

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton, on Friday 16 March 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chairman), Cllr J Lock, Mrs Eileen Tipper, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Bown, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Ruth Hobbs, Cllr M Pullin (Vice-Chair) and Cllr N Taylor

Other Members present: Cllr A Govier, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr T Munt and Cllr G Verdon

Apologies for absence: Ms Helen Fenn, Mr Richard Berry and Cllr J Williams

1 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

Eileen Tipper declared an interest as a member of the Community Council for Somerset.

Cllr Leigh Redman declared an interest as a Governor at The Willowdown Primary Academy.

2 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 26 January 2018 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the last meeting held on 26 January 2018 were accepted as being accurate and signed by the Chair.

3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were 8 Public Questions in relation to Item 10. The questions largely expressed concern regarding the effect that staff redundancies would have on the provision of services within SSE teams, particularly the PIMMS team. Concern was expressed over how valuable services could continue to be provided with less staff and over the lack of consultation with service users and young people. A verbal response was provided from Children's Services Commissioning. Those present were reassured that no change can be made to a child's Education Health Care Plan without a review with parents and the young person. The overall funding allocated to support children with SEND is increasing, although there may be changes as to how it will be spent. HN Top-up Funding will go directly to schools but children with higher level needs will continue to be supported by the specialist service teams within SSE.

All questions will receive a written response.

There was also a question regarding the school admission code for summer born children. The question will receive a written response.

4 **Scrutiny Work Programme - Agenda Item 5**

The Committee considered and noted the Council's Forward Plan of proposed key decisions in forthcoming months.

The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed. In addition was requested:

- An update on changes to SSE services (20 April)
- SEND Peer Review Update (20 April)

The Committee noted the outcome tracker and the Scrutiny Manager provided updates and it was agreed this would be reviewed at the next pre-meeting.

5 **SEND Peer Review Update - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee considered and agreed a request to defer this item to the 20 April meeting.

6 **Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019 - Agenda Item 7**

The Committee considered this report that provided the Committee with details of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) a three year plan that had started in April 2016 that set out the actions the Council and its partners were taking to continue and sustain improvements in Children's Services. The Plan followed a multi-agency approach, and was overseen by the Somerset Children's Trust and had 7 improvement programmes, each managed by a relevant Board to ensure improvement in each area.

The Partnership Business Manager – Children's Services, introduced the report and provided a very thorough overview of its contents, explaining the CYPP's origins after the Council received a Direction Notice from the Secretary of State for Education in November 2015 requiring a three year CYPP to be developed and implemented which the Department for Education could then use to judge how effective and sustainable improvements in children's social care functions had been.

It was noted that 'Children and Families' were a key theme within the County Plan 2016-20, recognising the importance of providing the information and advice families need to help themselves and of focusing our help early and effectively when needed. The key priorities were to improve children's safeguarding services; to improve exam results, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils; and to improve children's health and wellbeing.

The CYPP was reported on a quarterly basis and this report focused on activity of the third quarter (October to December 2017) of Year 2 and provided a summary of activity and progress, supported by each of the 7 programmes' highlight reports. Members heard that work during this quarter had been impacted by the month long OFSTED single inspection of Children's Social Care and the subsequent required activity to effect improvements ahead of the published report in January 2018. Six out of 7 of the programmes are rated green; meaning they are on track to achieve the actions by the target date.

Work will need to begin shortly to evaluate the current CYPP in order that this can feed into the development of the Plan after 2019.

Highlighted achievements included: the consultation of Family Support services; preparation for the SEND joint inspection; multi-agency work to reduce self-harm in children and work on how to establish permanent social workers. The report also highlighted challenges causing slippage to the action plans including: recruitment difficulties and increasing non-attendance and exclusion rates.

With regard to programme 1, it was clarified that the rise in exclusions is a complex issue with no one root cause. The issue is not unique to Somerset and is due to reviewed nationally.

With regard to programme 2, members asked to be provided with more detail about the Gp pilot in the next report.

A report for programme 6 was not provided because of the recent Ofsted judgement report. An action plan has been put in place reflecting the outcomes of the judgment.

Regarding programme 7, it was confirmed that social worker caseloads have increased. This is partly due to an increase in quality and partly due to difficulty in recruiting locums. Staff turnover is lower than national average but there is more work to do. The number of people applying for social worker posts has increased but the impact of this will not be felt for three or four months.

The Committee agreed to accept the report.

7 Changes to Education Travel Policy - Agenda Item 8

The Committee considered this report that provided an overview of the biennial review of the Council's Education Travel policy to ensure it complied with legislation and statutory guidance. Appendix A was tabled at the meeting. In addition to ensuring the revised policy provided more clarity and flexibility in terms of service provision, efforts had been made to reduce the size of the document.

It was reported that during this 2 yearly review Officers had also taken the opportunity to remove the final few discretionary elements from the policy, in order to enable the Council to deliver the required statutory elements within a pressured budget. In a verbal update, the Committee was informed that the proposal regarding late applications for school admissions has been withdrawn. 'Legitimate Expectation' requires policy changes to only affect new pupils starting school for the first time and those children who are changing schools.

It was clarified that any changes will be put in place for new service users. Those already accessing services will not be affected unless they change address or school, when they will be re-assessed. It was highlighted that there is a diminishing market in public transport and a shortage of bus operators.

A Member raised that the changes need to be carefully managed as some children may have behaviour difficulties due to additional needs. It was also raised that some situations may need to be judged on an individual, case-by-case basis. The Committee was reassured that individual needs of children would be considered where appropriate.

The Committee agreed to accept the report.

8 School Performance 2017 - National Curriculum Test and Public Examination Results - Agenda Item 9

The Committee considered this report that provided a summary of the Somerset outcomes through Ofsted inspections and performance data for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Assessments, KS1 and KS2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), GCSE and A Level results for 2017. It was noted that also the report included comparisons of performance against national data, where available, and included details of performance of vulnerable groups against each Key Stage. It was explained not all the data had been validated, so caution needed to be given to the accuracy of results as some national comparative data was unavailable for some indicators. To aid comparison the report also included information for statistical neighbours.

It was highlighted that KS4 outcomes present the greatest area of challenge.

It was clarified that under performance is taking place across academies and LA controlled schools with no emerging pattern. Individual academies can be more difficult to hold to account but there are no schools in Somerset that don't engage with the LA.

It was clarified that the LA is not involved with re-brokering Collaborative Academy Trusts; this is done through the Regional Schools Commissioner.

The Committee requested more information at a future meeting regarding KS4 outcomes, particularly for children with SEND. They accepted the report.

9 Update on Support Services for Education - Agenda Item 10

The Committee considered this report which explained SSE was an internal trading unit within the Council's Commercial and Business Services Directorate that provides a wide range of 24 support services to schools and other education providers, with a turnover of approx. £19m and 400 staff. The report was supplemented with a presentation which provided: a highlight/overview of the service to date; priorities for the future – services, financials and customers; and an update on commissioning of SSE SEND services.

The Committee were informed that SSE has achieved a break even position and that there is consistent buy back across SSE services. SSE has developed a one-stop shop website and introduced customer service reviews to improve feedback and help shape future services. SSE is currently collaborating with North Somerset Council to provide services that North Somerset Council is unable to support. It is also currently developing new

traded services, including those to meet the needs of large academies and Multi Academy Trusts. A £210k surplus is currently forecast for 2018/19 and this will be reinvested in services.

The Committee heard that SEN Advisory Support Services are being re-designed. A joint service review was required as a result of pressures on the High Needs Funding. The current proposals primarily affect Hearing, Vision and Physical Support teams.

The debate focussed on the causes for concern raised during Public Question time. It was clarified that only SSE staff had been consulted and that redundancy notices had already been issued. It was confirmed that there would be no impact from staff redundancies until May. The Committee expressed concern that the changes could result in a significant change to services and that they had been implemented with no consultation of service users or the Committee.

The Committee agreed a Member proposal that an urgent position statement was required on the implementation of staffing changes within SSE services. In addition, the Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member that any planned changes be paused and requested that a full report be presented to the Committee at the next meeting (20 April 2018).

10 **Any other urgent items of business** - Agenda Item 11

There were no other items of business and the Chair thanked all those present for attending and closed the meeting at 13:05.

(The meeting ended at 1.05 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Public Question Time – Record of Questions and Answers (in bold font)

In respect of Item 10 – SSE Update

Mr & Mrs Potter

Our daughter has a rare progressive illness which has slowly taken away her mobility, speech and motor skills. She has always been in mainstream school. When she was in primary school she didn't need much help at first but as her condition declined she needed more help to record and communicate with her peers and teachers. The Physical Impairment & Medical Support team (PIMMS) have been instrumental in supporting her, the schools and us as parents for many years which we are extremely thankful for. Without the help that the PIMMS team have given our daughter would not have been able to continue in mainstream school and her world would have been made a lot smaller. She is now 12 and goes to Heathfield Secondary School. The PIMMS team helped with the transition to secondary school and have always been there for her and the school staff so that she can stay part of a normal school life. She is seen nearly every week by one of the PIMMS team and they are continuing to support her and the school with training on her communication aids along with the school curriculum. Without the support of the PIMMS team we don't think it would be possible for her to stay in mainstream school so she will have to start all over again in a specialist school. We have found out that the cuts proposed by Somerset County Council (SCC) will mean that most of the PIMMS team will be made redundant. If this happens, then who will be the specialist support for not just our daughter but for all of the children that depend on their expert help and advice because we have seen first-hand that the schools rely on this heavily. By cutting this valuable service you will be excluding my daughter and other children from what has been a normal school life. The SEND Code of Practice, which is a legal document, states that the child or young person should be at the heart of every decision that relates to them. It recognises that in the past children with SEND or a learning disability have been done unto. It states that this should no longer be the case and that every child or young person should have a voice and be consulted every step of the way. So who has consulted my daughter about the cuts to this vital service?

A number of staff within the Physical Impairment and Medical Support team have requested voluntary redundancy. As a result it is inevitable there will be some changes in the support for families. For all children who have an EHCP the Local Authority will continue to provide the support outlined in the Plan. The Annual Review process will ensure that your daughter's views are captured. Additionally Somerset Parent Carer Forum are offering engagement sessions with parents to allow the opportunity to discuss the changes. Please follow the link for more information <https://somerseparentcarerforum.org.uk/> Further communications will be sent from Somerset County Council in relation to the changes.

Mr & Mrs Lorey

Our son is currently supported by the PIMMS team. Without this team of experts, our son would be unable to stay in mainstream school. He currently uses the Eye Gaze which is a very complex piece of equipment, he also has a Statement of Educational Needs. Who is going to meet my son's support requirements written in his Statement? I know that 3 members of the PIMMS team that currently work with my son have been made redundant. If these are removed he will be unable to remain in mainstream school.

A number of staff within the Physical Impairment and Medical Support team have requested voluntary redundancy. As a result it is inevitable there will be some changes in the support for families. For all children who have an EHCP the Local Authority will continue to provide the support outlined in the Plan.

1) Who has asked our son how he feels? And every other child relying on the Staff? **The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Annual Review process will ensure that your son's views are captured. Additionally Somerset Parent Carer Forum are offering engagement sessions with parents to allow the opportunity to discuss the changes. Please follow the link for more information <https://somerseparentcarerforum.org.uk/>**

2) Who is going to assess what communication aid our son needs? **The Local Authority have retained support from the Special Educational Needs Assistive Technology Advisory Service (SENATAS). This role specialises in assessing children and young people's communication needs, to ensure schools/settings know which communication aids are suitable to support children and young people to access the curriculum. This role also provides training and guidance to schools/settings in using communication aids such as Eye Gaze, Clicker 6/7 etc. Schools are able to use the funding they receive for the children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to request support from the SENATAS Adviser. Additionally, where a child or young people has support from a Speech & Language Therapist from health, the Speech & Language Therapist can refer to the Bristol Communication Aid Service (BCAS) for an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) assessment, subject to their criteria. Additionally there remains 4 Advisory Teachers within the service until the end of the academic year who will continue to provide advice and guidance to schools on how to support CYP to access the curriculum. From the Autumn term onwards there will be 3 Lead Advisory Teachers and the SENATAS adviser. The team are working on a transition plan to ensure they reshape the service to focus on those with the highest level of need.**

3) Who is going to train parents and schools how to use the equipment and update it to child's requirements and needs?

4) Who is going to program the Software?

5) What happens when communication aid fails?

Within the Physical Impairment and Medical Support Team, the Special Educational Needs Assistive Technology Advisory Service (SENATAS) role will be able to provide training and guidance to school staff in how to use specialist communicative equipment. The role is also looking to develop a helpline which would be available for schools to use their funding to access this support if they needed to. Across the wider Support Services for Education team, there are staff who will be able to support with a range of equipment.

6) Who will carry out safe systems of work?

Within the Physical Impairment and Medical Support Team, there will remain 4 Advisory teachers until the end of the school year. Beyond this there will be 3 Advisory Teachers who will be able to support Schools and settings.

7) How are his communication needs in statement section F going to be met?

All provision identified within his plan will continue to be met. A review of the EHC Plans for children and young people who are supported by the Physical Impairment and Medical Support team will be undertaken. A meeting will be arranged within the summer term for any families who may be affected by the changes.

8) Who is going to support my son in transition to secondary school?

There will continue to be support provided to schools and settings from Advisory teachers who can support with transition.

9) Who is going to ensure that my son is safe at school?

School staff who work with your son on a daily basis are responsible for ensuring his safety whilst at school.

Mrs Ford (not present at meeting)

I am writing in disgust on hearing that three main people from the PIMMS team who support myself and other members of staff working alongside a boy in main stream school with severe medical needs, using an eye gaze are being made redundant by September.

These cut backs are a disgrace and who will support us with continuing updating this eye gaze so the child can learn to his full potential. Things like updating, visits to the school to see how the child and staff are getting on and if the machine fails there was always someone on the end of the phone to come over and sort it out. Sue Green and Kate Holloway were fantastic with supporting both staff and the child. Who will be over seeing this now? Also, Matt France he was great support and always done our safe systems of work and done site visits for school outings to make sure everything was in place and safe.... Who will be doing this now?

There will continue to be support and advice available from the Advisory Teachers who will continue to work with schools and settings to support Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to access the curriculum, moving and handling, safety assessment and other key areas of support.

Support will also be available from the Special Educational Needs Assistive Technology Advisory Service (SENATAS). This role specialises in assessing CYP communication needs to ensure Schools know which communication aids are suitable to support the child to access the curriculum. The role also provides training and guidance in using communication aids such as Eye Gaze, Clicker 6/7 etc. Schools are able to use the funding they receive for the Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to request support from the SENATAS Adviser, which is moving to a traded model. Additionally, where a child or young person has support from a Speech & Language Therapist from health, the Speech & Language Therapist will still be able to refer to the Bristol Communication Aid Service (BCAS) for an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) assessment, subject to their criteria.

Mrs Emery, Somerset Parent Carer Forum

Somerset Parent Carer Forum has been approached by several members with questions around the changes to Support Services for Education (Item 10). Due to their caring roles they are unable to attend today, and we are therefore asking on behalf of those families the following questions.

1 - How will SSE support AAC (Alternative and Augmentative communication) users and children and young people who were supported by the specialist speech and language advisor and her team who have all been made redundant?

A review of Children and Young People supported by the Specialist Communication Advisor has taken place. There are 18 pupils currently being supported and the Specialist Communication Adviser has advised that 4 of these pupils can now be discharged. Of the remaining 14 pupils, 8 of these pupils attend a special school which receives significant funding to meet the needs of the children on their roll. A letter is being drafted to send to the Special Schools in relation to this. The Specialist Communication Adviser will work with schools/settings for the remaining 6 pupils to train and support them on the first half of the summer term and/or will refer to the Speech and Language Therapist if needed in order to refer to the AAC.

2 - How quickly will the support be available to the children and young people who use the service now and will there be a gap in service delivery?

A transition plan for the summer term is being created to ensure there is no gap in service delivery.

3 - What other areas in SSE are staff being made redundant and what plans are in place to support children and young people in those service areas?

Within the Hearing Support Team, 1 Specialist TA has requested Voluntary Redundancy and this is being progressed. 4 Teachers have additionally requested Voluntary Redundancy however no decisions have been made about these posts at this time. An engagement survey/consultation is underway with service users and settings in relation to potential changes in the service.

4 - Why have parent not been consulted about the impact of these cuts or informed about the imminent redundancy and changes to service?

The impact of the changes continues to be reviewed and an engagement process is now in place. Any families significantly affected will be offered a meeting within the summer term and further communications will be sent to staff.

In addition, the forum would like to know

5 - Was an impact assessment undertaken?

Yes. This has been completed, and continues to be reviewed/updated.

6 - How have the results of this been shared with staff?

Through the staff consultation, the Equalities Impact Assessment was shared with staff. An updated version has been shared with the team recently, and when reviewed and updated this copy will also be shared.

7 - The children's and families Act 2014 places a duty on Local authorities to have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or the young person; and the importance of the child or the young person, participating as fully as possible in decisions. Is the Local Authority confident that the reduction in these services areas will still enable these duties to be carried out effectively?

Yes, the service will retain 4 Lead Teachers over the summer term and 3 Lead Teachers beyond this date. Additionally the Physical Impairment and Medical Support team will retained support from the Special Educational Needs

Assistive Technology Advisory Service (SENATAS). This role specialises in assessing children and young people's communication needs. The LA is therefore confident that it can maintain its responsibilities in accordance with the Children's and Families Act 2014.

Mrs Watters, St Michael's C of E First School & St Dubricius C of E First School – Not present at meeting

I would like to know how schools, particularly small schools whose budgets are being squeezed yet again this year, are supposed to meet the needs of their SEND children with the reduced levels of funding and raised criteria to gain funding if advisory services are also cut to the extent that is being planned?

How it is that there are raft of highly paid people at the top in County Hall whose salaries appear to be covered, as do the costs of expensive consultants, when we will be failing a group of extremely vulnerable SEN children due to lack of finance and profession expert advice?

Why is that that those people making these decisions never seem to make visits to schools to see how it is in reality?

Why do Consultation periods never seem to be that in reality it always seems that decisions have already been made?

A letter will be sent to Mrs Watters at St Michael's School. In addition staff making such decisions are having to make some difficult decisions due to the overspend on the High Needs budget. Such decisions are made in light of the SEND code of practice and responsibilities on the Local Authority and that of schools. The staff making the decisions have significant experience of working in schools and meet with SENCOs through the SENCO network meetings and gain feedback on concerns from these meetings. All SENCOs were also written to in February informing them of the planned changes and seeking feedback on services.

Mrs Wynn

I'm here to represent my son. He is six years old and attends a mainstream environment at a Bridgwater School. He currently uses the Eye Gaze system supported by the PIMMS team, which apparently now no longer exists. The part of this that I don't understand is that there has been no consultation with any of the families that are directly affected. It seems that there has been no information handed to any of these families and decisions have been made regardless. I would also like to know, in this environment in the 21st century when we're supporting disable people in all the ways we're supposed to be, the increase in council tax is supposed to save these services but we're already getting cuts. What sort of legacy does this leave when we are a County now cutting back on the most vulnerable in society? We have the Paralympics which the government is ploughing money into and the death of the most amazing physician who was non-verbal and he's shown what any disabled person can do or better than the rest of us. As a County we just seem to be turning our back to it. What comes next? Wheelchair services into institutionalisation. It's a sad state of affairs and I'm ashamed to be someone living in this County right now. Other counties are not doing this. A consultation would have been great with a plan for the future. What do we tell our kids when they are not getting the support coming into the school anymore? I've spoken to my son's school and they haven't got the slack in the system to pick up the work of the PIMMS team.

The LA continue to provide support from the Physical Impairment and Medical Support team. There is a need to review the team due to funding pressures, but the team will retain Lead Advisory Teachers and have retained support from the Special Educational Needs Assistive Technology Advisory Service (SENATAS). This role specialises in assessing children and young people's communication needs, to ensure schools/settings know which communication aids are suitable to support children and young people to access the curriculum. Families who are most affected by the changes will be offered a meeting in the summer term, so that the changes can be explained and discussed.

Mrs Baker

I have two questions today. Firstly in reference to the collaborative academy trust mentioned on page 80. Otherwise mentioned by the media as "fat CAT" for the large sums of money the CEO and management team receive, and now under the eye of the Department of education for not having good ofsted inspected school. Sadly restricted funds into one of the schools resulted in 20 members of staff of excellence left in the term before the summer holiday. This school is also the safe haven for many, many children who have been pushed out of education in other our local schools, who simply do not deliver GOOD inclusive education. The second school is seeking a replacement head teacher on a low stepping stone salary.

Could the LA considering the example of other local authorities and pull back these schools under into the LA's remit? ... just think how that £250,000 could be spent appropriately on services.

(A detailed letter has been sent to Mrs Baker) The responsibility for the re-brokering of the current CAT schools sits with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the South West and the Department for Education. If you have any concerns about the process that is being followed in relation to the re-brokering we suggest you contact the RSC at rsc.sw@education.gov.uk.

The LA is not able to pull back these schools under the LA remit.

Question 2 in relation to the SSE reshaping of the service, in which I understand this morning a state person for the local authority contradicted the letter in which Mrs Walters sent out a few weeks ago "With the LA's new requirements and reduced level of funding this may mean a reduction in support directly to schools".

The teacher advisory service is actually doing what social care can never do although are supposed to. We need an independent audit and impact assessment of these changes, on the human rights of our children, for their rights to an education...and to be themselves

An equalities impact assessment has been completed and a transition plan in being finalised.

In respect of agenda item 9 – School Performance, there was also a question regarding the school admission code for summer born children. (The response below has been anonymised)

Thank you for your question at the public meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children & Families Committee for which you requested a written response. As you are aware, if a child is summer born (1 April - 31 August) parent/carers may request that he/she can start reception a year later. This is called delayed admission. The DfE Advice on the admission of summer born admission states the following key points:

- School admission authorities are required to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday, but flexibilities exist for children whose parents do not feel they are ready to begin school before they reach compulsory school age.**
- Where a parent request's their child is admitted out of their normal age group, the school admission authority is responsible for making the decision on which year group a child should be admitted to. They are required to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child concerned.**
- There is no statutory barrier to children being admitted outside their normal age group, but parents do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular age group.**

In line with the School Admissions Code statutory guidance para 2.17A the Admission Authority must take account of the views parents; the views of the Headteacher; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. If a request is refused, the child will still be considered for admission to their normal age group.

I can confirm that Somerset Local Authority, acting as the Admission Authority for voluntary controlled and community schools, consider applications for delayed entry on a case by case basis and in line with the statutory guidance described above. The parent/carer is required to make an on-time application for the child's normal age group but can submit a request for admission out of the normal age group at the same time. The Admission Authority will ensure the parent is aware of whether the request for admission out of age group has been agreed before National Offer Day and the reason for any refusal. If a request for delayed admission is agreed, the school place application may be withdrawn before a place is offered and a new school place application will need to be made as part of the normal admissions round the following year. If a request for delayed admission is refused, the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a school place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in-year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday. The DfE make no provision in the School Admissions Code for a right of appeal against the decision not to allow a child to be admitted outside of their normal age group. In the case of foundation and voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools, parents may make a complaint using the school's complaints procedure – because the governing body or academy trust is the admission authority. In the case of community and voluntary controlled schools, they may complain to the local authority – because they are the admission authority. Somerset Local Authority complaints procedure can be found at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/have-your-say/complaints-comments-and-compliments/complaints-comments-compliments/>

In your child's case the application for delayed entry was received on 15 January 2018. The information provided on the application form and the supporting letter from the pre-school were carefully considered. However, in the opinion of the Admission Authority for the school (Head Teacher and the Local Authority) the information provided did not give sufficient evidence that your child would benefit from a delayed entry. The Local Authority's view was that your child would not benefit from a delayed entry for the following reasons;

- There was no information or supporting evidence to show that your child is below the expected levels for his age group.
- The letter provided by the pre-school confirmed the views of your child's parents and gives general information but does not give detailed specific reasons why your child would benefit from a delayed entry.
- Although your child still needs a nap and isn't potty trained there was still 9 months for this to be resolved by September and there is also the option of deferred entry or part-time schooling.

As is standard practice and a requirement of the School Admissions Code the Head Teacher was consulted for her views. The Head Teacher had already discussed the request with your wife and Miss C (a class teacher who has met your child). The school could see no reason why your child should not join the school in September 2018 and informed us that the EYFS/KS1 teacher and the LSA's are experienced at managing successful transitions into school and are expecting to help your child develop the necessary maturity to cope with full time school when he is ready. The school also pointed out that the EYFS children have a play-based curriculum as recommended by the DfE and they are certain that your child will settle at school. I gather that your application stated that your child suffers with separation anxiety but acknowledges that he now settles well at the pre-school which was a view echoed by the pre-school in the accompanying letter.

Due to the reasons above the decision was made not to agree a delayed entry for your child and you were informed of this decision by letter on 6 February. I understand you have been informed that it is appreciated that children develop at different rates and therefore if you are able to provide more detailed information by 1 July, from for example the preschool, that demonstrates your child is not making expected progress we are happy to re consider the position with the Head Teacher. We are aware that preschools provide parents with progress reports and you may wish to consider supplying this.

As you are aware you can choose to defer your child's entry to school and he could start in January or April at the beginning of the Spring or Summer Term. He could also attend school part-time up until the end of his reception year. I appreciate this is not the outcome you are looking for but the Local Authority has complied with the requirements of the School Admissions Code. As mentioned, we will of course consider any further information supplied.

Yours sincerely,
Jane Seaman – Admissions and Entitlements Team