

Overview and Scrutiny

Meeting date: Monday 2nd September

Member question

Question from Cllr Chelin to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

Section 5 mentions that the NCLB can play a vital role in mobilising community-based solutions that strengthen learning, wellbeing, and aspiration. I was wondering what sort of things are envisaged and if/how are they likely (or able) to be evaluated.

No Child Left Behind is very much a collaborative movement involving schools, voluntary sector organisations, businesses, and statutory partners that are committed to ensuring that children and young people in Cheltenham have the opportunity to thrive.

The NCLB strategic board has heard many stories that schools are feeling the pressure to meet increasing demands and that many children and families are struggling to access the support they need to thrive.

As the report notes, education remains the responsibility of schools and statutory partners, but NCLB can harness the power of the wider collective to support schools, children and their families.

We are still at an early stage of planning the year of action. On Friday we met with a range of stakeholders and we have developed a long-list of possible activities including:

- Organising parent workshops to help parents understand the education system and strategies to support their children, especially those that have additional needs
- Supporting school staff understand the wider support that exists within our community-based organisations such as help with transport, uniform banks, housing concerns or food poverty.
- Working with health partners to help signpost to mental health support that meet the needs of children and young people most at risk of non-attendance.
- Undertaking research to understand the issues that arise during transition from primary to secondary school to develop evidenced-based solutions
- Facilitating connections between sports, activity, cultural and creative projects and schools and youth work to allow children and young people to develop confidence and skills that help them in their education

- Working with local employers to encourage meaningful work experience for young people especially those at risk of non-attendance.

These will be further developed and scoped by the NCLB board including setting measures so that activities can be evaluated.

Question from Cllr Chelin to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

In section 6 it is mentioned that, subject to decision-making by GCC, a next step might be for Cheltenham (district council) to coordinate the delivery of the HAF programme for 2026/27, starting with the delivery of the Spring programme in April 2026. Given the change to a unitary council by 2028, how this would play out beyond the coming year?

The Council has received confirmation that subject to contracts, it will be invited to be district lead for the HAF programme for the year 2026/27. As of yet, there is no discussion about future years of the programme.

Question from Cllr Chelin to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

Also in section 6 there is mention of the youth café pilot which is another positive project. What are the measures of success that will help to decide whether further funding might be sought to extended it?

In the pilot phase, the most significant measure will be attendance. In this regard, the youth cafe has been successful with 22 young people in the first week, 33 in the second week and 31 last week.

The youth work providers are also using an online survey to get initial feedback from attendees.

The results from both attendance figures and the survey will be used to determine the next steps for the youth cafe.

Question from Harry Booty (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

Priority 2 – Address the inequality gap of what specifically?
Opportunity/outcome/ resource?

In 2018, the Council commissioned a children's needs assessment was commissioned from the Strategic Needs Assessment Team at Gloucestershire County Council

The needs assessment set out that there was in the region of 4,300 children and young people growing up in poverty. And that these children, when compared to their more affluent peers were then facing significant challenges such as poorer education attainment, higher rates of exclusion, being at a higher risk being victims of crime, a higher risk of being drawn into criminal activity, a higher risk of being obese, a higher risk of being open to social care and at a higher risk of experiencing poor mental health.

It was these figures and the inequality in outcomes for children growing up in poverty led the council and its partners to devise plans for a year of action on child poverty called No Child Left Behind.

Question from Harry Booty (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

Re the “Education for all” priority - what is the analysis of the problem? E.g. Which children are missing school and why? Are the drivers primarily behavioural, structural, or both?

As set out above, the need for the year of action has arisen from the NCLB strategic board hearing stories that schools are feeling the pressure to meet increasing demands and that many children and families are struggling to access the support they need to thrive.

As the year of action is not due to be launched until September 2026, the strategic board will continue to liaise with schools and undertake engagement with young people to inform the shape of the year of action.

Question from Harry Booty (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

How will the NCLB network address the identified gaps?

I am uncertain about which gaps are being referred to. I will be happy to pick this up at the meeting.

Question from Harry Booty (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

The problems identified are large, deep-seated and structural. Are sufficient resources available to address them?

As mentioned above, No Child Left Behind is a collaborative movement involving schools, voluntary sector organisations, businesses, and statutory partners that are committed to ensuring that children and young people in Cheltenham have the opportunity to thrive.

But it is important to note that NCLB is not setting out to solve child poverty – instead the focus is about raising awareness and being a call to action; and being a collaborative movement, NCLB can harness the resources across this partnership to support children and families in Cheltenham.

Question from Harry Booty (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

What is the impact of proposed UK government changes (e.g. SEND reform) on delivery?

There are a number of changes happening at national government level including the publication of the national child poverty strategy, the proposed Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and the proposed SEND System Reform – which is currently being consulted on and as of yet there is no implementation timetable.

At this stage, it is unclear what the impact will be on NCLB's work in Cheltenham.

Question from Margaret Cheung (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

Hester's Way and Springbank show high levels of income and employment deprivation. It seems timely that the Social Value workstream will priorities these two areas in Phase 1. Might there be scope for collaboration between the two taskforces on this?

In relation to No Child Left Behind, we are pleased to be working with the Golden Valley team, and their lead contractors HBD as part of their social value plan. The NCLB team have been invited to Sheffield to connect with organisations in South Yorkshire on shared issues. The purpose of the workshop will be to encourage and facilitate sharing knowledge, expertise, solutions and innovation – developing an ongoing relationship between our work in Cheltenham and South Yorkshire.

Question from Margaret Cheung (Independent co-optee) to Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships

What improvement in school attendance is expected following the launch of the Year of Action – Education For All? Is there any percentage increase in the attendance rate anticipated?

As mentioned above, the NCLB team are still working up plans for the year of action including setting measures so that activities can be evaluated.