

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Deputations from members of the public

Date: 28 July 2026

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the committee for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which the committee Chair shall speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Chair and voted on without discussion that the spokesperson for the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

One deputation has been received for the 28 July 2026 meeting. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

1 Subject of deputation

Organisational Learning Following the WellBN Investigation

2 Supported by

Keith Burchfield (presenter) and five supporters

3 Summary of deputation

Chair, Members of the Board,

The independent NHS investigation into WellBN identified actual and potential harm affecting children and young people in Brighton. It examined NHS primary care rather than Brighton & Hove City Council. We fully accept that distinction. However, safeguarding does not operate in organisational silos.

Children move between schools, families, youth services, primary care, specialist services and social care. The Health & Wellbeing Board exists precisely because safeguarding and public health depend upon effective partnership working across those boundaries. The question therefore is not whether Brighton & Hove City Council was the subject of the investigation. The question is whether the investigation gives rise to any lessons for the Council's own safeguarding responsibilities.

Good safeguarding practice requires organisations to learn from serious failures wherever they occur within the local system. It does not require an organisation to accept blame. It does require curiosity. Residents have therefore asked a straightforward governance question:

Has the Council considered whether any lessons arise for its own safeguarding arrangements, work with schools, external partnerships or commissioning relationships?

Over recent months, residents have raised this question through correspondence with the Chief Executive, through the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee,

Brighton & Hove City Council

through the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee and at Full Council. To date, the principal public response has been to emphasise that the WellBN investigation examined NHS services rather than Council services. While factually correct, that does not answer the question being asked. No resident has suggested that the Council was the subject of the investigation. Rather, residents seek reassurance that the Council has reflected on whether any aspect of its own policies, guidance, partnership working or safeguarding governance should now be reviewed in light of what has been established.

This is particularly important because concerns about safeguarding, social transition, external providers and evidence standards have been raised publicly by parents and residents over a number of years. Some of those concerns were dismissed at the time. The WellBN investigation demonstrates why safeguarding systems should remain open to challenge and willing to examine uncomfortable questions. PSHE Brighton therefore asks the Health & Wellbeing Board:

1. What process has been undertaken to identify any organisational learning arising from the WellBN investigation for Brighton & Hove City Council and its safeguarding partners?
2. If no such review has yet been undertaken, will the Board now commission or support one?

This is not a request to revisit political debates. It is a request to demonstrate the principles that underpin effective safeguarding: curiosity, transparency, partnership working and organisational learning. Public confidence is strengthened not when institutions insist that failures happened elsewhere, but when they show they are prepared to ask whether those failures reveal lessons for themselves.

4 Supporting information

None