

People Scrutiny Commission

8th March 2021



Report of: Alison Hurley

Title: Alternative Learning Provision (ALP), including Hospital Education – Key Findings of the 2020 Independent Review

Ward: All

Officer Presenting Report: Alison Hurley

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Recommendation;

That the Commission note the report.

The significant issues in the report are:

Overview of Alternative Provision and Hospital Education, including key findings from the 2020 independent review of alternative learning.

The Independent review is much welcomed as the improvements are integral to the wider priorities outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Written Statement of Action (WSOA), and the Education Transformation Programme (ETP). Plans to deliver these improvements are under development and delivery of actions will start from April 2021. The full report and Action Plan will be presented to Schools Forum on 30th March 2021.



1. Summary

An independent review of Alternative Learning Provision (ALP), including Hospital Education, was undertaken in the Autumn Term 2020. The purpose of the review was to fully understand the strengths and areas for development across this sector, in order to make the necessary improvements to Bristol’s system. The review responded to the following brief:

- To gain a full understanding of how Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) is currently being used in Bristol and enable transparent decision making for future placements and consistency across settings
- To inform the collaborative approach to specialist education to agree what Bristol would like to achieve with ALP and how it will be used in the future
- To inform future ALP recommissioning

2. Context

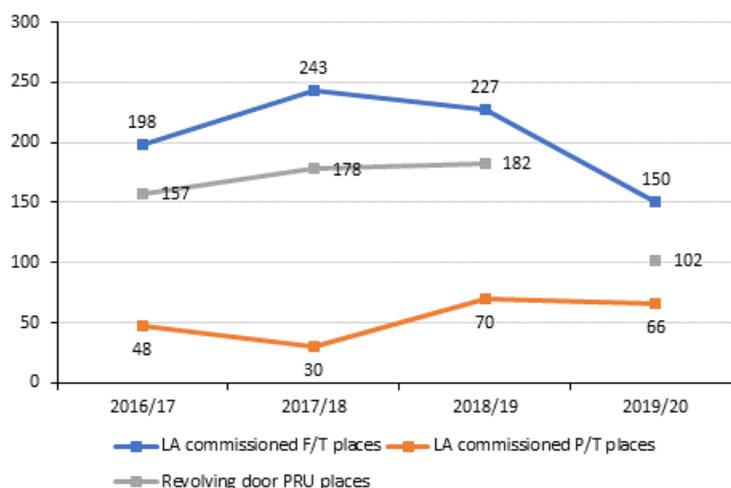
Alternative Learning Provision (ALP)

ALP is education outside of school arranged by local authorities and schools for children in KS1, 2, 3 or 4 who are permanently excluded, at risk of exclusion, or for whom mainstream education is inappropriate. Alternative Learning Provision is for Children and Young People of school age who are unable to attend mainstream or special educational settings because of health, emotional or behavioural reasons. It is something in which the pupil participates as part of their regular timetable away from the site of the school and not led by school staff. Schools can use ALP to prevent exclusions or to re-engage students in their education. Schools remain responsible for the students while they remain on their roll. It includes:

- Pupil referral units
- Hospital education
- Education for children in custody
- Schemes providing full-time or part-time alternative education outside of schools
- Preventative programmes working with individuals or groups of pupils to prevent them from being excluded from school

ALP placements

ALP places 2016/17 - 2019/20



This table shows Bristol’s ALP placements from 2016-2020. Although commissioned full-time places had started to decrease, the significant reduction from 2019-20 is predominantly a COVID-19 related issue. The Bristol Inclusion Panel was paused between March and June 2020 and there have been fewer referrals from schools, due to the reduced attendance.

ALP Review

The independent review has provided a detailed overview of the key areas to address in order to provide a robust strategic direction for the use of alternative learning in Bristol, bring greater parity to funding arrangements and ensure children and young people have appropriately supported routes back into mainstream education.

The full report details 31 recommendations for improvement, which have all been accepted. These are currently being developed into an operational action plan, which will commence in April 2021. The recommendations have been grouped into nine themes for delivery. The themes are:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Schools
- Data
- Governance
- Finance
- Commissioning
- Information Sharing
- Careers
- The Meriton Provision

ALP and **SEND** refers to the current inter-dependency between SEND and ALP with actions to clarify and strengthen processes and relationships between these two areas. There are extremely high numbers of SEND pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans and in the process of having EHC Plans in ALP. High numbers of pupils going to ALP are then assessed with un-met needs, particularly Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Speech and Language and low literacy and maths skills.

ALP and **Schools** is concerned with supporting and challenging schools with the aim of implementing a graduated response to prevent exclusions and reliance on ALP.

ALP and **Data** indicates improvement is necessary in data capture to facilitate accurate planning and reporting.

ALP and **Governance** links ALP to actions in progress with respect corporate themes such as the SEND Written Statement of Action and the Belonging Strategy, which will be launched in Spring 2021. There is also the need for clear system-wide strategic leadership of ALP as the ALP Hub has been working in isolation, with insufficient direction or accountability built into structures.

ALP and **Finance** shows ALP is used to cover a deficiency in the number of appropriate SEND placements and links to the current review of element 3 funding. While both the ALP and SEND budgets are from the ‘High Need’ block, different LA Officers are making different placements.

A protocol of SEND and 'high cost' placements needs to be agreed.

ALP and **Commissioning** mandates a joint ALP and SEND commissioning strategy along with joint quality assurance processes. This links to the recommissioning of ALP in progress.

ALP and **Information Sharing** covers the strengthening of systems for sharing key information between school and ALP, social and mental health support along with capturing the pupil and parent voice.

ALP and **Careers** will improve careers advice and guidance to young people.

ALP and the **Meriton** is concerned with moving post-16 support from Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding back into the Local Authority.

Many of the recommendations in the report have been identified as having strong links to Bristol Inclusion Panel (BIP) The City's fortnightly secondary Fair Access and access to ALP (to avoid PEX) placement decision making forum. Delivery of these recommendations will be joined up through the governance of the project.

Working groups have been formed to develop delivery plans for each of the recommendations within the report. These delivery plans will be published at Schools Forum in March 2021. Delivery of actions not yet in progress will commence in April 2021.

The ALP action plan will be a project within phase two of the Education Transformation Programme (ETP). The Programme Board will be accountable for timely delivery of milestones within the project. This will also enable the Board to ensure opportunities between the wider programme, Directorate, BIP and Written Statement of Action are exploited.

Bristol Hospital Education Service (BHES)

Bristol Hospital Education Service (BHES) is a Local Authority Maintained Pupil Referral Unit. BHES makes education provision for children who are too ill to attend school. This is done in line with statutory guidance from the DfE. The service is highly individualised and based on the wide range of health needs experienced by children living in Bristol and in some instances children from other local authorities. Broadly, the BHES makes education provision in one of four ways for children at:

Further and specific information about all forms of provision can be found on the [BHES website](#). The school makes full and part-time alternative education provision for children who are too ill to attend their main school.

BHES provides education for pupil in Years 7 to 11. Some pupils begin with one-to-one tuition and then progress to attending classes. Many pupils join late in their secondary education and remain at the centre until they leave at the end of Year 11. Some pupils attend one of two hospital settings. Pupils in the Bristol Royal Hospital for Children are often there for just a few days.

Teachers liaise with the pupils' school to provide appropriate teaching and learning. Pupils in The Riverside are there for longer periods because of the nature of their illness. Pupils in the two hospital

settings receive one-to-one tuition and/or attend group sessions aimed at minimising the disruption to education caused by admission to hospital.

The Meriton

Prior to 2017, The Meriton was a registered PRU which supported young women between the ages of 13-19 to gain an education other than at school. Alongside the educational courses offered, the Meriton provided advice and guidance with housing, benefits, job and college applications.

It had teaching and support staff as well as learning mentors, sexual health support and advice, links with health and social care and a 0-3 years nursery provision on site. The Meriton was transferred under the management of the BHES provision and re-organised in 2017 due to falling number on roll. The service review plan was drawn up as a consequence of significant changes in the needs of school students in Bristol. Specifically, the significant reduction in pre-16 young parents due to the pregnancy prevention strategies implemented in schools, increased inclusive practice by education providers and also budgetary constraints due to changes in funding streams available to meet the costs of providing the service to post 16 students at The Meriton.

These factors led to the review of the service provision and staffing structure. As a consequence, The Meriton was de-registered as a PRU and staff redeployed. The plan agreed to leave an allocation of 1.6 full time learning mentors with 0.2 management within the BHES.

The present service is mainly a post-16 support service, with a different funding stream coming from ESFA. It does not appear to be appropriately aligned with the remit of the BHES. The work links more directly to that of Children's Centres and community services. It is not an ALP provider service and while the Head of BHES has efficiently managed the service to the best delivery, this is a situation that needs to be resolved.

3. Policy

The activity within this report links strongly to the Corporate Strategy 2018-23.

Improve educational outcomes and reduce educational inequality, whilst ensuring there are enough school places to meet demand and a transparent admissions process.