

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
18 JULY 2017
7.30 - 9.15 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Virgo and Mrs Temperton
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs McCracken

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Lorraine Collins, Strategy & Development Manager Over 5s
Ian Dixon, Head of Targeted Services
Karen Frost, Head of Prevention and Early Intervention, Bracknell Forest Council
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Rachel Morgan, Head of Standards and Effectiveness
Councillor Peacey

56. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Birch be elected Chairman of the Panel for the municipal year 2017/18.

COUNCILLOR MRS BIRCH IN THE CHAIR

57. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Brossard be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the municipal year 2017/18.

58. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 25 April 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

60. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

61. **Public Participation**

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

62. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 23 June 2017 were noted.

63. **Quarterly Service Report**

The Chairman introduced this item by referring to the recently issued Ofsted Inspection report on Bracknell Forest Council's services for children. The Inspectors judged the department to be 'good' overall, with its work with looked after children, adoption performance and the experience and progress of care leavers all judged to be outstanding. Inspectors found that children in the borough benefit from 'highly aspirational, committed senior managers and political leaders who place them [children] firmly at the centre of their decision making'.

On behalf of the Panel the Chairman thanked and congratulated all the staff of the department for their hard work, which had been recognised fully in the Ofsted report. The Panel was happy to note that the report had made a point of commending the contribution of all staff and referred specifically to the rigorous scrutiny of the quality of services for children exercised by the Panel. These comments were echoed by the Executive Member, who indicated that after further consideration of the report in discussion with partners, there would be an opportunity in the autumn for the Panel to consider it more fully and look in detail at the Ofsted recommendations and action plan.

Turning to the Quarterly Service Report (QSR), the Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance for the fourth quarter of 2016/17 (January to March 2017) relating to Children, Young People and Learning. The Chief Officer: Children's Social Care made a presentation to the Panel about the Council's services for children, reporting particularly on a number of areas in which the Panel had expressed an interest. The total number of children looked after, children on child protection plans and children in need had risen substantially over the last year to almost 800. There were currently 152 children on child protection plans (down from a peak of 171 at the time of the Ofsted inspection) and 136 children in care. Ward data showed where the greatest number of children looked after or on child protection plans were located. The majority of looked after children were placed in Bracknell Forest foster care. A resume of the range of court work involving Children's Services was given; most areas were experiencing a big increase over the last few months. During April to June 2017, there were 27 care proceedings cases involving 44 children. There were 47 cases currently in court (more than all other Berkshire Authorities except Reading) of which 7 had proceeded beyond the 26 week timetable. There were a variety of reasons for an increase in the complexity of a case which in turn extended the duration of the proceedings.

Arising from questions and discussion, the following points were noted:

- There were approximately 60 social workers, some part time (including managers up to Chief officer level) currently in post, organised in various teams.
- There was a good, stable work force in post but the recent increases in the numbers of children requiring the Council's services presented a considerable challenge, which was being met through staff working longer hours and needing to engage additional agency social workers.
- At this stage it was not possible to say whether the current high levels of work would continue or whether there would be resource implications in the longer term. The Executive Member reminded the Panel of the ongoing investigation into the use of resources and current trends in service provision together with the benefit that would accrue from implementation of the transformation project, both designed to make better and more effective use of the resources available to the Council.
- The decision to place a child under a child protection order was taken jointly by all the agencies and therefore schools felt involved and supported in this action. Through regular monitoring and conference meetings there was opportunity for impact to be measured or changes made. The family support adviser (FSA) was assisted and youth workers attended all schools to speak on such matters as substance abuse.
- Although there had been a temporary interruption in the service, the Youth Offending Service (YOS) Prevention Service was available to take referrals. Attention was drawn to the programme of work with Year 8 pupils (with separate sessions for girls and boys) which had shown very positive outcomes in attitude and behaviour.

The Panel received a copy of the OFSTED Inspection Outcomes for schools, including published reports to July 2017. This covered the five schools receiving Inspection reports in the current academic year (with one report yet to be issued for Ascot Heath Junior School). Also, there were three schools that had recently become academies.

Arising from questions and discussion of the Inspection Outcomes report and the QSR, the Panel noted:

- The minutes of the last meeting of the School Improvement Advisory Board would be submitted to the next Panel Meeting.
- The Learning Improvement Strategy Framework set out a procedure to be followed when standards in a school were not good enough. The steps taken when a 'Declaration of Concern' had been issued were described, together with form of monitoring and measurement of progress carried out in conjunction with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors.
- Ofsted took a risk based approach to programming school inspections, so that higher performing schools were likely to be inspected less frequently. Ofsted usually carried out a desk top analysis every three years to determine those schools at higher risk of falling standards to be selected for inspection.
- Figures on school exclusions during the summer term were not yet available and would be reported at the next meeting of the Panel.

- Comment was made on progress to develop sufficient child care places for all two year olds. Free childcare for 15 hours per week for two year olds was dependent on eligibility criteria; some registered child minders had signed up to offer this while others were still considering it. The working model for child minders and available funding was quite complex and the Panel suggested that this would be an appropriate area on which to consider a report at a future meeting.
- An explanation was given of the plans to develop accommodation for care leavers, through working with Bracknell Forest's Housing Section to provide accommodation by revamping Holly House and not the Waymead site. The Panel requested that a members' visit to Rainforest walk and Holly House be arranged in the Autumn to learn more about this accommodation scheme. The annual figure for 16 and 17 year olds who were NEET was 3.9% in Bracknell which compared to a national figure of 6-7%. Schools were supported to target those (from Year 10 onwards) who did not have a destination planned for age 16+.
- An independent review of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had indicated that it was performing well. This could be another facility worthy of a member visit, although it may be necessary to limit numbers.
- Further explanation of the performance indicator L139s, Percentage of Secondary Schools rated good or better was requested, and the reason for the apparent low target of 67%.

64. **Statements of Purpose For 2017/18 and Annual Reports for 2016/17**

The Panel received for information a report presenting the Statements of Purpose 2017/18 and Annual Reports 2016/17 for:

- The Adoption Service
- The Private Fostering Service
- Larchwood Short Break Unit

The Panel noted that as a result of the Government review of Adoption, Adopt Berkshire was moving forward with plans to become part of a regional adoption agency – Adopt Thames Valley, which was to include Oxfordshire, Reading and Swindon as participating authorities. Oxfordshire would be the Host Authority. This would provide economies of scale and create greater choice while maintaining the standards of Adopt Berkshire and the opportunity for local people to support local children.

The Panel was reminded that Larchwood was a short break unit, providing short breaks, respite care and activities in the community for children with complex needs who had a learning and/or physical disability. As some members had not visited Larchwood, it was suggested that a visit be arranged at a convenient time during the next few months.

65. **Work with Young Carers**

The Head of Prevention and Early Intervention gave a presentation to the Panel on the service to provide support to young carers under the age of 18, or to young adult carers up to age 25. This included an assessment of what

needed to change in order to prevent them from undertaking 'excessive or inappropriate' caring responsibilities which could impact on their welfare, wellbeing, education, or social development.

The service was co-ordinated by a Strategic Group, comprising a wide range of partners, who had developed terms of reference, a Young Carers Strategy, guidance for professionals and other appropriate protocols designed to underpin a range of provision to support young people in a caring role. The service was supported and endorsed by both The Carers Trust and The Children's Society.

The Panel noted the profile of young carers in the Borough:

- 190 young carers (107 female; 83 male)
- 39 young adult carers
- 48 had their own diagnosis of needs
- 133 have had Children's Services interventions
- 26 were on Child Protection Plans
- Young carers were tracked via schools, areas, gender, ages and ethnicity
- Severe mental health issues account for 50% of the young carers providing care to an adult

The Panel received information about the family assessment for young carers, which enabled the right advice and guidance to be offered, with targeted support or referral to the Early Intervention hub if appropriate. The Young Carers in Schools Award, produced and regulated by The Carers Trust and The Children's Society, had been introduced. This featured bronze, silver and gold awards and had been very successful, producing noticeable improvements in the self-confidence of and attainment by young carers.

The Panel recognised that while details of the profile and support for young carers had been provided, the carers themselves did not identify as a group, nor did they wish to do so.

The Panel thanked Karen Frost for the interesting and informative presentation.

66. **Working Group Update Report**

Owing to the lack of Scrutiny support at present, the review of Early Intervention Services had yet to get under way. The Chairman reported attendance at a very interesting conference on the Pupil Premium, with some excellent speakers providing lots of practical ideas for schools, teachers and parents.

The Panel was informed that the latest Pupil Premium data would not be available until the end of July. A consultation about the Pupil Premium covering 13 schools in the Borough had been carried out and the results would be reported to the Panel in September.

67. **Executive Forward Plan**

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

CHAIRMAN