

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY BOARD, Wednesday, 16th March, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Raistrick (Chair)

Councillors: Durrans, Foster, Holdsworth, Issott, Kingstone (Substitute for Councillor Courtney), Monteith, Rivron and Tremayne

**72 SUBSTITUTES NOMINATED FOR THIS MEETING AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Courtney and Praneetha Bharath (Youth Council Representative).

*(The meeting closed at 20:19.)*

**73 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Durrans declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the Calderdale National Autistic Society.

Councillor Monteith declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the Board of Governors at Highbury Special School.

**74 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH FEBRUARY 2022.**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**75 THANKS TO RETIRING OFFICERS**

The Chair expressed thanks to Rob Murray, Assistant Director, Early Intervention and Safeguarding for his commitment and work in his time at Calderdale.

The Chair expressed thanks to Lesley Bowyer, Interim Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion, for all her work in Calderdale over many years and especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. He described the relationship built with all schools in Calderdale as an outstanding piece of work.

**76 C&K CAREERS - PROVISION OF CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE IN THE CALDERDALE DISTRICT**

The Chief Executive, Calderdale and Kirklees (C&K) Careers, submitted a written report which updated Members on the new commissioning arrangements which commenced on 1st April 2021. The report also provided data on young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), Children who were Looked After and Young People Leaving Care who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). 2021 data published by the Department for Education confirmed CMBC's position in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile of Local Authorities (LAs) for its performance on the number of young people who were either NEET or whose post 16 destination was unknown to the Local Authority.

The report advised Members that C&K Careers acted as a vehicle to deliver the statutory responsibilities of Calderdale MBC (CMBC) in relation to Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). The Company also worked with every Secondary School and Calderdale FE College to provide careers advice to young people, supporting their progression into further learning, apprenticeships, and employment.

The report aimed to provide an update on the range of services delivered by C&K Careers; how well these were delivered; the difference that they made; and how the pandemic related challenges and changing context impacted upon the progression of vulnerable young people.

During discussions, Members commented on the following issues:

- What have Officers decided to do in order to bring Calderdale back into the 1<sup>st</sup> quintile of LAs for its performance on the number of young people who were either NEET or whose Post 16 destination was unknown to the Local Authority? In response, Officers advised that data reported from February 2022 was expected to return Calderdale to the 1<sup>st</sup> quintile. The current levels were comparable to pre-pandemic levels. Officers had closely monitored young people and engaged with those who were NEET to encourage them back into provision.
- The core contract had been delivered digitally since 2021, had an evaluation been done to assess the impact of this? In response, Officers advised that headline figures indicated that there had been no significant decrease in performance and an evaluation would be undertaken. Officers advised that although this was a digital service, some face-to-face provision had resumed since the lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions to engage with young people who had not been reached during the pandemic.
- The statutory duties of the LA were to provide sufficient and suitable provision for all young people, was this expectation being met for all areas of need? Where there were more complex barriers, were suitable placements being made available? In response, Officers advised that there was sufficient Post 16 provision, with close to 99% of young people being made an offer of Post 16 provision. The diversity of options became narrower for any young people whose first position did not work out. Officers were working with partners to write a Post 16 Strategy which would ensure quality and quantity of post 16 choices.
- Did Officers actively look at local employment need and develop courses around this, to increase the possibility of young people entering employment following education? In response, Officers advised that the Post 16 Strategy would do this.
- Had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) been considered for those young people who had SEN support and were NEET? In response, Officers advised that SEN support was provided by schools and each had different approaches with different support in place.

- Did Officers pass on intelligence to other LAs when young people left Calderdale during provision? In response, Officers advised that this was not possible as the provision may not be replicated in other LAs.
- Young people had reported that they did not feel teacher assessments during the Covid-19 pandemic accurately reflected their true abilities. Did Officers think that this could be driving the higher level of apprenticeship take-up in Calderdale? In response, Officers advised that the higher-level apprenticeships fully assessed young people. Officers advised that the increase in apprenticeship take-up was driven by a demand for the skills and good communication with employers.
- There was a lack of rigour around how the needs of young people with SEND who were NEET were met Post 16. The needs at this age were very different and it was important to provide support for the transition to adulthood. In response, Officers advised that Post 16 provision in Calderdale was very good. The challenge was that the employment rates for people with learning disabilities or mental health challenges was not adequate. Officers advised that they needed employers to create opportunities, and they were making steps to increase the number of employers and partners they worked with.
- What was being done to support Young Carers to access Further Education (FE) and employment given their additional pressures? In response, Officers advised that like any other young person the response was to provide personalised approach based on individual circumstances.
- Were English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) students at risk of falling through gaps? In response, Officers advised that they were working with Calderdale College to bid for funding from the Youth Futures Foundation. There was limited ability to provide ESOL courses due to funding, and funding could be hard to access due to the immigration status of the young people.
- C&K Careers had a contract with Calderdale Council and with the Calderdale Association of Secondary Headteachers (CASH). Were they separately monitored? In response, Officers advised that there was a service level agreement with Calderdale and Kirklees Councils to deliver their statutory duties. They reported quarterly to the commissioning team within Children and Young People's Services. The contract with CASH was a collaborative contract and they did report collectively, however each school individually commissioned C&K Careers to meet their needs and received individual reports.
- The report had described the service as excellent, where did this assessment come from? In response, Officers advised that C&K Careers was externally assessed by Matrix and had been described as the best careers company the assessor had seen.
- Were the NEET and Not Known (NK) figures provided for children who were Looked After good? In response, Officers advised that anything above zero was not good. The young people were receiving the service from C&K Careers but were not engaged in activity. Officers were working closely with partners to

do everything they could, but there were a variety of reasons why these young people were NEET or NK.

**IT WAS AGREED** that the report be noted.

**77 PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND)**

The Director, Children and Young People's Services, submitted a written report which aimed to advise Members on the existing school provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as well as the development of a new school, which was considered at the January Cabinet meeting.

The report advised that Calderdale had a strong record of inclusion, with a higher proportion of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) attending mainstream school than was seen nationally. Existing provision for Calderdale children and young people with complex SEND was predominantly through 3 maintained specialist provision schools, all judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted at their most recent inspection. A number of children and young people with SEND attended independent specialist provision, some within the borough and some out of area.

The number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans had risen by 21% in the past two years, reflecting the national picture. Requests for assessments had increased from around 15-20 per month in early 2020, pre-Covid-19, to around 25 – 30 per month in 2021-22. Despite increasing specialist provision over recent years, there was pressure for places and additional capacity was needed. There were a number of pieces of work ongoing to ensure sufficiency of places locally along with a longer-term ambition to develop a new through-provision in North Halifax.

During discussions, Members commented on the following issues:

- Could Officers briefly describe the proposed new school and how this would meet sufficiency? In response, Officers advised that the demographics for mainstream and special needs were growing. There had been an increase in EHCPs, predominantly in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Pressure for places in specialist provision schools had risen and Officers were looking at using capital to increase capacity. This could be done through curriculum and timetable planning to an extent but was limited by the teaching areas available. Officers were looking at increasing provision within mainstream schools however SEMH was an area in which mainstream schools were feeling pressure in the ability to meet needs. Officers advised that there was a need to consider the pursuit of a new specialist provision school to meet forecasted needs.
- What type of specialist provision school would this be? In response, Officers advised that the approach would be a dedicated SEMH category, with a broad range of needs within this category being met. Officers advised that there was not a dedicated school for SEMH needs in Calderdale.

- What was the short-term response and solution given the growing pressure in all three specialist provision schools and the lack of provision available for children with SEMH? In response, Officers advised that they were building capacity in mainstream schools, commissioning places with specialist providers in smaller groups, and block purchasing placements with current providers for SEMH.
- Calderdale Council has had a strong ethos on integration and inclusion, it was important for children and young people to attend mainstream schools in order to prepare for living in a mainstream world. In response, Officers advised that inclusion was established within the code of practice, the SEND review due to be published was expected to provide a stronger case and framework to support inclusion. This was a 3–5-year plan looking at what capacity would be needed in 5 years. Inclusion and resource provision would be a part of that but would only provide support for a percentage of the children who needed additional resource. The head teachers of the 3 maintained specialist provision schools advised that they would not be able to meet the demand without further space.
- Had Officers looked at how this kind of provision was being offered around the country? There should be increased provision and specialist units provided in mainstream schools, rather than increasing segregated education. In response, Officers advised that work had been done to create a strong network within Yorkshire and Humberside and Officers had looked at the models of other Local Authorities (LAs). Officers advised that there could be more resource provision within mainstream schools but the capacity was not there to meet the most complex SEMH needs. Officers were being advised by schools that a specialist environment was required. There was no capital to provide a specialist unit in every school.
- Why had there been such an increase in the need for specialist provision? In response, Officers advised that every child with SEMH needs which could not be met within the schools' notional budget was assessed, and the majority of assessments were being converted to EHCPs. There had been a rise nationally in the referrals for SEMH.
- Given unlimited capital, would Officers choose to build a specialist provision school or increase inclusion and provision in mainstream schools? In response, Officers advised that data and information showed there was a need for both.
- What were mainstream schools missing in order to meet the needs of children and young people before specialist provision was needed? In response, Officers advised that under the government's new inspection framework SEND needs were a strong feature of the inspection visit, focusing on work and interventions to support promoting inclusion within the school. Officers advised that funding pressures meant schools were not able to continue to support high levels of need without an EHCP.
- What were the exceptions to EHCPs being issued within 20 weeks and what percentage did they make up? In response, Officers advised that exceptions were things such as schools' summer holidays falling within the 20 weeks, and

altogether they made up 2-3% of cases. Members asked whether parent and carer comments on exceptions could be included in future reports.

- Did the numbers provided of mediations and appeals refer to upheld appeals or all appeals? In response, Officers advised they would confirm this after the meeting. Officers advised that the number of tribunals lodged had increased but had begun decreasing in the past 3 months. Officers were creating a triage approach to assess each tribunal submitted, working to try to resolve issues rather than contesting at tribunal. The Chair requested data on this topic be provided to Members following the meeting.
- What planning was being done to prepare for a future need from the impacts of Long Covid? In response, Officers advised that schools were aware of the impacts of isolation and were increasing awareness of how to engender good mental health and adapt a holistic approach to providing support.

**IT WAS AGREED** that the report be noted.

## **78 WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

The Assistant Scrutiny Officer submitted a written report which updated Members on the work programme for 2021/22; this would be updated as the year progressed, and suggestions from Members of the Board were welcomed.

**IT WAS AGREED** that the Work Programme be noted.

## **79 THANKS FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair advised that he would not be standing for re-election in May 2022 and wished to make a few votes of thanks, to be minuted, at his final Scrutiny Meeting, as follows:

The Chair expressed thanks to Lauren Loble, Assistant Scrutiny Officer, for her outstanding work during the past 3 years, particularly throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and for smoothly handling the transfer to zoom meetings.

The Chair expressed thanks to Mike Lodge, Senior Scrutiny Officer, for his help and support, and gave him credit for his part in progressing this Scrutiny Board.

The Chair expressed thanks to individual past and present Members of this Scrutiny Board; Councillors Rivron, Foster, Courtney, Baines, Blagbrough, and Collins.

Councillor Foster gave thanks to the Chair on behalf of the Members of the Board, for his chairmanship and service over the years. She described him as fair, unafraid to challenge, never one to suffer a fool gladly, insightful, and thoughtful.

Councillor Courtney gave thanks to the Chair as acting Interim Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Young People's Services. She commended his 100% dedication to young people and particularly young people who were looked after.

**Wednesday, 16th March, 2022**

Julie Jenkins, Director, Children and Young People's Services, expressed well wishes to the Chair and thanked him for supporting and challenging Officers to continually improve.