

## **SOUTHEND ON SEA CITY COUNCIL**

### **People Scrutiny Committee Meeting**

**29<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

#### **Question 1. from Ms Cowdrey for Cllr Burton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and SEND)**

There is an increased need in the UK to support children and young people who identify as experiencing gender dysphoria. Research suggests that many may be identified as neurodivergent.

The route for support is medical, and there may be a considerable wait for referral for an assessment at a gender dysphoria clinic, due to more people requesting Gender Dysphoria services.

There are long waiting lists for CAMHS, and no guarantee that they will be seen, particularly if adolescent.

The NHS website suggests that schools or colleges may be able to offer support.

Can the portfolio holder advise what support for children struggling with gender dysphoria and gender identity is available in our primary and secondary schools and colleges? How can he reassure children, young people and their families that their health and well-being will remain paramount, that they are appropriately supported and what other local services are available to them?

#### **Response:**

**The administration takes full account of the findings of the recent Cass review into gender services. As Lady Cass concluded, previously for many young people the care they received was far too ideological rather than evidenced based.**

**Data show many young people in the GIDS cohort have high levels**

**of comorbidities, many are autistic, many suffer from depression, many have a history of trauma and sexual abuse; also many are same-sex attracted and may suffer from internalised and parental homophobia.**

**It is vital this cohort receive holistic interventions that address the young person's issues in the round rather than being put on a narrow affirmation pathway.**

**Regarding schools and colleges, national guidance is currently in draft form and will be published in due course.**

**We agree with Dr Cass that socially transitioning a child is a huge psychosocial intervention in their development and a cautious approach should always be taken. We encourage all education providers to have regard to the Cass Review and make sure parents are involved fully in decisions.**

**Question 2. from Ms Mitchell for Cllr Sadza (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Healthier Communities)**

The withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance has reportedly raised concerns with other council leaders resulting in resolutions urging the government to reverse this decision; not so in Southend.

The loss is not mitigated for all 'in need' by schemes such as The Pensioner Support Fund, taken from the Household Support Fund (HSF). The level of poverty in Southend is such that The HSF is needed by so many, including pensioners who may have been able to apply for it anyway.

Those who are unwell, have a disability and are vulnerable to the cold, remain at greater risk of hyperthermia, illness and hospitalisation.

Additionally Social Care is under huge pressure to take NHS patients without additional funding, therefore could the portfolio holder confirm what contingency plans are in place for a likely increase in demand for

social services, when we are already in challenging autumn and then winter months?

**Response:**

**Planning for the demand in social care services during the winter period have been in place since early summer through the intermediate care capacity plans under the Better Care Fund.**

**The local authority Adult Social Care team has a close partnership working relationship with the hospital, the Alliance, and community partners. The joint planning which is in place ensures there are relevant schemes available during the winter months to support additional pressure across the health and care system.**

**The Winter Discharge Fund includes contingency schemes designed to support a “home first” approach where possible, while also preventing avoidable hospital admissions and ensuring timely discharge. These contingency plans encompass Community based schemes, acute discharge schemes, urgent community response, integrated care planning and navigation, as well as welfare support.**

**Additionally, schemes have been developed to respond to system demand and capacity through provider incentives and early intervention measures. The intermediate care capacity and demand plans are kept under regular review and corrective action is taken where services will not be expected to meet projected demand.**

**Southend-on-Sea City Council continues to work with ICBs to ensure an integrated approach across health and social care to meet people urgent and emergency needs during the winter. An essential part of this is with the health and social care teams working together in local neighbourhoods to provide joined-up, person centred and preventative services.**

**Question 3. from Mr Nickless for Cllr Burton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and SEND)**

Could the portfolio holder tell me why Southend schools will not allow dedicated 1:1 SEND support for pupils, set out in section F of their EHCPs, and if this is a blanket policy?

**Response:**

Thank you for your question Mr Nickless.

There is no policy which bans or otherwise limits the provision of direct 1-1 support for students through an EHC plan. Following receipt of recent information relating to this on social media, we believe that any response from one of our schools may have been miscommunicated or misunderstood. It is possible that the school may have been trying to communicate difficulties within their own establishment's ability to provide support.

We currently maintain a number of EHC plans where there are varying levels of specified 1-1 provision based on the individual needs of the child/young person as set out in their EHC plans.

If there are any difficulties in providing such support, we expect our schools to raise these queries with us so that we are able to resolve them swiftly. All provisions within EHC plans are, and will continue to be, focussed on the individual needs of the pupils and incorporate a range of strategies and levels of support as appropriate.

Following receipt of this query we have communicated to all our schools to ensure there is a consistent understanding and to reiterate the offer of support from the LA in the event of any difficulties in meeting individual student needs.

**Question 4. from Mr Webb for Cllr Sadza (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Healthier Communities)**

In the Corporate Performance Report Quarter 1 2024/2025 there was an indicator (CP03.01) showing as amber, 'Take up of the NHS Health Check Programme'. This set out that in June 2023 there was a 923 take up, compared to the latest June 2024 value of 1186. Monthly target 1230.

What type of checks are involved in the NHS health check and who and where are they carried out?

**Response:**

**The NHS Health Check programme aims to help prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes, kidney disease and certain types of dementia.**

**Everyone aged 40 to 74 who has not already been diagnosed with one of these conditions or has certain risk factors will receive an invitation once every five years to receive support and advice to help them reduce or manage their risk.**

**Measures listed below are recorded as part of an NHS Health Check:**

- **smoking status**
- **family history of coronary heart disease**
- **body mass index (BMI)**
- **cholesterol level**
- **blood pressure**
- **physical activity level**
- **alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT) score**
- **cardiovascular risk score**

**In addition, those aged 65-74 should be made aware of the signs and symptoms of Dementia and signposted to memory services, if deemed appropriate.**

**In Southend, the NHS Health checks are undertaken in General Practice surgeries or through the Outreach programme which is delivered by Everyone Health. Everyone Health focuses on the**

**seldom heard communities.**

**Our target for the 2024/25 financial year is set at 4,913 NHS Health Checks. While we fell slightly short of our target (1,186) for April-June (1,228), we surpassed the planned target by the end of September 2024 with 2,615 NHS Health Checks completed.**