

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
20 MARCH 2019
7.30 - 9.07 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Skinner and Mrs Temperton, Ms D Owen

Executive Members:

Councillors Dr Barnard, Executive Member: Children, Young People and Learning

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs McCracken, Virgo and Ms C Barrett

In Attendance:

Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People
Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director, Education & Learning
Hannah Doherty, Assistant Director: Early Help & Communities
Jackie Ross, Interim Head of Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
Zoe Livingstone, School Standards & Effectiveness Partner

40. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 8 January 2019. It was noted the draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2019 were not published as part of the agenda. Members agreed to accept the draft minutes available on the website which were published following the previous meeting.

41. 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.

42. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

43. Public Participation

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

44. Inclusion Hubs

Jackie Ross, Interim Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) explained that Inclusion Hubs (to be known as 'Hubs to include children' in the future) was a project that had been considered in the Autumn term and presented to the

Schools Forum in December. The project was about looking at different ways of including children with SEND issues in education as much as possible. It involved officers working closely with adults and children in a number of schools around the Borough.

Members were informed the SEND Code of Practice was aimed at helping children who were not making same the progress as their peers. This could be for a number of reasons, including the cognitive level of the child, quality of teaching or family issues. The aim of the Inclusion Hubs was to provide prompt solutions for children and assess how adults could work with them.

There were approximately 2,500 children with SEND across the Borough. Whilst the majority of children succeeded in Bracknell those on SEND support had a higher frequency of fixed term exclusions. Officers had begun by looking at how they could deal with that issue.

Schools were asked to apply to be part of the pilot and were successful if the school met the following criteria:

- high percentage of children with SEND
- high percentage of children in receipt of Pupil Premium funding
- the school had been placed by Ofsted in Category 3 (Requires Improvement)
- the leadership were open to working in a different way

The aim was to work with children but also to work with the whole school and ensure dissemination of skills at the end of the project. Some schools wanted assistance with SEND issues specifically and others wanted to look at how they worked with families. During the project officers noticed the legacy of Early Help Hubs coming to fruition in their work with families. Initially the Council wanted to work with five schools but six met the criteria so it was agreed all six would be part of the pilot scheme.

Prior to going into schools officers asked for minimum information – the child's name, if parental consent had been obtained and a blank box for school staff to complete about the child. Some schools sent in additional information. Officers then went into schools and asked school staff to present the cases for the five children they had chosen. During the presentations a number of school staff presented about issues they experienced in trying to regulate a child's behaviour. It was thought this could be linked to their home environment; the child not relating to the school environment or difficulties in understanding which may require an assessment of their cognition. An example was given of specialists altogether in a secondary school debating what could be provided in school for a particular child but also thinking about what was available outside, perhaps educating the child in a Forest School (Forest schools take place in a woodland or forest. More information can be found on their website) <https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>

It was noted the joining up of staff in the Council to create the People Directorate had enabled increased joint working as part of this project and were looking at how they could join up further. Increasing participation of children with SEND in schools was a national issue and that school staff had been told to differentiate to help a child over the past few years. However, the new Ofsted Framework indicated a different approach. For some children it could mean accessing an alternative curriculum in school or creating smaller groups for children to access, which already occurred in some Bracknell schools. Staff had been actively discouraged from attaching a Teaching Assistant to a child and instead integrate the child into school as much as possible. Work with the final school was going to be concluded shortly.

Next steps included revisiting all the children that participated in the pilot during the summer term to see if their new provision was appropriate or not. Council staff would meet collectively with Head Teachers and SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) involved in the Inclusion Hub project to understand their experience. They had received positive feedback so far. Additional funding had been limited but school leaders cited the value in being able to discuss tricky issues with their colleagues and specialists. Council staff presented their initial findings from the pilot scheme to Ofsted during their recent inspection, with the intention to develop it further with schools across the Borough.

Key areas of work for the future included:

- Looking at identification of needs, especially if the child had not come through Early Years services and were new to the Borough.
- Checking if needs had been identified adequately, especially if a child received a lot of fixed term exclusions. This was likely to require training with some schools around identifying needs.
- Reviewing what needed to be commissioned in the medium and long term? This would involve working with schools as they were also commissioners and promotion of clusters of schools commissioning services together.
- Checking if existing specialist capacity met the needs of the Borough. This might include a graduated scheme where more specialists got involved in a child's case or it might mean looking at what schools could develop independently and strategically to build capacity across the Borough.
- Keeping children and young people at the heart of this project.

Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education and Learning concluded by saying this had been an opportunity to take an idea, supported by the Schools Forum in Bracknell, and see what could be done to support children as well as making sure residents got value for money. Members would receive an update at the end of the summer once the pilot had been concluded.

As a result of discussions the following comments and questions were raised:

- It was confirmed the total number of children involved in the pilot was 30.
- Half of the schools involved were primary and half secondary. There was a mixture of academies and maintained schools.
- Members acknowledged multi-agency working with specialists undertaking joint visits to school and home ensuring a holistic view of the child's needs.
- Schools were working with Children's Social Care where appropriate.
- Members thought this project was similar to the Family Safeguarding Model which they saw as a strength.
- There was a mixture of children involved in the pilot – some had no identified needs; some had school SEND support and some had an EHCP in place. Potentially, the model could work for all children.
- Additional capacity would be created within the team to support this work by Spring 2019.

Actions:

- **Louise Connelly, Governance & Scrutiny Co-ordinator to publish the presentation along with the minutes.**
- **Chairman to request a follow up paper be brought to the September Panel meeting.**

45. **Special Educational Needs**

Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education and Learning explained there were six key areas set out in the Council's 'Learning Improvement Strategy' Special Educational Needs and Disability Improvement Strategy 2017-20 which had already been shared with members and was linked to one of the six themes 'Thriving in Learning and not be left behind.' As of July 2018 four of the six areas had seen an improvement in outcomes for children with SEND. Further improving outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 remained a key focus particularly within writing and mathematics. The Focus had shifted to children with SEND support and the Council was working to develop capacity within schools and to develop school's capacity for brokering support from outside agencies as appropriate. This work linked with the Early Help Hub model in Bracknell.

46. **Improving the experience and outcomes of Pupil Premium (double disadvantaged) children**

The Chairman gave thanks to Cllr Hamilton for all her hard work as Chairman of this Task and Finish Group.

Cllr Hamilton began by thanking Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People, Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education and Learning and Zoe Livingstone, School Standards and Effectiveness Partner for their input. She also thanked Councillors who participated in the Task and Finish Group; the staff and children for their honesty when speaking to Councillors during their visits and Louise Connelly, Governance & Scrutiny Co-ordinator as they had all worked hard on this piece of work.

Cllr Hamilton explained the Local Authority 'Learning Improvement Strategy' identified 'Diminishing the Difference for Disadvantaged Pupils' as one of the three main priorities for the Council. Coupled with information given to members at previous Children, Young People and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel meetings it has been agreed this issue required a more detailed investigation and should form part of the Panel's work programme in June 2018.

Members identified a number of key strands of work including leadership, particularly governance, as well as ensuring additional funding for children in receipt of Pupil Premium funding (or who have been in receipt of free school meals at any point during the past 6 years or were children looked after by the local authority for one day or more) were obtaining the best outcomes possible.

As part of their work members put together a survey which was sent to all schools in the Borough; interviewed Local Authority officers and visited six Bracknell schools. In addition, they visited Didcot Girls School in Oxfordshire which was rated outstanding and had excellent results in terms of diminishing the difference between pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding and the rest of their cohort.

After analysing all the information members noted areas of strength and weaknesses. The report made 12 recommendations which could be found on page 18 of the report. Examples of recommendations included requesting the Council continue to develop the role of governors and ensure all possible actions were taken to improve attendance of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding.

Zoe Livingstone, School Standards and Effectiveness Partner said she thought working with members on the Task and Finish Group had been beneficial both ways. Members had been effective by giving a sharper focus on where officers should their effort and she was proud of the work achieved by the Panel.

Following discussion the following comments were made:

- Members noted the recommendations flowed properly.
- It was agreed a comment from a member received today would be included in the final report.
- Members noted they had particularly enjoyed visiting schools and meeting with Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and governors.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations contained in the final report of the Task and Finish Group: 'Improving the experience and outcome of Pupil Premium (double disadvantaged) children'.

Actions:

- **Louise Connelly, Governance and Scrutiny Co-ordinator to include final comment received from a member of the Task and Finish Group.**
- **Chairman to request the report and recommendations be considered by the Executive.**

47. **Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the multi-agency response to sexual abuse in the family in Bracknell Forest**

Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People gave an overview of the JTAI inspection process which entailed four inspectorates working together – Her Majesty's (HM) Inspectorate of Probation, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service, Care Quality Commission and Ofsted. Prior to the visit inspectors spent three weeks examining information. Twenty inspectors were on site for a week which the same as visit Shire Counties, regardless of the size of the authority.

Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People thanked her relatively new leadership team for their joint working throughout the inspection. There were no surprises contained in the letter and inspectors commented on Bracknell Forest being 'like a sponge' as they learnt from day to day practice and embraced a learning culture.

Areas highlighted for improvement were indicated in the letter but there were no priority actions. The team had begun work on a high level action plan to address areas for improvement, such as prioritising strong multi-agency working.

A number of case studies were included in the report as half the children in cohort wanted to share their experience with inspectors. This was thought to be unusual and showed the strength of relationships between social workers and children. Bracknell Forest was only the 6th authority in the country to be inspected on this topic so opportunities for inspectors to talk to children about this issue had been limited.

Following discussion the following comments and questions were raised:

- Members were pleased to note examples of good practice such as social worker visits with children being undertaken in a timely manner.
- Gareth Barnard, Executive Member: Children, Young People and Learning thanked everyone involved and noted it was commendable there were no priority areas identified. Although different partner agencies worked across different boundaries and had different remits it was thought this was becoming less obvious due to joint working– i.e. improved work with health.
- Members queried how other agencies, for example Thames Valley Police, were addressing issues raised in the letter. They were informed issues highlighted were often national, not necessarily Berkshire or Bracknell specific, such as reviewing Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

arrangements. Each single agency would share their action plans to address the issues raised with each other and would be holding each other to account through the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) partnership.

48. **mime Local Authority Data Dashboard - January 2019**

Members scrutinised the Local Authority School Data Dashboard (January 2019 update) prepared by MIMÉ 'making information matter' on behalf of the local authority.

49. **Local Safeguarding Children Board Structure**

Members were informed Bracknell's LSCB was currently reviewing early adopters of the Government's 'Working together to safeguard children: transitional guidance' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The guidance requires LSCB partners to transition to safeguarding and child death review partner arrangements by September 2019. The LSCB and its adults equivalent 'Bracknell Forest and Windsor & Maidenhead Safeguarding Adults Board' had set up a series of workshops to review early adopters and look at innovative practice before deciding what new form arrangements should take. Partners wanted to retain strengths of current Boards as well as look at different models. For example, schools were not deemed as statutory partners under the new arrangements but this has proved a strength in the Bracknell LSCB and they would like to retain this partnership. It was noted Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had a joint LSCB currently. A range of ideas would be looked at as part of workshops over the next six weeks before LSCB partners agreed a transition plan. Members were asked to keep a close watch on early adopters as some that had adopted arrangements across a number of authorities had not seen a positive impact. Each individual area had different needs and this needed to be acknowledged in any new arrangements. Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People agreed to bring an update to scrutiny when possible so they could assure themselves the correct decision had been made.

Actions:

- **New arrangements for safeguarding and child death review partners to be added to forward plan.**

50. **Quarterly Service Report**

It was explained Quarterly Service Reviews (QSRs) were no longer co-terminus with Overview and Scrutiny Boards which meant two packs were included this time – People and Central Directorate QSRs.

Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People drew members' attention to the introduction in the People Directorate QSRs which highlighted the work of Family Hubs and recent Ofsted inspections. Comments from inspections showed their work had made a clear impact which highlighted the quality of the school improvement team.

The following questions were raised:

- Members asked for clarification on the increased gap in attainment in indicator N102.1 on page 88. Rachel Morgan, Assistant Director: Education and Learning explained improvements had been made over the past year and the percentage had actually decreased. In 2016/17 the percentage of difference

in writing between disadvantaged children and nationally was 24%. This had narrowed to 28.5% in 2017/18.

51. **Executive Forward Plan**

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

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank