

Committee Report

PURPOSE: Final Decision Report

KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION: Non-key decision

COMMITTEE: Children and Young People Committee

DATE: 30 September 2024

TITLE: Children and Young People Policy Committee Update Report

Ward(s): All wards

Officer presenting the report: Hannah Woodhouse **Job title:** Executive Director Children and Education (DCS)

Committee Chair: Cllr Christine Townsend

Executive Director lead: Hannah Woodhouse: Executive Director for Childrens and Education

Proposal origin: Committee Chair

Purpose of Report: An update to the Children and Young People's Policy Committee to provide information on the delivery and performance of children's services in line with the statutory expectations of the Director of Children's Services. The report identifies key challenges and risks for consideration, areas of progress, and upcoming activity.

This report does not include an update to data presented to the August meeting, due to the frequency of committee dates. The November report will contain a further data update. As before: this report will develop with each iteration and so feedback is welcomed.

Executive Director Summary of progress and issues arising

Introduction

1. As we start the term and the new term of a new government, we await further information about policy proposals which relate to children's services or education. So far there have been some significant changes indicated through the changes to the inspection framework for schools removing single word judgements from school inspections and proposals to include more measures of inclusion in a 'report card approach' which reflect the context of a school, inclusion of pupils. Further announcements included a curriculum and assessment review, commitment to add VAT to independent schools, a skills drive, expanding the number of school based nurseries and breakfast clubs to every primary school.
2. Within the Children's Wellbeing Bill sit a number of proposals including to 'Require all

schools to cooperate with the local authority on school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning, by giving local authorities greater powers to help them deliver their functions on school admissions and ensure admissions decisions account for the needs for communities.’ We anticipate further details in the autumn budget.

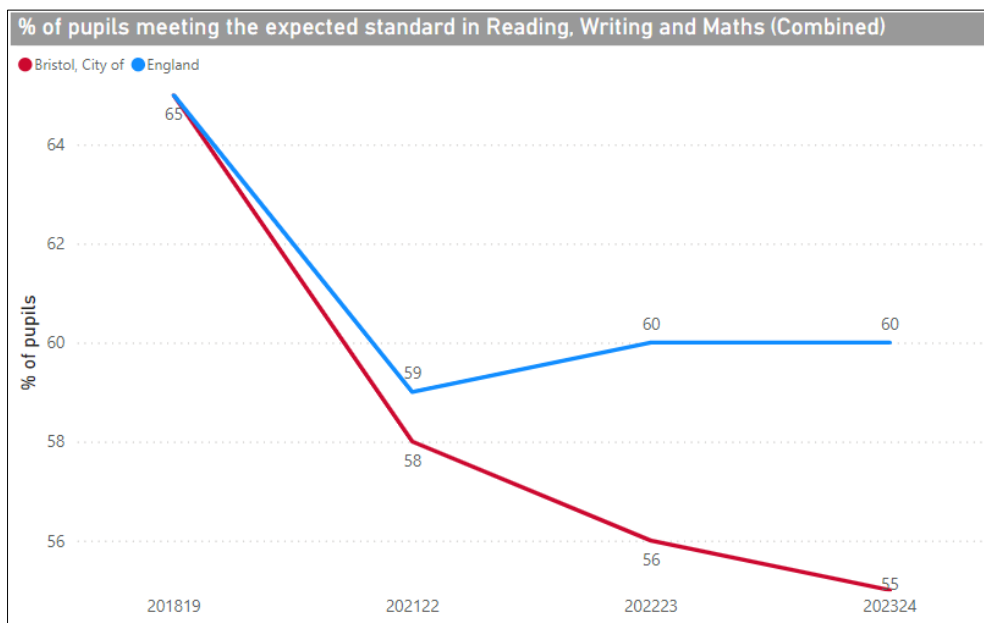
3. We continue to work on medium term financial plan proposals, particularly to manage the ongoing pressure arising from the cost of residential placements and further pressures to the DSG driven by additional pupils with more complex special educational needs and disabilities. In the September board the **Children’s Quality, Improvement and Performance (QuIP) Board** considered reports on school inclusion and attendance, families experiencing homelessness and transitions into adulthood for disabled young people. Updates are set out below.
4. Directorate performance management arrangements ensure that performance information is monitored at a team, service and directorate level to ensure delivery of services and impact for children. Any exceptions, risks and progress are escalated to the children’s QuIP Board which also reviews a suite of key metrics across children’s systems to maintain oversight and ensure delivery of improvement plans.

Early years and education

5. **Attendance:** As we set out in the committee in August, average school attendance decreased last year against the national average making improving attendance a key priority. In response to these concerns a group is working across the city led by trust and school leaders bringing schools together to provide advice and guidance, review our progress against the data and support the sharing of best practice. Where there are acute issues and persistent absence, schools will offer support to families and work with services to provide practical whole-family support as far as possible. The start of term has started well with significantly higher levels of attendance and we will continue to monitor and share this data throughout the year.
6. **Maintained Nursery School programme.** The 12 maintained nursery schools in Bristol are working closely together to produce and develop a model which develops excellent practice and is financially sustainable. Maintained nursery schools play an important part in the early help offer for families but historically have struggled with deficit budgets. Themes being explored by the schools include modelling area-based models of federation, a single back office ‘MNS business hub’ function and the development of a ‘federation/trust’ model under which all MNS can sit. A Memorandum of Understanding is currently being developed to outline areas of work and decisions brought to the CYP committee in due course.
7. **Early Years Childcare Sufficiency (CSA).** The Early Years Team holds the statutory duty under the Childcare Acts of 2006 and 2016 for all childcare places in Bristol. Annually a count of all places from nursery to after school clubs is measured, producing a ‘Childcare Sufficiency Assessment’ which is shared with internal and external stakeholders. This must be published every 3 years as a minimum. Bristol’s last published assessment was in 2022 and showed we have sufficient childcare places citywide (this is not a ward level measure) but indicated that spaces for babies were getting close to insufficiency in some wards. In view of this, the £650K capital grant allocation (June 2024) was targeted to

increase places for the expansion of childcare, with a focus on children under 2 years old in line with the government’s ambition to increase childcare for under 2s.

- 8. **Wrap Around Childcare.** Wrap Around Childcare sits under the umbrella of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, but in Spring 23 the government announced funding to expand wrap around childcare (i.e. primary school aged children, term time only, at before and after school sessions from 8am-6pm) to enable parents and carers to return to work. Nursery aged children are not included. Bristol secured £1.6m and is currently assessing and awarding funding to over 30 schools to create over 600 places. The project should see places available by the end of January 2025 with financial support available until March 2026.
- 9. **Breakfast Clubs.** A manifesto promise from the new government was the creation of 750 state funded schools offering free breakfast clubs from April 2025 as a ‘test and learn’ phase prior to a national rollout. Schools can now sign up to be early adopters directly with the DfE, building on the Wrap Around Childcare expansion programme to reduce the impact of poverty and to support families with the cost of living. We should hear more about this initiative later in October 2024.
- 10. **School results.** It was very good to celebrate outcomes of young people at primary, secondary and special schools over the summer. We will bring a full summary of provisional KS4 results to the committee in due course but the provisional KS2 results show a further concerning position as below. The % of pupils reaching expected standard in English, Writing and Maths reduced to 55% compared to a national position of 60% which places Bristol in the 90% percentile in the country. Children claiming free school meals and those from black and minoritised backgrounds (particularly pupils from Black Caribbean backgrounds) continue to see results which are very significantly lower than their peers.



- 11. Clearly this is extremely concerning. We continue to discuss with both primary maintained and academy trust leaders and are developing a new school improvement

framework to support maintained schools in the city to bring rapid improvement in outcomes to all children. Again we will bring further updates.

12. A further **pressing challenge across the city is the change in pupil places** which is forecast to fall in the early years of primary school for the foreseeable future. Working closely with trust leaders we have established a working group to review proposals to reduce class sizes strategically protecting small schools and avoiding financial cuts across all primary schools. This is work that can only be agreed across trusts and maintained schools so will be an important test of our ability to work together across the city. We are aiming to hit the DfE admissions deadline in December with a set of agreed proposals.
13. **Post 16 Participation.** Bristol NEET and Not Known figures have increased in August to 8.7% (3.9% CSNK and 4.8% NEET). The increase is due to the time of year at the end of term when records are being continuously updated. Overall, our performance is broadly in line with the England average of 5% Not Known and 3.6% NEET. We anticipate that this picture will improve upon receipt of enrolment data from schools in neighbouring local authorities. Local FE colleges have notified us that their current 16-18 programmes are full, so we are currently adding young people without a place onto college waiting lists. There are currently 677 young people identified at risk of becoming NEET in Bristol secondary settings. There is an urgent need for more consistent CEIAG including experience of work and support with post 16 pathways.

SEND and inclusion

14. We are very pleased that our **new SEND and Inclusion strategy** [[Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028 Consultation | Ask Bristol Consultation and Engagement Hub](#)] is now out for consultation until the 28 October. This has been co-produced with children and families, and with partners. The strategy will be showcased at the SEND Bristol Local Area Partnership Event 2024, where partners will speak about the expected outcomes and impact the strategy will have on future ways of working. We are on track to take this to January committee for approval to publish following consultation feedback and review.
15. We also have developed [Early Intervention Fund \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#) the renamed targeted support fund for schools and a new outreach service with early intervention and support for children with SEND. And we the new SEND and AP Improvement partnership Board is in place meeting for the second time in November. This is supported by a monthly schools group (SEND and AP delivery group) which works to promote proactive inclusion across mainstream schools enabling the partnership to fulfil the SEND Strategy priorities.
16. We have already reported that we continue to see a further increase in **demand for education, health and care (EHC) Plans** for children and are working hard within the service to progress assessments as quickly as possible. We are very mindful of the distress and uncertainty this can cause and are doing everything we can to process EHC needs assessments as quickly and effectively as possible.

Keeping Children Safe

17. Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership and **Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews**. We continue work as a partnership to support the production of two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews written by independent reviewers, learning from the child deaths in January and February 2024 and these will be published in due course. Also we will bring the Annual report of the KBSP to this committee in November and are working through some proposals for changes to the way that we work as a partnership as a result of 'Working Together 2023' guidance.
18. **Families experiencing homelessness**: Families in Focus (FIF) are currently supporting a number of families who would be street homeless without support due to being found ineligible for Local Authority housing support. As well creating instability for families, including temporary accommodation such as hotels, these arrangements are often more costly to the Council. We continue to work across the Council to support families at risk of homelessness as well as possible.
19. **Transitions to adulthood**. The Young Adults Transition Service (YATS) has been redesigned to ensure that young people receive the right support at the right time, and are supported in their transitions to adult social care or services. Referral criteria has been reviewed and children will be referred from the age of 14. The team will support young people who: Will likely or certainly have care and support needs post 18 which derive from, or are related to, a physical or mental impairment or illness and, have a current or future Transitional Support need. The service aims to support young people to live as independently as possible, ensure they are listened to, and that they are supported to make real choices about what is important to them. Positive progress has been made so far, and this will continue to be evaluated and monitored as the new service model is embedded.
20. **Youth Zone**. We are due to sign the development agreement for the Youth Zone to be built in Filwood, South Bristol. In March 2021, the then Cabinet approved a mandate for a regenerative project in the South of Bristol (Youth Zone) committing to raise outcomes and aspirations amongst children and young people where outcomes are disproportionately poor. Youth Zones are large state of the art youth centres based in areas with high levels of young people, aimed at inspiring, occupying, supporting, and keeping young people safe. The centres are run by local charities affiliated to OnSide (a charity that supports youth services) and are funded through a combination of Local Authority and central government grants and philanthropy.
21. The centre will be constructed and operated by Youth Moves (a local charity). In March 2023 a Cabinet report set out that the full cost of the centre is £12.8m of which £8.6m has been raised by Onside mainly through Youth Investment Fund capital grant from DCSM, and BCC will contribute £4.2m capital including enabling works. In addition, BCC will make a revenue contribution of £1.2m over three years which is expected to comprise 30% of the total running costs the remainder of which will be raised by Onside/Youth Moves. We will continue to support both organisations to continue to engage closely with the community and develop services which meet the needs of young people in South Bristol.
22. Work has continued on our **response to serious youth violence and the exploitation of children**. The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (KBSP) Preventing Serious Violence Board

has now met a number of times and will be developing the related strategy and actions during November. An update on the response to serious youth violence and prevention strategies will be provided to this committee in November 2024.

23. Bristol Sanctuary Services This month, Bristol Sanctuary Services transitioned into the Children and Families directorate. The service supports sanctuary seekers from a range of schemes and immigration backgrounds: resettled refugees, asylum seekers, Ukrainians, and people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). We are proud to have been reaccredited as a City of Sanctuary this summer, continuing 14 years with this status that recognises the work we collectively do to welcome and support sanctuary seekers in Bristol.

Prioritising Children in Care

24. Bristol's new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-29 was launched at Full Council in July, with significant work having been undertaken concurrently to embed the council's commitment to care-experienced children and young people at the highest level, both corporately and politically. An action plan has been developed to support its delivery which will report on a quarterly basis to Corporate Leadership Board, and also to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

25. Recruiting Foster Carers – a campaign! Developing **sufficient homes for children in care** is an issue nationally and in Bristol. We know it is usually better for our children to remain living in Bristol near family and connected people. We have launched a [new campaign](#) to encourage more foster carers and to provide more support to carers – again all your support is welcome.

26. Provisional Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 outcomes for children in care. The 2024 GCSE provisional outcomes indicated some very positive results for children in care with increased numbers achieving 4+ and 5+ in both English and Maths. Results in Maths were particularly strong with numbers of children achieving 5+ more than twice that of the previous year. These outcomes have positively enabled young people to move on to study level 3 courses at Post 16. Key Stage 2 outcomes did not show a marked improvement on the previous year although the individual contexts in the small year group do help to explain this. Further targeted funding is being offered to schools for children in care in years 5, 6, 10 and 11 to ensure children have the best possible additional support and preparation for their assessments.

27. Attendance rates for children in care in the academic year 2023-24 marginally improved with a positive trend being noted in the reduced persistent absence rate for secondary-aged children. The virtual school continue to maintain a priority focus on attendance for all children in care through review and joint action planning with schools and social workers.

28. Suspension rates continue to be an area of concern for children in care to Bristol. More than a quarter of secondary-aged children received one or more suspensions in the 2023-24 academic year. These suspension rates are high in comparison to statistical neighbours and to other priority groups of children receiving support from children's services. Further work is required to support education settings to embed trauma-aware

practice and ensure children's circumstances are fully considered when implementing behaviour policy.

29. One of our new Children's Homes is now open, whilst another is at the Ofsted application stage. We expect to exchange and take possession of our 2 Goram Homes solo occupancy homes in the next two weeks; and we have just purchased a further new home. We are reaching the end of the negotiation process with providers before they bid to become our strategic delivery partner for a number of the Children's Homes.

Upcoming priority work areas for the month ahead

30. Bristol **Youth Justice Service** (YJS) took part in a pilot inspection with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). We will update further in due course.

31. The DfE will meet with the Council, Parent Carer Forum and local area SEND partners in early November 2024 to review progress against **Bristol's SEND Accelerated Progress Plan**, which focuses on building positive relationships with parent carers and a consistent approach to coproduction. An update on progress will be provided to this committee in January 2024.

32. We are working on a **children and education strategy** across all services which will set out priorities as part of the Council's wider business planning process. We are also continue to focus on how we can develop services particular to work with partners to support families earlier preventing crises and needs escalating. As part of this we are launching a number of long planned HR consultations including in social care, SEND and schools partnerships which make proposals to adjust the way we deliver services in line with demands and needs of customers. We are bringing an update on our transformation programme to the CYP committee in October.

Officer Recommendations:

1. That the Children and Young People Policy Committee note this report.

Corporate Strategy alignment: Children and Education Services play a critical role in delivering corporate strategy commitments across all its themes. The majority of key activity referred to in this report falls within two themes: children and young people: A city where every child belongs and every child gets the best start in life, whatever circumstances they were born into; and Economy and skills: Economic growth that builds inclusive and resilient communities, decarbonises the city and offers equity of opportunity.

City Benefits: This report supports the committee's understanding of delivery of children's services to improve outcomes for children and families in Bristol

Consultation Details: The content of this report has been discussed with Divisional Management Teams and Executive Director Meetings.

Background Documents:

1. [Bristol's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2029](#)

2. [Bristol SEND Accelerated Progress Plan](#)

1. Finance Advice: Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this specific report, this report does highlight very significant issues that are directly influencing expenditure within the directorate. With the directorate overspending significantly in both social care and special education provision, actions that are detailed in this report to address demand pressures and control expenditure are welcome. Improved sufficiency of in-house care placements and improved recruitment and retention of foster carers is to be welcomed where this avoids more costly and more distant provision, as is improved recruitment and retention of social workers where this reduces the need for more expensive agency provision. The increases in EHCPNAs remains a concern, whereby these represent a growing pressure upon High Needs budgets. Transformation of service delivery alongside improved early help is planned to address these financial concerns.

Finance Business Partner: Travis Young Finance Business Partner, Children & Education 01 August 2024

2. Legal Advice: This report is for noting and will assist the Committee in ensuring the Council is complying with its statutory duty and statutory guidance.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor, 1 August 2024.

3. Implications on IT: I.T. are supportive and available to aid in progressing relevant work and can be engaged through the existing work request process.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect, 6 August 2024

4. HR Advice: This report is to provide information on the delivery and performance of children's services to the Children and Young People's Policy Committee and will be provided on a monthly basis. The report highlights the key challenges and risks for consideration, areas of progress, and upcoming activity. There are no significant Hr implications for Bristol City Council employees arising from this report.

HR Partner: Lorna Laing, HR Business Partner, Children and Education Directorate, 6 August 2024

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	NO
Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	NO
Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment (Environmental Impact Assessment	NO
Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment	NO
Appendix E – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix	NO
Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis	NO