

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 19 September 2019

Present:

Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Chair)
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor P Male
Councillor D Skinner
Councillor R Thay
Councillor C Thomas

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson

Other Members: Councillors

Employees (by Directorate):

G Holmes, Place Directorate
K Nelson, People Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillor B Kaur and L Kelly

Public Business

11. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

12. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th July, 2019 were approved.

13. Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) Update

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided an update on Coventry Local Area preparation for a SEND Local Area inspection.

In 2016, the Government commissioned OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education) and the CQC (Care Quality Commission) to conduct a five-year cycle of joint inspections, to monitor the progress of local areas in implementing the SEND reforms. The new statutory duties for education, health and care were set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The first cycle of inspections was nearing completion. The final inspections would happen no later than the Spring Term 2021.

The aim was to “hold local areas to account and champion the rights of children and young people”. In particular, the local area health, social and education services were required to work together to:

- publish a ‘local offer’ setting out the support and provision in the area for children and young adults with special educational needs or disabilities (or both)
- provide accessible information to children and young people, as well as parents and carers, about the services and support available in the local area
- work with children and young people, their parents and carers, and service providers to make sure that any special needs or disabilities (or both) are identified as early as possible
- assess (in co-operation with children and young people and their parents and carers) the needs of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (or both) who may need an education, health and social care plan (EHCP)
- produce an EHCP for all children and young people who are assessed as needing one (all relevant agencies should cooperate to do this and involve the children and young people and their parents and carers)
- provide children and young people with the support agreed in their EHCP, and regularly review their plans

As at September 2019, 96 of the 152 inspections had been completed and reports published. Forty-eight inspections concluded that a statement of written action (STOWA) was required. This means that the inspectors had found “significant areas of weakness in the local areas practice” in 50% of local areas overall. In 2018/19 a total of 30 inspections took place, 21 of which (70%) required a STOWA.

There were 14 Local Areas across the West Midlands region. Of the 10 inspections conducted so far, six had resulted in a STOWA. One Local Area (Sandwell) had been re-visited’ and it was confirmed that adequate progress had been made and a STOWA was no-longer required. There were four remaining local areas across the West Midlands awaiting inspection: Coventry, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Wolverhampton. These would be conducted one per term between Autumn 2019 and Spring 2021. The Local Area would receive 5 days notice, of the 5 day inspection.

Over the course of the 5-day inspection, inspectors would meet managers and leaders from the area’s education, health and social care services and look at young people’s case files. They would review the support provided by the local area for some individual children and young people to better understand how well the local area meets its responsibilities overall. They would also visit early years settings, schools, further education providers and specialist services.

Working with partners across the Local Area, Coventry remained focused on the continuous improvement of the key statutory areas, specifically the identification of children and young people with SEN (age 0 to 25) across the City; the quality of assessment, the impact of provision and ultimately outcomes in adulthood. Children and young people had told us that they want to enjoy an ‘ordinary life’ which in adulthood includes having full access to community activities, positive relationships and meaningful paid employment. These principles underpin the SEND strategy ‘Lifting the Cloud of Limitation’.

Coventry Local Area had reviewed last years integrated education, health and care self-evaluation for 2019/20, setting out evidenced progress, strengths and areas for further development. The joint self-evaluation continued to focus on the three inspection questions: How well do we identify need, meet need and improve outcomes. The self-evaluation was informed by a comprehensive dataset.

Partners had ensured that when Coventry receive notification of the inspection, all required documentation was available to share with the inspectors and that a logistics and communication plan was in place, evidencing strong governance and partnerships between education, health, social care, Coventry Parent Carer Forum and the young people's shadow board.

The Board questioned the Cabinet Member and officers on the following:

- hidden disabilities
- assessment and appeals
- working together
- data
- funding

Members were encouraged to pass on any resident enquiries to officers to investigate.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board noted the briefing note and requested that:

- 1) further information be provided regarding the processes for assessing needs**
- 2) financial information be provided in future reports**

14. **Education Performance**

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note and presentation of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided information about Education Performance. The data was unvalidated currently and the presentation detailed the publication timetable, headline achievements, ofsted profile, successes and priorities for Early Years, Primary, Key Stage 4 and 16-18.

The Scrutiny Board questioned the Cabinet Member and officers on the following:

- data
- successes and emerging priorities
- partnership working

The Scrutiny Board, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the officers discussed the data and the advantages and disadvantages of bringing unvalidated headlines at this time during the academic year.

The Scrutiny Board decided that it was valuable to hear an update at this time even if it couldn't include data. Information that was available that could help Scrutiny Members with the benchmarking of progress could be included for example the previous years report and priorities.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board noted the briefing note the presentation and requested that next year there be some benchmarking information such as the previous year's report and priorities included.

15. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board noted the Work Programme.

The Board noted that the following Members had now been appointed to the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group: Councillor Sandhu, Councillor Lepoidevin, Councillor Lloyd, Councillor Thomas and Mrs Hanson.

The Board discussed the valuable 'Signs of Safety' training.

RESOLVED that Cllr Sandhu would consider further involvement of the Board with regard to the 'Signs of Safety' training.

16. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 3.15 pm)