

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
5 OCTOBER 2011
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Kensall, Sargeant and Mrs Temperton

Ms S Cauchi, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children and Young People

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs McCracken
Mrs Mitchell

In Attendance:

Lesley Adams, Senior Admissions Officer
Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview and Scrutiny
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Andrea King, Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager
Alex Walters, Independent Chairman Local Safeguarding Children Board
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Performance & Resources
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

14. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children, Young people and Learning overview and Scrutiny panel held on 15 June 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The statistics on child poverty were awaited and would be circulated to members once available.

15. 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.

16. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

17. **Bracknell Forest Youth Council's Domestic Violence DVD**

Alex Austin of the Bracknell Forest Youth Council presented a DVD on the subject of domestic abuse which had been produced for the Local Safeguarding Children Board's annual conference.

The Panel was informed that the Youth Council had been involved in all aspects of the DVD's production including: researching content, script writing, filming, producing all the graphics and editing the final film.

Researching the project had sparked off a significant amount of debate at Youth Council meetings. Copies of the DVD would be distributed to the Borough's secondary schools so that it could be used to spark debate during PHSE lessons.

It was acknowledged that domestic abuse had been a significant factor in the lives of many Looked After Children in the Borough and that there were a number of factors that influenced levels of domestic violence. Data for the number of domestic abuse incidents reported would be circulated to the Panel. The panel noted that the Council would be investing an additional £100,000 in tackling domestic violence in 2011-12.

The Panel congratulated all those involved in the production of the powerful film.

18. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The Panel noted the minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 8 June 2011 and 6 July 2011.

19. **Annual Report 2010/11 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board**

The Independent Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) presented a report containing a summary of the 2010/11 Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The report summarised the following main areas of the full Annual Report:

- Assessment of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements and responses to serious case reviews
- Performance management
- The recent Overview and Scrutiny report on local safeguarding arrangements
- Assessment of policies and procedures
- Achievements and challenges
- Feedback to, and challenge of, the Children and Young People's Partnership

It was noted that the LSCB's successes over the past year had included: recognition of the Safeguarding Toolkit as an example of good practice nationally, the participation of children and young people in LSCB activity, a heavily oversubscribed annual conference and the completion of a review and redesign of safeguarding training.

Challenges faced by the LSCB during the period included: reduction of partner agencies' resources, uncertainty over the arrangements for commissioning and inter-agency training, possible changes to Child Protection as a result of the recently published Munro report and membership changes.

The Panel expressed concern that many voluntary groups were finding the costs associated with sending volunteers on Level 2 Safeguarding Training problematic and it was agreed that this would be investigated.

For confidentiality reasons the reports of the four Independent Management Reviews (IMRs) that had taken place during the reporting period would not be published. However the outcomes and learning points from each IMR had been used to inform and improve child protection procedures in the Borough.

One Serious Case Review had taken place during the reporting period. Once OFSTED had reviewed the LSCB's submission and all criminal proceedings finished then the findings would be published.

The Panel thanked the LSCB Chairman for her update.

20. **Annual Report on School and Children's Centre Inspections 2010-2011**

The Panel received a report summarising the outcomes of inspections carried out by OFSTED on Bracknell Forest's schools and children's centres during the 2010-2011 academic year.

During the period September 2010 to July 2011, ten schools (2 infant, 6 primary, 1 secondary and 1 special) and one children's centre had been inspected. Of the ten schools inspected:

- 1 had been graded Outstanding
- 6 had been graded Good
- 2 had been graded Satisfactory and
- 1 school, Easthampstead Park Secondary, had been graded Unsatisfactory

Inspection of the Rowans Children's Centre had resulted in a grading of Satisfactory.

One school, the Pines Primary School, had been removed from special measures and Crown Wood Primary School had had its Notice to Improve removed. Birch Hill Primary School continued to improve and their most recent OFSTED monitoring inspection indicated good progress was being made.

A Management Intervention Board had been established to work with those schools in Special Measures or issued with a Notice to Improve. The Board monitored progress made against the actions identified in OFSTED's Action Plan for the school, reported progress to the Director of Children, Young People and Learning and recommended any appropriate further action. A process that had been commended by OFSTED.

Subject inspections of PHSE and Design and Technology had taken place at Brakenhale and Garth Hill College respectively during the year. Both had judged to be at least Satisfactory and commentary given on how both subject areas might be developed further.

New inspection frameworks would be implemented by OFSTED from January 2012 and a conference to appraise schools of the changes would be held in November. Briefing notes were also circulated to schools as information about the new inspection framework was released. In response to members' concerns that the £75 fee for attending the conference might be a barrier to participation, the Chief Advisor said that the fee was lower than that charged by a number of other local authorities and there was a requirement to recover the cost of running the event.

The Panel noted the report.

21. **Performance Monitoring Report**

The Panel received an update in respect of Looked After Children. The update included an overview of the Child Protection Process, data relating to the number of referrals and assessments made to and by Children's Social Services, data relating to the number of children in the Borough subject to a Child Protection Plan and information relating to the number of Looked After Children in the Borough.

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

- It was thought that the increase in the number of referrals and assessments was due to an increased awareness amongst the public and people feeling more able to report concerns than they might have done previously
- Since March 2009, the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan in Bracknell Forest had risen from 44 to 77. However when calculated per 10,000 of the 0-18 year old population numbers in Bracknell Forest were below the South-East England and England averages
- Children effected by emotional abuse often displayed signs of distress. In many cases emotional abuse and neglect were interrelated
- A breakdown of the ages and numbers of children effected by emotional abuse would be circulated to the Panel
- Children's Social Care had a number of early intervention and prevention initiatives in place to address issues of neglect and these were being developed further; however the benefits of this work often took many years to materialise
- When budgeting for foster care calculations were based on the number of families known to the Department however the budget was liable to fluctuation over the year as new families were identified
- Children's Social Care had to follow strict rules and regulations when assessing potential adoptive parents
- When assessing potential adoptive parents social workers needed to ensure that they would be able to cope with any problems due to events in the child's early life that might arise in the future
- Once a child is adopted all financial responsibility for meeting that child's needs are passed to the adoptive parents. However, if a child has a need that requires additional support for example specialised equipment is required then the authority is able to pay an adoption allowance to the parents
- The bureaucracy involved when a child was adopted combined with the amount of work that the family courts were dealing with meant that adoptions took many months to finalise
- The Local Authority was part of a Berkshire-wide adoption consortia and children were often placed with adoptive families in other areas due to complicated family issues
- The Council made significant use of independent foster carers, and recruiting more local foster carers was a key strategy. The number of applications received in the past year from people wanting to foster would be circulated

The Panel thanked the Chief Officer: Children's Services for the update.

It was reported that the new Youth Bus was now operational. Weekly visits were currently being made to Birch Hill, Sandhurst, Easthamstead and Longhill Skate Park. This schedule would change after the October half term so that the bus could visit other areas of the Borough.

Youth workers were using the bus as a base when visiting schools and to undertake targeted work with particular groups including; young people with learning disabilities, settled traveller families and young women who engage in risky behaviour.

While over 800 young people had made use of the Youth Bus' facilities during its summer programme only 200 young people had made use of the facility since the new bus had been put into service in April. The Panel noted that the new bus was smaller and less visible than the old one and that the historic unreliability of the old bus service meant that awareness of the service had fallen amongst young people.

The service provided by the Youth Bus was well received by the young people who used it and work would take place to ensure that the right activities were being provided in the right places. Members said they would welcome a presentation at a future meeting on the range of training and other interventions by the Council and its partners for young people not in education, employment or training.

It was clarified that the 16 vacant posts reported during the first quarter of 2011/12 (April to June) had arisen for a number of reasons including retirement and posts being held vacant. Some posts had subsequently been filled.

A breakdown of the number of heads of service, the number of support staff and the number of part time support posts in the Department would be circulated.

The Panel thanked officers for their updates.

22. **School Places and the School Admissions Process**

The Panel received a presentation in respect of the school admissions process.

The presentation included: the process of applying for and allocating school places, the latest placement figures, actions taking place to meet additional demand for school places and a forward look. Arising from the presentation the following points were noted:

- In June approximately 1000 parents attended the five information sessions held to enable them to learn about the secondary admissions process
- In September 14 information sessions had been held for parents whose children were scheduled to start primary school in September 2012. These were a new initiative and had been well received by parents
- While it was the Local Authority's responsibility to meet basic educational need, funding to build the new primary school at Jennets Park had been provided by the developers through Section 106 contributions
- The Council had always been in a position to offer an admission year school place to children resident in Bracknell Forest
- Details of the current number of vacancies per school would be circulated to the Panel
- It was predicted that by 2018 there would need to be a 25% increase in the number of school places to accommodate all the school age children in the Borough
- Pressure on school places caused by a larger than usual cohort was accommodated through the use of temporary 'surge' classrooms which would follow the year group through their primary and secondary education

- Long term sustained pressure on school places was accommodated through the permanent expansion of capacity in existing schools and the planning and building new schools

The Panel thanked the Senior Admissions Officer for her presentation.

23. Working Group Update Report

The Panel received a report providing an update on the working groups of the panel.

It was noted that the School Meals Working Group would have an input into the development of the procurement specification for the new school meals contract when it was developed for tender in the coming months.

24. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/12 and Proposed New Powers

The Panel noted a report containing the agreed work programme for the Panel in 2011/12. The report also detailed proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution to extend to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's power to adopt reports, make recommendations to the Executive, full Council and other organisations.

25. Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report

The Panel received the Bi-Annual Progress Report for Overview and Scrutiny. The report set out the progress made in overview and scrutiny during the period March to August 2011 and detailed significant national and local developments in overview and scrutiny.

The Panel noted the report.

26. Executive Forward Plan

The Panel noted the forthcoming items relating to Children, Young People and Learning on the Executive Forward Plan.

CHAIRMAN