

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 18 October 2023 at 4.00 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Brian Madgwick (in the Chair)

Councillor Peter Candlish

32. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hannah Brent, Stuart Brown, Leonie Oliver and Mary Valley. Mike Stoneman also sent his apologies.

33. Declarations of members' interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 September 2023 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

Post meeting note: Cllr Candlish said that immediately following the meeting he had been talking to officers; during the meeting discussion had taken place about the Council finding places to put people but the other way around would be if people define appropriate spaces and the Council could then look to see if there is a place that meets that description.

35. Review into education, employment and training opportunities for our care experienced young people aged 18-25 (AI 4)

Simon Attrill, Recruitment Lead for HTP Apprenticeship College.

Simon explained that they are a private independent training company, with their head office is in the Isle of Wight and they have had an office in Portsmouth since 2005. The Portsmouth office is now at St Georges Business Centre. The college offer a more traditional study programme for 16–18-year-olds which extends to 25 for those with an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP). They also run a traineeship provision, which sits before an apprenticeship, and allows young people to have tasters in different sectors with the hope that they will progress onto an apprenticeship or into employment or further education. The government have changed the funding for traineeships; previously they could take this up to the age of 25 but this now has to be embedded into the 16–18-year-old funding. With apprenticeships there is no upper age limit, and their offer is around the

service sector with careers available in hospitality, business, health and social care and customer service.

In Portsmouth, the main offer is on apprenticeships, but they can work with individuals for the traineeship programme. On the Isle of Wight, they have run some structured traineeships with the local NHS trust. 15 people completed this last year and 12 of these progressed onto the apprenticeship in their chosen area. The college also work with young people on an individual basis to match them to a suitable placement. The college work proactively with young people if they are referred to them and work with employers if they have vacancies; for example, Portsmouth Hospitals University Trust (PHUT) who they have some good apprenticeship vacancies with. The college work with employers all across the south within approximately 1.5 hours of Portsmouth. The culture for HTP is to help young people and they are happy to receive referrals from organisations in the city to work proactively with people to find them a way forward to meet aspirations.

In response to questions Mr Attrill said that:

- HTP does not have a full-time provision as other colleges in Portsmouth have; their offer for this geographical area is apprenticeships and also traineeships. The reason they have not helped more of NEET young people is that they have not had the referrals to be able to build up that partnership.
- There are approximately 450 people on apprenticeships across the organisation; a small percentage of these will be at PHUT. There are currently about 7 opportunities for young people at PHUT.
- Employers will come to the college either because they have an existing working relationship with them or they have found their details, and they will say they are looking to take on an apprentice. The college will go and meet the employer to discuss their requirements and ideally get a job description. The college can then advertise through the government 'find an apprenticeship' service and link with partners such as the Solent apprenticeship hub. It is vital to build partnerships with stakeholders and employers and he felt this is where there is a gap currently.
- The college does not have any entry criteria for some of the level 5 apprenticeships and they take people on a case-by-case basis. It is for the employer to make the final decision on who they employ. The college will either respond to an employers needs to find the best fit for them or if they get a young person referred, they will do what they can to place them. There will always be the challenge of young people not turning up to interviews or work.
- Apprenticeships are employed position and there is an employment contract with the organisations. Most private companies invest in the young people and want them to stay on at the end of the apprenticeship. The ambition is that 95% of the time they will go into substantive employment.

Amanda Percy, Post 16 Skills and Campaign Manager, PCC, said that if young people want that support, they will continue to give it. There are care experienced young people who do not enjoy their apprenticeship and the personal advisors will support them in their next steps. Some care experienced young people do not want to declare that they are care experienced with colleges. Care experienced young people are entitled to funding which is phased. Amanda said she would share the details of the care leaver apprenticeship bursary with the panel after the meeting.

Tess Cole, Vice Principal, City of Portsmouth College

Tess explained there are four campuses in the city:

Highbury - which predominately has the vocational provision;

North Harbour - construction

6th form campus - A level provision

Arundel campus - for young people who have social, emotional or behaviour issues.

There is a vast range of provision on offer ranging from entry level through to degree level. They have provision for students with EHCPs and specialist level 1 provision across a range of vocational areas where students get additional support because they are care experienced or have issues at home, to encourage them to stay on programme.

The vocational courses prepare students for the world of work; work experience is built into their courses. The college work closely with Amada's team at PCC and receive lots of referrals from the Council and external agencies. She felt that the college do know how to support those students who need additional support. If a student does not succeed on one course they have different systems in place to support them to find one that is a better fit for them.

The college do pre 16 provision for 14–16-year-olds as school is not the right place for those young people and they want to try a more vocational course.

In response to the question of when the impact of trauma is seen, Sam Bushby, Deputy Director Children and Families, said that this can be at any point of a child's life dependent upon their experiences and the impact this has upon them. This could be a young baby born impacted by harm in utero. It is known that first 1,000 days of a child's life is significant in terms of development and traumatic experiences during this can have a significant impact. Young children can be seen to struggle at nursery and infant school due to trauma in their early years. Some children can find school a sanctuary and can do well even though they have been harmed, but any transition in a child's life can be particularly difficult -including entering adolescence and adulthood.

In response to a question as to what the college do well, Tess felt that the City of Portsmouth College is very flexible. The start of the year has begun but they are still taking on students who had not made their minds up and they take new students all the year round. In terms of what could be better, she felt

that they do have behaviour issues and attendance can be an issue. The staff try to support them and it does sometimes help over time.

The college work closely with schools and pupils in years 8,9,10 and 11 to offer taster days and hold open evenings with parents and young people. Some young people come in have a clear plan on what they want to do and how to do it. There are careers advisors if young people are still unsure on what pathway they wish to take. Amanda Percy added that the careers world has changed, and these young people are entering a different world and are likely to have a minimum of 7 different jobs in their career. Therefore, staff need to help them be resilient for a career moving forward and developing transferrable skills that can be transferred between sectors.

In response to a question, Tess said that the college do hold independent living skills for their level 1 students and their SEN provision. This includes budgeting and money management, and a certificate is awarded at the end of this course. There are also trips and experiences to help open their eyes.

This is compulsory and timetabled in for their lower-level programmes.

Charlie Miller, Director of Student Progress, Havant and South Downs College.

Charlie said that HSDC offer a course in everything apart from construction or horticulture. There is 14-16 provision which can be home educated or via school referral. They offer foundation learning from E1 up to higher education and adult learning which is at the Havant and Leigh Park campuses. The college offer English and Maths only for their vulnerable students that are unable to manage a full programme. There are 3,000 full time students at HSDC and half of those are from Portsmouth. Amanda added that there are two members of PCC staff who work in the colleges in the Autumn and Spring terms to look after the care experienced young people.

In response to a question on what could be improved, Charlie said that the communication between the Council and the colleges could be improved. They are not made aware of the vulnerable students until they are enrolled as this information is not allowed to be shared until they are enrolled. This is why the number of NEETs is high. It is about how they can offer bespoke courses and offer places if they do not know who they are. HSDC have 111 Looked After Children but they are still trying to establish what LA they are attached to, 23 are from Portsmouth but there are others where they would not know until January that they have been in the care system which is inadequate. It is a combination of when they receive handovers from schools and schools cannot share information with colleges until they are enrolled with them legally. For the young people who do not make it to college, they do not know who they are. If they are at identified risk of sexual exploitation or county lines they know who they are as they attend the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) meetings held weekly and happen to come across some of the NEETs. Sam Bushby added that the MET meetings are multi-agency meetings and is a good example of good multi-agency working. They consider children who live with their family, or are cared for by the Local Authority.

Charlie said that all senior leaders at HSDC are trauma informed and they run bespoke programmes, but they need to know who the young people are. They are also doing some work on relational practice. Amanda Percy added that there are 169 young people who are NEETs aged 18-25. When the young people leave the virtual school, they are RAG rated as to the risk of becoming NEET and any young person rated red is put into a NEET prevention programme. A lot of the young people are up to age 25 and may not be looking for a college place but employment. There is a separate piece of work around the general NEET population where the Council rely on referrals from schools to say they are concerned about the risk of NEET and then the Council work with the colleges to try and place those young people. It is important to have a broad range of options for the young people. There is a shortage in Portsmouth of 'roll on, roll off' provision; if a young person drops out in November, they do not want them to have to wait until the new academic year until they can restart a course. The Enham Trust provide this and they cannot offer any more places currently.

Amanda said that through the employability academy they are working to ensure that employers and teachers are care experienced ready and have some training around trauma and how to support these young people. Portsmouth is a trauma informed city and schools receive free training on this. Charlie added that for further education this is not offered and they are expected to fund this themselves. She added that they can share with the permission of the young person that they have experienced trauma or if they feel it is a need-to-know basis. If staff are trauma informed they would not insist that a student does something for example a foot massage as part of the health and beauty course, as they will be aware that they have experienced trauma and this could be a trigger for them.

In response to a question why Portsmouth have so many young people NEET, officers said it is for a variety of reasons including mental health, anxiety and having appropriate housing and it is hard to think of work or training when they do not have secure housing. Once they get the support our young people have a huge amount to offer. If employers can get on board with the trauma understanding this will really help. Sam Bushby said that officers are concerned about the high number of care experienced young adults who are NEET which is why they suggested this topic would benefit from scrutiny. She said that at the next meeting they could look deeper at the reasons and they would be hearing the voices of young people at this meeting and say what more could be done to help them.

In terms of young people who have sought safety and asylum there are currently 164 care experienced young people in Portsmouth and there are 43 who are children in our care currently seeking safety and asylum. PCC offer a lot of support in terms of accessing courses and colleges hold English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL). It is very difficult for young people struggle when they are not allowed to work whilst their application is pending. They really want to work but it can take some time to get their 'leave to remain' and they are significantly restricted in what they can do in this time.

The panel thanked officers and the education and training providers for attending and all the work they are doing to support our care experienced young adults.

The meeting concluded at 5.30 pm.

Councillor Brian Madgwick
Chair