

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 17 January 2022 at REMOTE & INFORMAL MEETING.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 7 April 2022.

Elected Members:

- * Ayesha Azad (Vice-Chairman)
- * Liz Bowes (Chairman)
- * Fiona Davidson
- * Jonathan Essex
- * Rachael Lake
- Andy Lynch
- * Michaela Martin
- * Mark Sugden
- * Alison Todd
- * Liz Townsend
- * Chris Townsend (Vice-Chairman)
- * Jeremy Webster
- Fiona White

Co-opted Members:

- * Mr Simon Parr, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church
- * Mrs Tanya Quddus, Parent Governor Representative
- * Mr Alex Tear, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church, Diocese of Guildford

1/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Fiona White.

2/22 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 13 DECEMBER 2021 [Item 2]

It was noted that a Member had requested that the Cabinet Member for Communities' commitment to email her regarding the lift in Guildford Library be added to the minutes.

3/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None received.

4/22 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

Witnesses:

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

Matt Ansell, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding

Liz Mills, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

1. A question had been received from a resident, Maria Esposito.
2. As a supplementary question, the questioner asked what happened when the systems in place failed. She added that systems were prone to failure and that the boundaries of services were not joined up.
3. The Director for Corporate Parenting responded that there was little that could be added to the written response as it described the systems in place. She apologised for the occasions where failures had occurred.
4. A question had been received from Fiona Davidson.
5. Asking a supplementary question, the Member queried whether November 2020 was the latest data available.
6. The Director for Family Resilience and Safeguarding apologised for the typographical error and explained that the data was from November 2021.
7. A second question had been received from Fiona Davidson.
8. The Member, as a supplementary question, highlighted that data provided in response to an action from the October 2021 meeting of the Select Committee showed that approximately 51% of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans were completed in the south west quadrant, whereas data in the answer to her current question showed a decline in timeliness. The Member asked whether improvement had occurred, as the narrative in the response to her question stated.
9. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning replied that improvement had taken place, although there was a dip in performance in the autumn term, which was explained in the answer. The Director added that a report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was to come to the Select Committee in April 2022, when further information could be provided on performance improvements.

10. The Member highlighted that data had been requested as part of a supplementary question at the meeting of the Select Committee in December 2021 and had not yet been provided. The Chairman noted this and requested that it be followed up by officers.

**5/22 INCLUSION, POST-16 DESTINATIONS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
[Item 6]**

Witnesses:

Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Liz Mills, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

Jane Winterbone, Assistant Director – Education

Sandra Morrison, Assistant Director – Inclusion and Additional Needs

Maria Dawes, Chief Executive Officer, Schools Alliance for Excellence

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning introduced the report and highlighted that the work described therein was underpinned by the council's corporate priority that 'no one is left behind'.
2. A Member sought clarity between the classifications of 'children missing education' and 'children missing full-time education'. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that a child missing education would not be on the roll of any school, for example if they had moved into the county and were awaiting enrolment. A child missing full-time education would be on the roll of a school but receiving less than 25 hours of education per week; mechanisms were in place to support such children and help them return to school when appropriate. The Assistant Director for Inclusion and Additional Needs added that children with medical needs may be supported by a medical Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Other children could be supported by the Access to Education Service if, for example, they had a mental health issue. On occasion, as agreed with the parents, a child may attend school on a part-time basis to accommodate specific

needs. The Member asked whether a proportion of children missing full-time education was still due to a lack of suitable transport arrangements, as well as the impact of missing full-time education had on children. The Director stated that home to school transport was not a focus of this report but recognised the connection. The Director explained that each individual child would have a learner's plan and the school would have a responsibility to ensure that their outcomes were in line with their peers. It could be the case that a child's education would need to be adapted to meet their needs. Leadership and locality teams reviewed the data of these cohorts regularly.

3. A Member asked about how the council monitored the number of children who were electively home educated and their education and safety. The Director for Education and Learning explained that legislation relating to elective home education did not provide the council with all the powers to identify this cohort fully: parents were not obliged to tell the council that they were electively home educating their child, but the council encouraged parents to provide this information. Close monitoring arrangements were in place for children who had been on the roll of a school and withdrawn to receive home education. The Assistant Director for Inclusion and Additional Needs explained that a risk assessment would take place for a child whose parents wished to home educate them and the Service would encourage the parents to keep the child in school. If the parents proceeded with home education, there would be an annual monitoring visit. If such a child was known to children's services, the risks of a them being home educated would be discussed with their social worker. Where an electively home educated child had an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, an additional annual review would take place. Concerns regarding the safeguarding of electively home educated children were shared by officers; the Director for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Chair of the Safeguarding Board had written to Government regarding such concerns. The number of children known to the council as being electively home educated in January 2022 was 1,535. Mechanisms were in place for hospitals and GPs to alert the council about any children who appeared not to be enrolled in a school. The Director added that there were no looked after children who were electively home educated. Many children were being electively home educated as the result of the pandemic, although a proportion had since returned to school. The Chairman noted that this was a national

issue and requested the response from Government be shared with the Select Committee.

4. The Member also enquired about the progress of the new Alternative Provision Strategy and how it would impact children's outcomes. The Assistant Director for Education explained that the Strategy was launched in September 2021. The Strategy included a service level agreement for PRUs which focussed on integration and pupil outcomes, as PRUs should be seen as an intervention with the aim of a child returning to a mainstream school. A quality-assured approved provider list was being developed to enable schools to decide where would be best to place a child and to understand the council's prior work with that provision, although schools would still hold responsibility for the child. Key performance indicators (KPIs) were being developed, which would include the number of young people who were not participating in post-16 education, employment or training. The Assistant Director shared that in July 2020 there was a government grant to ensure that those in alternative provision during the pandemic transitioned successfully into education, employment or training after year 11. There was a high level of success in that year and the work was being mainstreamed. The Member queried if the success had continued in 2021. The Assistant Director clarified that the increase of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in 2021 from AP was not large or cause for concern. The Assistant Director also explained that there had been work on new curriculum pathways, which included a strong vocational offer for 14 to 16 year olds. Through the Post-16 Phase Council, there had been work with all colleges in the county to ensure a vocational offer was accessible to all regardless of location. To provide fit-for-purpose PRUs, feasibility work on the existing sites had been completed and the searches for new sites was completed in December 2021.

5. A Member sought assurance that all children with SEND had home to school transport and asked whether those who had missed education had received support during such periods. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning assured the Member that a relatively low proportion of SEND children had been affected by home to school transport shortages. Where any issues had arisen, the Education Service had worked closely with providers to ensure children could access school as

quickly as possible. Schools were responsible for providing education to their pupils who were unable to attend.

6. A Member asked how many disadvantaged children were NEET, as only percentages were given in the report. The Assistant Director – Education was to provide the data following the meeting.
7. The Member asked how the figures in the report compared with benchmarks, how looked after children and care leavers were supported into post-16 destinations and what more could be done to support them. The Assistant Director explained that a role dedicated to supporting care leavers and looked after children had recently been created in the NEET team. The Service was committed to improving recording of post-16 destinations. Many looked after children experienced significant barriers to participation in EET and many were not engaged during Year 11. There was close working with the Headteacher of Surrey Virtual School (SVS) to consider if anything could be done differently to reduce the barriers experienced by this cohort. The Member queried whether there was any information on the destinations of care leavers placed in county versus out of county. That data could be circulated subsequently. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning added that there had been a development in SVS on functional skills, as this had been a barrier for care leavers in the past. The Corporate Parenting Board routinely scrutinised this information.
8. The Member asked whether there was capacity in the home to school transport team to cope with increased demand as more SEND provision was established in Surrey. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that a dynamic purchasing model had been introduced and had enabled more providers to enter the market. The increase in local SEND provision had enabled more children to attend school in county and the majority of children went to school within six miles of their home. The independence of children was a key focus of this work and thus, a broad range of options were being considered. The Cabinet Member added that as part of the home to school transport review, there was currently a twin-track funding bid to increase capacity in the home to school transport team so every case could be quality assured. The Director explained that the Capital Programme was about ensuring that

where children required a special school placement, they would be placed in a local maintained setting.

9. Responding to a question on schools' involvement in decisions regarding home to school transport for SEND pupils, the Director for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that schools usually led on children's annual reviews and worked with the council on next placement steps for a child, which would often lead to conversations about transport arrangements. It was noted that the majority of parents took their children to school themselves. The Member raised a concern that the EHC plans were not being taken into account when transport arrangements were made for SEND children. The Director was to provide a response subsequently. The Member also asked why the NEET rate had remained at the same level as in 2019. The Assistant Director for Education explained that due to the complexity of needs of those children, there were significant challenges. The ambition was now 100% participation, which encouraged practitioners to consider the onward journey of each child. The number of NEET former pupils for every educational setting in Surrey was now monitored, which allowed for targeted conversations with individual settings. The Director added that a co-produced initiative for young people with SEND who get stuck on pathways to EET was being piloted under the Preparation for Adulthood programme.

10. The Member also raised concern about the proportion of looked after children who were NEET and asked about the support available to those children to see that they were not left behind. The Assistant Director for Education replied that as improvements delivered under the children's improvement programme embedded, there would be fewer social care placement breakdowns, which was likely to lead to more successful transitions into post-16 destinations. The young people who tended not to transition into post-16 EET were those who had experienced multiple placement breakdowns. The Director for Corporate Parenting acknowledged that the turnover for looked after children was higher than the mainstream group. Each individual child would have a Personal Education Plan which addressed the issues for them.

11. In response to a question on mitigating the learning gap and supporting disadvantaged pupils, the CEO of the Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE), recognising that quantifiable

evidence was not available in the absence of statutory exams, explained that SAfE monitored schools to ensure they were focusing on supporting disadvantaged children to minimise the impact of the pandemic. The Department for Education (DfE) closely monitored schools' use of COVID catch-up provision, including tutoring, for disadvantaged children. Ofsted inspectors had identified that schools were sufficiently providing for disadvantaged children, although only one non-primary (an all-through) school had been inspected recently.

12. A Member asked how the performance of academies were monitored, what the outcomes were for academy pupils and how a school's status as an academy affected the council's ability to improve its pupils' outcomes. The CEO of SAfE explained that although local authorities did not have the accountability for academies in the same way as they did for maintained schools, it did not result in a lack of engagement with academies. Ofsted inspected academies in the same way as maintained schools and SAfE scrutinised inspection reports in the same way. SAfE had regular meetings with the Regional Schools Commissioner and would provide challenge to the Commissioner regarding academies with low performance. SAfE's support was available to both academies and maintained schools. The Director for Education added the Education Service was part of a wider education system, the focus of which remained on the collective success of every child in the county. The Assistant Director for Education explained that if a pattern of complaints related to a specific academy, then the complaints would be addressed with the academy. The Member raised the issue of occasions where home to school transport arrangements were unsuitable for a child's specific needs. The Cabinet Member responded that work was underway with community providers to explore alternatives and to incentivise parents to transport their own children with a mileage reimbursement.

13. A Member asked whether the council had considered or modelled the formation of a multi academy trust (MAT) in light of a forthcoming white paper which could propose that local authorities be empowered to form MATs. The Director for Education shared that there had been a joint session with the Diocese of Guildford on the sustainability of schools. The Assistant Director for Education was leading on related analysis which included risk assessing all schools and their direction of travel. The Service's view was that schools should be centrally

involved in determining their own futures and thus, such work was undertaken in collaboration with schools.

Resolved:

The Select Committee noted the report and its recommendations.

Actions:

- i. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning to share the council's letter to Government regarding elective home education and the response to it with the Select Committee once available.
- ii. The Assistant Director for Education to provide the numbers of children in the cohorts used in the figure *16- and 17-year olds NEET by disadvantage, as at end June 2021* on page 58 of the report and the percentage of those children whose post-16 destinations were unknown.
- iii. The Assistant Director for Education to provide comparative data on the post-16 destinations of looked after children and care leavers who had been placed in county and out of county.
- iv. Director for Education and Lifelong Learning to provide information on home to school transport arrangements for SEND children, including:
 - Consideration of Education Health and Care plans when arranging provision,
 - Schools' involvement in decision-making,
 - The number of children who did not start school at the beginning of the 2021/22 school year due to home to school transport issues,
 - Data on the increase in demand for home to school transport.

6/22 CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT AND NO WRONG DOOR UPDATE [Item 5]

Witnesses:

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

Matt Ansell, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report and provided context, noting the key challenges within Children's Services and the Ofsted inspection taking place between 17 and 28 January 2022.
2. A Member asked why the Corporate Parenting Service was confident, from the work of Creative Solutions, that No Wrong Door (NWD) would be successful. The Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning provided an overview of the NWD programme and explained that Creative Solutions was the early work undertaken to think and work differently with young people and families, similar to the approach of NWD. The Director for Corporate Parenting explained that the work of Creative Solutions provided opportunity to train and prepare staff ahead of the introduction of NWD. The North Yorkshire County Council's NWD accreditation process presented constructive challenge, and this provided reassurance around the success of the model. The Service was well set up in terms of collecting data and understanding the implications of NWD, and colleagues from North Yorkshire County Council would provide support in this area. A Member asked how many of the young people supported by Creative Solutions who did not enter care would have been expected to enter care without that support, and what impact on looked after children numbers was expected of NWD. The Director explained that financial predictions were based on conservative estimates based on data from North Yorkshire County Council's NWD. Creative Solutions had engaged with 75 children in the last nine months and had finished working with 35 of those children, work with the rest of the children was ongoing. Of this cohort, only two of those children still entered the care system, which was very low compared to figures from previous years.
3. In response to a question on the first NWD hub, the Director for Corporate Parenting shared that the hub was on track to open in January 2022, a staff restructure had been completed and recruitment to additional posts had taken place, whilst there

were a few vacancies still to fill, including foster carers. The Member also asked about the progress of the 'getting to good' phase of the children's improvement programme and inspection readiness. The Executive Director explained that the ongoing Ofsted inspection of Children's Services would provide an answer regarding service improvement. The compilation of evidence in preparation for the inspection had illuminated the considerable progress made during the previous phase of improvement between the 2018 inspection and 2020. The Executive Director stated that significant positive feedback had been received regarding improvement, but acknowledged that there were still areas where the Service needed to improve further in order to receive a grading of Good.

4. The Member asked about the challenges of engaging educational settings in Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) training, the timescale for the complete rollout of GCP2 and how the council monitored the application of the GCP2. The Executive Director explained that the GCP2 was being utilised by practitioners and its use as evidenced in referrals through the front-door, which were monitored by the Neglect Sub-Group and Children's Safeguarding Partnership. The Director for Family Resilience and Safeguarding noted the effectiveness of using GCP2 as an intervention tool with families at an early stage and could provide an update in the future on how the tool was being used.
5. A Member enquired about the job design of the personal advisor workforce. The Executive Director explained that personal advisors provided practical support for them to engage with adult life. Issues related to a lack of continuity for young people when personal advisors were absent. There had been a redesign of the duty arrangements to provide continuity of support for young people. The Director for Corporate Parenting added that the Ofsted focused visit to the Leaving Care Service came at a time of abnormally high vacancies and the overall turnover for permanent personal advisors was relatively low.
6. A Member asked about care leavers living outside of Surrey and their access to mental health support. The Executive Director explained that care leavers living outside of Surrey often lacked knowledge of local mental health services, but their personal advisors should help them to navigate the local system. In the long-term, there was an aspiration to support more young people

within Surrey. The Director for Corporate Parenting added that most care leavers would experience mental health issues at some point in their adult life. Many of these young people were in neighbouring counties and local authorities and their personal advisors could connect them to local teams. The Member highlighted anecdotal evidence of personal advisors lacking the knowledge to effectively support service users outside of Surrey.

7. In response to a question on the council losing contact with looked after children and care leavers, the Director for Corporate Parenting explained that there was statutory responsibility owed to former looked after children up to 21 years of age, which was extended to 25 years of age by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Some young people would decide at age 21 that they no longer want to remain in contact with the council and sometimes they changed their mind following that decision. Care leavers were reminded that contact remained available if they changed their mind. The Executive Director shared that 90% of young adult care leavers had experienced two-way contact in the last 12 weeks. Of the 83 young adults who had not experienced contact in the last 12 weeks, there were 19 that the Corporate Parenting Service was not in touch with at all.
8. A Member asked for further detail on the pie chart included on page 29 of the report which rated 25% of children with disabilities (CWD) cases as red following a review. The Executive Director explained that this data came from a bigger report and cases were rated as red for different reasons, including practice not yet meeting a child's needs and children not meeting the CWD Service's threshold. For examples, families sometimes tried to see their child supported by the CWD Service, when their needs could be more appropriately met by other teams. External reviews had taken place to ensure the needs of each child were being met.
9. The Member also asked about Phase 3 and 4 of improvement initiatives and their impact on the rate of staff turnover. The Executive Director shared that Children's Services recruitment and retention efforts had started to pay off in maintaining the level of permanent workforce, although there was still work required to reduce the use of agency staff and to retain senior-level practitioners. Additionally, the Member queried comments on the impact of the inadequate Ofsted grading on staff recruitment made at a previous meeting. The Executive Director

explained that it often depended on the stage an individual was in their career, as a newly qualified social worker may not want to begin their career in an inadequate local authority. This view was confirmed by a Community Care Survey which found that it was more likely for a social worker to think twice before joining a local authority graded inadequate than previously. The Director for Family Resilience and Safeguarding explained that the children's workforce was stabilising and the workforce strategy was in the process of being refreshed and this could come to the Select Committee for scrutiny. The Cabinet Member added that this challenge was found across the wider children's workforce and partner organisations, such as recruitment of youth workers.

Alex Tear left the meeting at 11:57.

Resolved:

The Select Committee noted the report and its recommendations.

Action:

- i. The Director for Corporate Parenting to provide the number of care leavers located outside of Surrey and of those, the number requiring mental health support.

7/22 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 7]

The Actions and Recommendations Tracker and Forward Work Plan were noted.

8/22 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 8]

The Select Committee noted that its next meeting would be held on Thursday, 7 April 2022.

Meeting ended at: 12.04 pm

Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank

**Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee –
17 January 2022**

Question 1

What measures are taken by Surrey County Council Social Services, Surrey County Council Safeguarding, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Children and Young Peoples Learning Disability Service Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation and Surrey Police, to keep the public safe from those with serious behavioural issues, specifically direct personal abuse pervading their homes?

Response

These services all act in accordance with the information and guidance provided within the attached briefing note also available to Council Officers and Members at [Anti-Social Behaviour – Briefing for Children’s Social Care | JiveSurrey \(jiveon.com\)](#)

Where Council Officers become aware of concerns regarding the impact of perceived anti-social behaviour they should direct residents to the Community Trigger Process which was introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014.

Further information and advice on working in partnership to tackle crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour is available from the Surrey County Council’s Community Safety Team: Email: communitysafety@surreycc.gov.uk

Question 2

Why is a third party that is significantly impacted by an individual's intrusive and abusive behaviours not allowed to have direct contact and discussion with those who are overseeing the care of that individual, specifically Surrey County Council Social Services, Surrey County Council Safeguarding, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Children and Young Peoples Learning Disability Service Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation?

Response

Surrey County Council like all Local Authorities, Government Agencies and large business is required to comply with the principles of Data Protection as contained within the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018. Further information regarding the sharing of personal data with third parties can be found on the [Information Commissioners Webpage](#)

Question 3

If special schools, respite care charities, disability taxi services and other support services have limits of tolerance regarding those clients in the care of Surrey services with significant behavioural issues why are the public not allowed to invoke the same limits of tolerance for their own homes and be supported in that by all of the stated agencies?

Response

As indicated earlier in this letter, where Council Officers become aware of concerns regarding the impact of perceived anti-social behaviour they should direct residents to the Community Trigger Process which was introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014.

Further information and advice on working in partnership to tackle crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour is available from the Surrey County Council's Community Safety Team: Email: communitysafety@surreycc.gov.uk

**Liz Bowes, Chairman – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture
Select Committee**

Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 17 January 2022

In full-time equivalent terms – and looking at the snapshot of a typical recent month – how many Surrey County Council children and young persons' social workers are agency staff vs how many are permanent staff? Based on extrapolating from this month snapshot what is the approximate annual additional costs of employing agency staff?

Councillor Fiona Davidson

Response

In November 20 (the latest information available at the time of pulling together this response) the number of agency workers covering Social Worker, Senior Social Worker and Advanced Social Worker posts were 86.3 while there were 310.9 posts covered by permanent employees.

Social Worker agency staff cost on average £23,200 per annum more than permanent staff. This would make the estimated additional annual cost £2.0m which would represent 9.1% of the overall estimated cost of Social Workers, Senior Social Workers and Advanced Social Workers.

Liz Bowes, Chairman – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee

This page is intentionally left blank

Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 17 January 2022

The Education, Health and Care plan timeliness information provided in response to a question in October 2021 identified that the South West quadrant has performed least well in delivering Education, Health and Care plans on time for the past two years.

- Why is this?
- What actions are being taken to remedy this situation?

Councillor Fiona Davidson

Response

Why is this?

Case officers have the responsibility for drafting Education Health and Care plans under the supervision of Senior Case Managers. The South West team has unfortunately had a number of vacancies and has been operating at reduced capacity.

The SW team is also comprised of a high proportion of new staff. These staff are given a comprehensive and thorough induction, however, it can take between 12-18 months before they are fully operational.

The retention of new staff in the SW has been a particular challenge for the team.

Exit interviews illustrate that COVID has had particularly significant impact upon new staff due to the lack of opportunity for office working where peer to peer support would have been available.

Additionally, there is a delay in advice being provided to the team by partner agencies due to increasing volumes of EHC assessment requests and capacity issues within those teams. This is an issue across the county but compounds the delays within the SW.

What have we done to address these concerns:

There is a robust recovery plan in place.

The number of EHCPs issued and their timeliness is monitored on a daily basis against targets by senior quadrant managers and there is a weekly performance meeting with the Assistant Director for Inclusion and Additional Needs SW to monitor progress against the recovery plan.

The recovery plan includes improved recruitment, support and training for staff, closer liaison with advice givers to minimise the delays in advice given as part of the EHCP process and operational changes to the work of the team.

The recruitment, support and training actions for staff includes:

- The case officer induction process being redesigned to ensure that this is robust and appropriate for remote working.
- Case Officers being provided with more frequent supervision in order to support them manage their cases both on a 1 to 1 and group basis.
- Regular visits into the office so that new members of staff can work closely with their team.
- A buddy system.
- NASEN training to ensure staff develop the required skill set during their first year in post
- A series of staff training webinars and specific training for case officers in strengths based approaches.

The actions to improve the timeliness of partners advice includes

- A revised health pathway which has reduced steps in the advice giving process and therefore ensured health colleagues advice is received quickly
- Liaison with educational psychologists to help them prioritise their work to meet deadlines which has led to a reduction in delayed advice
- Liaison with Learners Single Point of Access (LSPA) to increase the speed of early decision making when assessment requests are received

The operational actions include

- changes to the EHC assessment process to improve efficiency
- careful analysis of the work flow so that a proactive approach is taken to remove barriers to the timely completion of plans where issues are identified

This work has led to an improvement from 7% of plans due for completion in September 2021 being completed on time to 39% in December 2021. Forecasting of the workflow suggest that this percentage increase is likely to reach between 50-60% in January 2022 bringing the team closer to the operational target of 70% by the end of March.

Liz Bowes – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee