

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Education, Skills and Employment

At 5.00 pm on Tuesday 16th November, 2021

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

Present:-

Members

Councillor Scott Edwards (Chair)

Councillor Wendy Brackenbury

Councillor Leanne Buckingham

Councillor Philip Irwin

Councillor Dorothy Maxwell

Officers

Jenny Daniels

Anne-Marie Dodds

Charlotte Franks

Debbie Lloyd

Ben Smith

Democracy Officer (minutes)

Assistant Director for Children

Head of Virtual School

Assistant Director of Children and Family Support

Service and Youth Offending Services

Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

36 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Annabelle de Capel Brooke and Lee Wilkes.

37 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2021 were approved, subject to noting the following contributions made by members during debate in respect of minute 32 'School Effectiveness Update':-

- i. That it be placed on record that every person who had worked in schools during the pandemic, be they teachers, teaching assistants, support staff, dinner ladies, cleaners for the last two years in school had done an amazing job in the face of the covid pandemic, and were continuing to do so;
- ii. Current and future practice centred around providing help to schools in a supportive way and constructive challenge being undertaken only where it was considered that responses given in terms of issues of effectiveness were not well evidenced. The approach was about enabling schools and headteachers, rather than being confrontational, which was welcomed;
- iii. That regular updates on school effectiveness and improvement be added to the forward list of items for the EAP, with a particular focus on 'requires improvement' schools in the spring term, 2022.

38 Members' Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were received.

39 Virtual School Extended Duties.

The Head of the Virtual School provided a presentation on its work and the additional duty to be a strategic lead for children in need.

In answer to member queries and debate on the presentation the following principal points were noted:

- i. The Virtual School Head post was one within each Local Authority. They were discharged to monitor all children under the care of that authority. The school did not deliver any service directly to a child but they provided advice to those providing a support service to children in care;
- ii. The Virtual School worked strategically with partners and upskilled them to understand learning and each other's roles within a young person's life and how specialised approaches to learning would benefit them;
- iii. There were a substantial number of children in care affected by trauma. It was known that those who had witnessed domestic violence could be affected in the long term by it and their ability to learn. Even when in the womb a child could be affected by domestic violence;
- iv. The Virtual School were also an advisory service to social care and could suggest a type of school to be considered for a particular child. It could support schools by advising them on services within the local authority and how to access them., as well as providing education officers who could support a school in educating a child and act in a supportive way through a child's educational health plan;
- v. It was always recommended that a child in care was prioritised because it was recognised the additional needs that the children had. There were plans to increase the numbers of staff within the Educational Psychologist Service to enable working with greater numbers of young people;
- vi. Children under the care of the local authority could be placed in a number of settings such as residential homes or placed with foster carers. The Virtual School met with the professionals working with a child in care. It was also confirmed that it also met with the person responsible for the child whether that be the actual parents, or foster carers.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted and the update on the activities of the Virtual School be welcomed.

40 Executive Item - Youth Justice Plan 2021/22

The Assistant Director of Children and Family Support Service and Youth Offending Services presented a report to be considered by the Executive on 16 November 2021 and by the full Council on 1 December 2021, noting that the Council had a statutory duty to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which provided specified information about the local provision of youth justice services.

Arising from discussion and member questions, the following principal points were noted:-

- i. Northamptonshire was showing an increase in custody rate per 1000 population against England, Regional and Family Average for the period 2020/21. There were a total of 13 custodial sentences in the period. The Youth Offending Services had developed a new panel approach to offer robust and credible alternatives to custody in order to address the increase in custody rates.
- ii. It was important for young people to have a positive destination at the end of their orders as it stabilised them. Education and training were key in this as well, with an estimated number of 86% engaged with employment, training and education at the end of this period (subject to a 50% reduction when taking into account Covid lockdowns and resultant school closures during 2020/21.)
- iii. There was a strong focus on community resolution because where it worked it prevented young people from becoming criminalised. This involved all partners, including the courts, with a 'court process' being undertaken but not formalised in order to provide a deterrent effect but to avoid criminal prosecutions where suitable.
- iv. Some of the pupils under the care of the virtual school could also be YOS clients. Moving forward they were developing support of the young people by creating a sense of understanding of what they had done and helping them to view the world without the trauma they had experienced.
- v. There was a significant increase in the number of children suffering mental health. Mental health was proving to be quite a challenge judicially. The children could be self-harming or contemplating suicide;
- vi. A focus going forward was the development of training to respond to trauma in practice to gain acceptance of what youth offenders had done, why they had done it and the emotional reasons for seeing the world in the way they did. The mental health of children proved quite a challenge for the judiciary – with a particular concern on how they were supported through mental health teams, by avoiding putting them into custody and finding more appropriate route to support them.
- vii. The world had changed for young people in terms of lifestyle in recent years. Many still had healthy lifestyles but not all. YOS attempted to channel young people back to healthy lifestyles, attempting to get them interested in other things outside of crime. Initiatives such as the Adrenaline Skate Park and Football Friendly were things they attempted to channel them into, which were welcomed.

RESOLVED:

That the Education Skills and Employment Advisory Panel endorses the Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22, prior to its consideration by the Executive on 17 November 2021.

41 Executive Item - Proposed Amalgamation of Tennyson Road Infant and Alfred Street Junior Schools

The Chair reported that this item would no longer be considered at this meeting, as a result of the item having been withdrawn from the Executive agenda of 17 November 2021.

42 Forward Plan of Executive Items

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager reported that there were currently no forward plan executive items in respect of Children's Services, but the postponed item 'Proposed Amalgamation of Tennyson Road Infant and Alfred Street Junior Schools' would be rescheduled to a future Executive meeting date.

43 Forward List of Items for Education, Skills and Employment EAP

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager provided an update on the forward list of items for the Panel.

In addition to those items already noted, the following additional items were requested for consideration at future meetings:-

- i. That the SEND Briefing due for consideration at the next meeting in December include details on:-
 - How the needs of new school entrants were identified;
 - Process involved and the time required to identify and provide support to school children;
 - Number of children awaiting Education and Health Care Plans.
- ii. An update on school effectiveness, during February/March 2021.

RESOLVED:-

That the forward list of items be updated accordingly.

44 Close of Meeting

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 6.13 pm

