

Annual Report of the Director and Lead Member for Children, Young People and Learning on how they are meeting their responsibilities as set out in statutory guidance

Introduction

1. This is the first annual report of the Director and Lead Member for Children, Young People and Learning which sets out the statutory guidance¹ and our position against it. The statutory guidance was first issued in 2005, updated in 2009 and re-issued by the current Secretary of State in 2010. The guidance covers the legislative basis for the two appointments, roles and responsibilities and how this relates to Government expectations about local authorities' role in education and children and young people services.
2. The guidance is issued under the Children Act 2004 and local authorities must have regard to it. If they decide to depart from it, they will need to have clear reasons for doing so.
3. This report aims to provide an account of the Director Children's Services (DCS) and Lead Member Children's Services (LMCS) in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities as set out in the statutory guidance; it is not a full account of the range of work carried out by the Directorate.

Appointments

4. *Section 18 of the Children Act 2004* requires every top tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services who reports directly to the Chief Executive, who in turn is accountable to the Council for the performance of its chief officers. The DCS has professional responsibility for children's services, including operational matters.

Dr Janette Karklins is the Director of Children, Young People and Learning

5. *Section 19 of the Children Act 2004* also requires that one of the members is designated as the Lead Member for Children's Services. The LMCS has political responsibility for children's services.

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard is the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning.

Clear line of accountability

6. It is important to note that the DCS and the LMCS work closely with the Chief Executive in playing a key leadership role both within the local authority and in working with partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people.
7. The DCS reports directly to the Chief Executive, and the LMCS reports to the Leader of the Council. The LMCS also meets with the DCS on a monthly basis, attends the Departmental Management Team on a regular basis, and is in frequent contact with the DCS and Senior Officers via a range of meetings across the Council.
8. The Department for Children, Young People and Learning provides education and children's social care under a single officer and a single member

¹ Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services – Department for Education 2012.

providing a strategic and professional framework within which the safety and the educational, social and emotional needs of children and young people are considered together. The roles provide a clear and unambiguous line of political and professional accountability for children's well being.

9. Within Bracknell Forest the local authority has recognised and supported the breadth and importance of children's services functions, with the discrete roles and responsibilities of the DCS and the LMCS remaining protected.

Leadership and Partnership

10. The LMCS sits on the Children and Young People's Partnership Board. Attendance and active participation ensures the LMCS remains apprised of a wide range of issues that are significant in furthering partnership working. The LMCS has an overview of the Children and Young People's Plan and its accompanying priorities and contributes to discussions and challenges that take place within this meeting.
11. The DCS is the Chair of the Children and Young People's Partnership, this enables the DCS to facilitate and encourage increased / improved working with partners under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004.
12. Some key issues that have been addressed through the Children and Young People's Partnership during 2012/13 include:
 - Review of the progress against the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan.
 - Establishing clear links between the priorities for children and young people and the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities.
 - Ensuring clear links between the work of the Children and Young People's Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children Board – ensuring the Children and Young People's Partnership responds to the LSCB Annual Report recommendations.
 - Monitoring the work undertaken through the child poverty strategy, and as a result of the 2012/13 review commence work and develop further.
 - Development of a joint commissioning framework – also shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - Providing a focus on teenage pregnancy and sexual health.
13. The LMCS is a participant observer of the LSCB and plays an active role in discussions on safeguarding issues. The DCS attends the LSCB and also has regular meetings with the LSCB Independent Chair.
14. During the year 2012/13 there was a significant focus on the publication of the Serious Case Review and the consequent dissemination of learning from it.
15. A key activity for the LMCS and the DCS is to ensure that the safeguarding priorities of the LSCB are adhered to and that where relevant priorities are shared across partnerships to ensure full partnership engagement in addressing them.
16. Some examples of priorities that have been successfully shared across partnerships include:

- Focus on domestic abuse and reducing the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.
 - Focus on e-safety and ensuring young people are able to stay safe on line.
 - Focus on child sexual exploitation and reducing risk factors for young people.
17. The LMCS and DCS are both members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and have supported its development during the shadow year 2012/13. A key role has been in ensuring that key issues for children and young people are included within the Health and Wellbeing Board discussions and those issues highlighted in 2012/13 include:
- Ensuring the H&WBB is aware of the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan, and that where relevant these are included in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
 - Reporting on the LSCB Annual Report and highlighting safeguarding issues and responsibilities of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Clinical Commissioning Group.
 - Highlighting the issues regarding the Children and Families Bill in relation to SEN reforms.
18. The LMCS is involved in a range of other areas of activity in the Department, including being a member of the School Pupil Places Planning Group, which has the responsibility for steering accurate pupil forecasting and school places planning. He also sits on the Children's Centre Management Board, and Chairs the Adult Learning Board providing appropriate support challenge and accountability.
19. The DCS Chairs the South East Regional Children's Improvement Board and has led a number of Peer Review and Peer challenges in other authorities. This activity has also enabled Bracknell Forest to participate in a number of Peer Challenges taking place during 2011-13 including; School Improvement Key Stage 2, Educational Psychology and Children's Centres linked to early intervention.
20. In 2012/13 the DCS Commissioned a range of projects to support ongoing strategic planning and development projects concluding in 2013/14 included:
- An approach for all services for improving young people's engagement.
 - An analysis and profile of Children in Need.
 - Developing different delivery models to schools.
 - LARC 5 – contributing to national research focusing on neglect.

These projects are all due to conclude in 2013/14.

21. **Actions for 2013-14**
- Further develop the role of the voluntary sector and the coordinating role of BFVA.
 - Focus on child poverty issues with key partners, develop new actions for 2014.
 - Further embed and establish children's priorities within the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - Seek opportunities for close partnership working with Public Health.
 - Develop a new Children and Young People's Plan for 2014.

Safeguarding

22. Clear and effective arrangements are in place to protect children and young people from harm (including those attending independent schools). The LSCB arrangements are strong and effective with full engagement of all partners. The LMCS is also a participant observer on the LSCB. The LSCB Annual Report provides an account of the work of the LSCB during 2012/13.
23. The Director or the Chief Officer for Children's Social Care attend termly meetings with the judge in charge of the family court division. This has helped to develop a better understanding of the family justice system and established a strong dialogue and a forum for raising matters. This has been especially helpful in preparing for the changes planned to the Family Justice system.
24. Vetting and Barring arrangements have been updated in the light of the new government information.
25. The DCS provided a range of briefing / training sessions to senior leadership colleagues across the Council in 2012, and a corporate decision was made for each Department to carry out a Section 11 Safeguarding self assessment. This was an extensive exercise which left the LSCB and the Council in a confident position in relation to Section 11 compliance, and was highly commended in the LSCB Annual report 2012/13.
26. The LMCS and DCS attend quarterly safeguarding meetings with the Chief Executive, Chief Officer Children's Social Care and a range of issues are discussed, including performance, safeguarding issues and actions. Additional resources have been allocated to Children's Social Care in order to address increases in numbers of children subject to child protection or becoming looked after.
27. The DCS undertakes regular audits of case files in order to maintain an overview of cases, and provides feedback to the Chief Officer Children's Social Care.
28. The Chief Officer and DCS hold regular case file discussions with social workers which enable the workers to outline a sample of cases, discuss any issues with the DCS and Chief Officer Children's Social Care and receive feedback.
29. The DCS also attends Duty and Assessment Team Meetings 5 to 6 times each year.
30. **Key Achievements 2012-13**
 - Officers have established key links and a forum for local independent schools around safeguarding; this includes their representation on the LSCB Forum.
 - The LSCB annual report shows a very successful year of safeguarding activity.
 - Successful LSCB 2012 Conference which focused on the key messages from the Serious Case Review.

- Implemented the new Vetting and Barring arrangements and also established them in schools.
- Established effective strategic priority links across key partnerships including domestic abuse and e - safety.

31. Key Actions for 2013-14

- Provide a particular focus for young people on sexual exploitation through showing the play Chelsea's Choice in schools and extending this to parents and independent schools, and through the LSCB Annual Conference.
- Ensure key strategic priorities around neglect are shared across partnerships.
- Focus of 2013 LSCB Conference is neglect.
- Implement the new requirements from the Family Justice Review, in preparation for the statutory requirements from April 2014

Vulnerable children and young people

32. Prevention and early intervention is a prime focus for the work of all the services. The work through Family Focus and some of the specialist interventions through the Community Safety Partnership has meant that Domestic Abuse is a focus for all with a particular emphasis on addressing the support for victims but also working with perpetrators to prevent further escalation.
33. The Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy for the Department was published in 2012/13. The Strategy sits below the Council's overarching approach to prevention and early intervention.
34. An Early Intervention Hub was established in November 2012 to support the Early Intervention Strategy. From the launch date in November 2012 to 31 March 2013 the Hub had 192 referrals for coordinated early intervention support.
35. The Corporate Parenting Group is well established, it receives a wide range of reports including any strategy developments, and key performance information for looked after children. Young people from the SiLSiP (Children in Care Council) attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to have a dialogue about things that have an impact on them. SiLSiP also meet twice a year with the LMCS and DCS.
36. The Life Chances team is a virtual team that was established during 2012/13 and provides a mechanism for partners to meet, share information and intervene early to support looked after young people through periods of difficulty / challenge. Any matters of concern can be promptly followed up and addressed or escalated for action.
37. The Family Focus Project has been successfully introduced and implemented during 2012/13, this promotes new ways of working with families who have multiple challenges in a coordinated way to achieve the desired change and

improve outcomes for the family and consequently for the children in the family.

38. Key Achievements in 2012-13

- Family Focus has been well established with the emphasis on partnership working to better and collectively address long term issues with some of our most complex families.
- Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Service has demonstrated its effectiveness by extending their remit to work with more families; they are managing to prevent cases escalating into Child Protection concerns.
- Extended the very successful Life Chances model to Care Leavers to ensure that there is a relentless focus on collectively ensuring good outcomes for them as they progress into adulthood.
- Reviewed and refreshed the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Continue to prepare for the new Special Educational Needs requirements following the enactment of the Children and Family Bill.
- Clear focus on reducing permanent school exclusions

39. Key Actions for 2013-14

- Re-launch the Corporate Parenting Panel with new terms of reference.
- Continue to develop the Family Focus work with a strong information sharing and multi-agency working at the heart of the model.
- Utilise the Vanguard approach to consider how support for families and parenting could be improved and better coordinated.
- Continue to prepare for the implementation of new SEN legislation.
- Strengthen the early intervention model of working and demonstrate the impact on the child and family, and potential for cost avoidance in the future.

Fair access to services

40. The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory responsibility and also a key role for the local authority. Considerable time and energy has been put into planning the expansion of school places in the Wards where they are most needed. This is to ensure that there are sufficient places and also that they are in the schools that parents want their children to attend. This has been a successful approach for example at primary 97% got one of their preferences and 84% got their first choice. The Council ambition is for all schools to be good schools. Therefore the preference is around faith, size of school and not the opportunities offered as no matter which school a child attends they will all be good schools.
41. Addressing the small number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and engaging them in planning for their future has and continues to be a prime focus. We have been particularly successful in engaging and preventing young people becoming NEET.
42. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to modernise the Youth Service, during 2012/13 there was a high level of consultation with young people including a survey of their preferences moving forward, and some reorganisation took place. This work will continue into 2013-14.

43. **Key Achievements in 2012-13**

- IT based system for the acceptance of school places.
- Successful expansion of existing schools to provide additional school places.
- Youth service developed so that it is integral to the prevention and early intervention work and also a key contributor to the health and well-being of young people.
- Increased number of young people have accessed the Duke of Edinburgh Awards at all levels and we have celebrated their many achievements

44. **Key Actions for 2013-14**

- Implement fully IT based system for parents/carers both in making application for admissions and acceptance of places at primary and secondary.
- Ensure School Places Planning process remains robust and supports the planning of sufficient school places.
- Implement further phases of the Youth Service Modernisation Programme.
- Continue to address the issues around young people who are not in education, employment and training.

Educational excellence

45. School improvement is a key priority for the service. We want all schools to be achieving well above the floor standard and striving for good and better in Ofsted Inspections. The majority of our schools are good and better and provide an excellent education for their pupils.
46. A careful and thorough analysis of the end of key stage results is made by each school and progress each term is also measured and monitored by teachers, headteachers and school governors. There are robust school improvement strategies in place and support is provided to enable schools to continue to improve.
47. There has been a particular focus on the attainment of pupils who receive the Pupil Premium to ensure that they are making good progress.
48. We are a strategic partner with our Teaching School, encouraging school to school support.
49. An effective Schools Forum operates which meets 8 times a year and recently carried out a particularly good consultation on financial management of schools.
50. **Key Achievements in 2012-13**
- Improved end of key stage results in 2012.
 - HMCI League table placed Bracknell Forest 40th out of 150 LA in 2012 and in the top ten for early years.
 - 72% of schools are good or better following Ofsted inspections (July 2013).

51. **Key Actions for 2013-14**

- Continue to support schools to achieve high standards of education.
- Issues of poor school performance addressed promptly.
- Continued focus on school attendance and exclusions.
- Monitor pupils eligible for Pupil Premium pupils to ensure they are making expected progress.

Summary

52. This report has given a summary of some of the key responsibilities of the DCS and the LMCS and achievements in the past year. Much has been achieved across the Department, and there has been an increasing focus on working in partnership with others. The DCS and LMCS remain committed to fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and will take that commitment forward into the coming year 2013/14.
53. The coming year will continue to pose challenges as we know that there are significantly more families and children who are experiencing difficulties and need additional help / support. We know that the population is increasing and this will place challenges in ensuring enough good school places. We are working in a climate of reduced resources and need to continue to seek new and innovative ways to make the best use of the resources that we have available to us, key to this is effective plans and strategies to frame our actions. We plan to launch a new Children and Young People's Plan in 2014 which will set key priorities not only for the Children, Young People and Learning Department, but for our key partners and stakeholders, including other Departments across the Council.