

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
4 JULY 2012
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard, Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Kensall, Mrs Temperton and Dr Barnard

Mrs S Cauchi, Parent Governor Representative
Ms C Mitchell, Children's Social Care Representative

Executive Member:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Councillor Leake
Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Scrutiny)
Sandra Davies, Head of Performance & Governance
Karen Frost, Early Years Manager
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Sheila McKeand, Head of Service: Looked After Children
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Performance & Resources
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Ms Whitbread and Mrs McCracken
Mr D Moss, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Birch be elected Chairman of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2012/13.

COUNCILLOR MRS BIRCH IN THE CHAIR

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Ms Whitbread be appointed Vice Chairman of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2012/13.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 18 April 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **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.

5. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

6. **Public Participation**

No submissions from members of the public submitted under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny had been received.

7. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The Panel noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meeting from 27 June 2012. The Chairman stated that it had been a very informative meeting and in particular the presentation from the Fostering Association had been inspiring.

8. **Quarterly Service Report**

The Director of Children, Young People & Learning reported that the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) was now presented in a new format, which she hoped members would find helpful.

The Director reported on the following elements from the QSR:

- *Ofsted inspection at Wildmoor Heath*, it was noted that details had been omitted from the quarter 4 QSR and the Director therefore informed members that whilst Wildmoor Heath had been subject to Special Measures in January, interim monitoring by Ofsted in April had shown satisfactory progress.
- *School places* - there were currently sufficient school places in the Borough, however population trends in Bracknell Forest showed an increasing birth rate. New housing in the Borough had also led to an increase in the need for school places. The future need for additional forms of entry and bulge classes in existing schools were under consideration.
- *School admission appeals* – more appeals had been received this year in comparison to previous years. The Director paid tribute to the School Admissions Team who had worked hard to predict the need for school places as well as to provide responses to appeals.
- *Youth provision* – A key strand of the modernisation process around youth provision was to consider town centre provision. The Group considering this included young people, who co-chaired meetings. Following the closure of three youth centres, discussions were currently underway with parishes as to how this provision could be replaced. There was currently a wide range of summer activities scheduled for the summer months for young people.
- *Academy Status* – Discussions around academy status continued to take place with schools, but there was currently little appetite from schools to pursue this.
- *Changes to Special Educational Needs (SEN)* – Following the Green Paper there would be major changes to SEN, including changes to school funding and the provision from schools. There would be briefings for headteachers shortly on this as well as further discussions with schools planned in the autumn.

The Panel noted that the Headteacher from Ranelagh would be attending their next meeting to talk through her experience of academy status.

In response to member's queries, the Chief Officer: Performance and Resources reported that there were currently 140 surplus places at secondary schools across the Borough at Sandhurst, Easthampstead Park and The Brakenhale schools. There had been 38 appeals lodged for secondary schools. 34 for Garth Hill, of which 10 had been allowed and 4 for Edgbarrow which had all been refused.

In terms of primary schools there were currently 31 surplus places across the Borough at Great Hollands, Sandy Lane and College Town schools. 50 appeals had been lodged and were in the process of being heard. Plans were in place to deal with the pressure on primary school places.

There were currently 13 families who had refused their school place but had not indicated where their children would be educated.

The School Admissions team were currently delivering a series of talks to parents around primary to secondary transfers, these talks were usually very well attended.

In response to members' queries, the Chief Officer: Performance and Resources reported that annually, Admissions Guidance was consulted upon and the message from consultation had been that designated area should be given higher priority over having a sibling at the school.

It was reported that the proportion of children attending private education had not changed significantly locally.

9. 2011/12 Annual Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints Report

The Head of Performance Management and Governance reported that the report included complaints from children in social care only and did not relate to children's services generally. She reported that the Complaints Manager who had been in post for considerable time had now retired, a new appointment had been made.

It was reported that the percentage of complaints made against referrals was less than one percent. Every effort was made to deal with complaints at an early stage, stage one. If a complaint progressed to stage two, this would be investigated by an independent person.

It was reported that the highest number of complaints were received around safeguarding, due to the high level of need in this service area. The report also detailed actions as a result of complaints.

Members of the Panel were pleased to see the low level of complaints and also that compliments were also now being recorded.

In response to members' queries, it was reported that often timescales involved in resolving complaints may be a little more lengthy to allow thorough investigation and negotiation with the complainant.

The Head of Performance and Governance agreed to provide members with the overall number of people that had made complaints and whether there were any repeat complainants.

10. **Presentation - Child Poverty Strategy and 'Troubled Families' Initiative**

The Early Years Manager delivered a presentation on Child Poverty and the Troubled Families Initiative and made the following points:

- A child Poverty Strategy was now in place for 2011-2014 and was called Breaking the Cycle. There were three outcome priorities and one underpinning priority: i) To raise the family income of those families living in poverty, ii) To mitigate the impacts of living in poverty and iii) To improve outcomes for children and young people with a focus on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Underpinning priority: To increase awareness and challenge perceptions of child poverty and build a framework for the future.
- To date: all priorities had been progressed, the action plan continued to develop with a large number of actions already met. Other strategic plans had been linked to child poverty.
- Some of the work being delivered included:
 - Work with 14-16 year olds and 16 plus, who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), this work involved alternative curriculums and work placements.
 - An increased entitlement to childcare for vulnerable families with two year olds.
 - A joint project was currently underway with Buckinghamshire County Council and would involve tracking two year olds and their journey through early year's provision.
 - The Family Information Service staff were now all trained to offer advice around benefits. Discussions with providers such as Credit Union were also being undertaken to support families with debt and loan difficulties.
- Next Steps: As the government were currently revisiting work around child poverty it was possible that definitions may change, measures may change and as a result the Council's strategy may need to be revised.
- Troubled Families: Child poverty was a key indicator of a Troubled Family. The government was keen to look at families that had many issues. 115 families in Bracknell Forest were identified as being troubled families. These families would be targeted using a three year programme and funding would be secured on a results basis.
- Progress to date with the Troubled Families Initiative:
 - A project plan was in place
 - A project board and project team were in place
 - Grant had been approved by DCLG
 - Information sharing protocols were in place
 - Families were being identified
 - Local need criteria had been identified – neglect
 - Work would commence with families from September
- Both the Poverty Strategy and the Troubled Families Initiative would sit within the Early Intervention Strategy and would be key to achieving a range of priorities and most importantly would have a huge impact on the Borough's children, young people and their families.

The Early Years Manager agreed to provide information around the correlation between NEET and troubled families.

The Director of Children, Young People & Learning reported that the Troubled Families Initiative would enable numerous services to work together, including from the voluntary sector and other partners. This should mean that instead of a family coming into contact with numerous officers and having lots of interventions, one or

two officers would interface with the family and respond to all needs in a co-ordinated response. Information sharing protocols would be key to this work.

The Chief Officer: Performance and Resources reported that a conference would be held on 26 September and there would be a speaker from the Troubled Families Unit. There would be a focus on the impact for Bracknell Forest, members would receive invitations to the conference in the upcoming weeks.

The Chairman asked that an annual progress update be provided on the Troubled Families Initiative, which was known locally as 'Family Focus'.

11. Presentation - Review of the Common Assessment Framework Process in Schools

The Head of Performance Management and Governance delivered a presentation on the review of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and made the following points:

- The O&S review of the CAF had been published in January 2012, the majority of recommendations had been accepted by the Executive and one recommendation had been partially accepted.
- There was an ongoing review of the CAF, which was taking place alongside O&S work. This work had included consultation with key partners and stakeholders. Up to March 2012, 22 agencies had contributed to the process and the process was still underway. Contributions had also been received from young people.
- A significant amount of work had been undertaken to respond to the feedback from consultation to date.

The Head of Performance Management and Governance agreed to provide members with information around whether the CAF process had led to improved transitions for young people or improved opportunities for young people.

12. Presentation - Key Outcomes for Children, Young People and Learning

The Director of Children, Young People & Learning delivered a presentation around trend data concerning key outcomes for Children, Young People and Learning to demonstrate the measure of prevention and early intervention success. The Director made the following points:

- A Needs Analysis for 2012 had now been published and was based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The information provided a helpful analysis in terms of Bracknell Forest Children's Services on a ward by ward level.
- Increasingly the focus would be on prevention and early intervention as opposed to managing families in crisis. The Children and Young People Strategy also focused on prevention and early intervention.

The Head of Performance Management and Governance made the following point:

- Through the integrated pathways model, an early intervention hub was to be established. This would provide a single point of access for the Common Assessment Framework. The hub would be introduced in the autumn and would make the process easier for schools.

Members were assured that personal information was controlled very carefully through information sharing protocols.

The Head of Performance Management and Governance agreed to send all external Panel members as well as Cllr Mrs Temperton copies of the Needs Analysis 2012.

The Chairman congratulated the team on establishing the hub, it would ensure co-ordinated communication between Children's Services and schools effectively.

13. **Annual Report of Foster Care Service 2011-12**

The Head of Service for Looked After Children presented the Annual Report on the Foster Care Service 2011-12 and made the following points:

- For a number of years Bracknell Forest had participated in a combined Fostering Panel with neighbouring local authorities, however more recently due to the volume of business that needed to be considered by the Panel, a separate panel for the Borough had been established. The Panel now had a new chairman and seemed to be operating effectively.
- There were an increasing number of fostering households in the Borough and the overall number of placements in one household had also increased.
- The Ofsted inspection carried out in June 2011 had described the Service as good with outstanding features.
- There had been a steady increase in the number of Looked After Children in 2011-12, there had not been an increase in adolescents but there had been an increase in younger children. Some of this may be attributed to the way the Service dealt with neglect and a better understanding of neglect.
- The Service made every attempt to support parents however it was recognised that there were some parents that were never going to be able to change.
- Placement stability figures were 74% which to some extent reflected the quality of foster carers. The number of children moving placements two or three times had fallen to 10% and the team were still working to reduce this further.
- In terms of recruitment the onus had been on Bracknell carers for Bracknell children. The recruitment drive undertaken had led to the recruitment of a number of good foster carers. The Service was on target to achieve another 12 households of foster carers this year.
- The Bracknell Forest Care Association had worked hard to develop themselves and had successfully created a community of Looked After Children.

Members made the point that often a great deal of investment and training was offered to foster carers who offered short term placements, it was important that these foster carers took on enough placements to justify this level of investment.

14. **Adoption Service Annual Report 2011-12**

The Head of Service for Looked After Children reported on the Adoption Service Annual Report 2011-12:

- The Ofsted inspection of the Service in March 2012 had found the service to be satisfactory.
- There had been a rise in the number of children that needed to be adopted in 2011-12, as a result there had been a recruitment exercise to respond to the

need. Changes were expected in the future around making the timescales shorter, in which authorities needed to place children for adoption, which would create pressure.

Members congratulated the team on their work and in particular their work around preventing disruptions to a child's placement.

15. **Work Programme 2012/13**

The Panel noted the work programme for 2012/13 and noted that the working group around Schools Governance had not begun work yet and this would need to be started at the earliest opportunity. Given current commitments, this working group was likely to begin work in the autumn and conclude at Christmas.

16. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel noted the forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan.

CHAIRMAN