

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

**Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel  
Wednesday 30 June 2010, 7.30 pm  
Council Chamber, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell,  
RG12 1AQ**

### **To: CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

Councillors Mrs Beadsley, Mrs Birch, Dudley, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Osborne, Phillips, Mrs Ryder and Ms Whitbread

#### **Church Representatives** (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Mr G S Anderson and One Vacancy

#### **Parent Governor Representatives** (Voting in respect of Education matters only)

Dr P Josephs-Franks and One Vacancy

#### **Teachers' Representatives** (Non-Voting)

Miss V Richardson and One Vacancy

#### **Children's Social Care Representative** (Non-Voting)

One Vacancy

#### **cc: Substitute Members of the Committee**

Councillors Beadsley, Edger, Mrs Fleming, Harrison, Leake, Mrs Shillcock and Virgo

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Published: 23 June 2010



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**Wednesday 30 June 2010, 7.30 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Easthampstead House, Town Square,**  
**Bracknell, RG12 1AQ**

**AGENDA**

Page No

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**
  2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**
  3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/ SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**  
To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.
  4. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**  
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the former Children's Services & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24 March 2010. Information sought by the Panel at its last meeting has been circulated electronically and is appended to the minutes. 1 - 16
  5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**  
Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interest and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.
  6. **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**  
Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.
  7. **CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY PANEL**  
The minutes of the last meetings of the above Advisory Panel, held on 17 March and 19 May are attached for the Panel's consideration. 17 - 26
- PERFORMANCE MONITORING**
8. **ANNUAL REPORT - CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS**  
The 2009/10 Annual Report of the Complaints Manager for Children's Social Care is attached for the Panel's consideration. 27 - 42
  9. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER**  
To consider the attached Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Children's Social Care. 43 - 64

## **OVERVIEW & POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

10. **NEW SOUTH BRACKNELL YOUTH FACILITIES**  
To consider a progress report in respect of the provision of new youth facilities in South Bracknell. 65 - 70
11. **PLAYBUILDER PROJECT**  
To receive a presentation regarding progress in implementing the Playbuilder project.
12. **TAKE UP AND ORGANISATION OF SCHOOL MEALS**  
To consider a report inviting the Panel to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that a review of the take up and organisation of school meals be added to the Panel's work programme for 2010/11. 71 - 72
13. **WORKING GROUP UPDATE**  
To receive an update in respect of the Working Group of the Panel reviewing safeguarding children. 73 - 74

## **HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT**

14. **EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN**  
To consider forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to Children, Young People and Learning. 75 - 80

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be held on 27 October 2010.

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
24 MARCH 2010  
7.30 - 9.20 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Dudley, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Osborne and Edger (Substitute)

Dr P Josephs-Franks, Parent Governor Representative

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Beadsley and Mrs Ryder  
Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative

**Executive Members:**

Councillor Alan Kendall, Executive Member for Education

**Also Present:**

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)  
Martin Gocke, Chief Officer: Access and Inclusion  
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning  
Amanda Roden, Democratic Services Assistant  
Dr Angela Snowling, Consultant in Public Health  
Amanda Waters, Head of Adult and Community Learning  
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

**10. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members**

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor Edger for Councillor Mrs Ryder.

**11. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The Chairman expressed thanks for the tour of Bracknell and Wokingham College and conveyed her good impressions of the new facility.

Further details of the Committed Capita One (EMS) upgrade and a briefing note on the Playbuilder Project were provided for the Panel.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 20 January 2010 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

**12. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

**13. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**14. Performance Monitoring Report**

The Chief Officer: Access and Inclusion, introduced the Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) for the third quarter of 2009/10 (October to December) relating to Children, Young People and Learning. Performance relating to child obesity, children and young people's participation in high quality physical education (P.E.) and sport, and take up of school lunches had been identified for particular attention.

The Chairman welcomed Dr Angela Snowling, Consultant in Public Health, who gave a presentation entitled 'Staying Healthy – a life course prevention programme', which focused on tackling health inequalities through a lifecourse approach concentrating on the most deprived areas, an overview of the commissioning process, the Staying Healthy programme and the outcome of national performance indicators NI 55 and NI 56 for childhood obesity. The Staying Healthy programme consisted of the breastfeeding peer education project, the family weight management project, the supported voucher scheme for adult obesity, and the healthy life checks project.

There had been problems with data sharing in NHS Berkshire East but data would now be uploaded to a single website in order to simplify measures and access. Most of the indicators in health were annual and in the case of obesity, for example, the actual figures were too small to be published.

Figures from the evidence base which prompted the breastfeeding peer education project in NHS Berkshire East showed that children were less likely to become obese if they were breastfed and this could have a lifelong impact on obesity rates. NHS Berkshire East were awaiting confirmation from the Strategic Health Authority regarding possible funding.

The target group for the breastfeeding project was young families in the most deprived areas, such as expectant mothers and their babies. It was not just a peer education project. The possibility of awarding a qualification as part of the training and eventually working alongside health visitors would be explored. There would be an operational plan for releasing in-year costs. For the family weight management service there was a shortlist of five named providers and a very formal tendering process. The project was commissioning for outcomes and the aim was for ninety families to complete the course and achieve significant weight loss.

Figures on long term life expectancy in men and women showed that approximately a quarter of all deaths from each group was caused by a form of cancer. One purpose of the Staying Healthy programme was to tackle underlying risk factors for cancers and cardiovascular diseases. The top three factors affecting infant mortality rates were maternal obesity, smoking in pregnancy and infectious diseases. There had been an increase in smoking in younger women.

NHS Berkshire East would work with the local hospitals, children's centres, early years centres and breastfeeding charities to promote breastfeeding and would monitor the prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks from birth. The most deprived areas of Bracknell Forest were Wildridings and Central, and Harmans Water, as less than a quarter of mothers in these areas maintained breastfeeding by 6-8 weeks. Only one in three children were breastfed by 6-8 weeks in Berkshire East as a whole. The project would focus on ten mothers per year and aim for a 'cascade' effect on other mothers.

Target groups for childhood and adult obesity were families and children in Years 4-5 of primary school in the wards with the highest rates of Year 6 obesity. The Birch Hill and Hanworth area would be targeted first, but the school figures would not be published as the issue was family based rather than school based. There were stringent targets for tackling obesity in Year 6 in primary schools and NHS Berkshire East had just two years to reach the target of 12.6%. Figures were higher amongst boys and in Asian and African groups. The end results were lower than the South East average, so on the whole Bracknell Forest had good results when compared to neighbouring authorities.

Multiple causes for obesity included a combination of an unhealthy diet and a lack of exercise. Discussion followed that children tended to use computers, and computer or TV based games, and did not go out and play as much as previous generations.

The Chairman thanked Dr Angela Snowling for her presentation.

The Chief Adviser: Learning and Achievement and the Chief Officer: Access and Inclusion advised on performance relating to children and young people's participation in high quality P.E. and sport, and take up of school lunches, respectively.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Dr Snowling's presentation would be circulated to the Panel.
- A typical week in school for pupils was approximately 25 hours and at least 2 hours per week of this time should be spent on exercise. Information had been gathered by the government via an annual sports survey. High quality P.E. and sport was needed, for example, darts was not considered to be a sport. The majority of Bracknell Forest schools did complete 2 hours of P.E. or sport per week. A small number did not due to pressures on curriculum, for example in Year 9, as P.E. and sport was not linked to overall academic performance and some pupils were learning two languages alongside their other subjects. Ofsted would investigate this further as there was a strong pressure on schools for pupils to complete 2 hours of exercise a week.
- The Chief Adviser, Learning and Achievement, would provide a list of schools not providing two hours of exercise a week for pupils and advise on their actions to overcome this.
- Dr Snowling would provide further information on which schools in the borough were taking part in the Advanced Healthy Schools Programme.
- Take-up of school lunches in Bracknell Forest was 28.5% in primary schools and 31.0% in secondary schools. Bracknell Forest primary schools were in the worst performing quartile nationally and secondary schools were in the third quartile. Changes of contract, prices and publicity had all been undertaken but there had been no significant change in take-up and this remained an issue. There were very few free school lunches provided in Bracknell Forest as a local authority and it was felt that the numbers would rise if more meals were free. There was also the difficulty most children faced of not having time to queue for school lunches and eat them during their allocated lunch time period. Some schools staggered lunch hours but there was only so much flexibility within the school lesson timetable.
- It was suggested that the number of children who did not qualify for free school lunches could be compared to the number of children who did qualify but it was noted that some children who were entitled to free meals did not claim them. Opportunities for publicity for parents, for example through job

centres, could be explored. The cashless Edgcard system of purchasing school meals also made no difference to take-up. There would be pilots to investigate the possibility of reducing the threshold for free school meals.

- The Chairman extended an invitation for members to indicate which performance indicators in the PMR they would like to look at in detail at the next meeting.

## 15. **'Grow Our Own' Project**

The Chief Adviser: Learning and Achievement, introduced the progress report on the 'Grow Our Own' Project including case studies of people who had benefited from the scheme.

The Head of Adult and Community Learning, who was also the Grow Our Own Project Manager, presented the report on the project, which was jointly funded with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) to provide support and training for non-employed residents in both boroughs. The training would complement existing employment skills and the project was run from the Open Learning Centre in Bracknell Forest. The project involved activity to engage clients and build partnerships with support organisations, such as Children's Centres, Family Support Advisers, Job Centre Plus, Extended Schools team, and Bracknell & Wokingham College.

The new Client Adviser for Bracknell Forest had started in February 2010 and so far there had been seventeen client interactions. The Grow Our Own Project Manager had been invited to take part in a conference regarding the project. The case studies of the project involved people of differing ages and work experience, for example one client attended E2E (Entry to Employment) which was aimed at 16-18 year olds.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- South East England Development Agency funding continued to be used until November 2009 for all project costs. Bracknell Forest Council had committed £218,884 to support the project and a budget plan showed continuity up to May 2011. Funding was being drawn from Section 106 contributions and £9,337 had been funded to date via this method. No funding stream had been identified for beyond May 2011 as yet. If no other funding was found for after this time, then the project would likely cease. There was concern for how the project would stay viable as clients involved with the project would be potentially disadvantaged by its end. Funding for the joint initiative also came from RBWM to be paid in 'tranches'.
- The Chief Adviser: Learning and Achievement, would confirm the radius of use within Bracknell Forest for the Section 106 funding for the 'Grow Our Own' Project.
- The project targets and outcomes for Quarter 1 2010/11 commenced from January 2010, but the Client Adviser for the project did not start until February 2010, so up to February there were only administration costs.
- Clients who had been unemployed for a long period of time would possibly require more support and training.
- The project did not qualify for the government employer's incentive scheme with reward points and cash back as the clients would need to be registered unemployed and the project was not a Department of Work and Pensions contracted service. Only employers providing training were eligible. The project was ineligible for other grants until clients had been unemployed for six months or more.



- The Grow Our Own Project Manager would provide an update report and results of the 'Grow Our Own' Project for the October Panel meeting.

**16. New South Bracknell Youth Facilities**

The Panel received a report providing further details in respect of the provision of new youth facilities in South Bracknell. As part of the transfer of housing stock to Bracknell Forest Homes, the Council had made a commitment to invest £1million from the proceeds into youth facilities in South Bracknell. Great Hollands had been identified as a priority area for new youth facilities and a potential site had been found. This was welcome news and the Panel congratulated those who had been working on the project.

The Silver Bus which had been a mobile source of youth activities in Bracknell would be replaced with a newer and more flexible vehicle. The aim was for this to be operational in the summer time. The majority of youth workers would be able to drive the new vehicle and it would be able to access places which the Silver Bus was unable to.

**17. Executive Response To The Review Of Delivering The 14-19 Education Entitlement**

The Panel thanked the Executive Member for Education for being present at the meeting. The Panel considered the Executive response to the report of the review of Delivering the 14-19 Education Entitlement undertaken by a working group of the Panel and presented to an Executive Briefing meeting by the Panel Chairman.

The review involved working with Executive Members to provide recommendations which would assist in influencing and developing policy. The recommendations had been agreed by the Executive.

A letter had been sent to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission from the Chair of the Engineering Diploma Development Partnership regarding the report and offering to attend a meeting of the Panel to discuss the introduction of the Diplomas in Bracknell. The Panel agreed that:

- The Chief Adviser, Learning and Achievement, would respond to the letter from Councillor Graham Lane, Chair of the Engineering Diploma Development Partnership in London, and include a copy of the Overview and Scrutiny Report: Delivering the 14-19 Education Entitlement and the Executive response with the reply.
- The Chief Adviser, Learning and Achievement, would provide a progress report on the Diplomas for young people aged 14-19, including progress and take up for the October Panel meeting.

In response to questions from the Executive Member, the Chairman confirmed that:

- The Executive Member's role as 14-19 Champion would be informal in nature.
- Copies of the Delivering the 14-19 Education Entitlement report would be sent to the Secretary and Shadow Secretary of State by the Executive Member.

**18. Indicative Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11**

The Panel was invited to endorse its indicative Work Programme for 2010/11.

The proposed review of the Council's plans and performance with regard to safeguarding children, including the role of the Executive Member, was to be commenced in the near future by a working group of the Panel. In preparation, the Director of Children, Young People and Learning had met the Head of Overview and Scrutiny to frame the review.

**RESOLVED** that the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel's indicative work programme for the 2010/11 municipal year, set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed.

19. **Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report**

The Panel noted the Quarterly Progress Report of the Assistant Chief Executive on Overview and Scrutiny activity over the period November 2009 to January 2010 and local and national developments in Overview and Scrutiny.

20. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel considered the forthcoming items relating to Children, Young People and Learning on the Executive Forward Plan.

Item I021485: Jennett's Park Procurement Route

The governing body for Jennett's Park Primary School had been established and the planned opening of the school was due to take place in September 2011. The Chief Adviser: Learning and Achievement, would provide an update on the development of Jennett's Park primary school and when it would be opened for the next Panel meeting.

Item I021254: Primary Capital Strategy for Change

The consultation in respect of the above had been through the governing bodies and some work had already been undertaken. It would be important for parents and other interested parties to be consulted as well.

- The Chief Adviser, Learning and Achievement, would provide further information on the consultation with schools and interested parties on the Primary Capital Strategy for Change, such as where, when, how, and which schools had been consulted.

Item I021971: Statutory Annual Complaints Report for Children's Social Care

Further to the Chairman's question, the Director of Children, Young People and Learning confirmed that the Panel would continue to receive the above Statutory Annual Complaints Reports.

**CHAIRMAN**

**Provide a list of schools not providing two hours of exercise a week for pupils and advise on their actions to overcome this.**

Whilst not being a statutory requirement for schools, it is an aspirational target of government to get all young people to participate in 2 hours high quality physical education per week. When schools are inspected by Ofsted they are asked whether they have 2 hours of PE on the curriculum and Ofsted have been implying that a school would find it very difficult to receive an outstanding grade without having 2 hours or show they are committed to working towards this over the next year.

At least two hours of PE to each year group:

Secondary schools	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Edgbarrow	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO*
Ranelagh	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Garth Hill	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Sandhurst	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO

\* Will be doing so from September 2010

Primary schools	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
College Town Junior			YES	NO*	YES	YES

\* Planning to do so from September 2010

All other secondary and primary schools provide at least 120 minutes of PE per week for all year groups.

Data collected for the academic year starting September 2009.

The Local Authority has a strong advocacy role in support of this target and the School Sports Partnership programme has developed individual PE development plans for each school.

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## **National Healthy Schools Enhancement Programme roll out**

### **Phase 1 schools – start autumn 2009**

Wildmoor Heath  
Crown Wood  
Harmans Water  
Holly Spring Infants  
Meadow Vale  
New Scotland Hill  
Winkfield St Mary's  
Garth Hill  
Sandhurst  
Fox Hill  
St Margaret Clitherow  
Uplands  
Whitegrove  
Edgbarrow

### **Phase 2 – start summer 2010**

Binfield  
Birch Hill  
College Town Infant  
College Town Juniors  
Crowthorne  
Pines  
Sandy Lane  
St Joseph's  
St Michael's Easthampstead  
Warfield  
Wooden Hill  
Edgbarrow  
Ranelagh

### **Phase 3 – start Spring 2011**

Ascot Heath Infants  
Great Hollands  
Holly Spring Junior  
Owlsmoor  
St Michael's Sandhurst

### **Phase 4 – start Summer 2011**

Wildridings  
Brakenhale  
Easthampstead Park

### **Phase 5 – need to achieve national healthy schools before going onto enhancement**

Cranbourne  
Ascot Heath Juniors  
Kennel Lane  
PRU

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**Confirm the radius of use within Bracknell Forest for the Section 106 funding for the  
'Grow Our Own' Project.**

In relation to the Grow Our Own project two Section 106 contributions are currently held by the Council for the purposes outlined:

Ref YN348 Relating to land at the former Thales Site, Western Road, Bracknell

Ref YN 359 Developments of Units at The Peel Centre, Skimped Hill Lane, Bracknell

The agreements both state that the contributions have to be used on training projects within a 10km radius of the developments.

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## **JENNETT'S PARK : UPDATE**

### **Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

#### **Context**

The Council granted planning permission in 2004 for a residential development, and a section 106 agreement was concluded under which the developer was (amongst other matters) obliged to reimburse the Council a contribution to the cost of the construction of a one form entry primary school, and it's subsequent enlargement to provide a further form of entry at a later date.

The developer has indicated to the Council that it would be willing to take responsibility for building the school, instead of paying a financial contribution. The school would, under this proposal, be built as a two form entry school, with the classrooms to accommodate the second form of entry left as a shell to be brought into use as and when required.

From the Council's perspective this is an attractive proposition.

#### **Current Position**

We are currently seeking Counsel's advice on our ability to alter the section 106 agreement and we await the decision of the European Commission Judgement. However, initial advice is positive.

Two plans of action are being development in order to meet the aim of the school opening in September 2011. Both of these designs are currently in the pre-planning application stage for comment.

Once we hear the outcome of the European Commission, we shall be in a position to either: advertise under the EJEU for a design and build contract or formally agree a change of section 106 agreement with the Jennett's Park consortium, to build the school.

**David Watkins**  
**Chief Officer**  
**Performance and Resources**

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## **PCSfc : CONSULTATION**

### **Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

#### **Context**

Members of the panel sought clarification on the matter of consultation for the Primary Capital Strategy for Change, specifically for Crown Wood School.

#### **Response**

The aim of our consultation is to focus on the four, specific schools, highlighted for phase one of the programme. In the first instance, we work with the Headteacher and Chairs of Governors, Schools Bursars to scope the anticipated development. This is the very early stages of the project. Typically we would be looking at the options available at each site, together with the aspirations of the school. Once we have an outline plan, the Chair and Headteacher, take the proposals to the School Governing Body. Once the school is happy to sign off the plans, we seek wider consultation with parents, young people, the school community, key stakeholders, Ward Councillors.

The consultation takes the form of questionnaires, leaflets and open meetings. These formal sessions are part of the planning application.

To date, we have undertaken three separate consultations on the future development of Sandy Lane Primary School; Holly Spring Infant and Junior Schools and Meadow Vale Primary School. These were undertaken before Christmas. Response to these consultations has been positive. Indeed Sandy Lane Primary School planning application was approved recently.

Specifically for Crown Wood, we are currently working with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to develop a plan which we will use to consult the group mentioned previously. This is planned to take place next term.

**David Watkins**  
**Chief Officer**  
**Performance and Resources**

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**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
17 MARCH 2010  
5.00 - 7.25 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Ryder (Chairman), Mrs Birch, Mrs McCracken and Mrs Shillcock

**Also Present:**

Councillor Beadsley

Councillor Barndard, Executive Member for Children & Young People

**40. One Minute Silence**

A one minute silence was held in memory of the Vice Chairman, Councillor Ray Simonds.

**41. Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People and Learning to her first meeting.

**42. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising:

Visit to Holly House – the Chair said that she had sent a thank you card to staff and letter and Christmas card to the young person who had invited the members to look around her home. It was suggested that the next visit could be to Rainforest Walk, Penny Reuter said that she would arrange the visit.

Policy for the Education of Look After Children:- the decision for the policy for the Education of Look After Children had been made by the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning in January 2010. This would set out the responsibilities in relation to Look After Children's education.

Award Ceremony for Looked After Children – the award ceremony for Looked After Children was a success and had been published in the local newspaper. Arrangements had been made for the Mayor to visit Amy's school to present a further award.

The Pledge – Sheila McKeand updated the Panel on the progress with The Pledge. She confirmed that the Look After Children had a copy of The Pledge and topics had been discussed with the children and they had given feedback.

Members Briefing Seminar – a members briefing seminar had taken place and the attendance had been good, 21 Councillors had attended.

Performance Indicator NI148 – Penny Reuter confirmed that the information on performance indicator NI148 had been send to Councillor Beadsley.

Children In Care Council: ‘Say it Loud, Say it Proud’ – a Council meeting had taken place during the February 2010 half term, 4 young people attended. It was noted that Sarah Roberts went to the meeting to give the young people information regarding her role. Dates for the next meetings were currently being organised.

**43. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**44. Review of Terms of Reference**

Penny Reuter presented her report on achievements and review of the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

Achievements regarding objectives as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the Terms of Reference included:

- The Pledge had been adopted.
- Meetings had considered performance.
- A number of celebration events had taken place.
- The Council’s corporate parenting responsibilities had been promoted.
- A member briefing had taken place.

Regarding scrutiny mechanisms Penny suggested that anonymous case studies could be used more often in the scrutiny process and to look at other methods which involved young people in a better capacity. The Terms of Reference could include linking in work with care leavers and other panels and it was suggested that the minutes of the Care Matters Steering Group could be brought to CPAP meetings.

Arising in discussion suggestions included: -

- Introducing the Children in Care Council to continue development of the Corporate Parent Advisory Panel.
- Bringing the minutes of the Children and Young People’s Trust to CPAP meetings.
- Investigating how CPAP works with other corporate bodies.
- Involving items from the Children & Young People’s Plan.
- Focus on listening to young people.
- The Chair report to Council on a regular basis to promote and give a good news item regarding the work of the Corporate Parent Advisory Panel.

Penny said that she would do more work on the Terms of Reference and then the finalised version would go to the Executive Member for a decision.

The Panel agreed:

- 1 To consider whether there are any additional objectives that could be recommended to the Executive for inclusion in the terms of reference.
- 2 To consider if there are any changes in members that could be recommended to the Executive.

- 3 To consider how its work can be linked to the work of the Children and Young People's Trust.
- 4 That the training session for the coming year is focused on the participation of children and young people.

45. **Performance Monitoring Report**

Penny Reuter presented her report giving an overview of performance of Children's Social Care for look after children during 2008/09.

Arising in discussion –

- 43% of looked after children were in the category of abuse or neglect.
- At the end of Jan 2010, 18 out of 83 children had moved placement three times or more. This was considered poor and analysis of the reasons had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. There were a number of reasons for movement including pregnancy, offending and substance misuse and improvements were being made.
- 45% of looked after children were with Foster Carers within the Borough.

46. **Foster Carers' Association**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Wayne Bowditch, Corrie Sharp and Peter Hall, Fostering 4 Bracknell Association, who gave a presentation on the work of The Bracknell Forest Foster Carer's Association –

- The purpose of the Association was to provide an opportunity for foster carers to develop a support network and get to know each other. Also to promote fostering and represent views of foster carers and a reference point for developing services.
- The Association was funded by Bracknell Forest Council, Children's Social Care and a grant from the National Lottery.
- There were four officers and quarterly committee meetings were held to discuss plans and activities.
- Activities for foster parents and children were organised which included a trip to Chessington World of Adventures, an Easter Egg hunt and Christmas parties.
- A member of the Association has organised a library of specialist books for carers to borrow.
- The Lottery grant would be used for foster carers to get to know each other by working together on outward bound type of activities.
- Wayne and Corrie meet quarterly with Shelia McKean and Helen Fenton to discuss a range of topics, feedback carer's views and learn about new initiatives. The notes of the meetings are sent out to foster carers and are discussed.
- A magazine, Bitz, was distributed by the Association and went out with Foster Carers packs and was available in the Library.

- The Association are approaching companies to obtain discounts for foster parents in the local area.
- They are currently developing contact with foster carers by email, this has not been very popular but would prove a useful way to monitor information.

Wayne emphasised that the Association was still learning and would be happy to accept help from the Panel. He said that they were trying to promote the role of the foster carer and work with the Council to encourage new foster carers.

The Chair thanked Wayne, Corrie and Peter for the presentation and the work of the association.

**47. Regional Commissioning of More Local Residential Provision for Children with Complex Needs**

Sheila McKeand gave an update of the regional commissioning of more local residential provision for children with complex needs.

Sheila said that there is difficulty with residential resources in the region for looked after children with emotional and behavioural needs. They are sometimes placed a long distance from the Borough which creates problems such as social worker visits. There is a complexity regarding providers so finance and work had been carried out with other Local Authorities to develop a tender process to bring in a provider.

A provider has been selected with a provision of 20 beds between six local authorities, this would guarantee Bracknell Forest Council one bed with ability for future expansion. This enabled a guaranteed place, cost savings over a year with minimal risk and would secure specialist placements. Sheila added that the process had been successful and would enable a better standard of care for looked after children.

The Chair thanked Sheila for the work carried out by her and the team.

**48. Employment of Care Leavers**

Sheila McKeand presented a report on the progress of plans to improve the employment opportunities for care leavers within the Borough. There were a number of initiatives working towards supporting care leavers into employment. These included:

- Care2work which is a national scheme set up in 2009 and run by the National Care Advisory Service. It monitors the strategic work plans of local authorities and negotiates with a range of national employers to develop a sustainable scheme for the employment of care leavers. Within Berkshire the Care2work advisor is in negotiation with a large company who has expressed an interest. Work will be carried out with national employers for them to take on some of the Council's care leavers.
- Public Service Award 16 is a national initiative to improve the employment opportunities and accommodation for vulnerable groups of adults. In January 2010 Bracknell Forest was successful in a bid for money to develop the service for these groups. The money will be used to appoint a fixed term project worker and a specialist housing post to work with vulnerable people on accessing housing.



Within Bracknell Forest, Children's Services and Corporate Human Resources were working together to develop a scheme where plans can be tailored to the individual needs of the young person. Care Leavers in this scheme would not be employed by the Council but fall into the voluntary/work experience category. In January 2010 there were 19 care leavers who were without education or employment, Seven of these young people would be used to match possible work experience placements within the Council.

49. **Suggested Future Programme of Meetings**

The suggested future programme of meetings was agreed by the Panel.

50. **July Training Session**

The Panel agreed that the suggested training session on Wednesday 7 July 2010 would be changed and would now be held on Tuesday 6 July 2010 at 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

51. **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting would be held Wednesday 19 May 2010.

**CHAIRMAN**

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**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
19 MAY 2010  
6.00 - 7.55 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Ryder (Chairman), Mrs McCracken (Vice Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, and Mrs Shillcock

**Also Present:**

Councillor Beadsley

**Apologies for absence received from** Councillor Barnard

**1. Election of Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs Ryder be elected Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing municipal year.

**2. Appointment of Vice Chairman**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs McCracken be appointed Vice Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing municipal year.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 17 March 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising –

- (i) Visit to Rainforest Walk – the visit to Rainforest Walk would take place on Tuesday 15 June. Members were asked to meet outside Rainforest Walk at 11.00am. Councillor Beadsley gave his apologies as he was now unable to attend.
- (ii) Terms of Reference - revised terms of reference, incorporating amendments discussed at the last meeting were tabled. Members were asked to email any comments to [sarah.roberts@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.roberts@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) by Wednesday 2 June, after which they would be submitted to the Executive Member for Children & Young People for approval.

**5. Presentation from Head of Youth Offending Service**

The Chairman welcomed Karen Roberts, Head of the Youth Offending Service (YOS), who attended to give a presentation of the service in relation to looked after children and young people.

Karen gave a brief summary of the work of the YOS to put the presentation into context. The YOS team comprised workers from many fields – including police, drugs work, social work, health, parenting. The service provided supervision, comprising a mixture of support and enforcement, for young offenders, aged 10 to 17, sentenced by the courts. There was also an early intervention service for 8 to 13 year olds identified as being at risk of becoming offenders: this began four years ago and had been successful in addressing the needs of those young people.

Karen tabled a paper entitled Offending Behaviour and Looked After Children. Looked after children were significantly over represented in the overall population of children 10 to 17 identified as having committed offences and then dealt with through the criminal justice system. Some factors known to contribute to the offending of looked after children were –

- Trauma and difficulties experienced
- Family problems and conflicts
- Violence and abuse in the family
- Abuse, neglect, bereavement and disadvantaged backgrounds
- Major upheaval in becoming looked after
- Changes and a lack of permanence
- Stigma of being looked after
- Difficulty in finding appropriate placements and separation from families and communities
- Mental health problems

Offending was one of a range of negative outcomes and often began before the young person became looked after.

Karen tabled a paper which set out local statistics. Figures had significantly reduced from 19% in September 2008 to 7.5% in March 2010 with the YOS and Children's Social Care working jointly to the policy and protocol for the prevention of offending of looked after children. Karen confirmed that YOS retained an interest in young people placed out of area.

Karen tabled a case study of a 17 year old which illustrated the never give up approach. The young person had a poor early start and lots of factors contributed to the escalation of his offending. Social workers had little opportunity to build a relationship with him until he received a custodial sentence.

On release he was found a placement in an individual supported flat with an organisation called Moving On and received an intensive supervision package – for 25 hours a week he was engaged in a programme covering wide issues.

This case showed how things could escalate in negative circumstances but the YOS do not give up. It was a good example of Social Care and the YOS working together, and MAPPA had recently commended the good joint work in this young person's resettlement plan.

The Chairman thanked Karen for a fascinating and interesting presentation.

## 6. **Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children**

Sheila McKeand presented the Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children which was based on –

- (i) an analysis of need
- (ii) identification of gaps in meeting need and development of action plan to address the gaps
- (iii) implementation of the action plan
- (iv) monitoring of progress and re-evaluation of the analysis of need.

The strategy had been based on the work of the Care Matters Steering Group, had been discussed in a number of forums, and would be presented to the Children's Trust on 27 May 2010 for comment and adoption.

Arising in discussion –

- Paragraph 6.3, gaps in service provision, Councillor Mrs Shillcock asked why there was no specific accommodation scheme for care leavers in Bracknell Forest. She referred to the 'MoveOn' scheme in the Supporting People Strategy where there was an agreement with Bracknell Forest Homes for a percentage of accommodation. Sheila McKeand thought that care leavers were addressed in the main housing strategy. She would seek further clarification and report back to the next ordinary meeting under matters arising.
- Paragraph 5.4, ethnicity, and paragraph 6.4, recent changes, the question of placements and funding for unaccompanied asylum seeking children was discussed.

The Panel agreed that the action plan should be brought back to each meeting for monitoring.

## 7. **Performance Report**

Sarah Roberts presented the short performance report giving an overview of performance of Children's Social Care for looked after children to 31 March 2010. The additional information requested at the last meeting had been included and examination results would be reported to the September meeting.

Arising in discussion –

- Placement stability – 17 out of 88 had moved placement three times or more, quite a high figure. A significant factor was the high number of older young people. The Panel noted that when a young person went missing for more than 24 hours it counted as a placement move and Bracknell Forest was particularly honest about how this was reported. Also Bracknell Forest had such relatively small numbers that small changes made a significant difference.

The officers would try to plot the numbers of out of borough placements onto a map to present to a future meeting.

8. **Employment of Care Leavers**

The Panel received a verbal update on the employment of care leavers, including details of two young people who had commenced work. Other potential employers were being identified and would then need to be matched to young people. The Panel asked for an update at the September meeting.

9. **Fostering Fortnight 17 - 28 May**

The Panel noted the details of Fostering Fortnight, 17 to 28 May. On Monday at the Bandstand seven serious enquiries were received. Other fostering events were to be held at Bracknell Leisure Centre, the Hollywood Bowl, the Coral Reef, and the Look Out Discovery Centre.

The Panel noted that taster sessions for looked after young people were to be held at Bracknell Sports Centre during half term week.

10. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Closed training session – 6 July 2010, from 5.30 to 7.30pm to undertake training on the participation of children and young people in the decision making process.

29 September 2010, 5.00 to 7.00pm.

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
30 JUNE 2010**

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**ANNUAL REPORT – CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS  
(Chief Officer: Performance and Resources)**

**1 PURPOSE OF DECISION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the annual report of the statutory Complaints function for Children’s Social Care – attached as Annex 1, following approval by the Executive Member for Children Young People and Learning.

**2 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **That the Children’s Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the Annual Report.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 The Representations Procedure Regulations 2006 state that Complaints Services should produce an annual report for consideration.
- 3.2 The Complaints Service performs an important role in assuring the quality of response to children and young people or parents and carers who make complaints. The annual report supports the continuing development and review of the service and learning from complaints.
- 3.3 The Annual Report has been endorsed by the Executive Members and consideration is now reported to the next meeting of the Children’s Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 None considered

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The report informs the number and nature of complaints received by the department. The learning from those complaints is also taken forward to improve practice where appropriate.
- 5.2 Overall, there were 27 complaints received within Children’s Social Care during the period of which 5 were upheld. Of these, one was in respect of the youth offending team, two were in respect of the Learning Difficulties and Disability Service, 13 were in respect of the Safeguarding Service, seven were in respect of the Looked After Children’s service, two were in respect of the Under 11s Service and two were in respect of the Duty Team.

- 5.3 A total of 27 compliments were received by the Complaints Manager in the same period.
- 5.4 On the subject of the nature of complaints, four were in respect of access to services, 13 were in respect of service procedures, six were in respect of service standards, three were in respect of staff attitude/conduct and one was in respect of cost and efficiency.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Guidance is issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. As such the Guidance does not have statutory force but the authority should comply with it unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that there are no significant financial implications arising from this report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Available upon request

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 None identified

### Other Officers

- 6.5 None identified

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 None

### Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Not applicable

### Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable

### Background Papers

The Statutory Complaint Procedure for Children's Social Care: 30 October 2007.



Contacts for further information

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Annex 1



Children's Social Care

Complaints and Compliments

Annual Report

2009 – 2010

## **1 Introduction**

This is the annual report on the work of the Complaints Manager for children and young people who receive a service from Children's Social Care in Bracknell. This is a public document.

The Complaints Manager has the key responsibility for managing the statutory process for complaints from children and young people (or their representatives) about the quality of that service. The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of this work and to summarise the issues that have arisen. The report covers the period from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

The report will go to the Executive Member for Children and Young People and then to the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 30 June 2010. Complaints about school provision are dealt with under a separate procedure.

## **2 Context**

### **2.1 Legislation**

The arrangements for the statutory management of complaints from children and young people (or their representatives) are set out in The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No 1738).

The legislation required local authorities to appoint a Complaints Manager with the remit of:

- Managing and quality assuring the three Stages of the statutory complaint procedure
- Managing the enquiry process where a complaint is considered by the Local Government Ombudsman
- Reporting the complaint data
- Ensuring all staff and service users are aware of the procedure and how it operates

Legislation is supported by detailed guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, which has been taken into account in the Complaint Procedures published by the local authority.

### **2.2 Who May Complain?**

All children and young people who receive or are entitled to a service have a right to access the statutory complaint procedure.

This includes all those who are in an adoptive placement or foster placement, who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated (under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989). It also covers disabled children who have services from Children's Social Care.

Children or young people about whom a court report for civil proceedings has been prepared by the local authority also have the right to access the statutory procedures. Further, complaints about services delivered on the local authority's behalf can be considered under the statutory complaint procedures.

A parent/carer can also bring a complaint on behalf of that child or young person. The view of the child or young person will be sought wherever possible.

### **2.3 Statutory Complaint Procedure in Bracknell Forest**

Responsibility for the service rests with the Director of Children, Young People and Learning. In order to provide independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources (Chief Officer, Children's Social Care), this post reports to the Performance Manager and sits within the Performance and Governance Team.

### **2.4 The Statutory Procedure**

The purpose of the statutory procedure is to enable the complainant to have access to independent consideration of matters raised. The procedure aims to outline to the complainant and the local authority ways in which the issues raised can be resolved. Furthermore, the complaints procedure requires the Local Authority to explain the reasons behind their decisions and actions and, where appropriate, provide an apology and/or remedy. In these circumstances the local authority will also consider the generic learning from specific issues raised and change the way it works where necessary and appropriate.

In managing the procedure the Complaints Manager is required to ensure that:

- the child's complaint is well articulated and investigated
- the complaint investigation considers the matters raised comprehensively and objectively
- the reply of the local authority addresses all the matters raised in the complaint and the investigation and is pro-active in resolving the complaint wherever possible.

### **2.5 The Local Authority Procedure**

Complaints not covered by The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No 1738) are dealt with under the local authority procedure. Complaints made by parents or carers or other adults about the impact of a service on them personally is generally considered under the local authority procedure.

## 2.6 Timescales for resolution of complaints

From the introduction of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No 1738) in September 2006 a complaint from a child or young person should be resolved at the local Stage 1 within ten working days, and within 25-65 working days at Stage 2.

The Complaints Service has continued to provide complainants with substantial and objective accounts of their complaint

### *Stage 1 Statutory Procedures*

Ten complaints at Stage 1 Statutory Procedures received a response within an average of 17 working days. This is outside the standard of ten working days. The timescale is explained by a small number of complaints taking longer to resolve to the satisfaction of the complainant. None of the complaints progressed to stage 2 and so the extra time taken was justified.

### *Stage 2 Statutory Procedures*

Four complaints at Stage 2 met the expected standard of 65 working days for completion of the investigation report and reply of the department.

### *Stage 2 Local Authority Procedures*

13 complaints at Stage 2 Statutory Procedures took an average of 14 working days to resolve. This is outside the standard of ten working days. Again the timescale is explained by a small number of complaints taking longer to resolve to the satisfaction of the complainant. None of the complaints progressed to stage 3 and so the extra time taken was justified.

## 3 Overview of Work

### 3.1 Number of complaint investigations

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, there were 5,608 contacts with 1,269 referrals to Children's Social Care. At the end of March 2010 there were 671 open cases for children and young people. All of these potential or actual service users and their parents or carers were eligible to complain to the local authority.

A total of 27 complaints of which 5 were upheld were managed by the Complaints Manager for the period 2009-10 in comparison with:

*A total of 18 complaints received for the period 2008-09 of which 7 were upheld*

*A total of 29 complaints received for the period 2007-08 of which 8 were upheld*

There has been an increase in the number of complaints for the period 2009-2010 over the previous years. However, more importantly the number of those complaints upheld remains fairly stable. The increase in numbers is not significant statistically given overall small numbers and indicates that the complaint procedure is accessible and easy to use as the legislation requires.

Complaints on behalf of children and young people have declined from last year. Social Workers, the Reviewing Officer and the Participation Officer all play a role in enabling children and young people to make their views known leaving the complaint procedure as a necessary but last resource.

<p><b>Ten complaints were dealt with at Stage 1 of the Statutory Procedures.</b> These complaints were on behalf of children or young people and were dealt with at service delivery level.</p>
<p><b>Four complaints were dealt with at Stage 2 of the Statutory Procedures.</b> All four complaints were made by adults and mainly focussed on the service to children and young people. The department showed discretion and appointed external investigators for all four complaints. The response to the investigation was provided by the Chief Officer for Children's Social Care.</p>
<p><b>Thirteen complaints were dealt with at Stage 2 of the Local Authority Procedures.</b> These complaints were not primarily on behalf of children or young people and were dealt with at Head of Service level.</p>

The complaints dealt with under the Complaints Procedure do not necessarily represent all the issues raised about the care provided. Many issues are raised by a child or young person with a social worker and are resolved immediately without recourse to the complaint process. Wherever possible, staff will resolve issues before they become formal complaints.

### 3.2 Findings from complaints:

The following findings were made in respect of the 27 complaints raised:

<p><b>At Stage 1 of the statutory procedures</b></p>	<p><b>1 complaint was upheld 2 complaints were partially upheld 7 complaints were not upheld</b></p>
<p><b>At Stage 2 of the statutory procedures</b></p>	<p><b>3 complaints were not upheld 1 complaint was partially upheld</b></p>

<p><b>At Stage 2 of the local authority procedures</b></p>	<p><b>1 complaint resulted in no findings</b>  <b>4 complaints were not upheld</b>  <b>4 complaints were partially upheld</b>  <b>4 complaints were upheld</b></p>
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### 3.3 Complaints by Areas of Service Provision

**For the ten complaints dealt with at Stage 1:**

<p><b>One complaint was in respect of the Youth Offending Team Service.</b></p>
<p><b>One complaint was in respect of the Learning Difficulties and Disability Service.</b></p>
<p><b>Five complaints were in respect of the Safeguarding Service.</b></p>
<p><b>Three complaints were about the Looked after Children Service</b></p>

**For the four complaints dealt with at Stage 2 of Statutory Procedures:**

<p><b>Two complaints were made in respect of the Under 11s service</b>  One was a complaint about an open case. The other was out of time and followed lengthy correspondence with the constituency MP for the complainant. An external investigation was commissioned to progress the complaint.</p> <p><b>Two complaints were in respect of the Duty Team</b>  One complaint was out of time but was allowed into the procedures given the reasons provided why complaints had not been raised before.</p>
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**For the 13 complaints dealt with at Stage 2 Local Authority Procedures:**

<p><b>Eight complaints were in respect of the Safeguarding Service</b></p>
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**Four Complaints were in respect of the Looked After Children Service**

**One Complaint was in respect of the Disability and Learning Disability Service**

### 3.4 Nature of complaints received

Complaints received often contain a variety of issues. However, for the purpose of this report a main aspect has been attributed to each of the 27 complaints raised.

<b>Access to Services</b>	<b>Assessment decision: 1</b> <b>Eligibility criteria: 1</b> <b>Service delay: 2</b>  <b>Total: 4</b>
<b>Service Procedures</b>	<b>Confidentiality: 5</b> <b>Procedures: 8</b>  <b>Total: 13</b>
<b>Standard of Service</b>	<b>Consultation with client: 1</b> <b>Quality of report: 4</b> <b>Standard of service: 1</b>  <b>Total: 6</b>
<b>Staff Attitude/Conduct</b>	<b>Support from Social Workers: 2</b> <b>Staff Behaviour: 1</b>  <b>Total: 3</b>
<b>Cost and Efficiency</b>	<b>Financial assessment: 1</b>  <b>Total: 1</b>

Item 6 of this report provides further commentary on these complaints.

### 3.6. Cost of complaint investigations for 2009-2010

The cost of independent investigations for this period was £5,794.92.

### 3.7 The involvement of young people in the complaint process

Of the 27 complaints considered by the local authority, three were made directly by young people.

One child was interviewed as part of a stage 2 statutory investigation. Her Guardian ad Litem supported her at the interview.

Children and young people who are looked after by the Local Authority may bring representations to the attention of the Reviewing Officer. These are then resolved as operational issues. Where resolution fails for whatever reason the children and young people have the right to complain using the statutory complaint procedure. They receive information on how to make a complaint when they first become looked after. Information on how to contact the Complaints Manager is printed in the child and young person's consultation booklet, which they receive before every LAC review.

## 4 Representations received in Children's Social Care

For the year 2009-10

<p><b>Compliments</b> given to the Complaints Manager</p> <p>Examples of comments were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SW has changed the client's life, she is now working and alcohol free</li><li>• The Family Centre is always friendly</li><li>• The Social Worker has been a great support</li><li>• The Social Worker was nice and polite to me</li><li>• You have been so supportive in every way</li><li>• The Social Worker treated me and my daughter with every respect</li><li>• The After Care Team are very good at what they do</li><li>• The Social Worker is patient, helpful and non judgmental</li></ul>	<p><b>27 in total</b></p>
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<b>MP enquiries</b>	<b>12 in total</b>
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## **5 Development of Policies and Procedures**

### **5.1 Development of complaint management expertise**

25 staff received training in relation to the complaint procedure and their role in resolution of matters at the point of delivery.

The Southern Regional Complaints Managers Group aims to meet quarterly. It is well attended and considered to meet its aims. The network aims to raise standards for Complaints Management across the region to promote consistency of practice and to provide a source of mutual advice. Over the past year the group has considered dispute and conflict resolution strategies.

## **6 Commentary on complaints received for period 2009-2010**

### **6.1 Examples of complaints received about access to Services:** *exclusion from safeguarding review, child who received statement of educational needs should have been offered assessment as child in need, delay in process for prospective adopters, LAC not receiving appropriate treatment for mental health condition.*

#### Comment of Complaints Manager

Not all of the above complaints were upheld but they do highlight the importance of timely updating and consultation with clients.

**Examples of complaints received about Procedures:** *actions during safeguarding enquiries, alleged breaches of confidentiality; consultation with non resident parents/ others, safety of child living with parent.*

#### Comment of Complaints Manager

Many of the complaints under this heading were answered by the Duty Team who often have to make sudden and rapid interventions in families. These families are less familiar with the statutory responsibilities of the department and therefore more likely to use the complaints procedure prematurely. Again for the most part the complaints were not upheld.

**Examples of complaints about Service Standards:** *quality of assessment reports, quality of care from foster carers.*

#### Comment of Complaints Manager

The complaints about the quality of reports were upheld. In some cases complainants were unhappy that facts were wrong, e.g. spelling of names.

Errors of this kind can be seen by clients as a lack of respect and do not help working relationships.

**Examples of complaints about Support from Social Workers:** *Foster Panel hostile to prospective carers, Social Worker unsupportive of Foster Carers, refusal to change Social Worker.*

#### Comment of Complaints Manager

Complaints of this nature are complex and often based on perceptions for which there might not be evidence. The Head of the Looked after Children Service took action in respect of the complaint about the Foster Panel. The other two complaints were resolved and involved staff in working with complainants to resolve issues.

**Examples of complaints about Cost and Efficiency:** *residence allowance not offered.*

#### Comment of Complaints Manager

This complaint was not upheld.

## **6.2 Learning from Complaints 2009-2010**

The department holds formal learning sets for all Stage 2 statutory and Stage 3 Local Authority complaints at the end of the process. One learning set was held for this period concerning a Stage 2 statutory complaint concluded the previous year.

The key issues from the learning set were lack of support for foster carers from Social Worker through an investigation process, delay in foster carer panel review, and delay into investigation following an allegation. It was agreed that the procedures in place for dealing with this matter were not flawed but the way it had been managed by staff then in place led to the complaint. The complaint learning also reinforced the importance of strategy meetings to manage the complaint investigation.

All complaints at stage 1 are also reviewed for learning points. For the year 2009-2010, a recurring theme in a number of complaints was the quality of assessment reports. This was discussed with Heads of Service who have arranged 3 lunchtime training sessions for staff on Report Writing and Assessment and Analysis.

Another recurring theme for 2009-2010 in stage 1 complaints to the Duty Team was the provision of information to non resident parents. The Duty Team held a specific learning session with the Assistant Solicitor, Information Management in respect of this matter.

All complaints whether upheld or not upheld provide the department with useful feedback about the expectations of its clients. 6.1 above indicates some of the quality issues which complainants have raised. Heads of Service meet with the Complaints Manager on a 6 weekly basis where these matters

are discussed. Heads of Service will then take appropriate action such raise them at team meetings or through the supervision procedure.

The Complaints Manager also attends Team Manager Meetings on a twice yearly basis to discuss quality issues arising from complaints.

## **7 Issues about the Complaint Procedure from Complaints received**

### **7.1 The Parameters of the Complaints Process**

In accordance with the guidance, the Complaints Manager has a responsibility to put in place a process which is transparent and set apart from operational management of the care service.

**For the year 2009 to 2010 the following issues should be noted within the complaint procedure:**

Two complaints went into the stage 2 statutory procedures although they were outside the new one year eligibility timescale. The Complaints Manager considers that, given both complaints were on behalf of vulnerable children, it was good practice to undertake external investigations.

Thirteen complaints for this period were not primarily on behalf of children or young people. Nevertheless these complainants did require substantive responses to the issues raised and the learning from these complaints is as useful as those raised within the statutory procedure.

The Complaints function has been increasingly involved in providing advice on the appropriate route for matters raised to be resolved. The complaints procedure is not the only route available.

### **7.2 Good practice in complaint management**

The Equality Impact Assessment carried out during this period identified the use of advocacy and support for children to resolve complaints as good practice.

The contract for services commissioned externally now outlines the department's requirements for how those services should manage complaints received.

## **8 Areas for future development**

The following area has been identified for development for 2010-2011:

- To consult with other local authorities of similar size to Bracknell Forest to compare approaches used for analysis of complaint data.

## **9 Conclusion**

Over the period of this review, the Complaints service for Children's Social Care has met the requirements of the relevant guidance and regulations. Overall management of complaints is managed well and with sensitivity. The Council does not receive a high number of complaints but those that it does receive are becoming increasingly complex. The Council learns from complaints made and there is evidence that changes to processes have been made where appropriate.

The next report will cover the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011

**Patricia Morris**  
**Complaints Manager for Children's Social Care**

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
30 June 2010**

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**INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT  
Director Children, Young People and Learning**

**1 PURPOSE OF DECISION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service to the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the report set out in Annex 1 is received by the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 2.2 That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel note that new guidance was issued in Spring 2010 which will have an impact on the way in which the IRO role will develop in the coming year.

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The IRO Service performs a key role in assuring the quality of the local authority's care planning for children who are looked after. The annual report supports the continuing development and review of the local strategy for children's services.
- 3.2 Guidance issued by the DCSF [now the DFE] requires that an annual report should be provided to the Lead Member with Executive responsibility for Children's Services and for Corporate Parenting, with the aim of identifying good practice, and highlighting areas for further development / improvement.
- 3.3 The attached report was completed in October 2009, it was received and approved by the Executive Member for Children and Young People, and was received by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel in December 2009. Normal protocol when the report is presented to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel is that a response from the Council completed by the Chief Officer, Children's Social Care, is also presented. A copy of this response is attached as annex 2. This is the first time the report has been submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.4 Towards the end of 2009 the DCSF issued a suite of statutory guidance for consultation setting out how local authorities should carry out their full responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children. The new IRO Handbook was one of those documents. There is work underway currently to determine the impact of the new guidance, published in spring 2010.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 None considered as production of such a report is recommended in DCSF Guidance.

## **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 DCSF Guidance suggests that IRO Services should produce an annual report for consideration by the Executive Member for Children's Services.
- 5.2 The Guidance does not specify either structure or content but states that the purpose of the report is to inform the development of local strategies for meeting the needs of children who are looked after by the Local Authority.
- 5.3 The attached report is the fourth annual report. It sets out the work of the IRO Service over the period 1 September 2008 – 31 August 2009. The report highlights good practice and identifies areas of potential concern and the measures that have been taken to address these.
- 5.4 Legislation is supported by detailed guidance, which has been taken into account in making arrangements in Bracknell Forest.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforces and strengthens the role of the IRO enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case to ensure that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Guidance is issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. As such the Guidance does not have statutory force but the authority should comply with it unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2.1 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that there are no significant financial implications arising from this report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The IRO Service has been the subject of a full Equalities Impact Assessment and as this report proposes no change of policy a further EIA is not required at this stage.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 No issues arise from this report.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups to be Consulted



None

Method of Consultation

Not applicable

Representations Received

Not applicable

Background Papers

Revised policy and procedure for the statutory review of  
children looked after: Bracknell Forest Borough Council

21 March 2006

Contact for further information

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**Annex 1**



**Independent Reviewing Officer Service**

**Annual Report**

**2008/9**

**Jan Poole, Independent Reviewing Officer**  
**Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance**

**October 2009**

# 1 Introduction

This is the fourth annual report on the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in Bracknell Forest. The IRO has a key role in assuring the quality of the case planning for those children and young people who are looked after by the local authority. Throughout the period of this report the IRO has contributed to the development of good practice in this area through highlighting good practice and identifying areas of concern and weakness. The purpose of this report is to provide a context for this work and to summarise the issues that have arisen for the lead member with responsibility for children, young people and corporate parenting.

The report covers the period from 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2009.

## 2 Context

### Legislation

The arrangements for the statutory reviews of looked after children were amended and updated by Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which introduced the new statutory role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. The requirement for such a post came into force in September 2004.

The legislation required local authorities to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer with the remit of:

- chairing the authority's looked after children reviews;
- monitoring the authority's review of the care plan; and
- where necessary, referring cases to the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to take legal action as a last resort if the failure to implement the care plan might be considered to breach the child's human rights.

In addition, there is an expectation that this service will 'quality assure' the local authority's care planning for looked after children.

Legislation is supported by detailed guidance<sup>1</sup>, which has been taken into account in making arrangements in Bracknell Forest.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforces and strengthens the role of the IRO enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case to ensure that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs. Revised IRO Guidance is expected in draft Autumn 2009 for consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> **Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002** *DfES publication*, available at [www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption)

## Which children?

All looked after children, including children who are in an adoptive placement, prior to an adoption order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in Short Break Care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are compulsorily looked after such as those remanded by the court to the local authority accommodation.

In Bracknell Forest the number of such children in August 2009 (figures for August 2008 in brackets) was:

section 31 of the Children Act 1989	35 (33)
section 20 of the Children Act 1989	59 (47) including 19 (15) short break care
Placement Order: Adoption and Children Act 2002	0 (5)
On remand	1 (0)
Total	95 (85)

## The IRO service in Bracknell Forest

Responsibility for the service rests with the Director of Children, Young People and Learning. In order to provide independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources (Chief Officer: Children's Social Care), this post is managed by the Head of Performance Management and Governance.

## Statutory Reviews

The purpose of the statutory review is to consider the plan for the welfare of the child; to monitor the progress of the plan; and make decisions to amend the plan as necessary in the light of changed knowledge and circumstances.

In chairing reviews, the IRO is required to ensure that:

- the child's views are understood and taken into account; and
- the persons responsible for implementing any decision taken in consequence of the review are identified.

Any failure to review individual cases should be brought to the attention of a senior person within the local authority.

The Executive Member for Children and Young People approved a revised policy and procedure for the reviews of looked after children which comply with the latest legislative requirements in March 2006<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Policy and Procedure for the Statutory Review of Looked After Children  
Bracknell Forest Borough Council 21 March 2006

## Frequency of reviews

Under the provisions of the *Review of Children's Cases Regulations (1991)*<sup>3</sup> local authorities are required to review the case of any child who is Looked After or provided with accommodation as follows:

- first review must take place within 28 days of the date upon which the child begins to be looked after or provided with accommodation;
- second review must be carried out no later than 3 months after the first review; and
- subsequent reviews shall be carried out not more than 6 months after the date of the previous review.

The date of the next review should be brought forward:

- if there is a change of placement or other substantial changes to the care plan (see below for clarification of this);
- if the IRO has specific concerns about a child and directs that the review be brought forward; and
- any request from the child or parent(s) for a review to be brought forward should be given serious consideration.

## 3 Overview of Work

### Number and timeliness of reviews

A total of 230 Looked After Children (LAC) reviews (excluding Short Break Care reviews) took place in the relevant period.

Every effort is made to carry out reviews within the statutory timescales<sup>4</sup>. In the period up to 31 August 2009, 225 (97.8%) reviews have been conducted on time. This is excellent performance. At 31 March 2009 the NI 66 figure was 91.3% and compares favourably with the national figure of 90.9%.

Local authority performance is measured against the recorded achievement in this area. Performance in this area is closely monitored and in all cases when a review is 'out-of-time', the reasons are noted. The reasons for reviews being overdue were:

- Key personnel not being available (2 reviews)
- Child had two placement moves in a short period of time (1 review)

The statistics reflect the continuing conscientiousness of social workers in informing the IRO when a child is newly accommodated and alerting the IRO in good time to anticipated difficulties with forthcoming review dates.

### Child Participation in reviews

The involvement of children in their own reviews is regarded as an essential part of the process. This has been highlighted as a priority in previous reports and has continued to be an important theme this year.

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<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 3

<sup>4</sup> NI 66 Timeliness of Reviews of LAC is included in the 198 indicators in the National Indicator set and will be reported on in quarterly performance monitoring reports.

*'A key task for the IRO will be to ensure that the review processes, and particularly review meetings, remain child and family centred'* <sup>5</sup>

The IRO has an important role in ensuring that the child:

- can make a meaningful contribution to their review;
- speaks for themselves if they are able and willing to do so; and where this is not possible that their views are conveyed by someone else on their behalf or by an appropriate medium; and
- has been given the opportunity to make a written contribution to the meeting, particularly if they have chosen not to attend or are unable to attend for some other reason.

The recorded achievement in this area of activity is also a measure of local authority performance (although no longer a national performance indicator)<sup>6</sup>. At 31 March 2009, this figure was 98.4% and represents improved performance when compared with a figure of 90% at 31 March 2008.

The reasons why children did not contribute to their reviews in this reporting period are given below:

- A young person did not attend his review in spite of arrangements having been made, and attempts by the IRO to speak to him subsequently were unsuccessful;
- A mother would not allow her children to be included in the review process in any way. This involved five reviews;
- A young person was given a custodial sentence the day before his review and the IRO was not able to make contact with him within a meaningful period of time following the review;
- A plan for the IRO to meet a child with disabilities prior to the review to assist preparation for the child to participate in the meeting was not successful;
- An older teenager refused to participate in the review meeting, complete a consultation paper or use the opportunity of someone speaking on their behalf.

Work has continued to enable children to participate in their reviews in ways acceptable to them. Reviews are rarely held in school time, and, in the few cases where this is necessary, the meeting takes place in the lunch break if possible, thus allowing the child to attend with minimal disruption to their education. Social workers in the Disabled Children's Team, together with their manager and with the Children's Services Management Team, have continued to promote the participation of disabled looked after children. The outcome has been continued improvement in this area. More children have been enabled to attend all or part of their reviews, due to the creativity of social workers, closer working together with staff at the Local Authority's Special School and continued effort on the part of key workers at the Larchwood Short Break Unit. Several reviews have taken place in the children's own homes on their return from school, providing them with a comfortable environment for these meetings. Progress is evident in the majority of out of borough establishments to ensure that the child is being supported to enjoy their right to participate in their reviews.

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<sup>5</sup> Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002

<sup>6</sup> C63, Participation in Reviews

It has been identified that expectations by the local authority in respect of child participation in LAC reviews need to be explicit in contracts in order to be able to challenge establishments where the child is not being supported to enjoy their right to participate in their reviews and this is included in any new contracts.

### **Young people chairing their own reviews**

Young people have continued to be encouraged to chair their own reviews. 17 reviews were chaired by the young person themselves. Their ages ranged from 12 to 17 and five of them chaired their meetings twice. They enjoyed the experience and their willingness to be available to help other young people who are considering chairing their reviews for the first time is an area which is available for development. Their increased confidence is noticeable each time they take on this role. Six co-chaired their reviews. Developments such as spending more time with the young person preparing for the review, encouraging other young people to chair and younger children to co-chair, are carried out as time permits, although all young people are offered the opportunity to speak to the IRO directly before their review.

### **The Child Participation Development Officer (CPDO)**

The Department employs an officer with responsibility for encouraging the participation of children and young people in a range of activities. The IRO has worked with this officer to develop this area of work with regard to statutory reviews. The CPDO seeks to:

- encourage professionals to do all in their power to enable young people to have their say in decisions which affect them;
- inform and enable young people to know their rights and to have their say in meetings which concern them; and
- enable the young person to attend and/or contribute to that meeting in some way.

Work has been undertaken to review the consultation materials for children with learning difficulties and disabilities and a new consultation booklet is in draft form.

The IRO informs the CPDO if a child has not attended their review so that she can follow up on this and encourage or help future participation. The allocated social worker will always follow this up too. Ways of making the consultation document available electronically is being considered, as is a suggestion that children and young people should be able to e-mail or send text messages to the IRO directly.

### **Reports to managers in Children's Social Care**

The IRO meets on a quarterly basis with the Head of Service for Looked After Children in order to ensure appropriate liaison between the service and children's social care teams. In order to support the development of good practice, the IRO has reported quarterly to the Children's Social Care Management Team (CSCMT) and six monthly to the meeting of Team and Unit Managers (TUMs). In addition to reporting on the number of reviews held on time and child participation in reviews, she has also reported on the following issues:

### Overarching Permanence Plans

A plan for permanence must be produced for all looked after children at their four monthly statutory reviews with milestones that can be monitored and agreed at that review. 100% were completed on time.

### Pathway Plans

A Looked After Child Pathway Plan should be started when the young person is 15½ and completed by their sixteenth birthday. Of the young people who fall into this category, 91% had a plan in place at the required time. Of the four who did not, two had passed their 16<sup>th</sup> birthdays at the time they were accommodated; one was accommodated very shortly before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and a decision had been taken that the fourth young person was not ready to start their Pathway Plan until near the time of their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. There is good working together between the Over 11s and the After Care Teams with a member of the latter team attending reviews once a looked after child reaches the age of 15 ½. This enables them to get to know the child and vice versa and to assist with the child's smooth transition to the After Care service at the appropriate time.

### Consultation Papers

*'The IRO has an important role in ensuring that all parties to the review are able to make an effective contribution.'*<sup>7</sup>

Consultation Papers are sent to parents, carers and the young person prior to a review. A review of the consultation documents was completed in 2007 but the level of returns over the reporting period has continued to be variable. The child's consultation paper provides the IRO with a comprehensive picture of the child's feelings about the various aspects of the care and services he/she is receiving and assists the IRO in ensuring the child's voice is heard.

### Parental Involvement in Reviews

This continues to improve. In 144 reviews (63%)<sup>8</sup>, over the reporting period, parental contributions were taken into account: 53% of reviews were attended by a parent and a further 9% participated by the medium of a consultation paper, prior discussion with the Social Worker or a telephone conversation with the IRO. In a further 33 reviews parental attendance is n/a for reasons such as parents deceased, adoptive placements, UASC etc – this would increase this figure to 77%. The IRO informs the Social Worker's supervisor of reviews where no parental involvement took place, to facilitate a discussion as to the reasons for this and whether the situation can be improved for future reviews. In some cases, however, it is not appropriate for the birth parents to attend reviews e.g. children placed with their prospective adoptive parents.

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<sup>7</sup> Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption And Children Act 2002 page 27 *DfES publication*, available at [www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption)

<sup>8</sup>This compares with 54% in the period up until the end of August 2008



## Youth Offending Service (YOS) involvement in Reviews

In order to improve ways in which the Youth Offending Service can contribute more effectively to reviews, the IRO has monitored their attendance or report contribution in relevant LAC cases. Feedback has been given in person by the IRO attending the YOS team meetings. Much improved involvement has been recorded as well as better communication between the YOS and Social Workers in respect of looked after children.

## Other Issues

Further monitoring includes the completion of Permanency Planning Meetings; timescales for Social Workers' reports reaching the IRO in advance of children's reviews; the completion of mid-term reviews (i.e. a paper review of the decisions and actions agreed at the previous review carried out by the Social Worker half way through the six monthly cycle, a copy of which is forwarded to the IRO).

## **Short Break Care Reviews**

Over the period, a total of 31 reviews took place for children who receive short break care at the Larchwood Short Stay Unit, The Chiltern Centre, Henley and Bridge House, Slough. These children are currently treated as accommodated under Section 20, Children Act 1989. Short Break care is defined as care that lasts for fewer than 120 days per annum, with no period of care for longer than four weeks.

Whilst Local Authority Performance is not measured in this area<sup>9</sup>, short break care reviews are given equal importance to those for children who are looked after full time, but less Quality Assurance monitoring is undertaken. All but one of the reviews took place on time.

## **Development of policies and procedures**

The IRO contributes to new policies or review of existing policies as relevant.

## **Support for the Berkshire IRO Network**

The Berkshire IRO Network has met quarterly and the meetings continue to be hosted in Bracknell Forest. It is well attended and considered to meet its aims. The network aims to raise standards for LAC across Berkshire; to promote consistency of practice and service provision across agencies; and to provide a source of mutual support. This includes:

- professional development;
- raising practice standards;
- research and development;
- group supervision; and
- the opportunity to feed issues into the SE Regional Network.

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<sup>9</sup>There is no formal indicator to measure this but performance is recorded as part of the DCSF data collection exercise regarding all reviews that take place during the year. Locally this performance is included in the quarterly Performance Monitoring Report for the Council.

The IRO also attends the South East IRO Network Meetings which provides a wider perspective of the IRO role and up to date information on Government policy, guidance and initiatives.

## **4 Focus on Practice**

A key function of the IRO is to raise issues where practice can be improved. In the vast majority of cases this is not necessary and comments are made elsewhere in this report on the quality of care planning and case management by staff within the Children's Social Care branch. Regular feedback on good practice is given to members of staff and their managers.

It is evident that there is a strong commitment to improve outcomes for children across the Department and within the Council. The issues that follow have been raised by the IRO in line with the Resolution Protocol (see page 16), during the period of this year's report, with the intention of highlighting where improvements can still be made:

### **Accommodation**

1. The IRO commented on a placement for two children approx, 55 miles from their school and the long journey travelled each day to and from school, even though she was aware that a placement was being sought nearer their school. She was particularly concerned for the youngest child who was starting their first term at secondary school.

Outcome: An appropriate placement was being sought and was soon identified for the children enabling them to move within two weeks of the beginning of the new school year.

### **Education**

1. The IRO recorded her concerns regarding an apparent unresolved issue of 1:1 support for a young person in school and the inappropriateness of the head teacher's comments at a LAC Review.

Outcome: The matter was resolved through discussion between the S.E.N. Manager and the school.

2. The IRO supported the concerns of those who attended a child's LAC review regarding an apparent delay in an assessment process for a child in secondary school and whether the school was able to meet the child's needs.

Outcome: The IRO discussed the concerns with the Principal Psychologist, who confirmed at that time and following individual work with the child that he did not consider it necessary for the Local Authority to initiate a statutory assessment of the child's educational needs at the present time.

## Care Planning Issues

### Care Planning

1. Following a review for a young person placed out of area, the IRO recorded her concerns regarding the lack of progress by the care agency on the care plan.

Outcome: The IRO was informed that Children's Social Care had had some concerns regarding the provider for some time. The carers provided a full education proposal and independence plan within a short space of time following the review. Ongoing difficulties in respect of education provision for children placed out of area and who have a Statement of Educational Need were again highlighted in this case.

2. Following the first LAC Review, the IRO commented on an inappropriate placement, in her view, of a young person with a family friend.

Outcome: The IRO was informed that Children's Social Care shared her views. The young person had been offered a foster placement in Bracknell but had refused this and their placement with a family friend was in accordance with their wishes and feelings. The young person returned to live at home successfully within a short space of time.

3. The IRO commented on the delay (22 months) in providing a disabled young person with their own chair at the short break care unit.

Outcome: The Local Authority's contribution towards the expenditure was authorised.

4. The IRO queried whether the Public Law Outline process had delayed care planning for three children and whether initiating Care Proceedings at the outset would have reduced the delay in securing a professional for the recommended assessments, thus determining clearer care plans at an earlier stage.

Outcome: The IRO was informed of the work that had been undertaken and was kept informed of the progress on the assessments and the care plans.

5. Following a LAC Review, the IRO supported the Social Worker's concerns that a young person's residential school placement, whilst meeting his educational needs, was not meeting his social care needs.

Outcome: As the placement became more difficult, the young person was removed from the school and an alternative placement assessed to meet his needs was identified.

## **Practice Issues**

### **1. Inter-country adoption**

Following the third post inter-country adoption placement review for a two year old in June 2007, the IRO requested that a policy be drawn up to provide standards and guidance in future cases.

Outcome: The policy is in draft form. There have been no inter-country adoptions in this reporting period.

### **2. Children who are placed outside of the borough**

The IRO is concerned about those children for whom no suitable placement was available within Bracknell Forest or the immediate surrounding area at the time they were accommodated, which resulted in them being placed at considerable distance from Bracknell. This has implications for their education and their contact with family. It presents them with the dilemma of having to try to invest in two areas and entails considerable time spent travelling between the two locations.

### **3. Supported Lodgings accommodation**

The IRO is also concerned about the apparent lack of Supported Lodgings placements which would meet the needs of those older young people who are not ready for independent living or do not want to move into Rainforest Walk or Holly House or for whom a place is not yet available.

4. The IRO contributes to foster carers' annual reviews and informs the Department of any concerns in relation to foster carers' standards.

## **The work involved in raising issues**

In order to raise issues, the IRO speaks to or writes to the Social Worker's supervisor, team manager or a Service Manager as appropriate with concerns and comments following a review. Their response may be verbal or in writing. A Resolution Protocol has been introduced (*Appendix 3 of Policy and Procedure for the Statutory Review of Children Looked After, May 2007*) and formal Practice Memos written by the IRO following a review are subject to this procedure. Timescales for responses and action regarding the escalation of an unresolved issue are set out in the protocol. During the period of this report, no matter has needed to be taken beyond the level of Service Manager.

## **Identifying good practice**

In accordance with the quality assurance function for the authority's service for looked after children, it is important that the IRO recognises and reports on good practice by individuals or teams and encourages the authority to continually improve its service for looked after children. The IRO carries out this function both formally and informally. The quarterly reports provide positive as well as critical feedback to managers and senior managers. Informal positive feedback to social workers takes place regularly as appropriate and in written form when the review meeting minutes are sent to the Social Worker. The IRO has commented on:

### Progress on care plans

- Positive working together between social workers, foster carers and parents in two cases which have enabled children to return home;
- Positive relationship between child/young person and their Social Worker which has helped them resolve some of their difficulties and move towards accessing their potential.
- Comments following reviews of children in their prospective adoptive homes regarding how quickly and well they had settled and started to develop attachments to their prospective adoptive parents. In one case the IRO reported on the prospective adoptive mother's comment that 'it had been a pleasure to work with Bracknell Forest and the Social Worker and that she felt that her prospective adoptive child had benefited from the positive aspects of the adoption process';
- Working together between teams e.g. transition between Over 11s and After Care Team;
- Timely completion of agreed review actions.

### Social Workers' contributions to LAC Review meetings

- Social workers' reports where they have been of a high standard;
- Conscientiousness regarding the arrangements for the meeting;
- Social workers' contributions in the meetings e.g. knowledgeable, assertive, confident in the face of challenges and tensions.

### Foster Carers

- Commitment and nurturing by foster carers which has resulted in significant emotional and developmental progress for children who have suffered distress and disruption;
- Commitment and nurturing by foster carers in a very stable placement which has enabled a young person with learning difficulties to achieve their potential and look forward to a positive move into young adulthood.

### **Positive comments made by children and young people about their Social Workers:**

- 'I've know her for years so I'm used to her and I like her very much';
- 'Always there for me';
- 'She helps me with everything';
- 'Funny and caring';
- 'She is the best';
- 'She is always helping me with my troubles and she is always happy'.
- 

### **Positive comments made by children and young people about their Foster Carers:**

- 'They're really nice, they treat me as their own';
- 'They're really fun';
- 'They are caring and they help me even when I am being bad';
- 'We all get on like a family';
- 'They are fabdiddilyocious'.

It is considered that social workers' commitment to LAC reviews has remained high over the reporting period and that they respond equally well to positive and critical comments from the IRO. They also demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for looked after children within the constraints of available resources and when working under pressure.

Two-way dialogue with social workers is encouraged by the IRO with attendance at their team meetings. These forums provide an opportunity to praise good practice and encourage ideas for improvement.

## **5 Key challenges for the IRO Service**

### **Independence and collaboration**

*'The independence of the Reviewing Officer is essential to enable them to effectively challenge poor practice in the review of cases'*<sup>10</sup>

In accordance with the guidance, the IRO is required to have a collaborative relationship with social work staff and management who hold the responsibility for ongoing care planning for the children in the care of the local authority. This relationship is not that of supervisor or someone who could undertake tasks in relation to the care plan or service delivery. This is now well understood by staff

### **Workload and timings of reviews**

The numbers of LAC in Bracknell Forest (excluding short break care) has increased slightly over the reporting period by 8.6% from 70 to 76 children. The number of reviews conducted in the period has increased by 4% from 221 to 230 (this can be explained by the fact that children come into care and leave care during the reporting period). In addition to the statutory review process outlined above, there are additional pressures and practical challenges caused by the need to bring some reviews forward i.e. in cases of placement breakdown, when a child has a planned move and when there is a change to the care plan<sup>11</sup>. For some children, therefore, reviews take place several times in a year.

Preparation, travelling time, chairing the meeting and writing the minutes constitute a considerable number of hours per review. A small number of reviews need to be carried out in two or three parts e.g. where circumstances make it difficult for child and parent(s) or parents to be together in a room. On a practical level, reviews in term time for school age children need to take place after the end of the school day, causing pressures, at times, on the IRO's diary.

Reviews are, therefore, constant with the added pressure of some children being placed many miles away from Bracknell e.g. Mid Wales, Yorkshire, Kent. Completing all reviews on time presents a challenge, which requires efficient time management on the part of the IRO and a commitment by social workers to the statutory time requirements. The general situation has been assisted by the Independent Chair

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<sup>10</sup> Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption And Children Act 2002 page 23 *DfES publication*, available at [www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption)

<sup>11</sup> The PAF figures for children and young people who have three or more placement moves in the most recent period are nine out of 75 children (12%). (For 2006/7, the figure was 19% and for 2005/6, 13.9%)

Child Protection chairing a small percentage of LAC reviews. The IRO chairs a few Child Protection Conferences as workload permits.

### **Staff Turnover**

Whilst the level of turnover of social work staff has declined there is an on-going requirement to apprise new members of staff of Bracknell Forest procedures and expectations.

## **6 Areas for future development**

The following areas have been identified for development.

### **Child participation in LAC reviews**

Whilst there has been continuing improvement in this area, continuing efforts are required to raise the profile of the importance of enabling children to participate as fully as they are able in their reviews, in accordance with their rights. Social Workers will continue to be encouraged to start the planning process for a review well in advance of the due date to allow time for the necessary planning to aid participation.

Residential establishments caring for children with disabilities need to be reminded of the Local Authority's expectations and the children's rights in respect of participation in their reviews. Social workers and the IRO should pass on examples of good practice to any establishments not prioritising this aspect of reviews.

The IRO will continue to offer to meet with the child before their review to listen to their views and, if necessary hold a review meeting in two or three parts.

### **Engaging the harder to reach young people**

Whilst the number of harder to reach young people and those who express no interest in attending their reviews is very small, continuing thought needs to be given on how to engage them in order that their views can be represented at the meetings.

### **Children chairing their own reviews**

Young people will continue to be invited to chair their own reviews. Younger aged children will be encouraged to co-chair their reviews with the IRO, if appropriate, with a view to them increasing in confidence to chair their own reviews when older.

### **Consultation documents**

Monitoring of completion of these documents will indicate how these documents can be further improved for children, parents and carers and good examples provided by the IRO from other authorities will continue to be taken into account.

### **Improving standards**

Regular attendance at team meetings throughout the year by the IRO will assist dialogue on the review process and ways to improve standards.

Attendance at events such as the Foster Carers' Conference and Foster Carers' preparation groups by the IRO would assist in developing a greater understanding of the review process.

### Children and Young Persons Act 2008

It is anticipated that the requirements of this Act and the accompanying Guidance will require the IRO to have greater involvement in children and young people's cases, which will have implications for the workload of the IRO.

## **7 Conclusion**

Over the period of this review, the IRO service has met the requirements of the relevant guidance and regulations. There continue to be improvements in the quality of contributions to reviews from all parties, despite the evident pressures on time for some participants. The growing involvement of young people in their reviews is pleasing, but there will always be progress to be made in this area. Priorities are clear and will be addressed when possible, together with opportunities for further development.

The next review will cover the period from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010.

**Jan Poole, Independent Reviewing Officer**  
**Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance**

**October 2009**



**TO: CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY PANEL**  
**DATE: 02 December 2009**

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**INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE:  
RESPONSE FROM THE COUNCIL TO THE FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT  
Director of Children, Young People & Learning**

**1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a response by the Council to the fourth annual report prepared by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service which was approved by the Executive Member for Children and Young People on 17 November 2009.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the response in this report is noted by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Department has received the report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service and wishes to inform and update the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel on steps being taken to address issues contained within the report.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 None considered.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Overview of Work**

- 5.1 The Council welcomes the report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service and notes the many positive comments in relation to good practice, good systems and good management.
- 5.2 The Council is pleased by the continued good performance against the national indicator NI-66 in relation to the timeliness of reviews, although notes that performance is not as good as last year.
- 5.3 The Council is also pleased by the recognition of the Council's continued improved performance in relation to the participation of children in their reviews which shows year on year improvement (78% in 2006-7, 90% in 2007-8, 98% in 2008-9). This is no longer a national indicator but we continue to place a high importance on children and young people taking part and contributing to decisions about their care and the plans for them.
- 5.4 The Council values the Management Reports that the Independent Reviewing Officer Service provides and notes that this drives improved practice and improved performance, without undermining the professional ethics of our staff. In addition, the IRO meets with the Head of Service for Looked after

Children on a regular basis and this enables recognition of good practice, early identification of any areas for development and problem solving.

- 5.5 The Council also appreciates the involvement of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service in both local and regional IRO networks, which provide useful discussion to inform the development of local practice.

### **Focus on Practice**

- 5.6 In relation to the Focus on Practice section of the report, the Council recognises the benefits of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service not only in monitoring the Council's performance but in raising practice issues on individual cases which enables the Council to improve its practice.

- 5.7 The Council notes that all the individual concerns about practice raised by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service have been resolved satisfactorily, although there are some general issues raised that are commented on below.

5.8 Quality of placements, including out-of-borough placements

The provision of timely, local and appropriate placements for our looked after children and young people is a priority for the Council. This is reflected in the Department's Service Plan and in the Children & Young People's Plan. A number of initiatives have been implemented to increase the number and quality of in-house foster carer placements, including a review of the allowances scheme for carers, improved training provision for foster carers and the establishment of a foster carers association.

Use of in-house foster placements has increased during the past year while the use of independent agency foster placements has decreased. However, the use of residential children's homes or residential schools has continued, largely because of the level of complex needs of our looked after children, many of whom have special educational needs. Monitoring the quality of these placements is managed through the Head of Service for Looked After Children and the Contracts Officer.

Provision of supported lodgings for our older young people and care leavers continues to be a priority for the family placement team recruitment activity. As reported to the Panel at the May 2009 meeting, there is a range of accommodation provision available now for looked after children and care leavers and supported lodgings are part of this range.

Regulations being consulted on following the enactment of the Children and Young People Act 2008 include the requirement to place more children within the local authority area in placements commissioned to meet their specific needs. Specific regional commissioning activity is underway both to improve the provision of local independent fostering agency placements, and to secure more local residential provision for young people with complex needs.

5.9 Educational provision

The Independent Reviewing Officer Service report comments in a number of cases on the quality of educational provision. A revised Education of Looked After Children Policy and Procedures document is currently being developed in order to set out the support that is available and the roles and responsibilities of all those who work with looked after children. Improving the educational attainment of looked after children and care leavers so that they

reach their potential is a priority for the Council and the intention of the revised document is that it will support improved practice in this important area.

- 5.10 The Council welcomes the detailed comment on good practice reported and recognised by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. The good quality of care planning is particularly pleasing, as are the comments from young people about their social workers and carers.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are contained within the main body of the report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that any actions arising from this report can be managed from within the Department's overall budget.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The Council Response to the IRO Service Annual Report ensures that looked after children are not discriminated against in terms of access to appropriate services.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Children's Social Care Management Team and the Departmental Management Team

### Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Meetings

### Representations Received

- 7.3 Comments received from Officers have been incorporated into this response report.

### Background Papers

Independent Reviewing Officer Service: Annual Report to Executive Member: 17 November 2009

### Contact for further information

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 30 JUNE 2010

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### **Bracknell Forest Youth Service – Overview, plans for Summer, developments in Great Hollands and Mobile Provision. (Paul Crawte – Youth Service Manager)**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Youth Service offer a brief overview of highlights current work being undertaken, along with plans for services being delivered over the summer. An update on progress on the creation of a Youth Centre in Great Hollands is offered, along with information regarding mobile provision utilised as a base for offering youth work in the borough.

#### **2 SUGGESTED ACTION**

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the content of this report.

#### **3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

##### **Youth Service Overview**

- 3.1 The Youth Service continues to offer a wide range of projects and activities for young people. These range from the universal services (such as youth clubs) through to more targeted provision. The need for brevity makes it impossible to offer a full picture of the current work of the Service.
- 3.2 The Youth Service aims to engage young people in informal social learning opportunities. The quality of the services offered is regularly inspected and measured in terms of young peoples learning, including the achievement of accreditations for individuals accessing projects.
- 3.3 The Service operates 6 youth centres across the authority. The Ways Youth Centre is now operated (through a management committee) by Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People. The Youth Service commissions much of the work that takes place there.
- 3.4 In addition to youth clubs operated through youth centres, the Service also offers activities and drop-in sessions from the Talk Shop, a community shop front in the Great Hollands Neighbourhood Centre. Work also takes place in Easthampstead Park School.
- 3.5 The Service delivers street based work. Some sessions are supported by the “Silver Bus”, others have seen the Street Based Development Team utilising bicycles to negotiate distances between the geographical settings where they regularly meet groups of young people.
- 3.6 For young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) the Service operates a twice weekly drop-in service offering information and advice. NRG is located in Coopers Hill, near the town centre.
- 3.7 The successful Sexual Health Drop-in services continue in three school locations each term time week. This popular and necessary service is funded through a grant from the local Primary Care Trust, funds which also support a successful service for young parents and young parents to be.

- 3.8 The Youth Forum has consulted widely with young people and become the Youth Council, inviting representatives from other youth groups, such as School's Councils, to help in their role. This group also host and support the local Member for Youth Parliament.
- 3.9 The Duke of Edinburgh Award continues with its success. As well as eight Award projects (including a specialist provision for young people with moderate learning difficulties), five schools also operate the award with the direct support of the Service, as well as Sandhurst Guides. By the end of the summer period 16 groups of young people will have taken part in expeditions this year with the direct support of the Youth Service. A further 13 groups have done so through school Duke of Edinburgh Award projects supported by the Youth Service.
- 3.10 As well as direct delivery the Youth Service has worked with staff at South Hill Park to commission work to support young carers and looked after young people. The project, "Art Plus Me", works with the target group to help build their self esteem and social skills. This in turn enables those attending, with support, to access more mainstream youth orientated provision.
- 3.11 The Service continues to support the Young Carers project operated by Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action (BFVA). This is done through the provision of a youth worker to one of the youth clubs operated by BFVA, and through free use of a youth centre for another project.
- 3.12 The Service supports other youth groups in the area. The Vineyard Church offer youth activities through youth centres managed by the Youth Service. In addition management and training advice is offered to help with the development of these projects. A recent Youth Service staff conference hosted members from the faith community who offer youth work style services in the area, sharing ideas and offering training to them.
- 3.13 Throughout the year the Service has engaged in an "In House" inspection process to assess and monitor the quality of its work. This has involved the Youth Service Management Team assessing delivery, inspection teams made up of the qualified youth service staff team, and a series of inspections conducted by young people. The results are currently being collated for review and indicate that the service offered can be considered a good service in line with previous Ofsted standards.

### **Youth Service Summer Provision**

- 3.14 The summer period has historically been associated with a significant change in attendance patterns amongst young people accessing services offered through the 6 dedicated youth centres managed by the Youth Service, as well as the services offered through other locations and methodologies. As a result the normal pattern of youth club operation is modified during the summer holiday period.
- 3.15 Each of the youth projects managed by the Youth Service consults with its members on a regular basis and develops a programme of delivery based around the views expressed by young people. To this end each centre offers a relatively distinct programme reflecting these views.
- 3.16 **Sandhurst Youth Centre – The Spot:** will be offering a day time drop-in facility throughout the summer period on a Monday. Throughout the holiday period the youth centre will offer a performing arts course; a babysitting course; and a moped training course.
- 3.17 Staff at The Spot will continue to support the Friday evening opening of the centre by the Vineyard Church, as well as operating a once a month film club on a Friday evening.
- 3.18 The street based team will continue to work in the area on a Tuesday evening, utilising the mobile vehicle when available.

- 3.19 **The Edgbarrow Youth Centre:** This twice weekly youth club will remain open in the first two weeks of the holiday period. It is anticipated that numbers will be low. Staff leave will be encouraged for the last two weeks of August. Those staff not on leave will redeploy to the local parks to work with the Street Based Development Team.
- 3.20 The service will continue to support the Friday evening opening of the youth centre by the Vineyard Church. In particular, following recent issues associated with this project the Church have been offered training for their volunteer team and assistance developing their aims, objectives and programmes.
- 3.21 It is anticipated that the Friday evening Street Based Development Team will continue to primarily focus its efforts in this area on a Friday evening, following a request from local police. The Youth Service is encouraging the Crowthorne Neighbourhood Action Group to facilitate the development of a delivery strategy amongst the various organisations offering youth work style interventions in the area. It is anticipated that a meeting to do this will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> June
- 3.22 **Priestwood Youth Centre:** The youth club is currently operating a young women's group and the programme developed by its members will continue through the holiday period.
- 3.23 Youth Workers will again deliver the Transitions programme; working with young people with moderate learning difficulties to improve their life skills, helping them with their transition from school to college and beyond. This project is funded through the Extended Services fund.
- 3.24 The centre will continue to offer its Friday night project for young people with moderate learning difficulties. This is a project run in conjunction with the Social Care team.
- 3.25 **Whitegrove Youth Centre:** Previous experience demonstrates a significantly low level of attendance at the centre in the first two weeks of August. This centre, staffed entirely by part time staff, will close for staff leave for this period. In the latter half of the month staff will offer a service from the centre, or from the local park, depending on demand.
- 3.26 **North Ascot Youth Centre:** As with Whitegrove, this centre will close for the first two weeks of August as previous years have demonstrated a low level of attendance. The second part of the month will see the centre offering a targeted programme to engage young people in the area in a variety of "off site" activities. This is funded in part by the Positive Activities for Young People grant.
- 3.27 Staff from the centre will continue their work at the local skate park and surrounding area on a Friday evening.
- 3.28 **NRG:** This day time project, principally aimed at providing services for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), will continue to operate as normal during the summer period.
- 3.29 The Freeways project, offering a targeted service to young people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered, will take a break over the summer period in response to member's advice on their availability during this time.
- 3.30 **Great Hollands:** The evening provision offered from the Talk Shop in the Neighbourhood Centre will continue throughout the holiday period. Should attendance be low staff will redeploy onto the streets and parks to work with young people.
- 3.31 The staff team will support and attend the activity days funded by the Youth Service and offered through Bracknell Forest Homes. This project targets young residents of BFH properties in the area.

- 3.32 Consultation activities with young people will continue through the holiday period.
- 3.33 Additional provision is currently being explored with a group of young people in the area. This is likely to produce a Friday evening project at the Talk Shop.
- 3.34 **The Wayz:** Although no longer managed by the Youth Service, this is included for Members information as the main evening club provision from this centre is commissioned by the Youth Service.
- 3.35 The Ways will continue to offer its normal programme through the summer period, although the Junior Club session is cancelled in this period.
- 3.36 The highly successful “Day Camps” continue, offering daytime activities for children and young people aged 8 – 13 years through the week.
- 3.37 **Street Based Development Team:** The team will continue to work in the Birch Hill area on a Wednesday evening, and are programmed to support a football tournament in the area organised with the local PCSO.
- 3.38 The team will continue to support the twice monthly drop-in youth club organised by the local PCSO and local churches in Birch Hill.
- 3.39 The team will continue to focus on the Crowthorne area (as advised above). Attention will also be paid, in particular, to the grounds of South Hill Park.
- 3.40 The team have a limited capacity to respond to other geographical areas should consultation with other agencies (such as the police) suggest it is appropriate to do so.
- 3.41 **Duke of Edinburgh Award:** This project has a number of groups out on expeditions throughout the summer months, most notably a Gold Award group during the summer holiday period.
- 3.42 **Youth Opportunity Fund:** As in previous holiday periods the Youth Council, who manage the Youth Opportunity Fund, have released funds to allow young people to utilise vouchers to access a variety of purposeful activities over the holiday period. This includes access to golf, ice skating and also bowling activities amongst others. This approach to enabling engagement in positive activities has proved very successful and popular in the past.

### **Great Hollands Youth Centre Developments**

- 3.43 Members may be aware that the building and alterations work to the premises which are to become the new Great Hollands Youth Centre have been delayed due to necessary utilities works.
- 3.44 The Borough’s Building Surveyor advises that National Grid have completed their works and that Scottish and Southern Energy are anticipated to complete their works by 25<sup>th</sup> June.
- 3.45 This would allow the contractors to start their works from 28<sup>th</sup> June. Allowing for some contingencies the Building Surveyor anticipates the centre being opened at the end of September or beginning of August.
- 3.46 The Youth Service has recently employed a full time qualified youth worker to continue the work in the Great Hollands area. Debbie Coleman is continuing to operate the youth club and other services in the area. In addition she is working closely with Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People (BACYP) who have been commissioned to carry out a full consultation with young people in the area regarding the new provision.
- 3.47 This consultation process has involved young people from the local school, including those on a behaviour modification programme. Regular youth club attendees have



been involved, and additional consultation undertaken with children attending the local community lead youth club operating from the Community Centre.

- 3.48 A residential experience is being delivered in the New Forest as part of this consultation process for a representative group of young people. This will take place over the weekend of 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Mobile Provision**

- 3.49 Currently the Youth Service offers two youth work sessions that utilise the “Silver Bus”. These are in Sandhurst and in Birch Hill.
- 3.50 This mobile facility has proved to be very successful and has increased the opportunities for young people. The current vehicle is old and subject to frequent breakdown which results in periods of time when it is off the road. In addition, the driver of the vehicle requires a specialist licence. This greatly reduces the flexibility available in the operation of the vehicle.
- 3.51 Plans are underway to replace the current double decker bus with a significantly smaller vehicle. This is to be funded from the money allocated to enhance youth service provision across the area south of Bracknell Town Centre, funds released through the housing stock transfer.
- 3.52 A suitable vehicle and design have been identified. The vehicle will be more manoeuvrable, will not require a specialist driver, and will come as a new vehicle and coachworks with suitable warranties.
- 3.53 The final stages to purchase this vehicle are being undertaken following approval from the appropriate Chief Officer.

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Contact for further information**

Paul Crawte – Youth Service Manager 01344 464730  
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### **Doc. Ref**

O&S YS Report June 10

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 30 JUNE 2010

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### SCHOOL MEALS – TAKE UP AND ORGANISATION Assistant Chief Executive

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Panel Chairman has expressed a wish to establish a working group to undertake a brief review of the take up and organisation of school meals in the Borough owing to the associated funding implications. Further to this wish, the Panel is invited to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that such a review be added to the Panel's work programme for 2010/11 and to nominate some of its members to form a working group to undertake the review when officer resources become available.

#### 2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Panel recommends to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that a brief review of the take up and organisation of school meals be added to the Panel's work programme for 2010/11; and**
- 2.2 **Members of the Panel be nominated to form a working group to undertake this review when officer resources become available.**

#### Background Papers

None.

#### Contact for further information

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 30 JUNE 2010

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### **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN - WORKING GROUP UPDATE (Working Group Lead Member)**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report updates the Panel on the progress of the Working Group on Safeguarding Children.

#### **2 SUGGESTED ACTION**

- 2.1 **That the Panel notes the progress of the Working Group reviewing the arrangements for Safeguarding Children.**

#### **3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The 2010-11 Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny includes a new review by the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Panel on Safeguarding Children.
- 3.2 The Panel has formed a Working Group to progress this review. The Group comprises Councillors Mrs McCracken (Lead Member), Mrs Birch, Mrs Angell, Harrison and Kensall; and Teacher Representative Miss Richardson. The Group met for the first time on 21 May, when the main items were: receiving a briefing from the Director of Children, Young People and Learning and her staff; considering the scope of and arrangements for the review; and receiving some key documentation. The Group resolved that their overall purpose is to review whether the arrangements by the Council and its partners provide reasonable assurance and confidence that children at risk of significant harm in Bracknell Forest are properly safeguarded, with particular reference to child protection. The exact focus of the review will be refined following meetings with service users.
- 3.3 The Group are meeting next on 18 June, and a programme of further meetings is in the course of being arranged. The review will entail a deal of work, and the Group plan to complete it in time for their report to be presented to the Panel at its meeting on 12 January 2011.

#### Background Papers

2010-11 Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny

#### Contact for further information

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 30 JUNE 2010

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### EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN ITEMS RELATING TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

Assistant Chief Executive

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents current Executive Forward Plan items relating to Children, Young People and Learning for the Panel's consideration.

#### 2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the current Executive Forward Plan items relating to Children, Young People and Learning appended to this report.**

#### 3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Consideration of items on the Executive Forward Plan alerts the Panel to forthcoming Executive decisions and facilitates pre-decision scrutiny.
- 3.2 To achieve accountability and transparency of the decision making process, effective Overview and Scrutiny is essential. Overview and Scrutiny bodies are a key element of Executive arrangements and their roles include both developing and reviewing policy; and holding the Executive to account.
- 3.3 The power to hold the Executive to account is granted under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 which states that Executive arrangements of a local authority must ensure that its Overview and Scrutiny bodies have power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive. This includes the 'call in' power to review or scrutinise a decision made but not implemented and to recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the body / person that made it. This power does not relate solely to scrutiny of decisions and should therefore also be utilised to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.

#### Background Papers

Local Government Act 2000

#### Contact for further information

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**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**  
**EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME**

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I022436
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**TITLE:** Extension of Connexions Contract

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To renew the contract with Connexions Berkshire for a period of one or two years from April 2011.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Central government grant.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** To be determined.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** To be determined .

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Jul 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I023316
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**TITLE:** School Places Plan

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To ask the Executive to approve the School Places Plan.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places through its Capital Programme including Government Grant and Section 106 contributions.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** CYP&L School Organisation Planning Group  
CYP&L DMT  
Executive Member for Education  
Development Planning Team Manager

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meetings with interested parties.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 14 Sep 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I023318
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**TITLE:** Development Plan for Adult Learning 2010-2011

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To approve the plan as a basis for receiving grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive Member for Education

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** Not applicable.

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Not applicable.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Jul 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I023337
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**TITLE:** Bracknell Forest Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2010-2011

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** Approval of the plan prior to forwarding to the Youth Justice Board.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** YOS Performance Management Group  
 Crime and Disorder Partnership  
 Department Management Team CYP&L

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** Meetings with interested parties.

**DATE OF DECISION:** 13 Jul 2010

<b>REFERENCE</b>	I023605
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**TITLE:** Grow Our Own Progress Report

**PURPOSE OF DECISION:** To present a progress report on the Grow Our Own Project.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Within existing budget.

**WHO WILL TAKE DECISION:** Executive

**PRINCIPAL GROUPS TO BE CONSULTED:** n/a

**METHOD OF CONSULTATION:** n/a

**DATE OF DECISION:** 14 Sep 2010

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