day period to acknowledge a statutory complaint had taken 14 days and none of the nineteen complaints had been acknowledged by the Council. The policy advised that the aim was to provide a remedy that in his experience was rarely provided. A number of broad statements had been made but no specific actions as to what, when or how. He referred to the recent Member investigation as an example.

Finally, Mr Dulay referred to the reports the Committee received and the Child Protection KPI's. He felt that whether numbers were higher or lower the Committee appeared satisfied resulting in the meeting failing to drive real scrutiny. As a father and a CIPFA qualified officer, he recognised good governance and wanted to see a greater impact as he felt the Council had failed in this regard.

Elaine Lamb addressed the meeting as a Director of Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice in response to the SEND community's feelings relating to the investigation outcomes. She advised that Parent Carer Voice had participated in the complaints process following the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024 but the outcomes were not what many had hoped for. These had been met with anger and frustration in the SEND community. She felt that the Council and its Members needed to recognise that the relationship between the Council and parents was damaged and more work was needed to build trust. She had been pleased to be part of the group arranging mandatory SEND training to elected members, thanked all those who had attended the workshops and hoped this would lead to more engagement with Councillors. She

hoped to be able to be part of the process in helping Members to provide effective scrutiny, recognising the barriers that many individuals in the SEND community faced including access to education, disability discrimination and hate crime. She concluded by advising that she would continue to work to help to prevent inequality and stand up for the children of Warwickshire to meet the needs of families.

### **3. Question Time**

#### **(1) Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Heather Timms responded to questions and advised that she would speak to officers and provide written responses to anything that could not be answered immediately.

#### **(2) Updates from Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Directors**

Councillor Heather Timms addressed the meeting on behalf of Councillors Kaur and Markham.

In relation to the Children and Young People portfolio, Councillor Timms advised that Warwickshire County Council had been selected earlier in the year as a sector led improvement partner by the Department for Education. This meant that the Council would be supporting other authorities to help improve their children's services and were the only sector led improvement partner in the West Midlands.

Councillor Timms went on to speak about Pathfinder, advising that Warwickshire had been selected by the Department for Education for Wave 2 of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme. A more detailed update was included later in the agenda. The Council would be at the forefront of reforms, receiving £4.1million to implement the changes. Councillor Timms took the opportunity to congratulate colleagues across the Police, Health and the County Council who had worked hard to apply for this opportunity.

Moving to the Education portfolio, Councillor Timms referred to the figures for Extended Childcare Entitlements and wraparound which were 2% above the national and regional average and highlighted the Education Sufficiency Strategy due to be considered at Cabinet that week. Members noted the new Fair Access Protocol, the Alternative provision Working Group and the partners working together to increase provision and help make the system more sustainable.

Councillor Timms was delighted to advise that Warwickshire Music had been successful in its partnership bid to lead the Music Hub for the sub-region. This would be known as the Heart of England Music and due for launch from 9 August 2024. Further information could be found about this and Elective Home Education on the Council's webpages.

With regard to Early Years, the progress and timeline for development of the strategy was explained for School Effectiveness and Early Years. 89% of schools in Warwickshire were rated good or outstanding, in line with the national data, and 88.8% of children were attending one of these schools.

The continuing pressures experienced by those working in SEND and Inclusion were

highlighted with increased numbers of students and increased costs. Work continued to improved performance against the 20-week deadline and progress on resourced provisions was ahead of schedule with nine due to open in 2024/25. Inclusion Framework trials continued in Rugby and Bedworth with one in Stratford agreed for September. Councillor Timms acknowledged the level of work being put in in SEND and Inclusion and thanked officers for their hard work and commitment.

Councillor Dave Humphreys queried the number of people waiting for a SEND diagnosis, recognising how difficult this could be. Councillor Timms advised that there was a £6000 budget available for schools to access to help support a child within the mainstream setting, prior to them receiving an EHCP.

Officers confirmed after the meeting that 712 new EHC Plans were issued in 2023, 383 had been issued so far in 2024 and 448 were currently in the system being processed. It was forecast that approximately 1074 EHC plans would be issued by the end of 2024. This information was shared with the Committee via email.

#### **4. Corporate Parenting Panel Update**

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Service Manager, introduced an update from the Participation – Voice, Influence & Change team and introduced young people from the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum, IMPACT and the Warwickshire Youth Council. Some representatives were attending in person and others via a hybrid link to address the Committee.

Shinderpaul outlined the work that had been taking place, focusing on the breadth and scope of work. The range of events and activities had increased over the past 18 months and the work with children in care and care leavers had been positively received. Other areas included SEND, the youth justice service, Youth Council, with a focus on working directly with children, individually and at a service level. He signposted Members to Appendix 1 which illustrated the events taking place and highlighted the number of gradually increasing contacts being established.

Other areas to note was the work with the cross ministerial board, an update on the brothers and sisters work and attendance of officers and youth representatives at the head teacher conference. Shinderpaul advised that work was ongoing with apprenticeships, in particular, a further four care experienced apprentices had started along with one apprentice completing a six-year legal programme, leaving with a law degree.

Report outlines additional areas of work in main body, worth noting – cross ministerial board, brothers and sisters work – area now enabling more time together, apprenticeships continue & 4 gone on to full time work, further 4 care experiences apprentices started, legal 6 year apprentice come out with law degree, head teacher conference, larger events, youth voice, warks youth conference, feeds us info about priorities about what is important to young people.

Shinderpaul explained that the presentation illustrated the range of work taking place with different age groups and the diverse range of young people involved. Activities included trips to the Bear Grylls Adventure site and the Snowdome in February 2024, Young Parents celebrating Mother's Day, Refuge Celebration Event in June 2023, Wellbeing Walks and the successful Sunday Football team.

Callum and Muhammed addressed the meeting on behalf of the Children in Care Council. Muhammed talked about his experience since arriving in the UK from Sudan, attending college to study science and his ambition to become a pharmacist. He felt the CICC was a safe place to share experiences and wanted to tell Members about what the group was proud of, what needed improving and key messages. The CICC helped to introduce to children to each other and gave them a voice to explain what they felt needed improving, which included:

- Placement stability; better healthcare access; cultural and identity support for children in care; and better communication with professionals before decisions were made about their lives.

In conclusion, Callum and Muhammed outlined their key messages stating the following:

- Placement issues and frequent moves affected a child's education, relationships and wellbeing; work was needed to continue to try and make a difference; and they would like more trips and opportunities to get children in care together.

Ricky and Melissa addressed the meeting on behalf of the Care Leavers Forum (CLF), explaining that this was a group of ten care leavers who met once a month to discuss what had gone well and what needed improving. Ricky's presentation covered the areas to feel good about including the events open to care leavers, wellness days, trips to local parks and opportunities to make friends. Additional agency support and involvement included Barnados and St Basils along with other agencies supporting housing and mental health problems.

Ricky outlined one area of improvement he felt was needed which was more involvement in recruitment, training and future opportunities for care leavers; apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

Melissa addressed the meeting helping to outline the key messages and improvements needed including an improvement of awareness for support for people overall and those with antisocial behaviour; education barriers; and improving support for independent living after leaving care.

She felt that more support was needed for those harder to reach people particularly those with addictions, or in prison. More training for professionals was required to help them understand the difficulties and behaviours being demonstrated, which would help relationship building.

Melissa talked about living independently and the need for support with life skills. She explained that it was often hard to stay in education and continue to do well, with many youngsters leaving a family home setting at the age of 18, losing that grounded feeling and trying to manage the stress of exams which often led to dropping out of education. The CLF felt that having the right staff helped to provide a better experience but progress needed to be revisited to keep up with improvements and adapt accordingly. The final key message was the need for the Council and professionals to keep them in the loop and give feedback from their involvement.

Ray and Ray addressed the meeting on behalf of IMPACT. They explained that the group's aim was to have fun and make friends but also had a serious role, outlining their participation on the Working Together Charter for Warwickshire SEND. They described their different experience of education and explained why the 'one size fits all' approach did not suit everyone. Ray advised that IMPACT had its first opportunity to speak on this subject in Summer 2023, at the Head Teachers Conference. Despite it being daunting, they had felt listened to and in conjunction with

Coventry University had produced a film entitled 'Wrong Size fits All', which had 23,000 online views so far. They hoped that the film inspired more young people to open up with a key message to act now, not later.

Ray recognised that schooling costs had increased but felt that if she had been supported at age 8 or 9, these could have been much lower. Her needs had not been seen and despite giving 110%, she had been seen as lazy. This had resulted in her lacking trust in the system for the past decade. A key message was that if young people did not feel safe, they could not be expected to learn with small things making a difference such as what they could wear and having regular breaks.

Ray and Ray concluded by requesting that young people be given the supported needed as early as possible and highlighted IMPACT's priorities from April 2024. They felt that having an IMPACT apprentice would be helpful to increase the diversity of the group, reaching out through Warwickshire's special schools and school councils. They thanked those Members who had attended training, recognising the clear challenges in the current system. Finally, they reiterated that they were not just a statistic but real people.

George addressed the meeting representing Warwickshire Youth Council. He gave some background about himself and provided a brief summary of the Youth Council, referring to the presentation slides which included further information. The Youth Council gave young people the opportunity to speak with adults who made the big decisions including the police and town planners. They were keen to meet more decision makers and work with other partners.

George explained the Online Elections process, who could take part, the publicity and how voting took place online. The Youth Council had received its highest number of candidates in 2023/24, with 66 young people putting themselves forwards and the first online voting test had worked well. The election process had been co-produced with the help of County Council staff.

George went on to give an overview of the Youth Project Grant funding the Youth Council had, which could be applied for by youth organisations in Warwickshire. There were four main categories for the grant:

- Reducing Crime and Improving Safety;
- Improving Young People's Experience in Schools;
- More Support with Mental Health and Wellbeing; and
- Providing More Things to Do.

In the last round of applications four grants of £5000 had been awarded and the organisations had been invited back to give the Youth Council an update on how the money had been used.

The Youth Council had also been involved in a Transforming Leamington project with town planners. They had input ideas and continued to have involvement throughout. Future plans included visiting schools to speak to young people as well as the establishment of three sub-groups which they hoped to report back on to Members in due course. George concluded by outlining the Youth Council's key messages which were to enable young people to have space, voice, audience and change.

The Chair addressed the young attendees and thanked all of them for delivering their presentations so well. She reminded them that it took courage to come and talk to Members and

they should be proud of themselves. All Members joined in thanking them for a very informative and concise presentation.

Councillor Sinclair queried how the feedback and insights from the young participants was practically used to deliver change. Shinderpaul Bhangal outlined a number of ways this was done, such as increasing the activities, relaxing stipulations and allowing more time for brothers and sisters in care to spend time together. This had come directly from a request by children living through the care system. Other examples included the Baby Box project which had stemmed from an idea by young parents and linking individuals with the right officers, at the right level.

Following comments from Councillor Kerridge, Shinderpaul Bhangal explained that one important factor was who the support worker was as one child's experience could be very different to another. Enabling those meetings whereby feedback could be given and received in a constructive way and building relationships with their support workers. Regarding those harder to reach care leavers and those in the justice system, Shinderpaul acknowledged that this remained a challenge as many were more reluctant to engage.

Councillor Barbara Brown was impressed with the speeches from the young people and asked how the relationship with schools could be managed to enable some students to wear what was comfortable. It was noted that some schools were academies and may work with the Council out of goodwill. Johnny Kyriakou, Director of Education, agreed stating that the Council had a key role to play but the school was ultimately responsible for the experience received, so those communications were important.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse reiterated the importance of the charter and working together. He felt this needed to include wider inclusion of the Health and Wellbeing Board, NHS and Parish and Town Councils. Nigel Mins agreed, reminding Members of the changes that had taken place and progress made over the past year. Nigel Minns advised that an important feature of the SEND and Improvement Board was that it was multi-agency.

Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi thanked all of the officers for their input stating the Councillors learned more from hearing directly from the young people. He hoped to see more presentations from them in the future as they were the experts. He referred to the comments made about anti-social behaviour, stating that it would be useful to help understand those behaviours further.

The Chair thanked all the young representatives for attending and suggested that they be invited back in six to twelve months' time. She also felt it may be beneficial if they spoke at Council to a wider audience, so that all Members could hear about the work taking place at a ground level. She thanked Shinderpaul Bhangal and his team for attending.

## **5. Year End Integrated Performance Report 2023/24**

The Committee received a report outlining the Year End 2023/24 organisational performance, progress against the Integrated Delivery Plan and management of finances and risk.

John Coleman, Director of Children & Families Service, introduced the report and signposted Members to key areas including xxx detailed in paragraph 2.4. He advised that there was an improvement around the number of children in education and employment. John Coleman also brought Members attention to the following performance data:

- The number of maintained schools in budget deficit had risen;
- The percentage of in year applications had improved but needed further progress (see page 39);
- The number of children in need and in child protection had risen to 3700, impacting on caseloads for social workers, highlighting a rise in the number of children requiring support;
- The overspend in the Children & Families service was detailed in Appendix 3;
- The average cost of residential care had risen from £4500 to £6500/£7000 per week, per child.

In relation to the Integrated Delivery Plan detailed at Appendix 2, there had been some progress but some areas had been compromised. For example, Bedworth were the only area with no County Council youth centre but there were plans to bring one forwards in the future. In addition, the Children's Homes project was progressing well with some sites awaiting Ofsted inspections.

Following a query from Councillor Kerridge regarding measures that were static or in decline, John Coleman gave assurance that detailed plans were in place to address this but some areas were more challenging than others.

Members also discussed the percentage of students in mainstream school with an EHCP. Nigel Minns advised that 12 new EHCP's had been issued last year and already figures were expected to increase to 1070 this year, with 448 in the system currently. He reiterated the main driver to keep children with SEND in local communities and schools.

Councillor Piers Daniell asked for the number of schools that would have resourced provision by September and what the process was for providing that once requested. Nigel Minns, Executive Director for Children and Young People, advised that it was key to get as many schools up and running as quickly as possible so as soon as the provision was requested, the need was checked for that area, and funds provided.

Rachel Jackson advised that in 2023, a total of 195 schools had resourced provision available, and the target for 2024/25 was to increase that to 231.

Nigel Minns later responded advising that the number of schools in receipt of resourced provision would be 529 by 2028.

## **Resolved**

That the report is noted.

## **6. Knife Crime and Child Exploitation**

Members received a presentation from George Shipman relating to the areas of development and approach to Knife Crime and Child Exploitation within Warwickshire.

George Shipman highlighted the key points which had been covered in a recent Member development session. The briefing had looked at the current approach and the adoption of new approaches, focusing on partnership working with the police, health colleagues and others.



He advised that a large focus was on development of the exploitation strategy, which was made up of the different approaches required for different ages and groups of people. Part of the culture change was how early work was undertaken with young people initially, understanding their development needs which could include speech, language and emotional development. There was also a need to understand the changes that took place as children got older and the increase in risk taking behaviour. George Shipman explained that some individuals felt they had no choice and the internet and social media had a large impact on young people.

George Shipman outlined the Youth Endowment Fund to Members which was aimed at 13 to 17 year olds, either victims or perpetrators. Many areas of behaviour were linked connecting the police, gangs, social care and attendance issues. The issues affecting victims and perpetrators were often similar and officers were working on understanding and responding to those needs.

The update included the numbers of offences and number of children offending, which had reduced from 147 to 120 on 2023/2024. There was a reduction in weapon related offences, with the data separated further by district and borough. Members noted that all of those incidents had been committed by males ranging between 15 and 16 years of age. Support had developed from a County wide team to a North / South approach and the lead worker was no longer a social worker with the team being multi agency and multi-disciplinary.

The teams were co-located with the Police and Barnados and comprised of different workers with a range of focus. There were also a number of family support workers able to better target support and twenty minute focused sessions could be more effective than an hour long session. The substance abuse service had a drugs worker to support staff and help to increase knowledge, keeping track of new developments.

In response to those youngsters that often went missing, return to home interviews were carried out by specialist missing workers to ensure those relationships were built and maintained. Members were reminded that sleep also had a large impact on mental health.

The prevention work was seeing a reduction in crime in the area and nationally and the ambition was to maintain this focus moving forwards. The Council had also invested in 'Loud Mouth', a theatre company that provided training and education programmes in safeguarding and relationships.

In conclusion, George Shipman explained that the aim was to think about communities, how to drill down into them and taking local issues into account. Colleagues were working to understand the best agencies to respond in differing situations and how to identify concerns early.

In response to a query from Councillor Dave Humphreys, George Shipman confirmed that the re-offending rates were detailed and overall the rate was reducing. It was noted that the figures showed less people offending but those who did, reoffended more.

Clarification was provided on some of the acronyms in the report and Councillor Kerridge asked for further information on the serious violence characteristics. Officers confirmed that the vast majority were male and both perpetrator and victim were often within the same social group, with similar factors such as drug use, involvement in crime and non-attendance at school.

Councillor Sinclair noted that the national picture suggested that understanding the characteristics of offenders and victims should make it possible to identify them and intervene before offences

occurred. George Shipman confirmed results were seen in this area as officers were better equipped to understand those at risk. He explained that many had been present in households where domestic violence had occurred and the Council was focusing on the professional skills needed to help engage with these individuals.

In response to a question from Councillor Barbara Brown, officers confirmed they would get back to her about the gender percentage data in relation to victims. It was noted that female victims were worked with differently as the support and areas of need could be very different to male victims.

The Chair thanked George Shipman for his presentation and update.

## **Resolved**

That the report is noted.

## **7. Warwickshire Education Strategy 2024-2029**

The Committee received a report detailing the progress of the draft Warwickshire Education Strategy 2024-2029, attached at Appendix A to the report.

The draft strategy was endorsed by Cabinet on 11 April and would be submitted for further consideration at Council on 23 July 2024.

Rachel Jackson, Head of Education, Strategy and Transformation introduced the report and signposted Members to Appendix A which included a strategic pipeline outlining the range of support.

Rachel Jackson outlined the four priorities as detailed on page 91 of the document pack, expanding on each in turn. She explained the need to work across the broader system of health and social care, linking in with the Council's corporate approach and highlighted the education disparities, particularly in terms of post 16 provision. The support detailed in the strategic pipeline and the delivery plan would bolster this approach. Members noted the aim to update the Committee on progress in six months' time.

Councillor Justin Kerridge queried the statistics on the number of schools that were achieving good or outstanding status as he would like to see how Warwickshire compared to regional competitors, especially in relation to special education provision. Rachel confirmed that the framework was wide within education and comparisons would be carried out with neighbouring areas in due course.

Johnny Kyriakou, Director for Education, reminded the meeting that in relation to Ofsted judgements, the majority of establishments were academies and officers worked with the regional schools' office and schools on a bespoke basis.

Councillor Tim Sinclair asked for clarity on where young people's views and ideas were included in the strategy. Officers advised that the Delivery Plan assisted with this and could be seen in priority 2. Priorities 1 and 2 dealt with 'Best Start' and SEND considerations, helping to gain an earlier

understanding of a child and their needs. Councillor Sinclair asked if it was possible to make those interventions earlier and whether it could have a beneficial outcome.

Rachel Jackson explained that the Early Years Integrated Plan was designed to identify those children that may need support at an earlier time. She advised that this was due to come online later in the year.

Councillor Piers Daniell noted that only 2% of County owned establishments were Early Years and asked if there were any plans to expand in this area. Officers confirmed that provision was delivered by a range of providers but there were no current plans to expand. The Council would continue to work with its own nurseries.

## **Resolved**

That the progress of the draft Warwickshire Education Strategy 2024 – 2029 is noted.

## **8. Pathfinder Delivery Plan**

George Shipman provided a verbal update and slide presentation on the Pathfinder Delivery Plan.

The presentation included the background to the 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' strategy which had started in May 2022, following the publication of reforms across the children's social care system. In July 2023 over £45 million of funding was made available to design and test the reforms.

The 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' Strategy was built on six pillars, with the government investing funds to address urgent issues and to understand how the reforms could be delivered. This was felt to be the biggest change to child protection in years.

George Shipman went on to explain how the Pathfinder programme worked, supporting social workers and the number of actions the Council was asked to commit to. Ultimately, this was a shared ambition and Members noted the four key reform strands that would be delivered as a whole system transformation.

The presentation concluded with the planned timescales to implement the Pathfinder programme, which would require the Council to work at pace. George Shipman advised that officers hoped to report back to the Committee with more detail in due course.

Councillor Kerridge queried how support was delivered to families who may have differing parental views from each other. John Coleman agreed that this was challenging and the family help team would have a practitioner allocated to the family for the entire time. This was hoped to mitigate the need for families to repeat their story and would enable them to keep hold of the same officer or worker throughout the process. In order to implement this, the Council was going to restructure approximately 500 staff.

The aim was to get families to the right team in their locality much quicker, Currently assessments took 45 days to complete and the ambition was to reduce this to 10 days, whilst also reducing the number of strategy meetings held.

Councillor Sinclair asked for further information on how parents escalated potential failings with their single point of contact and how officers would ensure sufficient handover of information when staff left. John Coleman explained that Warwickshire had struggled to recruit social workers and carried vacancies. The Council was now looking to recruit fifteen family support workers and the change in reforms would help to open up the workforce.

In response to the escalation of failings, there was a process that parents could follow if they did not feel they were getting the support they needed as well as a formal complaints process. The transfer of information would be helped by the use of one recording system being used by everyone, making sure clear transfer summaries were in place and accurate chronologies.

Councillor Dave Humphreys asked if external agencies were used such as community groups, which often added to the support network. John Coleman agreed that use of the voluntary sector and community links were a critical part of the process.

The Chair thanked George Shipman for his presentation and the update was noted.

## **9. Work Programme and items on the Forward Plan**

The Committee noted and agreed the updated work programme and items on the Forward Plan relevant to the remit of the Committee.

Members noted that the Education Strategy Delivery Plan would be reported back on in six months' time.

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was none.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting date is scheduled for 17 September 2024.

The meeting rose at 12:58

.....  
Chair