

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
11 JANUARY 2017
7.30 - 9.10 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Mrs McCracken, Peacey and Mrs Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Skinner and Virgo
Ms C Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Executive Members:

Councillors Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Ian Dixon, Head of Targeted Services
Nikki Edwards, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention
Councillors Leake & McCracken

25. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

Councillor Peacey substituted for Councillor Virgo.

26. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the 7 September 2016 meeting of the Panel were approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

27. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

28. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

29. Public Participation

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

30. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The minutes of the meetings of the Panel on 21 September 2016 and 7 December 2016 were noted.

Members were advised that the Pamper Packs referred to in the minutes of the meeting on 21 September 2016 contained information and guidance for children and families such as signposting to mental health services and other resources.

31. **Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)**

The Panel received the Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) 2015/16.

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning drew Members' attention to the LSCB priority areas which had been identified for 2016/17:

- Increase the effectiveness of the safeguarding journey for children and young people.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements to reduce the impact of violence on children and young people.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements to provide Early Help provision.
- Strengthen arrangements in place to safeguard missing children and those at risk of child sexual exploitation.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the steps partners must take to counter hate crime and extremism.

Pupil Exclusions

Members discussed the number of permanent exclusions which, whilst remaining static over the last two years, had seen two permanent exclusions in 2015/16 for primary aged pupils. There had been an increase nationally and locally in challenging behaviour leading to an increase in fixed term exclusions in Bracknell Forest primary schools. An analysis of the figures showed this was due to multiple incidents by some pupils as opposed to a significant increase in the number of pupils displaying disruptive behaviour. It was discussed that this was partly attributable to the changing demographic in the local area and that some children faced increasing challenging issues at home. It was noted that there had been an increase in schools of aggressive behaviour by a significant minority of parents defending their children more strongly. The Director said the LSCB were focused on ongoing work to tackle the reasons which can encompass issues faced by some children at home.

The impact of substance and alcohol misuse on children, young people and families

In quarter 3 2015/16, the percentage of people in treatment who lived with children/all in treatment in Bracknell Forest was higher than the national average and at the end of 2015/16 there were still twelve adults in treatment who had children subject to safeguarding. Some of the key factors included mental health issues and domestic abuse in the family home. It was noted that Berkshire Women's Aid were having to turn away some referrals due to the high volume they received leading to an increased need for Council intervention.

The LSCB Board included Councillor Gareth Barnard in the role of Participating Observer and a request was made for either Councillors Mrs Birch or Mrs McCracken

to also attend meetings occasionally to observe. The Director said she would put the request to the LSCB Chair and would also circulate the updated Board structure to include details of the newly appointed lay member.

32. **Quarterly Service Report**

The Panel received the Quarterly Service Report, July to September 2016, relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

In response to discussion, the following points were noted:

- An allowance had been made in the budget for the new Apprenticeship Levy which had been introduced in grant maintained schools. However, the levy was not payable if the school employed an apprentice.
- Unacceptable treatment of apprentices – for example poor conditions or no travel allowance or sick leave – which made it hard for the apprentice to continue, should be raised in the first instance with the appropriate school or college governing board or Chief Executive if the employer was a private provider.
- 18 employees in Children, Young People and Learning voluntarily left the organisation during the quarter. All leavers were offered exit interviews, of which only 2 were taken up. It was agreed this was a disappointingly low number as it was important for the organisation to understand the reasons why people had chosen to leave.
- With regard to levels of attainment and pupil progress across all phases of learning for all pupils, the gap narrowed in phonics by 5% at Year 1 and 7% for pupils retaking in Year 2. The gap narrowed overall at Key Stage (KS)1 but this was not a direct comparison due to changes in testing. A significant gap remained at KS2 and although it narrowed marginally at KS4, the gap remained significant. This was a key priority for Children, Young People and Learning. It was requested that data was provided to Members to show individual results for all schools, not just those that were not performing well. The Director advised there had been a recent change in language and ‘narrowing the gap’ was now known as ‘diminishing the difference’.
- The stability of placements of Looked After Children, length of placement (aged under 16 and looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, who were in the same placement for at least 2 years at the end of the quarter) was 51.9% against the target of 60%. This was due to a number of different factors including children stepping down from residential to foster care, those being placed with adoptive families but not yet adopted and even those who stayed with the same foster carer but who had moved house, which the Department for Education (DfE) counted as a change. It was noted however that sometimes older teenagers could prove very challenging for foster carers and this aspect was monitored on a monthly basis.
- With regard to fixed term exclusions, Ian Dixon, Head of Targeted Services, reported the following data to the end of July 2016:
 - Brakenhale - 12 pupils accounted for 28 exclusions leading to 90 days lost
 - Garth Hill – 29 pupils accounted for 37 exclusions leading to 117 days lost
 - Sandy Lane – 8 pupils accounted for 14 exclusions leading to 28 days lostThe Head of Targeted Services said the majority of incidents were as a result of persistent disruptive behaviour but had also included aggression towards adults.
- 10 managed moves had taken place during the quarter which was felt to be a high figure at the end of an academic year. 2 pupils moved from Brakenhale to College Hall, 1 pupil moved from Garth Hill College to Brakenhale and the majority of the rest had moved from various other schools to College Hall. Concern was raised that some managed moves had taken place between schools that already

had problems which could lead to additional difficulties for those schools. It was felt that it might be preferable for problem pupils to be moved to better schools so they could be exposed to better role models. Members were advised that when planning managed moves, consideration had to be given to parental right of choice and perception and travel times and methods. In particular, the better primary schools were located away from the town centre so could be too far away for some children to travel to. However, managed moves were implemented to prevent permanent exclusion with some being to better schools and an example was given of where this had led to a successful outcome for the pupil.

Inspection Outcomes (Schools)

The Panel reviewed the published Inspection Outcome reports for schools to the end of December 2016. The results showed that the number of schools rated as Outstanding and Good was 77% against a national average of 89%. Councillor Dr Barnard said work was being undertaken to look at ways to change how school inspections were reviewed. There would be an increased focus and targeted approach on schools that were causing concern to decide what steps were necessary towards making improvement. The Panel noted that some of the Outstanding and Good results were historic and schools could move to a different category if they were inspected now so there would also be a focus on ensuring the better results were maintained.

Councillor Dr Barnard said that good leadership and a good school environment were key factors in attaining good results and the 'make up' of schools – number of pupils receiving free meals, the school located in a deprived area – did not and should not be used to explain poor results.

Looked After Children Update

The Panel received a handout showing the percentage of Looked After Children by Ward to the end of March 2016. Members noted that the highest percentage of Looked After Children came from Old Bracknell (16%), Great Hollands North (14%) and Harmans Water (13%). Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care said a number of children had been on Child Protection plans before being removed whilst a few had gone straight into care following a significant or serious incident.

The number of Looked After Children in the Borough equated to 38.7 per 10,000 population compared to the national rate of 60 children per 10,000 population.

A request was made for future data to include the actual number of Looked After Children by Ward as well as by percentage.

33. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2015/16

David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources & Early Intervention, presented the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2015/16.

The Panel noted the following:

- The report identified that the work of the IRO Service was set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook 2010, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011 and updated in June 2015.
- Challenges faced by IROs included delays in care planning, regulatory Looked After Children (LAC) visits not taking place within timescales, drift in follow up

actions in the agreed care plan, lack of information available to IROs regarding care planning, social work reports not always being provided for LAC reviews and level of contact and other contact issues. The report contained examples of challenges made by the IRO Service and the outcomes which had been achieved as a result.

The report set out the actions for 2016/17 which included the following and it had been agreed to undertake quarterly reviews in order to check progress against each target:

- Implementation of social media technology to enable children and young people to be offered wider accessible options to communicate with their IRO.
- Improve opportunities for fathers to participate in LAC review meetings.
- IRO Service to look at how performance information can be shared with senior managers more frequently.
- Continued performance monitoring and quality assurance of the work of the team.
- Delivery of workshops/seminars to Social Workers and Managers to ensure the role of the IRO was clearly understood and new staff to have a detailed induction along with refresher briefings and research updates.
- Consistent attendance/representation at South East Regional Groups and pan-Berkshire IRO/Guardian meetings to increase networking and support opportunities on a quarterly basis to help build upon and share good practice for all children and young people in care.
- Development of further peer support through opportunities for group supervision for IROs to improve child-centred reflective practice.

The report included two case studies of child participation in LAC reviews which Members found valuable as they provided evidence of the work undertaken by IROs. The case studies demonstrated that the children had a good experience of their review and that their views and feelings had been listened to and understood.

During the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, a total of 129 parents (mothers and fathers) attended their child's LAC review meeting. Of these only 28 were fathers and Members questioned why this figure was so low. One of the factors for this was that some of the mothers were lone parents or sole carers but it was also that it could prove to be a challenge to engage fathers in the review process. The report stated that the IRO Service had recognised the low figures for attendance by fathers and aimed to improve the opportunities for fathers to participate in the review meetings of their children during the next review period.

34. Children's Social Care Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Annual Report 2015/16

The Panel received the Children's Social Care Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Annual Report for 2015/16.

Members said it was heart-warming to see compliments contained within the report as they provided evidence of balance between the complaints and concerns raised over the same period. The number of compliments received in the year 2015/16 was 227, an increase of 46 from the previous year and the report contained examples of a range of compliments received from parents, carers and members of the legal profession.

Good learning had been achieved from the process of investigating complaints by providing a valuable source of information to identify service problems, make

improvements and enhance departmental practice. When a complaints case was closed to Children's Social Care, a feedback form was sent to the parent/carer to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on how they felt they had been supported by the Department. The report contained examples of some of the feedback that had been received, some of which was very good with some comments providing an opportunity to develop service improvement.

35. **Life Chances Team Annual Report 2015/16**

The Panel received the Life Chances Team Annual Report for 2015/16.

The Life Chances Team met on a monthly basis and was multi-agency with representation from Children's Social Care, Health, Education and the Youth Offending Service.

Stability in Placements

One of the placement stability indicators was the number of children who have had three placements or more. The majority of these children were teenagers and fragile placements were discussed at the Life Chances Team Meeting with plans put in place to support the child and the carer to minimise placements ending in an unplanned way. This had been successful in some cases but concern remained that too many children were having three or more placements and plans to address this were contained within the report's action plan. The report contained a chart which demonstrated the data for children who had experienced three or more placements over the past five years. The national average for this was 11% and Bracknell Forest was at 17.3% as of March 2016. Reducing the number of placements for children was a key priority of the Life Chances Team and formed a part of the discussion at the monthly meeting. As a consequence, Members were advised that this indicator was now on course to reach the national average target of 11%.

CAMHS

There had been a gap within the team in relation to representation from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). In spite of frequent requests CAMHS had not been able to provide a worker from their team to attend citing that they did not have the resources. However, Members were advised that progress had been made in this area and CAMHS would now be represented in the Life Chances Team. Members were pleased with this development given the fact that a number of Looked After Children had mental health needs. For those Looked After Children who had mental health issues and were located outside of the Borough, responsibility for the provision of mental health services fell to the authority where the child lived. Members were advised that under reciprocal arrangements, a referral was made on behalf of the child to their local CAMHS service.

Concern was raised that some Looked After Children still had too many individuals working with them and it would be preferable for them to have one key worker which all other workers fed into. Members were advised that whilst some professionals working with Looked After Children were standard, for example the child's GP and dentist, the total number of workers varied from case to case. All cases were looked at carefully to ensure that only necessary involvement took place with key professionals recognising that some Looked After Children did need specialist therapeutic intervention.

36. **2017/18 Draft Budget Proposals**

The Panel reviewed the Draft Budget Proposals for 2017/18.

Education Services Grant

The Director drew Members' attention to the following extract from the report:

As part of the 2015 Spending Review the government announced that it was looking to make £600m of savings from this grant. Announcements and consultations published since the settlement now indicated the grant would be withdrawn almost completely and for the Council this represented a funding reduction of £1.242m in 2017/18, followed by a further £0.255m in 2018/19. Reductions of this level meant that services provided to schools could not be maintained at their present level unless schools wished to pay the full cost of providing them. The grant reductions had been reflected in the Commitment Budget.

Education Library Service

The Director confirmed that this service was now closed but a figure of £30,000 had been budgeted as two staff had been retained to close the service down and included their redundancy costs. Therefore the figure represented a one-off budget pressure.

Savings Proposals

A number of services were exceeding their income targets, or had identified new opportunities for income generation, either through improved trading, or additional external contributions, and where this was expected to continue, budgets would be increased accordingly. This related to Community Learning (£30,000) and aspects of support to schools (£15,000). The Director clarified that with regard to the latter saving, this related to a range of activities rather than one large service.

Spending on Schools

Concern was raised with regard to the fact that based on current spending profiles, schools would be expected to face an average unfunded cost pressure of 2.5% which could result in reductions in staffing. This was due to financial difficulties faced by the Council on non-school services which also impacted on schools, with pressures arising on pay and other inflationary cost increases, including the Living Wage, new Apprenticeship Levy and the Local Government Pension Fund deficit. The Director advised that this would be looked at in more detail at the Schools Forum but it was good practice for all schools to look at their staffing structure alongside looking at ensuring children's needs were being met. The Director added that the Transformation Programme which was looking at current processes had identified that good performance management and appraisal processes in schools supported the idea of undertaking a review of current staffing structures.

In addition to the Dedicated Schools Grant, schools also received revenue funding from other specific grants including School Sixth Forms (currently -£4.643m), the Pupil Premium (-£3.345m), Primary PE and Sports Premium (-0.292m) and the Universal Infant Free School Meals Grant (-£1.487m). All of these amounts were subject to change in 2017/18 but the Director said she was not yet clear exactly when this change would take place as the DfE had yet to clarify. However, it was hoped that more information would be received from the DfE by the beginning of April 2017.

37. **Transitions**

Members received a briefing in respect of transition between primary and secondary schools and between secondary schools and colleges.

In particular, support was given to primary school children with challenging behaviour with their transition to secondary school. Members were advised that Easthampstead Park School had a full programme of transition events but it represented a big cost at a time of budget pressures.

Further to a review of transition from primary to secondary school previously undertaken, a future update would be provided in order to ascertain what changes and progress had been made. Consideration was being given to carry out a review of the transition between secondary schools and colleges.

38. **Work Programme 2017/18**

The Panel reviewed the Work Programme for 2016/17 and noted that the next review topic would be Early Intervention Services. Councillor Mrs McCracken indicated that she would like to join the Working Group undertaking the review when it commenced.

39. **Overview & Scrutiny Progress Report**

The Panel noted the Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report for the period June to November 2016.

40. **Executive Forward Plan**

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

It was noted that the purpose of the report for the Proposals for the 2017-18 Schools Block Element of the Schools Budget should be amended to read:

*To agree the 2017-18 Schools block element of the Schools Budget, including the operation of the **Local** Funding Formula for schools and associated units of resource.*

It was noted this would be determined at the next Schools Forum.

CHAIRMAN