

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
30 SEPTEMBER 2015  
7.30 - 9.15 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Ms Gaw, Mrs Hamilton, Ms Hayes, Skinner and Mrs Temperton  
Ms C Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative  
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative  
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Mrs McCracken

**Executive Members:**

Councillors Dr Barnard and D Birch

**Also Present:**

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)  
Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance  
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care  
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning  
Christine McInnes, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement  
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention

**76. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 10 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**77. 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 whilst under the party whip.

**78. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**79. Public Participation**

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

**80. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The Panel received and noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAP) held on 24 June 2015.

## 81. **Quarterly Service Report**

The Panel considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) for the first quarter of 2015/16 (April to June 2015) relating to Children, Young People and Learning. The Director reminded the Panel of the ambitions for education and children's social care, through putting children and young people at the centre of everything the Department does.

The Director presented to the Panel a number of the key messages from the report from which the Panel noted:

- School improvement – 3 more primary schools were Ofsted 'Good' and one 'inadequate' had improved to 'Requires Improvement' (the regular report of Inspection outcomes was tabled for Members). Thoughts on how to achieve further improvements were welcomed for the next Panel meeting.
- Excellent Art Exhibitions had been put on in the summer by children in care, and primary and secondary schools themed on the BBC Ten Pieces.
- Active recruitment of more foster carers had been taking place through a range of events.
- The Early Help Strategy had been refreshed.
- The Troubled Families Early Starter phase had been successfully rolled out.

Other important points arising and noted by the Panel concerned:

- The major consultation underway on school designated area changes
- Successful Headteacher recruitment for April/September 2015 with nine permanent appointments and two interim appointments.
- The national shortage of teachers meaning that schools were increasingly finding recruitment difficulties, especially for English, Maths and Science subjects.
- The extensive school building programme over the summer was continuing (with inevitable disruption at some schools).
- Children's Social Care staffing had stabilised and turnover had reduced. Recruitment to some of the additional posts had taken place and further recruitment was underway. (The Panel received an information sheet showing details of salary rates with market premia and retention bonus payable on each scale within the Children's Social Care establishment).

The Panel then turned to consider a summary of 2014-15 achievement data. The figures for Good Level of Development (GLD) were very encouraging at 73%, achieving the benchmark, and up from previous years. There was also a reduction in the Pupil Premium gap. Provisional data was provided on Key Stage 1 and 2 results, also showing information on narrowing the Pupil Premium gap. Further information regarding progress through the Key Stages at the next Panel meeting was welcomed. In most cases figures for the national average were not yet available for comparison. Experience at some schools had shown the very positive impact of 'pre-teaching' in English and Maths on narrowing the Pupil Premium gap. The data on GCSE and 'A' Level examination results showed improvements, although results varied between schools. It was noted that there was little information on gifted and talented learners in Bracknell Forest but more schools were likely to provide data on this in future. The Panel noted that the expectation remained that schools themselves should take the lead on improvement.

An analysis of admission numbers in 2015 (tabled for the Panel) showed the headroom available in schools (the number of available places to allow for families moving into the area and for parental preference to be met) had fallen from 15% to 7%, with some year groups as low as 2%. Available places for Reception at September 2015 showed only 0.5% headroom across schools in North Bracknell, 3.5% in South Bracknell (The Pines Primary and Great Hollands Primary had the most places) and 3% in Crowthorne and Sandhurst (where Owlsmoor Primary had the most places). The process for calculating the number of places required was explained and the Panel requested an update of the position at the next meeting, with any information available as to whether the significant building works proceeding at some schools had affected parental choice of school.

The Panel received responses to their questions and comments and thanked the officers for their interesting reports and presentations.

## **82. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2014/15**

The Panel considered a report presenting the 2014/15 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service, which performed a key role in assuring the quality of the local authority's care planning for children who were looked after.

The Annual Report provided an account of the activity of the IRO Service, identified a number of areas of good practice, and highlighted some areas for development within the service for looked after children. A total of 307 looked after children reviews were carried out during the year, slightly lower than the previous year reflecting the reduction in the number of looked after children in the review period. The service had a responsibility to engage parents in the review process and had been working to increase parental engagement, and in particular to raise the attendance of fathers.

The Panel noted the Annual Report of the IRO Service.

## **83. Elective Home Education**

The Panel considered a report and received a briefing on Elective Home Education in Bracknell Forest. Where parents or carers decided to educate their child at home, they took on full responsibility for providing a full-time education suitable to the child's age and ability and to meet any special educational needs they may have.

The relevant legislative requirements were explained from which the Panel noted that:

- The parent/carer did not need to be a qualified teacher; follow the National Curriculum or apply for national tests; observe school hours, days or terms; or need special permission or to notify the local authority of home education (unless the child had previously attended a special school).
- The parent/carer needed to notify the school in writing if taking a child out of school; or notify the local authority if removing a child from a special school.

While the Council had a responsibility to act if appeared that a parent was not providing a full-time, efficient and suitable education taking account of the child's age, ability and aptitude, it had no power to enforce, monitor or inspect the home education provision. The local authority approach was limited to making an 'informal enquiry' to check, as far as was possible, whether a suitable education was being provided.

Bracknell Forest currently had 48 children that were being home educated (which included some siblings). While this included a number where an excellent level of home education was being provided, there was a concern that this did not happen in all cases. The Council had taken a number of steps to mitigate any risks arising in Bracknell Forest, taking account of National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children advice and case studies, through:

- The streamlining of record-keeping and communication between Council departments.
- A re-organisation of line management and staffing – managed by the Safeguarding and Inclusion Officer.
- A thorough review of policy and procedures on home education over the last 12 months, giving more weighting to safeguarding, clearer expectations of parents, and emphasis on the provision of evidence of educational provision and progress.
- A clearer path of escalation of concerns and prompt action.
- Access to a Personal Adviser from Year 10 to reduce risk of young people not being in education, employment or training (NEET).

The Panel was pleased to note the work undertaken to strengthen policy and procedures relating to home education. It was requested the following additional information be circulated to Panel Members:

- Details of how many families the 48 home educated children were spread across.
- An indication of the number of families giving little or no access to the Council to ensure a suitable education was being provided.
- Copies of the appendices and pro forma to the Elective Home Education Policy and Procedure.

#### **84. Substance Misuse Overview and Scrutiny Report - Executive Response**

The Panel considered the Executive Response to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Substance Misuse involving Children and Young People. The Executive Member had accepted the report and adopted (in whole or in part) the recommendations contained therein.

The Panel noted the report and requested an update in a year's time to assess the impact of the new measures agreed for implementation.

#### **85. Working Group Update Report**

The Panel received an update of the progress of the Working Group set up to undertake a review of child sexual exploitation. Work was at an early stage and there was a good deal of further information and data gathering yet to be undertaken.

The Panel noted the report.

#### **86. Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

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

#### **87. Children's Social Care Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Annual Report 2014/15**

The Panel noted the 2014-2015 Annual Report in respect of Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and also concerns and compliments.

Arising from a question, the Panel noted that the variation in the costs of investigation of a complaint related to its complexity. The Panel was pleased to note the high number of compliments received by the Department during the year.

**88. Consultations on Changes to Annual Admissions Arrangements 2017/18 and School Designated Areas**

The Panel noted a report on the consultations currently in progress in respect of changes to Annual Admissions Arrangements 2017/18 and School Designated Areas.

**CHAIRMAN**