

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
16 DECEMBER 2009
7.30 - 9.20 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Beadsley, Harrison (Substitute), Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Osborne and Mrs Ryder
Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative
Dr P Josephs-Franks, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Ms Whitbread, Dudley and Simonds

Executive Members:

Councillor Alan Kendall, Executive Member for Education
Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer, Overview and Scrutiny
Martin Gocke, Acting Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Andrea King, Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager
Penny Reuter, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

29. Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Councillor Harrison for Councillor Simonds

30. Councillor Ray Simonds

The Chairman advised the Panel that Councillor Simonds was very seriously ill and, on behalf of the Panel, expressed her best wishes to Mrs Simonds and family.

31. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 16 September 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

32. 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.

33. **Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel**

The Panel received and noted the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 30 September 2009.

34. **Performance Monitoring Report (PMR)**

The Acting Director of Children's Services and Learning presented the Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) for the second quarter of 2009/10. He highlighted:

- The focus on establishing the new department.
- Larchwood, the short break care unit, had again been judged outstanding by Ofsted at an unannounced inspection.
- The Garth Hill project was on programme and on budget. Good progress had been made with the construction.

In response to questions –

- The number of young people not in education, employment or training at November 2009 was 7.9%, at November 2008 7.1%, at November 2007 5.3% and at November 2005 8.7%.
- Education officers were working with planners to solve the tree problem on the site of the proposed Crown Wood Children's Centre and it was hoped that a planning application would soon be submitted.
- There were raising attainment plans where performance was of concern in 6 primary schools and 2 secondary schools.
- The recruitment activity for the first return to secondary teaching programme had started.

At the last meeting it had been agreed that details of specific indicators would be given at each Panel to enhance members' understanding of performance against indicators:-

NI 50, emotional health of children

The focus was on the quality of relationships enjoyed by young people. This was a key aspect in their emotional health. 1200 pupils took part in a Tell Us 3 survey of four questions –

- I have one or more good friends.
- If I am worried I can talk to Mum or Dad.
- If I am worried I can talk to a friend.
- If I am worried I can talk to an adult.

Good performance would be indicated by a high figure answering yes to all questions. Bracknell Forest achieved 60.9%. The average for England was 63%. Statistical neighbours had lower percentages than Bracknell Forest.

NI 51, effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

This indicator required a self assessment of performance, scored on a scale of one to four, carried out in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation NHS Trust. Areas assessed were –

- a) Services for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- b) Services for 16/17 year olds.
- c) 24 hour cover.
- d) Availability of full range of early intervention services.

We scored 3 for (a) and 4 for each of the others, therefore scoring 15 out of 16. Our target was to achieve a 4 for services for those with disabilities by the end of the fourth quarter. This indicator was likely to be changed next year.

NI 58, emotional and behavioural health of looked after children

Looked after children were more likely to suffer mental health problems than those not looked after, an area of great concern. A strengths and difficulties questionnaire of 40 questions was used to screen looked after children. There were five aspects – emotional difficulties, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer and friendship issues and positive behaviour. All the scores were added together and divided by the number of looked after children to achieve an average. A good score was low. We achieved 13.2. England was 13.8. The South East was 15.3.

NI 62, stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements

Placement stability was critical to achieving better outcomes for looked after children. This measurement was taken at the end of March each year and included the number with three or more placements. The Panel noted that any move constituted a placement move, even if the child left a placement for only 24 hours. The children with more placement moves were often older children who did not want to be looked after or who had challenging behaviour. Bracknell Forest did not perform particularly well in this area, possibly because of the small cohort. Nationally for 2009 the figure was 10.7%, in the South East 10.4% and in Bracknell Forest 13.4%.

NI 63, stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement

This measurement was taken at the end of March and provided a snapshot of data for looked after children who had been looked after continuously for at least two and a half years and who were living in the same placement for at least two years. The figure for the South East was 68%, for England 67% and for Bracknell Forest 52%.

NI 73, achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2

With agreement of the Department of Children, Families and Schools, authorities had to set their own aspirational and challenging targets. Bracknell Forest's was 80% and we achieved 72%, the national average. Statistics given –

- 1277 pupils in the year group
- 919 achieved the benchmark figure
- 136 got level 4 in English but not in Maths
- 66 got level 4 in Maths but not in English
- The 8% slippage equated to 100 pupils

Early intervention to assist those who began to fall back was the key to success in this indicator.

The Chairman thanked the officers for an interesting and informative report. The Panel indicated its appreciation of this new approach to considering the PMR and it was agreed that further specific indicators would be identified for attention at the next Panel meeting.

35. Review of the Early Years, Child Care and Play Partnership

The review of the Early Years, Child Care and Play Partnership was deferred to the next meeting.

36. Annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Andrea King, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Business Manager attended to present the LSCB Annual Report for 2008/09. The Panel noted that the agenda for LSCBs was moving on rapidly nationally. Andrea outlined the LSCB's wide-reaching responsibilities under section 11 of the Children's Act 2004, its main tasks of which were scrutiny, challenge, enabling and support.

Key achievements during the year included:-

- Producing a safeguarding toolkit and safeguarding cue-cards for professionals and a safeguarding credit card for young people.
- Partnership agreed safer workforce materials.
- Missing children and substance misuse protocols/policies.
- Communications strategy and protocol.
- New online child protection procedures.
- The annual conference on how adult and children's services worked together to safeguard children.
- Increases in the safeguarding training programme.
- Section 11 self-assessments, post-Haringey assessments from all partners, extending the partnership focus beyond Children's Social Care.
- Case analysis of individual case practice, Government Office of the South East audit of protection plans and Care Quality Commission inspections.

Changes had been introduced since the case of Baby Peter:-

- LSCBs had been reviewed and there was a renewed focus on child protection.
- Section 11 and Working Together to safeguard children were being revised.
- The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council would need to be satisfied about the quality of local partnership and child safeguarding.

Current areas of development included:-

- Business Plan for 2010/12.
- Independent Chair and review of membership.
- Responding to new national guidance and supporting partners to understand and respond to national requirements.
- Conducting a multi-agency review on a specific case to identify learning and embed change.
- E-safety and Sexual Exploitation working groups.
- Child Death Overview Panel.
- Implementing the new Child Protection Procedures available online at <http://proceduresonline.com/berks/>
- Safer Workforce developments.

Arising in discussion:-

- 51 children were the subject of a Protection Plan, an increase of 10 over quarter 1.
- NI 70, reduce emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people – this was difficult to monitor and collect data for because Bracknell Forest residents might go to Wexham Royal Berkshire or Frimley Park Hospitals. There was currently a national debate about this indicator as it was not helpful for data about accidents to be combined with intentional harm.

The Chairman thanked Andrea for an interesting and informative report.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) a Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel Working Group be established to undertake a review of safeguarding children as referred to in the 2009/10 Overview and Scrutiny Programme; and

- (iii) the Working Group should comprise Councillors Mrs Birch, Mrs McCracken, Kensall and Harrison and Miss Richardson.

37. 14-19 Education Provision Working Group

The Panel received the working group report on Delivering the 14-19 Education Entitlement and the tabled notes of a meeting held earlier in the day at Garth Hill College with the Principal and Assistant Principal & Curriculum and Timetable Manager and with four year 9 pupils.

Councillor Kensall highlighted some points arising at the meeting:-

- The rigidity of the course structures once a pupil had commenced a course for a specified level.
- The Principal and Assistant Principal had no concerns around the lack of a form room to accommodate Diploma students or issues of uniform, only that pupils from elsewhere must respect the dress code.
- There was a problem relating to transportation to other colleges which needed to be addressed.
- Diploma courses would not necessarily provide for young people not in education, employment or training, for whom foundation learning may meet their needs more appropriately.
- Dialogue was stronger between Bracknell Town schools than those in other areas of the borough.

The Chairman thanked the members of the working group for all their hard work on this topic. She particularly referred to the conclusions set out in paragraph 4 on pages 91 to 93 and the recommendations paragraph 5 on page 94.

RESOLVED that the report of the review of the delivery of the new 14-19 education entitlement in Bracknell Forest, updated to include the findings of the visit to Garth Hill College on 16 December, be agreed and commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for adoption and for sending formally to the relevant Executive Member.

38. English as an Additional Language Working Group Update

The Panel received Councillor Mrs McCracken's report of a follow-up meeting of the Working Group which reviewed English as an additional language in Bracknell Forest schools to update on recent developments. The Working Group expressed a continuing interest and wish to remain involved in EAL matters provided that it would be beneficial. It had been suggested that the Working Group might consider aspects of the EAL induction programme.

The Panel noted that if the Working Group needed officer support to carry out further work, this would need to take account of other priorities and would be unlikely to be available within the next three months.

39. Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report

The Panel considered and noted the report outlining the activities of all the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Commission during the period August to October 2009 set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12 and summarising significant national developments in overview and scrutiny set out in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.15..

40. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel noted the items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to Children's Services and Learning.

In response to a question about the regional residential commissioning for children with complex needs, the Panel noted that in collaboration with neighbouring authorities it was hoped to encourage a provider into the area to provide for children with more complex needs. This would not cut costs but would provide better outcomes for these children because they would not be placed so far away from home.

CHAIRMAN