

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 JULY 2022

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) QUESTIONS FROM JULIA HOPPER TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, LEARNING AND INCLUSION

(a) Why were the LA inactive over serious failings regarding Southchurch school SEND children despite a year of warnings from community volunteers?

Thank you for your question, Ms Hopper. The local authority has not been inactive. We have systems in place to fulfil our statutory duties. This includes monitoring provision and arrangements for SEND to ensure they meet expectations. Where they do not meet expectations, or where adjustments are required to be in line with other schools across the city, we then look to deploy targeted support early in line with the local authority's powers of intervention.

Over the past eighteen months the local authority has worked closely with the school to support them in deploying specialist teachers (advisory SENCos) to work with the leadership team and the school's own SENCo to monitor the provision and support them in making the necessary improvements.

It is however disappointing that despite these efforts the SEND provision at the school has been found to require improvements. The local authority has already spoken in detail with the Academy Trust Leaders and will be visiting the school in the last week of June to determine what can be done to support the improvements that are required.

(b) When is the LA calling an emergency meeting for these families to reassure and explain what measures they will be taking to safeguard all children there and to ensure that SEND families are heard and SEND needs met?

Thank you for your question, Ms Hopper. In the first instance, as an academy and part of the Partnership Learning Trust, accountability and primary responsibility for all pupil's safety and wellbeing at the school rests with the trust leadership, and that of the school. It would be for the Trust to convene any meetings following an inspection rather than this responsibility to fall to the local authority. As stated in the response to your first question, the role of the Council is to seek assurance as far as they can that the school is fulfilling their duty to meet the needs of all learners, including those with additional or special educational needs. If we determine that this is not the case, or is not sufficient, we will firstly take this up with the Trust, but reserve the right to speak directly with either OFSTED or the Department for Education (DfE). As a result of the judgement OFSTED, working alongside the DfE, will undertake periodic monitoring visits to determine the progress made by the school against the areas for improvement identified in the OFSTED report.

I will add that as part of any OFSTED inspection, one of the first duties of the inspection team is to make a judgement on the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures at the school. You will be aware that despite the other failings, OFSTED determined that arrangements for safeguarding at the school are effective.

(2) QUESTION FROM DAVID WEBB TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH INTEGRATION

(a) What strategies have been put into place to reduce adult, children smoking and how many have quit in 2020, 2021 and so far in 2022?

Thank you for your question, Mr Webb. The Southend Stop Smoking Service works with local providers including GPs, pharmacies, and vape shops to deliver a comprehensive offer to residents who are looking to quit smoking. We also work very closely with our acute setting to ensure that inpatients as well as pregnant women, receive adequate stop smoking support and are signposted swiftly and effectively. We have good coverage of Stop Smoking Advisors within providers across Southend, all of whom receive regular training and briefings to ensure the service to our citizens is of the highest quality.

As well as offering Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) as a focused intervention, we now offer a drug-free approach in the form of Allen Carr's Easyway seminars, this is being ran as a pilot in Southend in 2022. These seminars use behaviour change techniques to reshape how individuals view smoking with a 60% success rate. In addition to our community offer, we also deliver targeted interventions to specific cohorts where prevalence is highest and/or there is additional risk, such as routine and manual workers, homeless communities and pregnant smokers.

We annually review the service using the CLear Tools assessment. This self-assessment document is endorsed by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and provides practical help to commissioners and service providers supporting us to move towards a truly tobacco-free future.

We work closely with the regional Stop Smoking colleagues and national teams to share experience and innovation which we use to continuously evaluate and evolve our service. This is demonstrated with our involvement in the ongoing delivery of the Long Term Plan (LTP) Tobacco Dependency Project which is being worked on collaboratively across the local NHS. The ambition of this piece of work is to strengthen referral pathways and stop smoking services across Essex for maternity, mental health and the wider acute inpatient services.

In addition to this we also work closely with our schools' team to ensure that young people remain educated on the harms of smoking cigarettes, and the use of vapes. Schools are provided with national PHSE resources that are used to guide lessons around harmful behaviours. Furthermore, our 'Smokefree School Gates' campaign aims to de-normalise smoking at school gates, educate children on the harms of smoking, and give them a voice/opportunity to speak up about how they feel towards people smoking around them.

In terms of impact of our programmes, 46% (386 people) who participated in one of the programmes successfully quit smoking in 2020/2021. That reduced slightly to 42% (481 people) who quit in 2021/2022. 15% of participants have quit so far this financial year but this figure does not include anybody currently on a programme attempting to quit smoking.

(3) QUESTION FROM DAVID WEBB TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, LEARNING AND INCLUSION

(a) What is the focus in helping adult education in Southend and how many adults have completed courses and achieved skills in 2019, 2020, 2021 and any in 2022?

Thank you for your question, Mr Webb. Southend Adult Community College (SACC) is the council's Adult & Community Learning service. It delivers vocational skills, functional skills (maths, English, ESOL), community and lifelong learning, family learning, skills for adults with learning and physical disabilities (SEN), and alternative 16-19 provision. Delivering against a range of 2050 outcomes, it is 100% externally funded through contracts with the Education and Skills Funding Agency and with other smaller funders. It is currently rated Good by Ofsted and is anticipating imminent inspection. In 2018/19 557 courses for adults were delivered with 2,166 learners completing their course – this was the last pre-covid academic year. In 2019/20 567 courses were delivered with 1,995 learners completing. In 2022/21 473 courses were delivered with 1,456 learners completing. So far in 2021/22 587 courses have been delivered with 1,881 learners completing (completion numbers will increase over the coming months).

There has been a slight decline in learner numbers due to the pandemic, however SACC has demonstrated good recovery and is performing well when compared with regional local authority adult community services. Work with Afghan and Ukrainian citizens has been prioritised this year, providing immediate access to learning and skills that enable refugees to integrate into the community and gain skills in English, maths and vocational subjects. Another priority area is improved vocational learning pathways that meet local skills and employment needs in Southend. SACC will continue to offer a wide range of responsive community learning and learning, skills and work experience for those with special educational needs to support their journey towards work and/or independence. SACC has been traditionally provided a small number of apprenticeships; however these are not part of the 22/23 curriculum with need being met through specialist or large scale providers including South Essex College.