

Children and Young People Policy Committee Supplementary Information



Date: Thursday, 26 June 2025

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: The Council Chamber - City Hall,
College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

6. Public Forum

Details of the public forum items received for this meeting are enclosed.

Issued by: , Policy Committee Team

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Date: Thursday, 26 June 2025



Children and Young People Policy Committee

26 June 2026

Public Forum – Questions



Public forum questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

- Q1. Jared Rufus: Support for the "Free summer buses for children" initiative, introduction
- Q2. Jared Rufus: Support for the "Free summer buses for children" initiative, schools
- Q3. Jared Rufus: Support for the "Free summer buses for children" initiative, local newsletters
- Q4. Cllr Tom Renhard: Children's homes
- Q5. Cllr Tom Renhard: Out of area placements
- Q6. Cllr Tim Rippington: EHCPs
- Q7. Cllr Tim Rippington: EHCPs
- Q8. Jen Smith: Short break availability
- Q9. Jen Smith: Social media guidelines issued to Children's Services staff
- Q10. Jen Smith: Transport issue
- Q11. Sally Kent: Mediation (EHCPs)
- Q12. Sally Kent: Early intervention fund
- Q13. Sally Kent: EHCP Timeliness and Legal Compliance – Training of Committee Members



QUESTION 1 – Jared Rufus

Support for the "Free summer buses for children" initiative, introduction

I work at a local Bristol school and we've made a pamphlet of the free (or cheap) activities that children can do around Bristol over the summer. This also includes the various bus routes that link to each of these activities, so that the cities children can make best use of the free bus travel for that has been organised for them over the summer. While some of the children of Bristol are well aware of all the parks, museums and events in the city, many (especially those whose first language isn't English) are unaware of all the wonderful spaces that are available to them. The students at our school have already found it helpful, and I think this would also be a great resource to other children across the city. I was hoping that you would be willing to help me make sure that as many children as possible will be able to make use of this wonderful opportunity? My other two questions relate directly to this. As this form doesn't seem have an option for attaching documents, how would be best for me to share the pamphlet we've put together? I could easily email it to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Response:

This initiative is being taken forward through local bus companies with funding from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority; the Council (and councillors) will play an appropriate part in publicising the offer. The pamphlet referred to has been received and will be circulated to all schools.

QUESTION 2 – Jared Rufus

Support for the "Free summer buses for children" initiative, schools

(Please see Q1 for the supporting context of this question) So that other schools may share this information with their students, if they want to. Would one of the councillors be willing provided me with the contact details of the best person/team to contact for a wider distribution?

Response:

Please see response to Q1.

QUESTION 3 – Jared Rufus

Support for the "Free summer buses for children" initiative, local newsletters

(Please see Q1 for the supporting context of this question) So that as many children as possible can make the most of fantastic opportunity to explore our city over the summer. Would the councillors be willing to work with me and share this resource to their local constituents via local newsletters?

Response:

Please see response to Q1.

QUESTION 4 – Cllr Tom Renhard

Children's homes

Goram Homes have provided 2 children's homes in *xx (location supplied in question submitted)*. Others are being completed elsewhere, including in *xx ward (ward name supplied in question submitted)*. On what date were these buildings completed and handed over to the council and on what date did children in care move into these properties?

Response:

The official handover date for the two homes was 13 January 2025. No children have moved in as yet because the homes will be run by a strategic partner, and the contract for this will be awarded mid-July following a lengthy procurement process. We expect that children will move into these homes from November 2025 onwards.

QUESTION 5 – Cllr Tom Renhard

Out of area placements

Please can you confirm the number of children currently placed out of area, (more than 20 miles away from their home address) and of this number, if the availability of local placements was no barrier, how many of these children could be brought back to the area?

Response:

There are currently 93 children placed out of area (more than 20 miles away). All children in external residential homes are being regularly assessed for return to Bristol or nearby within the 'Coming Home Pathway' strand of the Families First programme. Of the 93, there are 31 with a possible plan to move them back to area by the end of March 2026. Children's plans are reviewed regularly in consideration of their permanency plans.

QUESTION 6 – Cllr Tim Rippington

EHCPs

When does the council expect to meet its targets for completing EHCPs within the statutory timeframe?

Response:

The Council is working with the local area partners including NHS BNSSG (Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) Integrated Care Board and Bristol Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) to deliver our Education Health and Care Needs Assessment improvement plan and will publish this soon.

To deliver our plan we have already delivered the following which is having a positive impact:

- Invested an additional £500k into our Education Psychology service. This investment has already had an impact; in May 2025 our service achieved the highest number of Education Psychology Assessments completed of any month in the 2023-2025 period, delivering 152 professional advice for children.
- Completed our restructure in February 2025 to invest c. £1m into the SEND Service with the aim of reducing caseloads from over 220 per case officer to now an average of 180 and introduced improved supervision and accurate job roles.
- Reviewed processes to improve the completion of Education Health and Care Plans where appropriate. The impact of this has been that productivity of completion of EHCPs in the SEND Service is up by 50% more EHCPs than in 2024. To note in 2024 it took until July of that year to deliver the productivity we are already seeing in May.
- £1m investment in a new Early Intervention Inclusion & Outreach service which will launch in September 2025.

QUESTION 7 – Cllr Tim Rippington

EHCPs

At the end of 2023, 47.5% of EHCPs were completed on time. By February 2025, this was only 1%. Cllr Townsend, are you confident there was nothing more you could do to stop such a dramatic deterioration of a crucial service?

Response:

Bristol had a 34% increase in needs assessments in 2024, 24% higher than the national increase (11%). This was primarily due to the decision to withdraw the non-statutory Top Up Funding and this has impacted on timeliness.

As set out above in response to Question 6 by Councillor Rippington, the new administration has already invested another £2.5m in to SEND to create a sustainable service and we are seeing the productivity of this service surpass the levels of productivity in 2023 and 2024.

It is important to know that this is about equity – we want to progress EHCPs for those who have been waiting longest and have the most significant challenges, so we may not see the 20 week measure change significantly whilst we see so many assessments being submitted.

We are also aware that a number of other local authorities, including core cities, are experiencing a similar challenge to Bristol, this is a national issue and needs national solutions by the Labour government. We are aware that SEND reform was suggested at the Comprehensive Spending Review in June 2025 and we welcome the government's ideas on how that will be achieved whilst keeping children and young people with SEND at the heart of our schools and our communities.

QUESTION 8 – Jen Smith**Short break availability**

Please provide the following information regarding short breaks for disabled children and young people in Bristol:

- (a) The exact number of short breaks currently available, broken down by provider and by area of the city;
- (b) The number of spaces available for each short break;
- (c) The number of children or young people currently on the waiting list for each short break.

Please provide a full breakdown of (a), (b), and (c) for each service listed on page 8 (targeted short breaks) and the specialist services listed on page 9 of the Short Breaks Statement:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/3624-bristol-short-breaks-statement-2023>

Response:**LOT1, Out And About Consortium (OAA) :**

Number of activity sessions provided across the OAA consortium: 375 sessions/year

Total number of children/young people who attended each activity or sessions (total places available): 4200

Total number of different Children/young people in the service: 340

- KHAAS- the targeted service for children and young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds is aimed at Disabled children, young people and families from minoritised ethnic groups who face additional barriers accessing Short Breaks due to their ethnicity: e.g. language or cultural barriers. KHAAS deliver regular sessions at various locations across Bristol. In addition to this KHAAS organise many trips and outings. These sessions happen term-time 2/3 a month on a Saturday. Total places: 720/year. Total number of different children: 100/year. Full service, no waiting list.
- OOSC: Out Of School Clubs (Neurodivergent youth clubs) run by FACE. These sessions are split into under 11s and over 11s, happen term time on Tuesdays and Thursdays delivering a total of 4 sessions a week. Full service, no waiting list yet. Total places: 960/year. Total number of different children: 48/year.
- WECIL Youth is a pan-disability project run for 13-18 yrs old. Regular sessions run from various locations. 3 sessions per area are delivered a week term time. Full service, no waiting list yet.
- WECIL Play is a pan-disability project run for 5-12 yrs olds. This is delivered as a combination of 3 family sessions and 3 drop-offs, 6 sessions are offered a month, across different venues in Bristol. No waiting list. Total spaces: 700/year. Total different children: 100/year.

- WECIL Befriending, a volunteer mentor service which is for children and young people who cannot be accommodated in a group setting. Volunteers are matched with individual children and take them out weekly across Bristol. Approximately 2-3 hours a week, depending on the family circumstances. 52 Children/young people on the waiting list but this is being reviewed by new incoming staff and addressed. Total places: 550/year. Total number of different children: 30/year.
- Woodview, for complex high needs Disabled Children, delivered by WECIL every other Saturday in term time 5 hour session. No waiting list. Total places: 246/year. Total different Children: 20/year

LOT 2: Bristol Autism Project, family sessions and teen drop offs during the holidays delivered by FACE across Bristol city. Usually between 10 and 14 sessions (depending on what is offered) offered in a week during the holidays. No waiting list, rotation occurs, which means less per family.

- Number of sessions delivered a year: 150 minimum
- Total number of Autistic and SCIS Children and young people who attended each activity/session (total number of places): 1500/year
- Number of different Autistic children and young people or those with SCIS needs supported in this service (total number of places): 275/year

LOT3:

Holiday Short Breaks for complex high needs Disabled children, split into 2 groups over 8s and under 8s, all offered a 5 hour session a week during each holiday week, delivered by WECIL. Waiting list of 72 Children and young people which has been reviewed and shortened down to 23 appropriate referrals.

- Number of sessions delivered during a year: 88 sessions
- Total number of Children/young people who attend each activity (total number of places available): 500/year
- Number of different Children/young people supported in this service: 110/year

Bush overnight residential – 18 children

Belbrook overnight residential – 20 children

Directed payment – 131 children

- (a) The number of spaces available for each short break;

Specialist

In the residential homes we have a matching process to ensure our children are safe and with a peer group. We do have capacity in the Bush residential home for more children.

No children are waiting in specialist short breaks

QUESTION 9 – Jen Smith

Social media guidelines Issued to Children's Services staff

Please provide the current social media guidelines that are issued specifically to Children's Services Staff – not generally to council staff - or the URL where they can be found.

Response:

Below is the link to the specific section on the use of social media sites within Bristol Children's Services Procedural Manual

Use of Social Media Sites by Social Care and Safeguarding Staff

QUESTION 10 – Jen Smith

Transport issue

I was reading a Bristol City Council transport tender online which listed transport commissioned to take Disabled children and young people to residential short breaks overnight. It listed details about where they needed to be taken from and to which centre. You might want to exercise some caution about putting Disabled people's personal details on them though. But has transport to overnight short breaks also been affected by transport and travel costs like home to school transport?

Response:

All tender and contract information is published quarterly by the Local Authority as a requirement. The data referenced has now been taken down from the website pending consideration of the information that it contains.

Transport to overnight short breaks remains the responsibility of parents and carers, and this has not changed. Home to School Travel is responsible for the journey to and from school from the child's usual address, and other journeys are not part of the offer.

QUESTION 11 – Sally Kent

Mediation (EHCPs)

Please provide data on mediation for 2024 and 2025 so far:

The number of mediation cases held following a refusal to carry out an EHC needs assessment, and the outcomes.

The number of mediation cases held following a refusal to issue an EHC plan, and the outcomes.

The number of mediation cases regarding the content of Sections B and F of EHC plans, and the outcomes.

The number of mediation cases regarding Section I (placement) of EHC plans, and the outcomes.

The number of instances where the council declined to engage in mediation when requested by a parent or young person.

Please provide data for each category including:

- Number of mediation requests
- Number of mediations held
- Outcomes (e.g. agreement reached, partial agreement, no agreement)

Response:

***The data for 2025 has not been quality assured and may change, however please find the responses below.**

The number of mediation cases held following a refusal to carry out an EHC needs assessment, and the outcomes.

- **2024 -97**
- **2025-74***

The number of mediation cases held following a refusal to issue an EHC plan, and the outcomes.

- **2024-9**
- **2025-20***

The number of mediation cases regarding the content of Sections B and F of EHC plans, and the outcomes.

The data is collected on mediation on content of EHCP and includes Section I.

- **2024-23**
- **2025-15***

The number of instances where the council declined to engage in mediation when requested by a parent or young person.

- **We do not have specific data to answer this question.**

QUESTION 12 – Sally Kent

Early intervention fund

Please provide data on the Early Intervention Fund for 2024 and 2025 so far:

Number of school applications submitted, per funding round.

Number of applications approved, per round.

Total amount of funding awarded, per round.

Response:

There have been three application windows since the first-year pilot of the Early Intervention Fund was launched. These took place in November 2024, February and May 2025. To date there have been three successful applications from a total of 33, with a total grant of £2,152 awarded. Each application that was not successful has had detailed feedback and the team have been out to meet with schools to support them where appropriate to ensure they are applying for the right children at the right time.

Numbers of applications to the fund have been lower than expected with most applications not providing sufficient evidence of meeting EIF criteria to be accepted for review. This was the pilot year for the EIF fund and from September 2025, the new Inclusive Teaching and SEND Support Teams will be focused on working with schools to complete the whole school provision map and identify and apply for EIF for the right pupils at the right time. We will also be launching our new Graduated Approach in September alongside our new team which will also give schools a clearer understanding of what support should be ordinarily available to children and how the EIF can target support early.

Prior to launch of EIF, half-day face-to-face training was provided to SENDCOs. These continued through this academic year to ensure as many schools as possible were able to access training. Attendance at the sessions was high with 177 SENDCOs from 109 different settings attending.

Feedback from the sessions was positive.

We anticipate that the EIF will be utilised more broadly by schools in the next academic year and will be amending the model based on feedback from this academic year to inform the new approach from the next academic year.

QUESTION 13 – Sally Kent

EHCP Timeliness and Legal Compliance – Training of Committee Members

Given that the average time to issue an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Bristol has now reached 51 weeks, which is significantly beyond the statutory 20-week timeframe set out in the Children and Families Act 2014:

What formal training or legal briefing has been provided to EHCP panel members, council committee members, or officers involved in SEND governance to ensure they fully understand:

- The statutory legal obligations regarding the 20-week EHCP timeframe
- The legal risks of systemic delays, including potential for judicial reviews and findings of maladministration by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- The direct educational and safeguarding consequences of these delays for children and young people in Bristol?

If no specific training or legal update has been provided in the past 12 months, what plans are in place to urgently address this gap in governance and statutory awareness? Will the Council commit to publishing a clear, time-bound recovery plan to return to lawful EHCP processing timelines, and to ensuring that all decision-making bodies involved in SEND receive appropriate and ongoing legal training?

Response:

Committee members are offered external training opportunities, which they may choose to take up. It is the responsibility of the elected members to ensure their attendance through their whips. Officers in a Local Authority (LA) are not responsible for ensuring elected members complete their training. While Democratic Services (DS) can sign-post and organise training sessions, they cannot compel attendance.

Those who sit on the SEND Governance Board do so based on their sector-specific knowledge, expertise, and experience. They would not be able to take up a position on the board without these qualifications.

The Council is working with the local area partners including NHS BNSSG (Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) Integrated Care Board and Bristol Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) to deliver our Education Health and Care Needs Assessment improvement plan and will publish this soon.