

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD
30/09/2025 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillor McLaren (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillors Z Ali, Bishop, Byrne, Hughes, Iqbal, Rustidge and Shuttleworth

Also in Attendance:

Matthew Bulmer	Director Education Early Years and Skills
Katie Charlton	Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion
Julie Daniels	Executive Director, Children and Young People
Anthony Decrop	Children's Services - Oldham Borough Council
Sheila Garara	Children's Services
Jack Grennan	Constitutional Services
Shaid Mushtaq	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Umar Nasheen	Deputy Cabinet Member for Skills

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ball and Councillor Hobin.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Mohon Ali as Cabinet Member, with Councillor Nasheen substituting.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY BOARD MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

6 **SEND UPDATE**

Katie Charlton introduced the report, noting that the purpose of the report was to highlight the progress made since January 2025. It was noted that a white paper was expected soon on SEND from the government. It was highlighted that 92% of local area partnership actions had been completed.

There had been an 87% increase in EHCPs in Oldham, with 6.7% of pupils in the borough now having one, which was around 3900 children. It was noted that wait times for CAMHS had reduced and was much improved. It was highlighted that

there had been low numbers of exclusions which was testament to the work being done and that investment in services had supported this work. It was highlighted that the service was now leaving a period of recovery and was heading towards transformation.

Members queried why numbers of ECHPs were higher in Oldham than regionally. It was advised that it was a hypothesis that better early help work would avoid statutory plans. It was noted that previous long waits had led to EHCPs being used to meet needs. It was noted that the rate of increase in EHCPs was lower than historic, and a lower rate of increase than both national and regional.

Members also asked what the council was doing well and whether good practice was being shared across GM. It was noted that officers were attending GM meetings and sharing good practice. The Change Partnership programme was also noted, and the alternative provision taskforce could refer pupils near to exclusion as part of a proactive offer.

Members noted they had been encouraged by school attendance information from district meetings and officers noted that this was important intelligence for the service. The Chair requested that members write to officers to note comments and successes going forward.

Members asked that whilst the most common type of need for children and young people with an ECHP was autism, were there any forms of SEND that were significant. It was noted that Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) was a significant area of need and other areas of need were too.

RESOLVED: That members note the report and commend officers for their work.

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OLDHAM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN 2025-26

Sheila Garara presented the report, noting the 4Ps (Practice, Partnership, People and Place) for Children's social care and early help, and that these would help form the action plans. It was also noted that these would lead to significant improvements in SEND. It was highlighted that KPIs would be reported quarterly, with both Q1 and Q2 expected to come to the scrutiny board in November 2025.

The Risk register was noted, and it was mentioned that none of these risks had been realised. It was noted that the focused inspection noted that the plan was ambitious and aspirational and would address challenges that were presenting themselves.

Members noted school inclusivity and questioned what the council could do with academies, where the council has limited influence. It was noted that every child who wants a place gets one, and that 97.8% of primary school children got their 1st-3rd choice, whilst this was 93.3% in secondary. It was noted that schools had sufficiency, with an 11% surplus in primary school

places. It was highlighted that councils have statutory powers to add children into schools as part of in year fair access, and that schools had no choice on looked after placements.

Members also noted birth rates and the impact of the pandemic. It was noted that the impact was hitting primary schools now, but that there was spare capacity so there would be no need to close schools. It was noted that the post-16 bulge would reach its peak in 2029 and 2030.

Members were informed that in case conferences, partners were attending around 90%.

Members queried what the 75% complaints target meant in real numbers. It was noted that 75% was just a target but that in April to June there had been 46 complaints received. It was queried whether there were themes from these complaints, and it was advised that they were mainly around communications with families and disagreeing with the decisions. Members requested a breakdown of complaints for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: To commend the plan to Full Council

8

WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the draft 2025/26 Work Programme be noted and approved

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RULE 13 AND 14

There were no Rule 13 or 14 decisions to be considered.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.35 pm