



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Gee (Chair)
Councillor Cole (Vice Chair)

Councillor Batool

Councillor Willmott

Councillor Pandya

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Joseph Wyglendacz
Janet McKenna

Teaching Unions
Union Representative

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Pickering and Riyait, and the Director of Social Care and Early Help.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 18 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

6. SEND TRANSPORT POLICY CONSULTATION OUTCOME

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report to provide the Commission with an overview of the proposed changes to the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transport Policy and the Post-16 Transport Policy following a consultation exercise.

The Director of Adult Social Care and Commissioning presented the item, it was noted that:

- The formal consultation had concluded in January. Letters had been sent to over 700 parents for responses. The Parent Carer Forum and local teachers were also consulted.
- 9 responses were received from the consultation, these were generally positive responses in terms of the changes to the policy.
- The policy had been condensed to make it more comprehensible. A easy read version would also be produced.
- The name of the policy was changing from SEND Transport to SEND Travel to reflect the shift in emphasis.
- The new policy was clearer to parents in terms of their responsibility of getting their children to school.
- More details had been added on the eligibility reviews as part of the EHCP process.
- The policy was now clear that transport post-16 would not be provided unless an exceptional circumstance. A 2-year transition process for those who would otherwise lose the provision was also included in the policy as a temporary measure.
- Travel options other than taxis were outlined in the policy, such as personal transport budgets, free bus passes, and independent travel training.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- The poor response rate was disappointing. Strong efforts had been made to get responses, with every family being approached 5 times regarding the consultation.
- A potential reason for the lack of responses was contentment with the policy. Connections with special schools and other relevant bodies were strong, so if there were concerns then these would have been clear. The lack of these concerns being raised could be interpreted as indicating

contentment with the policy.

- The 9 responses were only to the formal consultation required by statute, a wider engagement between the Council and parents was in place to hear any concerns about the policy. The Commission was also a part of that process. The implementation of the policy could be adjusted based on any other feedback received.
- A major goal of the policy was to help SEND CYP prepare for adulthood by supporting them to become more independent with their transportation.
- Since the introduction of personal transport budgets in summer 2021, £180k had been saved from the cost of taxis and buses. The changes to the policy gave more flexibility in transport options, therefore it was thought that further savings would be made as there would be less reliance on taxis.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission supports Option 1 outlined in the report, to approve the policy changes.
2. That the Commission recommends that in future, the wider more informal elements of consultation processes be reflected in reports.

7. LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICERS (LADO) ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report updating the Commission on the work of the Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) for the year 2020-21.

It was noted that the Lead Officer for this item was not present so any detailed questions on the item would need to be raised outside the meeting.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- There had been an increase in referrals of foster carers. It was thought that this was due to the increased time spent at home during the Covid lockdown.
- Even if a case was found to be unsubstantiated, it could still be reopened if anything else came to light in future.
- The LADO process only applied to those in positions of trust such as teachers and carers. The process did not apply to parents as they were covered by other safeguarding arrangements.
- Comparisons between previous years with regards to areas for improvement and next steps could be included in future reports.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission notes the update.
2. That the Commission requests that in future LADO reports, comparisons

are made to areas for improvement and next steps from previous years.

8. REVIEW OF MAINSTREAM FUNDING FOR SEND

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report to update the Commission on the consultation to implement a fairer funding model across all the mainstream schools with effect from September 2022 that provide support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The Head of the SEND Support Service presented the item, it was noted that:

- A formal consultation had concluded in late 2021, parents were included in the consultation, but the main target audience was educational professionals.
- 132 responses to the consultation were received, with half of schools responding. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the schools that didn't respond were broadly in favour of the changes proposed.
- All schools agreed that the new funding model was simpler and more transparent, but schools who would lose funding under the model were concerned if it was fair.
- The largest concerns were around the transition between the different funding models. To address this there would be one off funding provided to schools facing reductions in the new model for one year to help manage the transition. This would be provided by the Council from the High Needs Block.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- No approval was needed from DfE on these changes.
- Additional support for schools facing reductions would be provided by an Inclusion Quality team, providing best practice advice and support to spend resources more efficiently. They would also provide accountability to ensure that each school was spending the funding appropriately.
- Fluctuation for SEND funding was natural to schools due to changes in pupil numbers, so once the transition funding ended the fluctuation would be similar to previous experiences.
- The new model would ensure that each child got the right amount of funding that they needed. Schools that would lose funding were currently disproportionately receiving more funding per child than others.
- In line with Element 3 and EHCP processes, schools would have an annual opportunity to request more funding for any child based on their needs.
- A school would have to clearly explain why they could not meet the requirements of the EHCP, and there were processes in place for the Council to challenge that.
- As a result of the complexity of the current funding formula, some schools who were receiving disproportionately more funding, were unsure themselves as to why that was the case.

- It was important to not overspend too much on the High Needs Block, as other Authorities had been instructed to put the spending into balance by DfE over a shorter period than was felt practical by the Council.
- The EHCP funding for each child was statutory so would follow the child no matter what school they were at.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission supports the new funding model outlined in the report.
2. That the Commission requests a report six months into the transitional year.

9. VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEAD TEACHER REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report summarising the educational outcomes and attainment of Looked After Children during the academic year 2020/21. It considered their achievements and the support provided by the Virtual School Team to achieve the best learning outcomes for Looked After Children

It was noted that the Virtual School was currently under the Children's Social Care and Early Help Division but was transitioning over to the Education Service.

The Deputy City Mayor for Social Care and Anti-Poverty noted that the role of Personal Tutors had strengthened due to the Covid pandemic, supporting CLA who had previous issues with school. It was also noted that the Virtual School also put on extra activities such as school trips. Members were also encouraged to attend the summer concert of Bullfrog Arts, a charity supporting CLA through music.

In response to a Member question it was noted that the Virtual School supported CLA to track educational process and provide support in whatever school they were in.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission notes the report.

10. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION REPORT

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report to provide a briefing on Elective Home Education (EHE) with a focus on the regulatory framework, the duties, powers and the approach of the LA to this area of work, and the duty of parents in respect of their children's right to a suitable education. Also, to provide a summary of the key data, the impact of Covid and the management of work including pressures services were under due to gradual increase in the numbers of EHE children over the last decade and the rise in numbers during the pandemic.

The Principal Education Officer presented the item. It was noted that the Ofsted inspection in September 2021 had examined this area, the processes were well received but there was a challenge of the increasing number of parents choosing EHE.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- EHE parents were under no obligation to teach the national curriculum.
- The majority of EHE parents preferred not to have in depth contact with the Council regarding their child's education. However, the Council was able to provide limited advice and support if asked.
- Regulation required that children received a suitable education in EHE, and if this was not the case authorities could take action.
- Council Education Officers would likely not be aware of any social or emotional issues arising from EHE. If issues did arise a referral could be made to Social Care.
- There was also a monitoring process for children with EHCPs receiving EHE.
- Parents were not obligated to inform the Council that they had moved their child to EHE.
- The safeguarding process was wider than schools, anyone could raise a safeguarding concern.
- Schools aimed to talk to parents to be able to address issues that might make a parent decide to home educate.
- The increase in the percentage of parents adopting EHE during the pandemic was less than in many other Councils.
- Parents reported in 2021 that the main reasons they chose EHE were health concerns, and philosophical and lifestyle choices.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission notes the report.

11. COVID-19 UPDATE AND VACCINATIONS IN LEICESTER SCHOOLS

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education and the Principal Education Officer provided a verbal update on the current situation concerning the impact of Covid-19 and the Covid and Flu vaccination programmes.

It was noted that:

- There had been a significant reduction of Covid cases in Leicester, with it being one of the lowest areas of the country in case numbers.
- The infection rate for 11–16-year-olds was half of the overall infection rate.
- The testing requirements for schools had stopped in February. This was a cause for concern for schools as cases could go unreported.
- Staff absences due to infections were still ongoing.
- The importance of ventilation had been reiterated to schools.

- There had been concerns from some around vaccines being delivered in schools. There had been a protest at a school campus about this, though it was understood that the protestors were not connected to the school or its pupils.
- Vaccinations for 5–11-year-olds had recently been authorised. These would be offered from April, mainly at pharmacies and pop-up sites.
- There were no current patients in UHL Hospitals because of Covid, though there was a reduced number who had been admitted for other reasons and had been found to have Covid.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission notes the update.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair noted that this was the final meeting of the municipal year, the Chair thanked Members for their attendance and questions, and thanked Officers for their reports and answers.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.50pm.