

Bristol City Council Minutes of the People Scrutiny Commission

6 December 2023 at 6.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Sarah Classick (Vice-Chair), Kerry Bailes, Brenda Massey, Sharon Scott, Lisa Stone, Mark Weston, Tim Wye and Katja Hornchen

1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed the attendees. Health and Safety information was provided.

2 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Chair Cllr Townsend and the meeting was Chaired by VC Cllr Sarah Classick.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

RESOLVED; That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved.

5 Chair's Business

No Business was submitted.



6 Public Forum

Public Forum questions and statements were published prior to the meeting and can be viewed [here](#).

RESOLVED; That the Public Forum be noted.

7 Q1 2023-24 Performance Report

The Performance Advisor for Children's Services presented the Q1 Performance report. It was noted that 97% of Actions were on target or better, and 55% of business plan priority measures were on target or better.

In regard to P-CYP1.3 (supporting fostering services to recruit foster carers) a Member noted the commentary of the efforts in place for retention including a 'good offer' and various 'activity events', and requested further details of the offer and events. This included activities specifically for foster families (days in the park, Christmas parties, etc), while some events were on a rolling programme to support foster carers. The offer had both a formal and informal structure of support; each child and family would have a social worker and access to therapeutic support services.

In regard to P-CYP4.2 (increase retention of social workers by reviewing pay) further detail around the timescales for pay review was requested. This was in progress; paperwork had been completed with a proposed job description and evaluation out for consultation due to be completed 19th December 2023. Funds were also available for international recruitment. It was confirmed that following the pay review that salary would become more competitive and in line with neighbours.

The social worker apprenticeship scheme was noted, and it was thought that 12 apprentices were on the programme at that time; a new cohort had recently been recruited.

For BPPM266 (Increase the percentage of adults with learning difficulties known to social care who are in paid employment), the decrease was noted. Officers confirmed that the data reporting on this was being interrogated to ensure accuracy. Officers agreed to provide further information on this once analysis had been completed. The work of the We Work for Everyone programme was noted, as well as organisations that provide employment opportunities such as Stepping Stone.

Members were pleased to see that BPPM307 (Increase the number of people enabled to live independently through home adaptations) was performing significantly above target, and requested further information on the reasons for this. Officers agreed to provide this.

The Performance and service area officers were thanked for the report and their work.

RESOLVED; That i) the report be noted, and that ii) further analysis regarding the performance of BPPM266 and BPPM307 be provided.



8 'Our Families' Transformation Programme Update - standing item

The Director for Children and Education Transformation presented an update against the Our Families Transformation Programme outlining the continued financial pressures and plans for mitigations. This included work on developing the sufficiency of children's placements within Bristol, including children's homes and supported accommodation. Further details on plans for provision for 16-18 year olds were provided.

It was noted that the challenges had increased over the 2022/23 and 2023/24 year, with children and young people presenting with more complex needs. It was also confirmed that the increasing demands were a national issue.

A Member noted the cost efficiency of foster carers, and how this could be supported and encouraged financially. The Director for Children and Families stated that some financial allowances had been provided, with fuel allowance also looked at. There had also been some creative thinking around how to reach out to people who might otherwise not have been able to foster, such as providing support around property extensions.

Officers confirmed that work was being conducted with neighbouring authorities in developing local provision.

Members thanked the officers for their work, and welcomed the creative thinking and working evident across directorates.

RESOLVED; That the People Scrutiny Commission note the report.

9 Education Health & Care (EHC) Performance Update - standing Item

The Director for Education and Skills presented an update against the performance of Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments.

It was noted that at the end of October 2023 there had been a 20% increase in EHC Needs Assessment requests compared to the same period the previous year; this also reflected a national increase.

Some improvements in timeliness of EHC Plans issued within 20 weeks had been seen, with Bristol performing above the average for the region and nationally. A key pressure came from the tension between finalising new EHCNA requests and legacy requests already outstanding.

Reduced capacity in the Educational Psychology Services was expected to have an impact. The extent of this was expected to be known by Q1 2024/25.

It was confirmed that the pressure in the Educational Psychology Services was national. Officers understood the local offer to be good resulting in good retention and recruitment.



It was noted that the Local Authority did not have capacity to attend all reviews and it was queried whether there was a relation between those reviews that had not been attended and subsequent tribunals. While this data was not held, the Local Authority did prioritise certain demographics and risk factors.

Members raised the impact on schools to collate information for EHCs where the Local Authority could not attend. Officers recognised this and hoped to show improvement over time, while acknowledging that schools were partners in the process.

Officers were thanked for the report.

RESOLVED; That the People Scrutiny Commission note the report.

10 Adult Social Care Transformation Programme Update - standing item

The Executive Director for Adults and Communities presented an update against the Transformation Programme.

An overview of the Transformation Programme was given, noting the 'programme reset' in 2023-24 to address additional financial challenges and the procurement of a delivery partner to build capacity and identify further opportunities.

Officers highlighted a number of areas in which progress had been made, including proactive debt recovery. This involved making systems more efficient, such as making it easier to pay debts (ie. by telephone).

The Fair and Affordable Care Policy consultation had been extended following engagement. Engagement with people with lived experience had been a priority, with an aim to be more co-productive.

The work in managing needs had supported 23 people in being able to access a home of their own instead of supported accommodation.

A single commissioning framework was established to simplify contracting with third party organisations. The tender for the SCF closed on 14 November 2023. The next step would be to evaluate and move forward with the successful tenders. The scale of the SCF was emphasised, with the capacity to encompass £200m per year. It was hoped that this would help to shape the local market, supporting contracts with local providers.

A benefit was expected to be improved monitoring, with tighter terms of reference. In terms of financial impact more astute commissioning could drive better arrangements, and avoids vulnerability to the market where all commissioned items were separate purchases. The aim would be to move to fewer providers, with more community based.

Members thanked officers for the report, and were pleased to see details of the Single Commissioning Framework.



RESOLVED; That the People Scrutiny Commission note the report.

11 Learning Disability & Autism Programme Update

The Executive Director for Adults and Communities and the Transformation and Commissioning Lead for Adult Care Commissioning introduced the Learning Disability and Autism Programme update. The joint Learning Disability and Autism (LD&A) commissioning team had been established in January 2023; this item was requested as a progress update against the programme of work following a report presented during the 2022-23 year. The team was fully staffed in 2023 and had started to identify system improvements.

The ASC Single Commissioning Framework discussed in the previous item was noted as relevant to this item, as the projects within the programme tied closely to the ASC commissioning function to address gaps in accommodation supply and support provision. The SCF consolidated commissioning activity with less spot purchasing.

The Executive Director for Adult Social Care highlighted the innovative work of the team and particularly thanked Transformation and Commissioning Lead for his work. It had enabled local providers to invest in property for bespoke housing solutions and had produced good outcomes; an example was given of an individual who had been in hospital accommodation for 20 years who was now able to access their own home.

The team was integrated with the Integrated Care Board to conduct joint commissioning with Health services.

All land and property asset disposals were being examined for suitability. Cllr Massey identified a potential local site she was aware of and agreed to share the details with Transformation and Commissioning Lead for further consideration. It was clarified that a 'single council approach' was being taken with site disposals, where the most appropriate cohort in need was considered in deciding best use. The 'whole system' approach was supported by the Transformation Programme Portfolio.

Members welcomed the work of the LDA team.

Older people were raised as a cohort who may have varying degrees of support needed as part of their accommodation. It was confirmed that the accommodation team also had this cohort in mind.

The types of property disposals most appropriate for supported accommodation use were discussed.

Officers were thanked for their report.

RESOLVED; That the People Scrutiny Commission note the report.

12 Direct Payments and Community Care



The Transformation and Commissioning Lead for Community Care and Support presented a report on Direct Payments, the term used for money paid directly to individuals to allow them to buy the services they are assessed as needing. A presentation was delivered with the key points being:

- There was a priority within the ASC Transformation Programme to bring Direct Payments in line with national benchmarking (26%) as Bristol were underperforming after having initially performed well.
- The project objectives, having been developed with stakeholders, were outlined, with achievements including the development of a Direct Payment Support Hub, improvements in accessibility, increasing the DP Personal Assistance rate, and development of services to support personalisation.
- Planned future activity was outlined. It was acknowledged that there was a challenge as the project was operating without additional transformation investment

There was evidence that Direct Payments provided good outcomes both in terms of quality of care and financially. Progress of the project was being monitored through the ASC Transformation Programme.

The Direct Payment Cafes introduced as part of the project where social care staff and receive guidance around Direct Payments were discussed.

The increase in personal assistance rate was identified as a key achievement, as this was where most payments would be made, and the previous rate had made it difficult to recruit. This was considered a success. A Member was pleased to see the increase in this rate, and provided an example where inflexibility on this had led to a frustrating piece of case work.

Introductory Agencies, in which people with particular care and support needs were matched with self-employed carers, were discussed. These were new to the sector. Planned future work included creating an approved suppliers list. Organisations with an innovative approach to personalisation were discussed.

The Direct Payment Support contract was expected to be recommissioned following the Single Commissioning Framework. A consultation would form part of this process.

The Individual Service Funds Pilot was discussed. ISF was considered a middle ground between commissioned services and Direct Payments, offering greater control of a personal budget. The pilot was to focus on disabled people with a learning disability. IS Funds had been shown to be a creative solution.

The balance between encouraging Direct Payments without pressuring a client for whom it would be inappropriate was discussed, with a Member providing an example. Officers agreed; the focus was on equipping staff to understand the offer and encourage where appropriate to do so.

Members would welcome examples of stories from people with lived experience for future reports. This was noted.

RESOLVED; That the People Scrutiny Commission note the report.



13 Scrutiny Work Programme

The Work Programme was noted.

Meeting ended at 8.30pm

