

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Supplementary Information



Date: Tuesday, 29 March 2022

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: The Council Chamber - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

6. Public Forum

(Pages 2 - 3)

Issued by: Dan Berlin, Scrutiny Advisor

City Hall, Bristol, BS1 9NE

Tel: 0117 92 222000

E-mail: scrutiny@bristol.gov.uk

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Statements

Ref	Name	Topic
S 1	Jen Smith	Performance Report Q3 (Education, Health & Care Plans)



Public Forum Statements

Statement 1: Jen Smith

As a parent carer who is part of Bristol's Send community, I am horrified at the continuing state of performance around the delivery of Final EHCPs.

Let's be really clear that there are legal time frames that the EHCP process must meet by law. This is 20 weeks. Every EHCP finalised outside of 20 weeks has broken the law.

Behind every EHCP that is late is a child or young person whose educational needs are simply not being met and a family under immense stress.

Families are still being forced to Tribunal to carry out an EHC Needs Assessment in the first place. Forced to Tribunal to appeal the decision not to issue a plan. And forced to appeal the contents of a finalised EHCP.

Tribunal has become part of the EHCP process in the city, for which Bristol is paying extra cash on outsourced solicitors, despite the hand-wringing sad-faced We Don't Have Enough High Needs Funding.

I frequently receive private messages through social media from families in the EHCP system whose EHCPs are not only late, they're over a year late.

Papers to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, state that there is a 'real concern that owing to increased demands for service and capacity issues, that future improvements may be slower...'

There is no excuse. None. 'Increased demands' seeks to push a 'not our fault' narrative when the fact is it is the LA's fault. And can 'future improvements' be any slower?

Bristol has had over two years since its Send inspection to make improvements and here we are with the exact same issues.

We've had years of a PR narrative spinning out that Bristol was bad with Send because of 'unprecedented demand' when actually Bristol did not have unprecedented demand and the statistics have proven it. Staff from SEN teams in other LAs despair at Bristol in their social media comments for the city being so bad for no good reason.

'The decline in performance...' are the key words here. That's where the focus should be. No more deflection, no more 'unprecedented demand' no more blame on families. It's Bristol's decline in performance and the People Directorate has had more than enough time to sort it out. How many more decades would it like?