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Questions and Answers

Health and Wellbeing Board

Thursday 24 September 2026

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Member Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

Item (A)	Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting on 24 September 2026

Member Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

Question submitted to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Dominic Boeck:
[In relation to Agenda Item 11 – Response to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Task Group…] "What specific actions have been taken or are planned in response to the recommendations of the Task Group?"

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:
The Council welcomed the work of the Emotional Wellbeing Task Group and recognises the importance of improving emotional wellbeing and mental health support for children and young people. Since the Task Group undertook its work, the local system has experienced significant change, including the withdrawal of £100,000 of Integrated Care Board funding from the Emotional Health Academy and the transfer of Mental Health Support Teams to NHS commissioning arrangements. Despite these changes, the Council has taken a number of practical actions to strengthen resilience within the early intervention system and to improve access to support for children and families.

Specific actions already delivered or planned include:

- **Strengthening access through a single front door:** The emotional health triage function is being integrated into the Children's Single Point of Access, creating a more sustainable and resilient access route for families. This will provide a clearer pathway into support, improve oversight of need and risk, and ensure emotional wellbeing concerns benefit from stronger safeguarding, early help and family support arrangements.

- **Reducing waiting lists and addressing historic demand:** During the summer period, targeted work has been undertaken to address the backlog of children awaiting emotional wellbeing support through the Emotional Health Academy, with cases reviewed and support pathways clarified to ensure children receive the most appropriate intervention available within current resources.

- **Improving service navigation for families:** By March 2027, information relating to emotional wellbeing support, SEND services, Family Hubs, Family Help and community services will be brought together through enhanced digital information, the SEND Local Offer and Family Information Service, making it easier for families to identify and access support.

- **Embedding emotional wellbeing within Family Hubs and Families First:** Emotional wellbeing support is now being incorporated within the developing Family Hubs and Families First model, ensuring children and families can access help earlier and receive coordinated support through community-based services.

- **Earlier identification of need:** Through the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, the Council and its partners are strengthening arrangements to identify developmental, emotional wellbeing and SEND needs earlier, particularly in the early years, enabling children to access support before difficulties escalate.

- **Supporting children awaiting neurodiversity assessment:** Through the SEND reform programme and joint commissioning arrangements, work is underway to improve support

available to families while children await ADHD or autism assessments, recognising that many families require practical support long before a formal diagnosis is received.

- **Targeting support through Best Start in Life:** The Best Start in Life programme is strengthening early language, communication, parenting and family support services, reducing the risk of emotional wellbeing difficulties emerging later in childhood and improving outcomes for children from their earliest years.

- **Developing stronger multidisciplinary working:** The Council continues to work with health partners through SEND reform, Family Hubs, the Family First Partnership and emerging neighbourhood models to improve coordination between education, health and care services and create more joined-up support around children and families.

- **Expanding the universal emotional wellbeing offer:** Working with Public Health and system partners, the Council will expand the universal emotional wellbeing offer available to children, young people and families through Family Hubs, schools, community services and digital resources. During 2026/27, this will include increasing access to evidence-based early intervention support, strengthening links between emotional wellbeing, parenting, early help and SEND services, and improving awareness of available support so that children can access help at the earliest possible stage, reducing the need for more intensive interventions later. This work will be monitored through the Best Start in Life and Families First governance arrangements.

  While significant challenges remain, particularly in relation to NHS-commissioned mental health services and the loss of dedicated funding, the Council is focusing available resources on earlier intervention, better service integration and clearer pathways into support. This approach aligns the Task Group recommendations with our SEND and Inclusion Strategy, Best Start in Life programme, Family Hubs and Families First reforms, ensuring that emotional wellbeing is embedded across the wider system of support for children, young people and families.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services asked:
Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?

Councillor Dominic Boeck asked the following supplementary question:
"Thank you, Councillor Codling. That's a very comprehensive answer and it's very encouraging to see that the Board is responding to the recommendations of the Task Group. First of all, the recommendations are rather high level, and I think your responses to that are high level also. There's a lot of mentioning of '…continuing to work / working with / expanding access…' and there's not much in the way of detailed actions from my point of view.

My supplementary to you Councillor and to the Board is: are you confident enough that the improvements that the Task Group seeks are going to be delivered in this way? Do you have confidence, or would you prefer to have a detailed action plan that the Board monitors over time? My concern here is that um these fine words will not necessarily lead to delivery of an improvement to the emotional wellbeing of our children."

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The Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:

Councillor Boeck, I agree that we need some more detail, and actually, I think that's a Health question, and I think we need them to answer that.