

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
16 JANUARY 2013
7.30 - 9.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Brossard, Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Kensall and Mrs Temperton

Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Heydon and Mrs McCracken

Mrs C Mitchell, Children's Social Care Representative

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Also Present:

Lesley Adams, Senior Admissions Officer

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer(Overview and Scrutiny)

Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care

Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning

Alex Walters, Independent Chair, Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board

Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

29. Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Allen for Councillor Heydon

30. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3 October 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Panel received previously circulated information on school admission appeals and on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In response to a Member's question regarding the number of children not offered their first school preference, the Panel was informed that a significant number of parents, particularly those applying for a primary place, expressed a preference for a school that they liked rather than their local school.

31. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest nor any indications that Members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

32. Public Participation

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

33. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

The Panel noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meeting of 12 December 2012.

Arising from Members' questions and comments:

- It was agreed to circulate the Life Chances Team Annual Report when available.
- The Panel was informed that social workers were being recruited and it was anticipated that caseloads would reduce once new staff had been appointed. Currently 4 agency staff were employed. The length of agency staff appointment varied, the longest period being for cover for maternity leave.

34. Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2011/12

The Independent Chair of Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) presented its annual report 2011/12 on the effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection practice in the locality.

The report set out the various ways that the LSCB assessed the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements including:

- Section 11 safeguarding self-assessments
- Individual case analysis (including child deaths and Serious Case Reviews)
- Review of safeguarding incidents
- Review of performance management information.

The report also detailed the LSCB's achievements in 2011/12, the challenges faced during this year and provided statistical information giving comparative data with previous years.

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

- The number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice system had increased by 68% between 2010/11 and 2011/12. This was partly due to a Thames Valley Police restructure and the numbers were now reducing. Information in respect of youth offending preventative work would be circulated to the Panel.
- There had been a 16% reduction in the number of sexual offences against those aged 17 and under in 2011/12 compared with the previous year. This continued to be a high priority for the Board.
- There was no direct correlation between the rise in the number of statutory homeless children and the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice system. However the level of homelessness and the impact on families of changes in the benefit system continued to be monitored closely.
- The composition of the Clinical Commissioning Group was reported.
- It was agreed to circulate information to clarify the graph illustrating the rate of statutory homeless children 2010-2012. It was thought that there were

currently no children in bed and breakfast accommodation outside the Borough.

The Panel noted the Local Safeguarding Children Board 2011/12 Annual Report and thanked Alex Walters, Independent Chair, for her presentation.

35. **2011/12 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Children's Social Care**

The Panel considered the 2011/12 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for Children's Social Care which set out the work of the IRO Service over the period 1 September 2011 – 31 March 2012.

The report identified a number of areas of good practice and highlighted areas for development within the service for looked after children. These included:

- 100% of the 170 Looked After Children reviews were carried out within the statutory timescales. This was the second consecutive year that all reviews were conducted on time.
- Child participation in reviews had risen to 100% compared with 97.1% in 2010/11.
- The Child Participation Development Officer now sat within the same team as the IRO service, creating increased opportunities for joint working.
- As a consequence of the changes to the Short Break Statutory Guidance in May 2010 there were now fewer children who met the criteria for Short Break Care.
- An increase in the recruitment of local Foster Carers had enabled more children to remain in the local community.

Following further discussion, the Head of Performance Management and Governance agreed:

- to circulate information regarding the number of children who no longer meet the criteria for Short Break Care.
- to consider the inclusion of negative as well as positive comments in future reports.

36. **2013/14 Draft Budget Proposals**

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented a report on the key themes and priorities for the Children, Young People and Learning Department as outlined in the Council's Draft Budget Proposals for 2013/14. The key themes included draft budget pressures, draft budget savings, draft budget net position, capital spend, staffing implications, and fees, charges and other income.

It was reported that the Department was subject to budget pressures of approximately £484,000 which were due to an increase in the number of looked after children and an increase in the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans, a significant increase in the workload of the SEN Team and new national funding reforms. In addition the Department was proposing savings of approximately £398,000 in 2013/14..

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

- It was proposed to reduce the Children's Centre budget by £15,000 on the assumption that it would exceed its income targets by this amount.
- A review of the Youth Service would deliver cost reductions and widen the remit of the lead postholder.
- The contract for advice for 13-19 year olds had been reconfigured to deliver a cost saving without impacting on the level of service.
- Efficiencies of £17,000 had been negotiated in relation to fostering agencies and services would be provided locally where there was relevant capacity.

37. **Quarterly Service Report (QSR)**

The Panel considered the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) and progress against Service Plan actions for the second quarter of 2012/2013 (July to September). The Panel also considered a table setting out Ofsted inspection outcomes for the Borough's schools up to December 2012 and a presentation by the Chief Officer Children's Social Care, on permanent placements for children and young people in care.

With regard to the school inspections, the Panel was informed of Ofsted's current priority areas, which included the support given to schools by the local authority. All recent inspection reports had graded the authority's support to schools as good.

The Panel noted the outcome of school inspections and requested that details, including previous inspections, be submitted to future meetings.

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

- As at December 2012, there were 101 Looked After Children (LAC).
- The steady increase in the number of LAC under the age of 10 was partly due to more early intervention.
- There were no children's residential homes in the Borough apart from Larchwood, Short Break Unit for disabled children.
- There was a national shortage of adopters which impacted on placements for older children; sibling groups and children with complex needs.
- Efforts to recruit adopters included adverts in the annual press and informal coffee mornings. Once potential adopters had applied they could attend preparation groups which were held frequently across Berkshire.
- Subject to their suitability, the aim was for potential adopters' applications to be considered by the Adoption Panel as soon as possible and within 8 months. The time taken to place a child with adoptive families varied considerably as it was vital to ensure a suitable match.
- Adoption placements were reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer four weeks after being made.
- The Family Placement Team provided support for all children placed by Bracknell Forest (wherever they lived) for 3 years after the adoption order, in accordance with statutory guidelines plus on-going support for those living within Bracknell Forest.
- Special Guardians were often adults known to the child in need of a placement, such as an aunt, grandparent or a current foster carer.
- A bid for an early intervention and prevention grant to fund adoption placements had been successful.

The Panel thanked the Chief Officer Children's Social Care for her presentation.

38. Annual Admission Arrangements 2014/15

The Panel considered the draft annual schools admission arrangements 2014/15 which were currently out for public consultation prior to approval by the Executive in March.

Members suggested that further consideration should be given to the wording of the admissions criteria for primary schools regarding siblings, citing cases where this had an adverse impact on younger siblings. The Panel was informed that, when parents were offered a place for their child at a school outside of their designated area they were told that a place for younger siblings could not be guaranteed. However, Members felt that as some children went to schools outside of their locality because there were no places at the nearest school, the matter should be reviewed.

Members also suggested that, in view of the low response rates to the consultation, consideration should be given to new methods of consulting on the admission arrangements.

39. Working Group Update Report and 2013/14 Work Programme

The Panel considered a report which set out the progress achieved to date by the working group reviewing school governance and noted that the review was progressing well. The Panel was also invited to suggest topics for inclusion in its 2013/14 work programme and suggested the following :

- The Provision of School Places
- Supporting Disadvantaged Children and Families
- Youth Service Provision
- Education Transport Policy
- Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools Update
- Substance Misuse

40. Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions

The Panel noted the scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

In response to a Member's question, the Panel was informed that the Sensory Consortium contract related to the renewal of pan-Berkshire contract for the provision of specialist support for visually and hearing impaired children.

CHAIRMAN