

Time commenced – 18.00pm

Time finished – 19:00pm

Children and Young People Scrutiny Review Board 21 June 2021

Present: Councillor Lind (Chair)
Councillors Bonser, Hezelgrave, Eyre, Kus (Vice Chair), Pandey
and Pearce
Co-optees – Tracey Churchill and Stephen Grundy

In Attendance: Pauline Anderson, Director of Learning, Inclusion and Skills

01/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Smith, Strategic Director of Peoples Services, Chris Hulse and Nicky Fenton co-opted members,

02/21 Late items introduced by the Chair

There were none.

03/21 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

04/21 Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

05/21 Impact of COVID on SEND and Recovery Plan

The Board considered a presentation from the Director of Learning and Skills regarding the Impact of COVID on SEND and Recovery Plan.

The officer explained that the presentation gave a broad overview of a range of support since the beginning of the COVID crisis in March 2020. The officer began with the with concept of “Catch Up”, which has been very much in news. Sir Kevan Collins had recently resigned from his role of Catch Up Tsar, as he was not happy with the reduction to the spend which represented a tenth of the £15 billion funding that was necessary to help children catch up. The National tutoring programme was still in place and local schools have been using the programme as long as they can find the right tutors.

National Catch up programme announcement was made last week, an additional £1.4 million has been added to the initial £1.7 billion. The funding was for three main things, to continue the main teaching programme, to support teachers into training and for mental health awareness week, together with some more funding into schools/education. Derby City Council (DCC) will

continue to support schools and families to access whatever funding is available to Derby Schools.

During the Pandemic DCC focused on children supported by social children in need, and children with a social worker who have been closely monitored for attendance during the lockdown periods. Right from beginning of the Pandemic DCC have monitored our most vulnerable children.

Schools and social workers, plus education teams, have worked together to support families, helped attendance and get access to holiday events and general support. The Education Welfare service has focused on the attendance of children with SEND and we have had great support from that service, plus good feedback from families.

Schools have had a greater focus on supporting families. There was lots in the news about school staff going the extra the mile such as taking food parcels to the home, supporting children online, even singing bedtime stories to maintain relationships with young children who could forget what it's like to go to school. The officer informed the Board that recently St Giles School had won the Beacon of Hope of Ward for just such activity.

There was close monitoring of data by the Department for Education (DfE) on a weekly basis for all children with SEND, and those who had a social worker assigned, so there has been high level of national attention.

The officer explained that there has been a greater national focus on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of children; we are now moving into long term effects, and we are building on existing concerns about children's mental health and wellbeing. Derby had a head start with this as the Opportunity Areas "emotionally healthy schools work" has been embedded for the last 2 to 3 years. Lots of schools and Academy trusts also have their own mental health infrastructure. Littleover School has been an award winner of the Carnegie Centre of Excellence Mental Health. The officer highlighted the range of support Kooth, Quell, and online provision it was explained that there has been a vast increase in demand for those services.

Additionally, the DfE is providing funding to help schools to support child mental health, the most recent funding was £34,000 for Derby City. This is overseen by a steering group, which was a Partnership Board looking at half termly network meetings for senior mental health workers in schools. There is now a very high prominence of mental health workers and first aiders in schools, much more than there was five years ago. The infrastructure was well established in Derby. There was planning of training during the autumn and spring term using the second funding round for this financial year.

The most recent network meeting for senior Mental Health workers looked at all the projects in Derby, such as Changing Lives, Building Sound Minds etc; it also looked at supporting mental health policies at school level and an input on the assessment tool. The demand is so high that DCC continually need to do more. Schools have also prioritised this area as children are coming back with real concerns about health, learning and socialising and being part of a social group,

as well as concerns about bubble closures. The officer stated that children and staff do need extra support and care.

Throughout the pandemic it became obvious that there was a digital divide in the City and across the country; it was obvious there were “haves and have nots” in terms of laptops and connectivity. The DfE also recognised this and administered their laptops for schools’ scheme for disadvantaged pupils. Some of the detail has been reported here in terms of numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Schools also made a lot of their own provision, bringing their own laptops out. The schemes need to be well supported and maintained.

Derby City Council specifically supported SEND pupils and pledged £50,000. DCC was working with parent groups to look at how they can continue to support that digital divide. Whether in lockdown or not it was understood that families do need that additional support, such as learning during the holidays, home-work, family learning and families who may be working with old laptops or small devices on which it is difficult to run bigger programmes need to have equipment upgrades and support.

It has been agreed as a Council to support disadvantaged pupils: this was being discussed with the Poverty Commission. There was £200,000 from DCC to provide the support, which was likely to be aimed at KS1 pupils as the DfE focused on KS2 and secondary during the Pandemic.

The Officer informed the Board that the DfE Opportunity Areas (OA) project was in its fourth year, The Director of Learning Inclusion and Skills and the Strategic Director of Peoples Services are on the Board. Inclusion programmes are being funded within digital hubs to improve IT skills in families. The Board were informed that some families struggled to keep up with supporting their children’s homework, technical management of software was a challenge for them. The OA Project was looking at digital hubs to improve skills across the families, which would also help in employment and household management for families.

The officer explained the support provided for new communities and those communities that are the most vulnerable in terms of COVID outbreaks and are the most disadvantaged in terms of poverty and other factors. Using COVID outbreak management fund, DCC supported those young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) from the ROMA communities, and improved their access to services. Extended support for hard to reach families from new and emerging communities was provided through the SEN Hub was provided. Increased advice and support for Asylum Seeker families with accessing universal and specialist services was provided, and the learning gap was narrowed through additional tutoring and curriculum support for children with English as an additional language (EAL) and Roma children from vulnerable families. The Freedom programme was delivered to victims of Domestic Violence (DV) from new and emerging communities in their home languages, because nationally and locally we have seen that throughout the pandemic DV has disproportionately increased. It is well known that DV affects children’s lives. Support was provided for hard to reach new communities in that capacity was added to the COVID vaccination programme to overcome community fears about COVID vaccination.

Elective home education was of interest over the last year, particularly seeing numbers rising during lockdown. DCC has very little in the way of a statutory role with families who elect to educate children at home. However DCC has a new approach now: the best thing we can do is communicate with them more, not to see them as at a distance, particularly during pandemic. All families need support and a number of those children have EHCP or special educational needs so it is imperative to work closely with them. We are providing signposting to activities and support prioritising SEND pupils, and additional support to enable their return to school if the family wishes.

The officer informed the Board that in 2019 the Local Area which included DCC had an Ofsted inspection of SEND. Since October 2019 The Director for Learning and Inclusion and Skills had taken on SEND and inclusion, and since then the service have been working hard to implement lots of improvements and changes. During this last year the majority of the time of the Director for SEND had been during the Pandemic. It was felt that communication and engagement was an important focus. New approaches were put in place, the first being a SEND newsletter which was accessible to councillors on the DCC Local Offer website, The Local Offer website tells you what we are doing in SEND; there was also a Local Offer Facebook page, the Parent Carer Forum which is the official parent group for Derby have an active Facebook page. There have been SEND strategy workshops which look at how we work with young people, helping them into employment and training as they get older, and supporting them in the college. A New community event Autism Dialogue has been introduced, where autistic people talk together with autism professionals and others about what it is to be autistic, what they need more of in Derby and what would make their life better. Some of those events have led to individual autistic young people joining our SEND strategy workshops. We have co-production meetings with a whole range of third sector groups and one of the strengths of the pandemic has been our "Better Together Partnership" work. After quite a few years of a not very strong connection between headteacher, governors and the council we have established SENCO Network Meetings and twelve SEND Ambassadors have been put in place who are our lead SENCOs across the City.

The availability of COVID Support Grants was highlighted and the officer stated that she had sought to access any kind of funding available to help young people. Grants had been accessed for the Parent Carer Forum to provide SEND Navigators for families needing support. The Board were informed that families at home are often confused and found it difficult to manage or get through the SEND system. The system is complex and the situation had become even worse during the pandemic, so £140,000 was invested to build a team of SEND Navigators who work to support parents in literally navigating the SEND system. Further funding for third sector organisations was accessed; they received grants to support more young people and families. The officer described the Holiday Activity Programmes, COVID winter grant providing pupils with free school meals, and activities during the holidays all being funded by government throughout last and this year. There was also increased support for SENDiass (SEND Information, Advice and Support Service) family mediation and support service, the capacity increased due to demand for help.

The officer highlighted the Equality Statements and the importance of schools asserting and abiding by their own equality statements. There was a robust process of analysing and monitoring those statements which Education and Skills team have been monitoring. DCC have an overview of schools; they have an Inclusion dashboard which collates all the information on attendance, EHCPs, part time timetables, budgets. The dashboard is there for DCC to gain an overview of strengths and weaknesses across the system and also trends.

The officer then described the extended Derby SENCO support. In addition to support from university and opportunity areas, DCC have all the networks mentioned earlier and there are thirty four plus schools on a graduated response pilot, to reinvigorate early support for children with special needs in schools, and to give those schools support as more and more complex children are coming into schools. DCC want to support schools to be as inclusive as possible. We are introducing the Derby SAL (SENco Advice Line) and have appointed two people to be advisers to SENcos in schools. So, there are SEN Navigators on the parents' side and Derby SAL for SENcos in schools. The Valuing SEND tool was being trialed. The tool helps to identify children's needs and how to meet those needs; four schools are at the core of that tool. There was a training and development programme for SENCOs to access to training on SEND. There was co-production and partnership on the SEND strategy. The officer took the opportunity to thank schools for all their support in all the work described above.

The Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) programme was explained. EOTAs gave an opportunity to create more bespoke packages for children and young people who were not able to be in school for a number of reasons for example, the child or young person may have had exclusions, or they may have mental health issues that affect their ability to attend a school, or the school settings they have attended have not been able to meet their specific needs. There was a small trend of children who are uncomfortable with returning to school because the school or college was not the right setting for them, perhaps due to the Pandemic or because they are at a stage in life where they need a more bespoke approach. The work on EOTAS was intensified, it is a complex area as every child or young person was different in terms of their needs. Packages are co-produced with parents and young people, working closely with the commissioning team, to access a range of alternative provision and other opportunities. There was not an exhaustive list; DCC are constantly developing new areas to support children and young people during the Pandemic, particularly the most vulnerable ones.

A councillor was interested in tutoring and asked if it was a route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The officer confirmed that the tutoring was for children, and that QTS was accessed through the usual routes. The councillor then asked if there was a plan to return the laptops. The officer confirmed that the laptops belonged to the families and children they had been given to, The councillor suggested that schools need to look at how they use the new resources that many children now have and sort out any shortfall, to get something that's really connected for home and school. The officer stated that people are still using quite a lot of blended learning approaches and understand the importance of online learning for homework and wider study; this was one of the benefits of the situation. The councillor suggested that the Pandemic had

highlighted where children have needed support, and a greater level of need has been identified. The councillor also noted that it can be seen by SENDiass and Derby SAL initiatives that you have increased the workforce because of the demand. The councillor asked if there were further plans to increase staffing where necessary. The officer confirmed that as well as the increases highlighted above that the EHCP team had been increased by four people. Derby are looking at graduated response and supporting schools, but had also found there was a need for family support. This was not work DCC can do but third sector groups such as Umbrella can work with those families and sibling groups, they are better placed than us to deliver those services. The councillor then asked about Elective Home Education, as he felt it was a massive disadvantage to have parents as educators if they are unqualified. This year pupils have had no GCSE or A level examinations as they had no teacher assessment, they have no qualifications which was a huge disadvantage for them. The officer agreed and explained that return to schools was supported where possible, but it was still a family choice. The councillor then talked about the Derby Skills Build an organisation who used to take in small groups of Home Learners who met in groups a couple of times a week for Maths and English, and it helped them to develop social skills with peers. Some children who had been home educated may not have had the opportunity of contact with their peers; was it worth seeing if Derby College could provide this service for short periods for small groups of young people to get together. The officer agreed that it was the kind of thing DCC were looking at; also working with Quad and Museums Service who also offer groups for home educated children

A councillor liked the approach of the SEN navigators, SEND dashboard and inclusion dashboard and valuing SEND tools, and a real plus for the work being done. It was also good to see the work of EOTAS. The councillor asked if there were plans to involve Voices in Action (VIA) to see if any issues had been missed or not reacted to, which could emerge later. The officer explained that the hardest task was to engage with young people during the pandemic. The work had been focused on adults, parents, and staff. It was highlighted that one of the last big events was with lots of young people at Pride Park looking at genuine partnerships and co-production with children. VIA is one methodology and the service was trying to find other ways of engaging young people, such as pizza events, sporting events; young people talk about life when they are doing something else. It was planned to put on events that will manage to elicit feedback from young people.

A councillor thanked the officer for the update and noted the importance of using unconventional ways of getting people to be open and talk. The councillor asked about Mental Health support, has there been ways of getting young people to engage. The officer confirmed that some young people prefer an online service which was confidential and private. Other young people do want a more social approach, which was happening in schools with key workers and with a focus on wellbeing first and learning second. Schools have re-balanced a lot of their approaches to understand young people's anxieties. In terms of SEND we have worked with Parent Carer Forum who have a whole range of activities on offer such as camping, music and arts. For children learning about their identity there was an LGBT Plus growing community which gives them the space to do that.

The councillor then asked why there was a rise of elective education. The officer stated that it had increased over the years for several reasons. Children are feeling bullied, a number of families were unhappy with support provided for SEND across the City. They felt their child had a better chance of thriving at home and not going into school, some children are school phobic, some have medical needs and don't wish to use the Medical School, some have a philosophical opposition to schooling. The officer was more concerned about the special needs groups, or if a child has had behaviour issues and was at risk of exclusion, their parents have then removed them from school so the young person then does not get the support needed. We have data and are monitoring so can analyse why children are leaving schools and if schools are not actively seeking to stop children leaving.

Another councillor asked about the tutoring programme and whether the funding had arrived. The officer confirmed that funding was already coming in through the year and it will be added to. The issue was being able to access high quality tutors as it was a marketplace situation; the service was working with headteachers to try and overcome the situation. The officer explained that the government does not provide the tutors; they provide the funding and model and it was partially funded by schools. The councillor asked if the money was ringfenced and if the schools would be reporting as to what has been spent and where. The officer explained that the DfE administer the scheme through schools, not the local authority, so there was no easy way to access the information. It was not possible to enforce returns of data from schools when there is no legal requirement. In speaking to headteachers it was felt that the opportunity was not being maximised due to the lack of tutors.

The Board resolved

- 1. To consider and note the report and presentation and noted with pleasure the work done by all to support Derby City's young people during the COVID crisis and beyond**

06/21 Topic Review Early Intervention and Youth Outreach Support Engagement – Draft Report

The Board received and considered the draft Topic Review report on Early Intervention and Youth Outreach Support.

The Board had agreed at its meeting on 7 September 2020 to undertake a Topic Review on Early Intervention and Youth Outreach Support Engagement in order to review and map what youth support provision was currently available within the communities in Derby City for the 2020/21 municipal year. The Chair had invited representatives from a range of providers in the City to give evidence at two Board meetings and at three working group meetings.

The Board considered the report and a councillor suggested that a timescale for the work to commence, and be achieved by, should be included in the recommendations. The Board agreed the recommendations in the report with the addition of the following sentence. "Derby City Council will begin the work as

soon as possible and it will be fully in place within six months from the date of the scrutiny meeting held on 21 June 2021”.

The Board agreed the final report and amended recommendations should progress to Cabinet for their consideration.

07/21 Work Programme and Topic Review 2020/21

The Board considered a report which allowed the Board to study its Terms of Reference and Remit for the forthcoming Municipal Year. The report set out key work areas, issues, and potential topic review subjects within the service areas, for discussion or inclusion in the work programme.

The Board agreed the work programme set out in appendix 1 to the report. Councillors were asked if they wanted to add anything on to the Agenda

The Board agreed that an Off-Rolling update should be brought to the next meeting

Progress Attainment and Achievement – there was a clear indication that SEND children right across the board in all key stages were not achieving what should be expected of them. The Pandemic period had interrupted this work. A difficult job had been done by schools but there was now a need to know what steps were taken before the Pandemic arose and how it has been dealt with during the return to normal schooling.

Education Outcomes report was not brought to CYP Scrutiny meeting due to COVID as well as several other reports. These reports should be brought back to the Board later in the year.

Child Obesity – schools are back now, children being weighed, there will be some data coming in and it will give us a clearer picture of the trend – it was noted that a report did come to the Board last year.

A possible Topic review subject was suggested – Early Years Dental Care and maybe beyond that, there was anecdotal evidence, but the councillor would like to know if it is borne out by trends in that field by specialists. If not dealt with in early years this comes out as a pattern in later life.

The chair asked if councillors had any other suggestions for possible Topic Reviews they could submit them for consideration at the next meeting.

The Board resolved to note the terms of reference and the Overview and Scrutiny Rules as set out in the Council's Constitution

MINUTES END