

Minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny

Panel

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 6 July 2023, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Jo Monk and Cllr David Ross

Also attended:

Cllr Shirley Webb, Chairman of Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Cllr Paul Harrison, Member of Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Cllr Andy Roberts, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care
Mari Gay, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Richard Keble, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Sue Harris, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
Mel Barnett, Director for All Age Disability, Worcestershire Children First
Sarah Wilkins, Director of Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning, Worcestershire Children First
Mark Fitton, Strategic Director for People
Rebecca Wassell, Assistant Director for Commissioning
Laura Westwood, Lead Commissioner
Fran Kelsey, Lead Commissioner
Sarah Rothwell, Commissioning Manager
Samantha Morris, Interim Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager
Alyson Grice, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 May 2023 (previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes.)

582 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Members of the Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Panel who had been invited to attend to consider all age strategies which cut across services for children and adults.

Members were informed that there had been a change in the Panel Membership since the last meeting with Cllr Mel Allcott replacing Cllr Dan Boatright-Greene. The Chairman thanked Cllr Boatright-Greene for his service to the Panel and welcomed Cllr Allcott.

Apologies were received from Panel members Councillors Mel Allcott, David Chambers and Tony Muir, and Tim Reid (Church Representative).

Apologies were also received from Councillors Lynn Denham, Adrian Kriss and James Stanley (Members of Adult Care and Well-being O&S Panel), Councillor Karen May (Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being), Tina Russell (Director of Children's Services) and Liz Altay (Public Health Consultant).

583 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

584 Public Participation

None.

585 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With reference to the Minutes of 24 May (Item 6 Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Accelerated Progress Plan and Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with SEND 2023-26), the Chairman confirmed that the Member who had suggested that complaints were not being dealt with in a timely manner (page 7 of the minutes) had been invited to give further details of specific cases. These further details had not yet been received.

586 Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with SEND 2023-26

In order to accommodate Officer availability, the Chairman agreed to take Item 7 first.

Attending for this item:

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care
- Director for All Age Disability, Worcestershire Children First (WCF)
- Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning, WCF
- Managing Director, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board
- Programme Lead for Learning Disability and Autism, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

The Panel received an update and presentation on the draft Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2023-26.

By way of introduction, the Director for All Age Disability made the following main points:

- Members were reminded about the strategy's Vision statement.
- The strategy's four principles were outlined to the Panel, one of which related to recovery from the pandemic and understanding the impact on children and young people. The Panel was informed that the impact of the pandemic was still being seen and would continue to be felt for some years to come. Ensuring a seamless transition between children's and adult services was an area of focus within the strategy.
- Members were reminded of the importance of supporting early intervention to prevent escalation of need.
- In developing the six priorities for the strategy, the aim had been to keep things as simple as possible. The development of the priorities had been informed by a well-attended workshop with multi-agency partners and the priorities were reflected in the Accelerated Progress Plan.
- The implementation of the strategy would be overseen by the SEND and All Age Disability Partnership Board including the regular monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The delivery plan included reference to other relevant strategies and their outcome measures and to the lead person for each associated strategy. The importance of sharing information across partners was recognised.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and the following main points were raised:

- Members were reminded that the Early Help Strategy included a government-funded holiday activity and food (HAF) programme for children and young people who were eligible for free school meals. The offer was also open to children and young people with SEND and was complementary to the SEND strategy.

- Figures for the number of young people with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) would be provided to the Panel after the meeting.
- Further information on WCF's attendance strategy was requested and would be provided following the meeting.
- The impact of poor mental health on children and young people was highlighted. It was confirmed that the findings of the scrutiny task group report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would be used to inform service development going forward.
- A question was asked about the aspirations behind the priority to ensure that 'identification and assessment of SEND is timely and effective' when compared to the current situation. It was confirmed that this would require a system-wide approach and was linked to early intervention and ensuring children were in the right settings. Identification of need was important across early years, primary and secondary settings. It was suggested that there was currently a level of unmet need, something which reflected the national picture.
- It was confirmed that the strategy included KPIs which were monitored at meetings of the SEND and All Age Disability Partnership Board. The Scrutiny Panel would receive a further update in due course.
- It was confirmed that reference to the role of parents and carers was included in the KPIs. Regular discussions were held with parents and carers. For example, 162 parents/carers had recently responded to a survey as part of the delivering better value programme and this feedback would be used going forward.
- With reference to the priority that 'there is awareness and understanding of SEND within local communities', a Member suggested that while this was a noble objective, it was also quite subjective and difficult to measure. The Director for All Age Disability gave examples of children and young people with SEND having opportunities to be involved in the community including through the HAF programme, short breaks and other community activities. She agreed that the priority was ambitious and success would be difficult to measure. However, she felt it was right to be ambitious and, although it may be difficult to achieve, this did not mean that it should not be tried.
- In relation to parent/carer feedback, the Panel was informed that revisions to the previous strategy had started in 2021 and this had been done through range of activities involving parents and carers to identify what priorities should be focused on. In addition, a workshop pack had been sent to schools for use with young people. Further refining of the strategy had taken place in 2022 via the Partnership Board (which included a parent/carer representative). It was acknowledged that there had been some challenges in this area but things were now moving in the right direction.
- With reference to educational psychologists, it was confirmed that capacity had recently been increased with the recruitment of 1 senior educational psychologist and 5 main grade staff. Locums were also employed as needed. It was confirmed that using locums was more expensive but the cost would come down as more permanent staff were recruited. In addition, there was some interest from trainees and the team also worked with the university. The Director for All Age Disability

was confident that the educational psychology service was doing what it could to maintain staff numbers.

- A Member of the Panel asked what parents could do in a situation where a school was unable to provide the required support as set out in an EHCP. The Director for All Age Disability reminded Members that there were currently approximately 5300 EHCPs for children and young people in Worcestershire with the number increasing both locally and nationally. Children and young people were presenting with more complex needs and more children with complex needs were attending mainstream schools. WCF was looking at what it could do to further support schools. The biggest challenge was in relation to young people with autism where the school environment could have an impact. The new free school to be built in Malvern would help in this area. It was acknowledged that some schools were struggling but schools were doing the best they could with the resources available.
- The Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning added that WCF was looking to understand numbers and levels of need through the school organisation plan. Schools may need to make adaptations to increase accessibility including physical and environmental changes. The school improvement programme also supported schools with their inclusion work, including support to gain Inclusion Quality Mark accreditation (which had now been achieved by 29 schools).
- In response to a question about whether any schools were resistant to further inclusion, Members were reminded that defining what was meant by inclusion had been one of the challenges considered through the Accelerated Progress Plan. A definition and charter had now been developed (with significant involvement from parents and carers). At a school level there were a number of ways in which inclusion could be measured, such as analysis of data (including numbers of pupils with EHCPs, levels of SEND support and outcomes for pupils with SEND) and a range of proxy indicators, such as whether the school was part of the countywide SENCO network and whether it was accessing training that was on offer. Ofsted outcomes would also be monitored and parent/carer feedback would be used to understand the situation in individual schools. This was a complex environment and WCF was confident that it analysed information on a systematic and regular basis to allow officers to understand what was happening across the system and provide support where necessary.
- The Managing Director, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board informed Members that health colleagues were fully supportive of the work being done by WCF. Challenges in the health sector related to specialist assessments where there was a great deal of demand and recruitment of specialist staff was challenging. The health service was doing the best it could to meet increased demand (something that was a national issue) and acknowledged parental expectations. Joint working with the County Council was important.

In conclusion, the Chairman noted that inclusion could change children's lives and early intervention was key to this. It was agreed that a further update

would be provided in 12 months' time including an update on performance against KPIs.

587 The Integrated Care System Autism Strategy Development

Attending for this item:

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care
- Strategic Director, People Directorate, Worcestershire County Council (the Council)
- Lead Commissioner, People Directorate
- Director for All Age Disability, Worcestershire Children First (WCF)
- Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning, WCF
- Programme Lead for Learning Disability and Autism, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

The item was introduced by the Lead Commissioner who made the following main points:

- The strategy was still under development and the agenda report detailed work undertaken so far. The aim was to co-produce the strategy across the Integrated Care System footprint.
- The strategy would be broadly in line with the new National Autism Strategy, including the six priorities of the national strategy plus an additional priority of 'Keeping safe'. Each priority had been allocated a lead organisation/officer with relevant experience.
- The development of the strategy would be done in conjunction with autistic people and carers at each stage.
- With reference to the priority of 'Supporting more autistic people into employment', suggestions for a more appropriate expert lead were welcomed.
- An engagement questionnaire had been created and circulated. However, recognising that not everyone would want to complete a questionnaire, face to face opportunities for feedback had also been arranged. Data from the questionnaire and other feedback was now being analysed.
- The next steps would be further co-production to look at the key actions for each priority including work related to housing, advocacy support, keeping safe and suicide prevention.
- The aim was to have the strategy ready for sign off by October with a final strategy available in January 2024. A first 'you said, we did' newsletter to feed back to respondents would be produced in April 2024.

Members were invited to ask questions and the following main points were raised:

- The Chairman of the Adult Care and Wellbeing O&S Panel asked a question about place planning and how far ahead plans were made given that children were now being diagnosed at a younger age. She referred to a recent example where a child had been unable to attend an autism base at high school due to a lack of spaces despite this being stated on their EHCP. The Director for All Age Disability informed Members that early diagnosis was welcomed and reminded the Panel that many children with autism did not need an EHCP as they were able to manage well without. Data had been analysed as part of the bid for the new free school, and one of the reasons that the bid had been successful was that it had been able to evidence need. Mainstream autism bases provided extra provision but the challenge on places was recognised. The free school would accommodate those who needed a different environment. *NB: Immediately following the meeting, the Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning confirmed that there had been 47 additional places created in mainstream autism bases in 2022/23 a figure which had been reported to the DfE as part of the 12-month review.*
- A Member suggested that this item was difficult to scrutinise and the amount of context included in the agenda report was disappointing. He questioned why so little progress had been made in two years. In response, it was acknowledged that the decision to work across three organisations had initially set progress back. The National Strategy had been published during the pandemic. After this the Autism Partnership's response to the National Strategy was developed and the questionnaire and further engagement was co-produced with autistic people, in order to ensure that everyone was comfortable with the questions asked.
- In response to a follow up question, it was acknowledged that different organisations had started from different places in particular with reference to their SEND programmes.
- It was agreed that further detail and context relating to the development of the strategy would be provided to Panel Members including details of work with carers and young people and a copy of the questionnaire used.
- In response to a question about whether responses to the most recent questionnaire were different to those received previously, given that there had been an issue with autism services for some time, Members were informed that information had not previously been requested from carers and young people specifically in relation to autism.
- The Strategic Director reminded the Panel that there was an increasing focus across adult and children's social care on co-production of strategies with people who had lived experience and this was something that services would be judged on by Ofsted and CQC.
- A Member of the Panel expressed concern that the strategy was being developed jointly with Herefordshire Council when the two Councils were in very different places in their journey and suggested that this might make the strategy disjointed. In response, Members were informed that all parties were supportive of the joint approach and the only delay had been to have the strategy ready by October 2023 rather than April 2023 as initially planned.

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care referred the Panel to the 2009 Autism Act which had put responsibility on the government to produce a strategy. Subsequent government guidance produced in 2014 had not been clear about where responsibility for delivery lay and most top-tier authorities had struggled with this. He felt it was right to develop a new strategy and bring partners on board. The aim was to support people in having a satisfactory life including gainful employment where possible. The involvement of district councils would be key in this.

In conclusion, the Chairman recognised the difficulties that people with autism and their families had to face and supported attempts to build support in the community, noting that if the strategy was a success, it would change people's lives. The Panel would receive a further update once the draft strategy was available.

588 Worcestershire Learning Disability Strategy 2023-2028

Attending for this item:

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care
- Lead Commissioner, Learning Disability, People Directorate
- Director for All Age Disability, Worcestershire Children First (WCF)
- Programme Lead for Learning Disability and Autism, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

The Panel received an update on the new Worcestershire Learning Disability Strategy 2023-2028. By way of introduction, the Lead Commissioner (who was also co-chair of Worcestershire's Learning Disability Partnership Board alongside an expert by experience co-chair) made the following main points:

- The strategy had been co-produced by the Worcestershire Learning Disability Partnership Board on behalf of people with a learning disability and their families. The strategy would be used by partner organisations to inform their own specific organisational strategies.
- The Board had a wide membership of partners across Worcestershire including a number of expert members by experience, family carers, providers of services and professionals from across health and social care.
- The strategy had been developed through a variety of engagement with people with learning disabilities and family carers, including coffee mornings, self-advocacy groups and a survey, in order to ensure the widest possible opportunity to hear as many voices as possible.
- The strategy was a very local document, rooted in Worcestershire, and all photos, case studies and quotes were of local people.
- The strategy covered all ages with a specific theme of Life Changes (Theme 5) including transition to adulthood and also to older adulthood.

- In total the strategy had seven themes and all themes had an all-age approach and linked to other strategies as appropriate.

Members were invited to ask questions and the following main points were raised:

- The Chairman recognised that the strategy was ambitious and aspirational and asked what was in place to manage expectations. In response, it was confirmed that the Partnership Board had been keen to make the strategy ambitious and had included examples of what 'good' would look like drawing on work that was already taking place. However, it was ambition embedded in realism with KPIs setting out plans for specific changes.
- The strategy was still at the launch stage having been signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board in May 2023. It was confirmed that the reference to voluntary organisations included charities. There were approximately 35 to 40 locally based charities supporting people with learning disabilities to engage in the community.
- The Chairman of the Adult Care and Wellbeing O&S Panel confirmed that she was also a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board. She welcomed the involvement of carers when the strategy had been presented to the Board as she felt this had brought the strategy to life.
- The Partnership Board met every two months and implementation of the strategy would be monitored at each of these meetings. In addition, focused Partnership Board meetings would be held to look at achievements in relation to particular themes.

It was agreed that a further update on the implementation of the strategy would be received in due course.

589 Delivery of the All-Age Carers Strategy for Worcestershire

Attending for this item:

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care
- Strategic Director, People Directorate
- Assistant Director, People and Commissioning, People Directorate
- Commissioning Manager, People Directorate
- Lead Commissioner, People Directorate
- Director for All Age Disability, Worcestershire Children First (WCF)
- Programme Lead for Learning Disability and Autism, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Director, Strategy and Partnerships, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

The Panel received an update on the delivery of the All-Age Carers Strategy for Worcestershire. By way of introduction, the Assistant Director (People and Commissioning) made the following main points:

- The strategy had been approved in February 2022 and had been co-produced via engagement with carers (including parent carers and young carers) and other key stakeholders to consider what worked well and what did not work so well and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Key partners included the Council's Public Health team, WCF, carer organisations, the Integrated Care System and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.
- The aim was to minimise the gap between services for adults and children and to have the same vision for all carers.
- A key aspect to note was the production of an annual plan and a review of achievement against that plan. The first annual report had been well received by the Health and Wellbeing Board in May 2023. The annual report included actions which were steered by the Carers Partnership and shaped the priorities for year two.
- It was important to remember that there were a number of carers who were employed by the Council. As part of end of year reviews, staff had been asked whether they were a carer and currently approximately 25% of staff self-identified as carers (680 members of staff).

Members were invited to ask questions and the following main points were raised:

- A Member requested further information on 'carers feeling recognised and valued' (one of the four key outcomes identified in the strategy) and further details of 'John's Campaign' (which supports carers of people with dementia to have the same visiting rights in health settings as parents of children). It was agreed that this would be provided following the meeting.
- In response to a question about how progress against the strategy was measured, it was confirmed that the Council's statutory duty to support carers had been contracted to Your Support Services (for young people) and Worcestershire Association of Carers (for adults). What was being done and what was making a difference was monitored through contract monitoring arrangements and analysis of carer feedback ('I statements'). Data was monitored with individual carers and also at different levels right up to the strategic level. It was agreed that a high-level summary of activity and data relating to monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy would be provided to Members following the meeting.
- A question was asked about what substitute care was available to allow carers to have a life of their own (one of the four key outcomes identified in the strategy). In response, Members were informed that replacement care came in many forms, including residential and home-based care, and the type and level of breaks would be decided on an individual basis.
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care noted that figures from the latest national census in 2021 indicated that the number of carers in the county had reduced by approximately 20% since 2011 to 53,000. However, at the same time the complexity of the caring role and the number of hours spent caring had increased. The

Panel was reminded that direct comparisons were difficult as the questions asked as part of the census were outside of the control of the Council.

- The Strategic Director informed the Panel that the recent survey by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) had provided interesting information on the national picture and he agreed to circulate it following the meeting.

In conclusion, the Chairman of the Panel reminded Members that it was important to remember the day to day lives of individual carers who saved the state so much in financial terms. It was essential to get the strategy right. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Panels would receive a further update in due course.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm

Chairman