

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Education, Health and Care Transitional Committee

Meeting held 4 November 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Mohammed Mahroof (Chair), Sue Alston, Alexi Dimond, Jayne Dunn, Mary Lea, George Lindars-Hammond, Kevin Oxley, Martin Phipps and Simon Clement-Jones (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jack Scott and Richard Williams. Councillor Simon Clement-Jones attended as substitute Member for Councillor Williams.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Transitional Committee held on 4th October, 2021, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 There were no public questions or petitions received from members of the public.

6. INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEES

6.1 Emily Standbrook-Shaw, Policy and Improvement Officer, submitted a briefing paper setting out the role and purpose of Transitional Committees (TCs) and how it was intended they are to work and how they relate to other structures within the Council, and to start to develop work plans and ways of working. She said the key points were that TCs were temporary, advisory Committees, and not, as some other local authorities who were similarly going through transition to a Committee system, considered to be shadow Committees which would continue to work with similar memberships once the new arrangements were in place. She said that it was acknowledged that education and health were a large remit and would need to be given much consideration when forming the new Committees. Emily

Standbrook-Shaw said that the Scrutiny Committees were still in place, and it was felt that the TCs would act as a conduit for consideration of issues that might arise out of Local Area Committees. She said that TCs would decide new ways of working and how to work with partners and communities, and that these ways of working would provide valuable evidence and feedback to the Governance Committee when deciding the final structure under the new committee model of governance.

6.2 The Committee noted the information now reported.

7. SEND TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD

7.1 The Committee received a report providing an update regarding Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services in Sheffield and also an update on Post-16 transition to adulthood.

7.2 Present for this item were Louise Goddard (Post 16 SEND Officer) Kevin Straughan (Head of Lifelong Learning, Skills and Employment), and Rose Ward (Interim Head of Service, SEND).

7.3 Kevin Straughan said that, as a preamble to the report, the SEND Team was a relatively new team and had only been in existence for the past five months and as such was gathering momentum and traction. He said the implementation of the Post-16 Officer had been deemed to be essential to address issues that had arisen during an inspection of Joint Local Area SEND carried out in 2018. The remit of the role was to establish clarity around the pathways to adulthood by making the picture clearer, wider and brighter for young people with SEND and also for their families/carers in an attempt to reduce the number of post-16 young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and having nothing meaningful to move into. Kevin Straughan said that, at present, the transition into adulthood commenced too late and caused confusion for many and there was still a lot of work to be done on this. He felt that there was a need for strong leadership and support for families, a clear mandate to work with young people and their families to get the pathway right as they transition into adulthood.

7.4 Louise Goddard stated that she had been in post since May 2021, and had established links with child and adult social care Heads of Service, the Youth Service, Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, the Pupil Referral Unit and some voluntary and community organisations and she had gathered data centred around the number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the school or education provider they sit with and the national curriculum year group they were in. She said from the findings it was clear that the pathways to adulthood were not set out early enough and were not clear. Louise Goddard stated that

there was a misconception about young people with SEN that they had nothing to offer except to work either in horticulture or charity shops and this was not the case, they had and deserved a right to further education and employment if they so wished. She then referred to the development of the Pathway to Employment Working Group which met monthly and had a very clear focus upon engagement with employers and a range of supportive stakeholders to ensure that a pathway into work was available for young people with SEND, and to explore mechanisms to engage employers, families and young people and prepare young people for working life. She said that employment at Post-16 was not for everyone with SEND, some wanted to develop independent living skills before gaining employment.

7.5 Louise Goddard stated that the team needed to produce EHC plans that were clearer, however in many cases, social workers were not appointed to assist children and their families and therefore not in attendance at EHCP annual reviews. She said there was a need to redesign the Local Offer website to make it user-friendly as currently it didn't take account of the fact that not everyone had the necessary digital skills and equipment to access the information. She said that she was developing SEND Surgeries around the city with representatives from health and social care, and transport, with the aim of taking over a family centre for young people and families to attend and talk about things that matter to them when reaching adulthood. She said that she was in the process of setting up Youth Forums so that young people could have a voice as the Service doesn't always hear from them, but instead just the views of the parents and the professionals who write the EHCPs. Louise Goddard then referred to those young people who were not receiving education in a special school setting, stating that there needed to be a five-day offer to them as post-16 providers offer a three-day study programme, however a pilot scheme was being rolled out to find out how to fill the other two days with activities and interests for those young people. She said that work on the transition booklet which was available on the parent/carer forum website was needed to include a tick list for actions to aid young people and their families with 'next steps' and 'what to expect'.

7.6 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- It was recognised that personalisation was important for young people and their families. What was clear from an ombudsman complaint, was that if more personalised contact had been made, and personalised the process more, the complaint wouldn't have been so strong. It was felt that the process could be followed more closely by having better contact and communication with families.

- With regard to a person-centred approach, it was accepted that the pathways needed to be put in place sooner rather than later. Aiming to have the pathway identified in Year 9, talking to parents and young people about what the pathway looks like, to give them an idea of the direction of travel and to have a true partnership with the parent/carer and young person. It was felt too late for young people at the age of 16 to arrive at Sheffield College without an idea of what was on offer. There were often some very intelligent people not knowing exactly what was on offer and what they could achieve and be successful.
- A meeting had been held with representatives of Sheffield Hallam University about their civic university concept and asked if those with SEND might be supported by the University to have a route into the University. Also, a partnership had been created with Northern College who were looking at creating a bespoke higher education course which directs young people to Huddersfield University who have created a pre-access course into higher education and will take young people who don't have a qualification for English or Maths and will take them in at the age of 19 or above to get them started.
- Contact has been made with the High Sheriff in the hope of bringing in a high bank of employers to open the door across a wide range of organisations in his capacity not only as High Sheriff but also as a businessman and someone who works alongside the voluntary sector. It was appreciated that there was a need for smaller employers as well that can personalise support and some good, positive responses had been received. One small restaurant had agreed to offer work experience opportunities. The South Yorkshire Jobs Fund starts next year, and it was anticipated to engage with the employers through them.
- Funding and strong support had been given by the City Council. It was important for better engagement with partners, and much more could be done with the partnership across the city, i.e. with the Universities, Sheffield College, parent/carer forums etc.
- Covid stopped things moving forward, but the Service held its first young persons' voice event organisation called "KIDS" and brought young people from all over the city and they told us what they wanted, they said we want to work and there's a need to get that moving more.
- With regard to apprenticeships, there was a need to

engage more with supported internship apprenticeships scheme and change the way it was recruited to. There was need a create a more generic apprenticeship scheme for 16- and 17-year-olds so that young people could come into the Council and create a barrier-less approach to help them to develop skills to have a career with the Council.

7.7 It was recommended that:

- the voice of young people needed to be present to work with service receivers
- with regard to the question around employment – there was a large unit around the Authority which is around regeneration and employment and there is something that can be done to join up Departments around the Council.

7.8 Rose Ward provided an update regarding SEND Services. She said that a review of high need funding was to be undertaken and that a three-year plan had been agreed to ensure that Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) for children were adequately funded and delivered to allow them the best chance of success. She briefly outlined the statutory assessment process and stated that it was essential to extract the correct information from annual reviews to ensure that young voices were heard. Ms Ward stated that a review of frontline staff had been carried out in May 2021 and due to a decreased number of Inclusion Officers for a number of reasons, a business case had been put forward to have a rolling programme of recruitment to allow for sufficient staffing to bring down case loads from 320 to 150. In context there are around 3,800 children with EHCPs, 1,200 were within post 16 and there were 336 children without a base and work needs to be done to ensure that everyone was on the right pathway.

7.9 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- Regular meetings were held with parents/carers of young people with SEND and the comments from the Committee will be taken forward to facilitate such meetings.
- Earlier on in the year, there were only six Inclusion Officers in the Team, so to enable the Service to sustain the number of plans to be written and reduce the backlog, a recruitment drive meant that that number had now increased to 18, with eight of those officers being brought in through monetary buy-ins. However, recruitment was a rolling programme so it was hoped to increase staff which would alleviate parents' concerns that their children were not receiving the proper help and support they required.

- Following on from the Quality Assurance Audit and Quality Standards Audit, weekly meetings were held to help social care and education representatives see how plans were written and to help them understand how to close the loop to see what works and what requires improvement.
- With regard to conflict resolution, every EHCP includes a covering letter giving information of how to approach mediation, an email address for contact and outlining the right to an appeal and tribunal.
- There was a rolling programme in place for recruitment and the Service was also looking to introduce an internal training programme to develop and upskill existing staff. There was an induction programme of three months for those coming into the Service.
- It was anticipated that 18 Inclusion Officers would be needed to be able to carry out between 120 and 150 EHCPs. By having a good level of officers, they get to know the individuals and their families and are able to have a relationship with the family and able to provide a better plan.
- It was acknowledged that there was a shortfall in the number of special school places available, not only in Sheffield but nationally. Work was being carried out with Sector and Corporate colleagues to look at expanding opportunities to ensure the most effective and efficient use of space within mainstream schools.
- Although recent appeals that had gone to tribunal had been found in favour of the local authority, it was hoped that these could be prevented as these were highly stressful and an inefficient use of resource. Meetings had been held with a number of parents who had gone through the appeals process and lessons have been learned by listening to parents and trying to understand their experiences and changes would be made. A Conflict Resolution Model was to be carried out to hopefully reduce mediation and tribunals without removing the parents' rights of appeal.
- A new special school will open in September, 2022 with some pupils attending with a new EHCP in place and it was felt that this would alleviate some of the pressures. The Service was also looking to develop hubs and integrated resources in mainstream sites as every child has the right to mainstream education and we are looking into how to

keep children in mainstream education. There was a plan for a further special school to open in 2023.

- With regard to a dedicated telephone line, we would have to look at the funding for this, but it was felt that this would be beneficial. The Autism Team does have a dedicated phonenumber.

7.10 The Chair summarised the key issues arising from the meeting as follows:-

- School places
- If there were additional schools, would we still be short of numbers
- The need for a dedicated phone line, is this something we should be doing
- To meet with parent forums
- Parents do struggle to get through the system, should it be clearer
- Tribunals, very expensive route, was there any mileage in speaking with those who have been there to see what can be done to avoid going to hearings.

7.11 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanked the officers for providing the information and answering the Committee's questions; and
- (b) agreed that arrangements should be made for Committee members to hear from young people and parents and carers about their experience of SEND Transitions to Adulthood in order to help develop policy recommendations on this issue.

8. OUR APPROACH TO FUTURE PRIORITY BUDGETING

8.1 The Chair recommended that this item be withdrawn due to the absence of the Executive Member for Finance and Resources and the Head of Policy and Partnerships as there had been a bereavement in the service area.

8.2 RESOLVED: That this item be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

9. WORK PLAN AND WAYS OF WORKING

9.1 Emily Standbrook-Shaw stated that should the next meeting be cancelled, the Home Care item would be put on the agenda, along with the item on the budget, at its meeting to be held on 4th December, 2021.

