

Central Bedfordshire Council

Children's Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

19 November 2019

Progress report on the Alternative Education Provision Project

Report of: Cllr Sue Clark, Executive Member for Families,
Education and Children
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Responsible Director(s): Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services
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Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Alternative Education Provision project. This includes recent activity, engagement with families with children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and with the organisations who deliver services to these children and young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider the progress of the Alternative Education Provision (AEP) project.
2. Support the development of a pathway in collaboration with the schools.

Issues

1. Please see Appendix 1 for presentation that details '**Alternative Education Provision**'
2. The presentation will be co-delivered on behalf of Sue Harrison (Director of Children's Services) by Jody Nason (Head of Commissioning, Children Services) and Jackie Edwards (Head of Virtual School, Children Services).

Context

3. In November 2017, an Executive decision report was presented to commence a large commissioning project to review as part of the Children's Transformation Programme. It included children's centres, some youth activities, alternative education received

through medical needs, hearing impairment and visual impairment as the key scope as well as services or through Jigsaw or the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB).

4. It became clear that the alternative education provision should be separated and considered a project in its own right due to the different nature of the services provided and the inability of one commissioned provider to deliver both.
5. This project was proposed to deliver the following outputs:
 - Clear pathways into and out of alternative education which are best value.
 - A more flexible service for children and young people with medical needs, hearing impairment and visual impairment.
6. The project was separated into workstreams to;
 - Review commissioned services:
 - a) Visual Impaired, Hearing Impaired and Medical Needs Team
 - b) JIGSAW –schooling for excluded primary school children and outreach for children and young people.
 - c) Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) - schooling for excluded secondary school children and those at risk of exclusion.
 - d) Brokerage of alternative education including vocational courses
 - e) Tuition for vulnerable learners
 - Develop a shared pathway into the services to provide effective support for vulnerable learners
7. A project group was established which is attended by colleagues from other directorates including Legal Services and Finance. There is also a parent representative in attendance. It should be noted that the project approach is consultative, workshops have been held with schools and providers and communication planned before the end of the financial year.

Workstream 1 – develop a shared pathway into the services

8. This workstream was developed following feedback from that schools who were unclear of the pathways into and out of alternative education settings (Jigsaw and ACB).
9. In response to this, two successful workshops were held in late 2018 and in early 2019 with over 80 attendees from many schools, settings and providers to discuss alternative education and the support the schools required to help prevent children and young people from permanent exclusion.

10. The workshop attendees identified the importance of early intervention to support schools to manage challenging behaviours and to focus on inclusion and developed key principles to guide the development of a clearer pathway into the two alternative provisions. These are:
- *The local authority will provide a strategic lead, ensuring outcomes are efficient, effective and value for money. Practice will be evidence-based, data-driven and supported by the professional opinion of key frontline staff. Local capacity will be built, to ensure cohesion, consistency and equity across CBC.*
 - *Every child has an entitlement to receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) they may have. This will be balanced by ensuring a fair distribution of the most challenging pupils when allocating places. Schools will be held to account for meeting the needs of pupils in catchment or whose parents choose the school to ensure that off-rolling does not occur.*
 - *Early identification and intervention are crucial. We will know our pupils and their families, we will listen to them and use our professional experience alongside their in-depth knowledge of themselves and their children to find the best ways forward. A shared commitment and mutual trust between families, services and schools are vital.*
 - *The behaviour should be seen as the problem – not the child, flexibility and creativity are essential. Behaviour can change and improvement can be secured with the right support and conditions around the child.*
11. These principles are being used to pull together a clear pathway which identifies the training available and support from council teams that schools can obtain to assist them in early identification of SEND and/or behavioural concerns and then to manage this with the aim of children and young people staying in school. This work will be completed by the end of the financial year 2020.

Workstream 2 – review of commissioned services

12. As part of the scoping work at the beginning of the project, the team reviewed council spend with external agencies and identified the following services;
- a) Visual Impaired, Hearing Impaired and Medical Needs Team
 - b) JIGSAW –schooling for excluded primary school children and outreach for children and young people.
 - c) Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) -schooling for excluded secondary school children and those at risk of exclusion.
 - d) Brokerage of alternative education including vocational courses
 - e) Tuition for vulnerable learners

13. A review was undertaken for each of these services with a full options appraisal to identify a long-term approach.

Visual impaired, hearing impaired and medical needs team

14. The medical needs team provides tuition at home for a child with an illness or injury keeping the pupil away from school whilst recovering from an illness or injury requiring regular hospital attendance, a chronic condition that causes frequent absences from school or a mental illness requiring therapeutic support.
15. The service provides teaching, mainly in the three core subjects of maths, science and English, as a way of supporting reintegration back into school.
16. The hearing impairment and visual impairment teams support schools with children who are hearing or visually impaired. This team supported 367 children and young people last academic year.
17. Following a review, it was concluded that the teams should be insourced and managed directly within the SEND Service. The team has been managed by the council since July 2019 and has been operating as a council resource for the previous half term since September 2019.
18. In all of these services, the staff are now better able to coordinate with other teams to give the right service to these children. For medical needs, this ensures that the child is effectively supported to return to school.
19. Work is underway to evaluate and change the criteria for children and young people to access the medical needs team. This will ensure that schools can refer into this service when a GP has diagnosed a mental health need, rather than them having to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and a program of training is being developed with the schools to support them to manage children with mental health needs.
20. The hearing impairment and visual impairment teams continue to offer training and support for the schools.

Jigsaw

21. The Jigsaw Centre supports primary school aged children and young people and provides support by:
 - a) Providing additional services to schools to support children at risk of exclusion;
 - b) Providing education and support for those pupils who are permanently excluded;
 - c) Providing personalised reintegration packages to assist pupils in their return to school;
 - d) Providing family support for children who are identified as having difficulties.
22. Following a review of this provision, it was concluded that the service be directly managed by the Inclusion Service within Children's Services and was transferred under council management in 2017.

A further redevelopment of the service is underway following feedback obtained from key stakeholders concerning the geographical location of the provision. The Jigsaw will be relocated into two behaviour hubs, one in the north and one in the south of Central Bedfordshire. The service will be extended to allow children at risk of being excluded to attend a centre that is closer to their home and to link with the locality teams working in that area.

Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB)

23. The ACB provides education for children and young people who have been excluded from school. Additionally, the ACB provides vocational courses for children and young people at risk of exclusion. 41 pupils attended this service in the summer term 2019.
24. A review was undertaken of the service to ascertain the longer-term option for this provision and following lengthy negotiations with the board of governors a contract extension has been agreed for 2019/20 which is in the best interests of some of our most vulnerable learners.
25. A working party has been set up by the ACB to look at how the school can offer a range of services to suit individual needs both for those excluded and for those at risk of exclusion. Whilst not directly overseen by the council, representatives from Children's Services attend the working party and are supporting the development of the future offer.

Tuition for vulnerable learners

26. The project team identified individual one to one tuition for children and young people that was being arranged and purchased to aid their learning as a further area for review. The children and young people accessing this are:
 - a) Those at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET)

- b) Looked after children who required additional support
 - c) Children/young people with identified special educational needs
27. A review concluded that a more coordinated approach would be beneficial for colleagues in Children's Services because it would ensure a simplified process for staff and a service that is coordinated around the child. The proposed solution is a procured framework with a range of tuition that will include support for:
- a) GCSE and A Levels
 - b) Primary aged children in reading, writing and mathematics specifically Looked After Children
 - c) Those who have additional needs
 - d) Those for whom English is a second language.
28. This procurement will commence in November 2019 and will be in place for the next financial year.

Brokerage & Delivery of Post-16 provision - Develop Education, Business Partnership (Develop EBP)

29. Develop EBP is an organisation which provides brokerage for educational placements for post 16 learners with complex needs or who are at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET). Additionally, this organisation coordinates post-16 vocational education or training for those young people identified with special education needs or disabilities (SEND).
30. The council has had a contract in place with this organisation for a number of years. Aligned to the council's constitution, a review was undertaken which concluded that this service is required to support vocational courses and market research concluded that Develop EBP is the only provider locally. Therefore, a direct award has been negotiated for a two-year period to provide continuity.

Next steps

31. This project has achieved many of the original objectives and will focus on the remaining objectives over the next six months.
32. The final outstanding action is to conclude the partnership work commenced in late 2018. The two successful workshops that were held provided invaluable feedback about the need for coordinated pathways into alternative education alongside clearly communicated training and support for schools to prevent exclusion. The identified pathway and vision is being pulled together following the workshops to feed back to schools and partners. This will be published by the end of the financial year March 2020.

Council Priorities

33. By securing good or better provision to deliver a great service for children and young people living and accessing education in Central Bedfordshire. The majority of children and young people accessing alternative provision have a level of vulnerability including medical needs (including mental health), identified special educational needs, at risk or excluded from school. This project will enhance Central Bedfordshire, improving education and skills whilst protecting the vulnerable by working collaboratively with the schools to enhance support and training to prevent children and young people from being excluded from school.

Corporate Implications

34. The Alternative Education Provision project is governed by the Children's Services Transformation Portfolio and produces regular highlight reports and risk assessments.
35. This project has dependencies with the Schools for the Future programme. This is mitigated through a shared project lead – the Assistant Director of Education.

Legal Implications

36. Legal advice has been sought throughout this project to ensure workstreams have been completed in a compliant manner. A legal representative attends the monthly board and has provided support for contract extensions alongside in-sourcing of teams and services.

Financial and Risk Implications

37. This project is working within the current budget envelope for services commissioned by the Local Authority and is scrutinized by the Schools Forum alongside the Transformation Board.

Equalities Implications

38. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Alternative education provision supports some of the most vulnerable learners.
39. A visioning workshop was held in December 2018 with key stakeholders to communicate the project and the scope. A further workshop is planned for early 2020 to engage with stakeholders and to update on progress. All contract extensions and TUPE activities have been undertaken following legal advice and the service has

continued in the same format. Any proposed change to service delivery will be subject to a formal consultation.

40. To provide ongoing challenge and support, SNAP PCF attend the Project Board to provide a parent view on the project.

Next Steps

41. There is planned further engagement with families, voluntary organisations, CBC schools and academies, and SNAP PCF to co-produce and develop:
- a. A pathway into and out of alternative education which are best value.
 - b. A more flexible service for children and young people with medical needs, hearing impairment and visual impairment.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Alternative Education Provision project (PowerPoint)

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