

**Bristol City Council**  
**Minutes of the Children and Young People**  
**Policy Committee**

28 November 2024 at 5.00 pm



**Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Christine Townsend (Chair), Katja Hornchen (Vice-Chair), Kerry Bailes, Sarah Classick, Ellie Freeman, Cam Hayward, Shona Jemphrey, Susan Kollar and Henry Michallat

**1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the emergency safety information was provided.

The Chair advised everyone that the meeting was being filmed and live streamed on the Bristol City Council webcasting page on YouTube. It was further confirmed that all policy committee meetings would be livestreamed from then onwards.

**2 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

There were no apologies or substitutions.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

On the motion of the Chair, seconded by Councillor Hornchen, the Committee RESOLVED;  
- That the minutes of the previous meeting on 17th October be approved as a correct record.



## 5 Chair's Announcements

The Chair provided some information about current central Government budget announcements, including a £6m additional investment in Youth Service funding. Bristol was expected to receive a share of this funding.

## 6 Public Forum

The following Public Forum was received for this meeting and was published in-full on the meeting webpage here: [ModernGov - bristol.gov.uk](https://www.moderngov.com/d/428266/summary/2023-03-22/2023-03-22-16-30-00)

### Public forum questions:

Ref No	Name	Title
PQ01	Shaban Ali	Children living in Lawrence Hill
PQ02	Cathryn Stephens	EHC Needs Assessments Data
PQ03	Caroline Lee-Smith	Specialist school provision
PQ04	Caroline Lee-Smith	SEN Caseworker Caseloads

### Public statements:

Ref No	Name	Title
PS01	Kate Persaud, Adam Barber	A new home for Elmfield Secondary - attended
PS02	Dan Ackroyd	Bristol Schools Forum, Educational Psychologists - attended

Kate Persaud, Elmtree Secondary and Adam Barber summarised their statement and highlighted the urgency of the situation. It was explained how important the new school building was and that if it was not ready by September 2025, the school would not be able to re-open. They asked if the Council had a suitable site in mind?

Hannah Woodhouse, Executive Director for Children and Education said she recognised how urgent the situation was and advised that it was a high priority. The Council was trying to unblock suitable sites and recognised that the school had pushed the boundaries on what they could provide already this year.

Dan Aykroyd attended and summarised his statement.

The Executive Director said there were a number of Educational Psychologist vacancies and that a recruitment drive had now been completed.



The Chair advised that they had already taken up a number of the issues highlighted by Dan.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the Public Forum.

## **7 Children and Young People Policy Committee Update Report**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the delivery and performance of children's services in line with the statutory expectations of the Director of Children's Services. The report identified key challenges and risks for consideration, areas of progress, and upcoming activity.

The Chair noted that there were no decisions to be taken on this report, which was for the Committee's information.

Hannah Woodhouse, Executive Director for Children and Education outlined the key points in the report to the Members which included:

- EHCPs figures continued to be a concern. More EHCPs had been finalised that month than the last. They were completing more of the legacy outliers to ensure that no children were waiting more than 52 weeks.
- Restructuring and expanding of the SEND service but it will take time to complete.
- The SEND and Inclusion Strategy would be brought back to the Committee in January.
- The data on the number of children missing in education was not positive and the Committee Chair had requested the situation be looked into.
- School attendance rates were generally holding up this year and were higher than last year. But some school numbers were now said to be dropping.
- Work on the school improvement framework was continuing but some schools were said to be struggling. It was proving difficult to recruit school improvement officers but this continued to be a focus.
- The number of school exclusions was recorded in this report for first time and will included going forwards as it was a subject that concerned many people. The numbers had risen over last 5 years but so far were lower than last year.

The following points were discussed;

The numbers of children with child protection plans had been slowly creeping up but how did Bristol compare with other core cities? Officers said they would provide this information.

Officers confirmed that the figures in the graph on short-term home placement stability, that the lower the figure the better. In the next report they would aim to make that information clearer.

A Member asked about children in care; did data exist on the stability of worker relationships and/or how many times there is a change in who the family worker is? An officer advised there was previously measure on stability of workers that was shared and that was benchmarked with the children's



commissioner. They were trying to internally track this as well and will be in a better position when in receipt of the national benchmark.

A Member requested some clarification about children missing education, and asked if the data was available, ward by ward and was it linked to deprivation? An officer advised about a publicly available by ward a profile tool, and within that, the rates of children ward.

The Chair explained that children missing education are children that the local authority (LA) are of aware of but were not enrolled into a school. An officer advised that there is no benchmark but they would try to find out and include it in the next update report. Pupils 'missing' school were enrolled into schools but were not attending. The schools themselves were initially responsible for addressing this.

A Member asked about the strategy for reducing waiting times for ECHPs. It was said that the aim was to treat each child in the order it came in but there was currently a shifted focus on those who had been waiting longest for assessments and completing those.

In reply to a question about the length of time for the recovery plan to improve the speed of assessments, officers advised that the recovery plan would be brought to the Committee with the SEND strategy in January 2025.

A discussion was had about the number of children who were awaiting specialist provision and why the number was increasing. Officers said they would provide the information on how many children are awaiting specialist provision.

The Children and Young People Policy Committee RESOLVED to note the report as per the recommendation.

## **8 Care Experience as a Locally Protected Characteristic**

The Committee considered a report that asked them to note a detailed a proposal for Care Experience to become "a locally protected characteristic" and refer to Full Council on 14th January 2025 for approval.

It was confirmed that this report was for information purposes.

The Chair invited Amanda Braund, Through Care Service Manager – Fostering to briefly outline the report. It was explained that if this proposal was agreed by the Committee and Full Council that care experience would be taken into consideration in the same way other protected characteristics are. Other employers in the City would be encouraged to follow suit. Several other local authorities (LAs) had already done this.

A Member said they were pleased about this initiative. It would be useful to have the information that explains why we needed to do this and how important it was because many people don't understand it. It could also help to promote it.



In terms of recruitment, yes it was thought the Council could use it but they would check with HR to ensure they providing the correct information.

A Member asked if the messaging on this could be communicated to the LA's contractors?  
The Chair believed that this was possible, especially in procurement.

The Chair thanked the officers for their hard work to bring the proposal forward.

The report will now be submitted to Full Council.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the recommendations as per the report.

## **9 Children & Education Transformation Programme Update**

The Committee considered the report that briefed them on the status of the Our Families transformation programme and the work being undertaken to refresh the programme now branded as Families First.

It was confirmed that the report was for information purposes.

The Executive Director, Hannah Woodhouse outlined the key points in the report to Members.

The transformation programme previously called "Our Families," was focused on reducing the pressure at the upper end of children's social care, particularly the supplier set, measures for children's homes, foster care support as well as work around workforce recruitment.

A brief discussion was had about the status of the transformation programme workstreams and the work being undertaken to refresh the programme.

The Council had not been able to deliver some of the savings previously agreed upon due to increasing demand and cost pressures on the service as well as delay to implementation of post 16 transport policy changes.

The Committee RESOLVED;

1. To note the current position and performance of the Our Families Programme
2. To note and support the direction of travel to Families First described in this report
3. Agree the recommendation to receive the full business case for approval in January 2025



## 10 Serious Youth Violence and Adolescent Social Care

The Committee considered a report that sought to;

1. To inform the committee of the current concerns in relation to extrafamilial harm (harm outside the family), including serious youth violence, criminal exploitation, and sexual exploitation across the city.
2. Update on the current multi-agency strategic approach to understanding and addressing these concerns.
3. Advise the committee of the current issues and risks and our response in relation to the scale of the worry.

The Chair confirmed that the report was for information purposes and added that in future she would prefer the report to be called 'serious violence that effects our youth'.

It was noted that Police Superintendent Mark Runacres was in attendance to provide information where possible and respond to questions from the Committee.

Tara Parsons, Head of Service: Children's Safeguarding and Targeted Services briefly outlined the key points in the report.

The paper was produced as an update on the strategic response to serious youth violence and extra familial harm and the coordinated multi-agency strategic response. It was also an update on the increased number of referrals to Children's Services in relation to extra familial harm and exploitation which it was being seen in many cities across England.

Some of the increases were said to be due to recent events in Bristol but also due to an increase in awareness of extra familial harm and exploitation being seen as a safeguarding concern.

The strategic and strengthened incident response was said to be one of collaboration and joint work between key partners across the City, between the Neighbourhood Police Team, Bristol Community and Public Health Teams and Children's Services and Education.

Officers said they would return in March 2025 with a further update and to advise how they have developed and imbedded the recommendations from the report.

The Chair added that the multi-agency work was led by statutory agencies across Bristol and across the wider geographical boundaries of the area. Some Members had recently met with the Bristol Youth Council members and other young people, who had reported a high level of fear and insecurity, including when walking to and from school. It was she said everyone's business to ensure that young people felt safe when they are out in their communities.

The Chair then asked for any comments and questions from the Members.



A Member asked about the return home interviews / conversations and if they were happening within the required time frame. Officers were currently working on this with Bernardo's who were the independent strategic partner organisation, to look at how they can keep on improving the interview process because some children were saying that they did not want to speak to strangers about this. Officers were currently looking at how they could fulfil the necessary obligations and also make sure children felt comfortable at the same time.

Referring to the information on page 40 of the pack (page 3 of report) under the Pressures and Risks section, the sharp increase in recent years of serious youth violence shown in the table, a Member asked if the increase was expected to continue and be even higher this year. Officers said that increases were unlikely to rise at the rate of recent years but they would report back when they had that data.

In reply to a question about what did officers think the reasons were for the sharp increase were? Superintendent Mark Runacres advised that after the incidents in East Bristol, police did a lot of work to fully review what the data showed across the City. There had been a significant increase in serious youth violence and knife crime incidents in East Bristol in the recent months leading up to the early part of that year, whilst incidents in other areas remained fairly static. There were links between the incidents and related ongoing tensions between young people in the East, which police had information and intelligence about. Since the targeted and early intervention work there were reductions and they have continued throughout the year. It wasn't however something they were complacent about. The issue of identity and what that means to young people in different parts of the City was significant and a challenging issue for the police. It was linked to issues of deprivation, vulnerability, exploitation and highlighted the importance of the early intervention work through safer options to identify young people who are at a heightened level of risk.

Also, highlighted were work around youth justice and the protective factors which included non-attendance at school, education, training and family stability. When these did not exist, it drew vulnerable young people into criminality, drug dealing and often the carriage of knives becomes part of those behaviours to perceived protection for them.

A Member asked if officers were confident with the overarching structure and that things were not being missed or slipping through the cracks in the multi-agency approach? The Executive Director said yes the Preventing Violence Board had looked at this over the past few months to ensure priorities and responsibilities were clear between public health, police, volunteers and those other organisations on statutory partnerships.

A Member asked if there was funding available for preventative rather than reactive work? Also, how much are police involved with prevention and was there funding available from Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for this type of work? The Superintendent explained that neighbourhood policing work was focussed on preventative work, they actively supported funding opportunities and yes PCC funding was available to apply for. Officers were engaging with local communities helping to build confidence in policing to encourage people report incidents.





Superintendent Runacres then took the opportunity to acknowledge and thank the communities in Lawrence Hill, Easton, Knowle and Hartcliffe who had assisted them. The responses that were received from all parts of the City had supported the police investigations and were exemplary. Their assistance supported the police to gather the evidence and get a positive outcome from the court and this did not happen by chance. The communities that engaged, were very effective and the police wanted to build on that even further. Also, the statutory agencies that linked into the community and worked really well together, shared information, helped link into schools and dealt with the impacts which were a key factor. Locality based delivery groups had now been established to ensure the work was tailored to the needs of the local community. He urged people to get involved in those local groups.

In response to a Member question about how councillors would continue to receive information, so that they were working together as part of a multi-agency team; the Superintendent said that in the immediate aftermath of the incident the police had to balance the risks and needs of the investigation with those of the community which could be very challenging. He also said he would speak to others in the police to ensure councillors were linked into their locality-based groups and their work on the seven priorities of the police.

In response to a question about what support was available for detached youth work and training? The Head of Service advised that the detached youth workers who supported the families at the time were excellent. They did not know the details of the training but could find out and share that with members afterwards.

The Chair finished the item by stating that for the majority of children the biggest factor in ensuring safeguarding was them attending an education setting. The push to make sure attendance is at the top of list was important and early interventions would keep the children in schools.

The Chair thanked the Superintendent for taking the time to attend and participate in the meeting.

The Committee for Children & Young People RESOLVED to;

1. Note the report and that a progress report will be shared with the committee in January 2025.

## **11 Home to School Travel Electric Vehicle Fleet**

The Committee considered a report that sought approval for the purchase of electric vehicles to create a fleet to be used by Bristol City Council.

The Chair confirmed that this was a key decision as it involved spend over £500k.

Hannah Gillett, Senior Commissioning Manager to briefly outlined the report.





The number of children and young people that are eligible for this service had been increasing year upon year. However, the Council needed to reduce the costs to sustain the service going forward. Procuring a fleet of electric vehicles would bring significant savings as well as the following benefits:

- Working towards nett zero targets
- Giving more oversight and control to the service
- Incentive costs reductions in the contractor markets
- Potential sponsorship driven income generation; and
- Offered potential across the council for reducing costs for transport generally

Officers were seeking approval for the 29 electric vehicles and recruitment of associated drivers to allow 29 existing routes to be replaced over the two years; 2025/26 and 2026/27.

A Member asked if there had been engagement with current contractors providing the service and if there was likely to be any backlash from them over the changes. It was confirmed that some engagement had already taken place. The current service was delivered under a framework where there was no commitment to spend. Providers would have been made aware of this at the point of joining the framework.

A member asked if advertisements were being considered on the fleet of cars? Officers said this would be decided at a later point in time but it was a consideration that could increase income.

It was asked if officers knew what other uses the fleet would be used for. It was said the priority was the home to school travel but that a fleet supervisor would be recruited and part of their role would be to investigate other potential uses.

A discussion was had about the potential lifespan of the vehicles. Officers said there were no issues with oldest electric vehicle in the fleet but they would look at how the existing fleet has performed overall.

The Committee RESOLVED

1. To approve the Home To School Travel Fleet Full Business Case (Appendix H) to implement an in-house Home To School Travel Fleet using BCC vehicles and staff.
2. To authorise the Executive Director for Children and Education in consultation with Chair of the Children and Young People's Committee to take all steps required to procure and award the contract for the purchase of electric vehicles, in-line with the maximum budget envelopes and as outlined in this report.
3. To authorise the Executive Director for Children and Education to take all steps required to extend the scope of use of the Fleet beyond HTST to deliver savings and benefits to other BCC depts (vehicles to be utilised outside HTST and in the 13 weeks of school closures).



## 12 Bristol Sanctuary Services Update

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on Bristol Sanctuary Services and its progress on the upcoming Sanctuary Strategy 2025 – 2030 and sought delegated approval to receive and spend scheme-specific grants from central Government.

Anne James, Service Manager for Refugee Resettlement outlined the report

Bristol Sanctuary Services had previously been called Bristol Refugee Resettlement.

Refugee Teams are now under Children Services.

Bristol has had a refugee and asylum strategy since 2019 that will be updated next year. A needs assessment had been created jointly along with the public health team, in collaboration with the voluntary sector for refugees and asylum seekers.

The strategy plan will be from May 2025 to 2030.

The team support families on the resettlement scheme for 5 years, £20,520.00 per person from the Home Office, fully funded and provide wrap around support.

There was an asylum seeker count on 31 March each year. BCC receive £750.00 for each person who is in a bed space at that time from the HO asylum disposal funding. Grants were given for additional bed spaces created each year in the community.

It was asked how long were asylum seekers staying in the hotels? It was said until they received their decision, thereafter, they have 28 days to leave the hotel and are supported by the housing team and the Red Cross.

What mental health support was available to refugees? Mental Health support was provided via Haven primary care for asylum seekers and refugees. The pathway for acute mental health is via Avon and Wiltshire Partnership (AWP) the Hope service. Mental health services for children was through the Ark Service.

The Chair confirmed that this was a key decision for the Committee.

The report and recommendations were then moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Hornchen.

The Committee APPROVED the report (unanimously).

The Committee RESOLVED;



1. Note the information about Bristol Sanctuary Services.
2. Note the progress updates relating to Bristol's Sanctuary Strategy, 2025 – 2030.
3. Authorise the Executive Director Children and Education in consultation with the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee and Section 151 Officer (Finance Director) to take all steps required to accept and spend sanctuary scheme-specific grants (including individual grants over £500k) from central government until March 2027 as outlined in this report.

The Chair requested an annual update after 31 March 2024 and this was agreed by officers.

### **13 Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Annual Report and Plan for Updated Arrangements under Working Together 2023**

The Committee considered a report that requested the Members to;

- note the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership's Annual Report 2023-24.
- note the revised governance arrangements of the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership to implement the updated requirements under the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' statutory guidance.

The Chair confirmed this paper was for information purposes.

Carrie Yeates, Head of Service: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, briefly outlined the report.

- The Delivery Groups currently known as Keeping Children Safe, Keeping Adults Safe and Keeping Communities Safe will be revised to become the Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- The new arrangements to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' has meant that the key guidance had also been updated.
- The KBSP Board were required to publish the new arrangements by end of December 2024.
- The new arrangements will be reviewed throughout 2025.
- Effective arrangements were in place to meet the requirements that Working Together sets out.

The following points were discussed as part of the item:

- Lead safeguarding partners would appoint the delegated safeguarding partner to oversee the operational delivery to be compliant with 2023 Working Together.
- The Plan was to keep the existing executives in place for the time being to remain as a strategic oversight board to enable a joint up approach for the protection of communities, vulnerable children and adults.



- Education was not a lead member of Partnership, in the way that health and the police had been but there was a strong emphasis on them being part of the delivery and it was important that schools were engaged in the partnership.

The Committee for Children and Young People RESOLVED:

1. To note the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Annual Report 2023-24.
2. To note the plan for revised local Safeguarding and Community Safety arrangements to meet the requirements under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

