

People Scrutiny Commission

13 March 2023

Public Forum - Questions



Questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Jen Smith – Schools reported to the School Improvement Team
2. Jen Smith – Learning disability and autism programme
3. Jen Smith – Secondary school resource bases
4. Jen Smith – Education Health and Care performance update
5. Sandra Thomas – Autism assessments



PUBLIC FORUM - QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1 - JEN SMITH

Topic: Schools reported to the School Improvement Team

I would like to know how many and which schools have been reported to the School Improvement Team for the academic years 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22?

And, broken down into primary, secondary, specialist, PRU, other and LA maintained and academy/free school.

Officer response:

The School Partnerships Team is a small team who provide school improvement support specifically for maintained primary schools. They provide external support and challenge for local authority primary headteachers and leaders. The team do not fulfil a reporting function for concerns regarding schools.

QUESTION 2 - JEN SMITH

Topic: Learning disability and autism programme

Recommendations in the Learning Disability and Autism Programme say:

'The programme will have a number of component projects to address the following aims:

'Better forecasting of demand from Children's Services into adult health and care services, and better transitional arrangements to 'bridge the gap' between childhood and adulthood.'

How is this likely to be achieved considering not all children and young people will be able to have an autism assessment due to a local criteria set by the NHS Bristol, N Somerset & S Gloucestershire Integrated Care Boards from this March?

Officer response:

Please note the data for forecasting will be drawn from Children Services and Education data.

We are not able to respond any further to this question as it relates to Sirona Care and Health's autism assessment service for BNSSG and a change to the way they manage their waiting lists, which has changed from 1 March – see link:

<https://www.sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/childrens-services/referral-for-a-specialist-autism-assessment-service/>

This question would be more appropriately directed to Sirona Care and Health as lead for autism assessments.

The points set out in the question are noted, however, and it may be the case that scrutiny members (People Scrutiny Commission and more particularly the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee) may wish to consider looking into the issues raised by this policy/criteria change in greater depth when setting their work programme for the year ahead.

QUESTION 3 - JEN SMITH

Topic: Secondary school resource bases – Performance Target BP0M220 – Increase the number of new specialist school places available

Papers to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for the 14 February 2023 state: '... there have been some issues with secondary mainstream schools not wanting to open resource bases as this will have an impact on their results. This has been a barrier and we are opting to work with special schools to mitigate this. We need a substantial number of secondary specialist places created in phase 2 to meet the needs of the city. We are on target to exceed 450 specialist provision places by 2024'.

Which secondary schools do not want resource bases because it will impact on their results?

Officer response:

This comment is not related to specific secondary schools. This is a pressure expressed by secondary schools generally under the current accountability framework and publication of performance tables. The projects agreed in phase 2 of the specialist provision project will provide sufficient secondary school provision in the city. The newly announced special free school will also provide additional capacity.

QUESTION 4 - JEN SMITH

Topic: Education Health and Care performance update

According to the papers, there were 47 appeals related to section I. How many of these:

Are currently live and not resolved?

Were appealed because mainstream was more expensive than the school the family were seeking because the panel had not applied the correct legal test?

How many subsequently had section I changed to whatever it was the parent was requesting without a hearing?

How many subsequently had section I changed to whatever it was the parent was requesting with a hearing?

How many did not have section I changed either with a hearing or without?

Officer response:

Of the 47 appeals lodged in 2022 including section I (placement), 27 have now been completed with the Tribunal Services. Appeals are lodged for many reasons and as stated in the report the local authority takes seriously its responsibility to support families and find resolution whilst meeting its statutory duties.

a. 23 appeals were resolved between the local authority and parents with Section I being amended without attending a hearing

b. <5 were resolved with section I changed as a result of a hearing

c. <5 did not have section I changed at all, either with or without a hearing.

QUESTION 5 – SANDRA THOMAS

Topic: Autism assessments

I am writing this in relation to the change of criteria and the stopping Autism Assessments from the 1st of March which means referrals received will be prioritised on the needs of each young child, young person and family by Sirona Care and Health.

I find it shocking that requests for assessments will only be considered if the child and young people meet the referral criteria in which the education placement is breaking down, not in Education or employment, children and young people whose family are at risk of breakdown, children who are in care or CIN plan, or children who are under CAMHS, so basically a child needs to be at crisis?

Every child and young person has the right to have their educational needs met, their health needs met, their social care needs met.

I would like to ask:-

Q1. Has the Bristol Autism Team had input into this new criteria? When was the meeting held? Who was invited?

Q2. Has the following been discussed?

- The Equality Act 2010-A child/young person must not be discriminated because of their disability, every child has the right to enjoy the highest possible standard of health, to access health and other related services and to facilitate for the treatment .
- Disability Discrimination - Section 6 of the Equality Act?
- Safeguarding children- (Empowerment, Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership, Accountability) by allowing this new criteria is going to cause emotional harm/neglect to children and young people.

Q3. Why isn't more funds made available to train up more staff to assess for Autism as it is only a team of three, who work term time only, surely if more trained assessors are available all year round, then this will indeed help the waiting lists?

Simply by ignoring a child has needs will only cause further mental health problems. The criteria to access CAMHS is unattainable and the therapy offered is behind in the times. Children and young people have the rights to be supported in their health and wellbeing.

The system is failing our children, we are our children's/young persons advocates, our voice/their voices need to be heard, to understand the impact of not having needs met, by having needs undiagnosed, for not being 'disabled enough', for having a hidden disability. By not receiving support will lead to mental health crisis, and more young adults taking their lives.

The new criteria is discriminatory!

Officer response:

We are not able to respond directly to these questions as they relate to Sirona Care and Health's autism assessment service for BNSSG and a change to the way they manage their waiting lists, which has changed from 1 March – see link:

<https://www.sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/childrens-services/referral-for-a-specialist-autism-assessment-service/>

These questions would be more appropriately directed to Sirona Care and Health as lead for autism assessments.

The points set out in the questions are noted, however, and it may be the case that scrutiny members (People Scrutiny Commission and more particularly the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee) may wish to consider looking into the issues raised by this policy/criteria change in greater depth when setting their work programme for the year ahead.