



Minutes

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 31 January 2017, in Large Dining Room, Judges Lodgings, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.30 am and concluding at 12.25 pm.

This meeting was webcast. To review the detailed discussions that took place, please see the webcast which can be found at <http://www.buckscc.public-i.tv/>
The webcasts are retained on this website for 6 months. Recordings of any previous meetings beyond this can be requested (contact: democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs P Birchley, Ms J Blake, Mr D Dhillon (Chairman), Mr P Gomm, Mr P Irwin, Mrs V Letheren, Mrs W Mallen, Mr R Stuchbury and Ms K Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr M Moore

GUESTS PRESENT

Lin Hazell and Mr Z Mohammed

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms A Byrne, Ms C Douch, Mr J Fowler, Mr D Johnston and Ms L Nankin

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr D Babb.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2016 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

The following updates were provided to actions from the previous meeting:

The Chairman informed the Committee that:

- The SEND Strategy had been deferred until the next Committee meeting on 21st March 2017.
- A communication had been received from a company called Everlief Child Psychology Ltd highlighting that the information about their hourly charging policy discussed in the webcast of item 9 - Educational Psychology Service at the previous Committee meeting on 6th December was incorrect. The company requested that it be noted that they did not operate in the way described. The Chairman confirmed that a note would be made in the minutes of the meeting of 6th December 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services informed the Committee of the following in relation to foster carer resignations during 2015/16:

- There were some foster parents looking after family members who had now turned 18 years of age and therefore would be removed from the foster carer register. Over the last year, 8 short term foster carers had left, either because of a change of circumstances or illness or because fostering was something they no longer wanted to do.
- Any foster carer who resigned was visited at home to undertake an exit interview and discuss any issues they may have had during their time as a foster carer.
- The fostering allowance needed to be competitive with neighbouring Local Authorities.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills confirmed that he would be able to bring a more in depth report on bullying to the Committee.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman updated the Committee as follows:

- The Voice of the Child and Young Person Inquiry had now been presented to Cabinet. The majority of recommendations had been agreed by Cabinet and two had been agreed in part. The Chairman thanked the Committee for their work on the inquiry.
- He had attended an informative seminar on Child Sexual Exploitation which included stories from survivors. He was concerned that there seemed to be not enough support for survivors in the longer term.

- Nominations would be sought for the parent governor roles that were available on the Select Committee. Emails would be sent to Parent Governors on 20 February 2017 and articles would be published in Governor Times and Schools Bulletin.

6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Mr R Stuchbury noted that there had been an increase in the take up of the Duke of Edinburgh award at schools in his area as well as an increase in A level achievement. He commented on the strong leadership and closer working within those schools and congratulated one pupil who had taken up a place at Oxford University.

Mrs V Letheren had visited the Action 4 Youth Headquarters last week and had been impressed with the work they were doing with mainstream children as well as those not in education, employment or training (NEET). Mrs Letheren added that the staff were very committed and there was a new Chief Executive in post.

Mr P Gomm noted the success of the new outreach work being undertaken with different Children's Centres in his area.

7 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.
- Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
- Mr D Johnston, Managing Director for Children's Social Care and Learning.
- Ms C Douch, Service Director, Children's Services.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills updated the Committee on the following:

- The national funding formula (second phase of the consultation) had been received on 14 December 2016. An additional £10m would be made available to Buckinghamshire schools if the changes were implemented.
- 85% of schools in Buckinghamshire would gain from this additional money, but 15% would lose out.
- Nationally, 46% of schools would lose funding and 54% would gain.

There were a number of questions raised by Committee Members in relation to the funding formula and the following points were made in response:

- The additional £10m would mean that teacher numbers would increase
- Over the last two years there had been approximately an additional £18m per year made available which had supported more teachers.
- The 15% of schools that were losing out were mainly primary schools with small pupil numbers and the amounts were relatively small. There would be mitigation in the first year with a cap of 1.5% on losses.

- The Government took into account a number of factors, for example free school meals and deprivation in the new formula.
- Secondary schools had already had discussions with the Council to look at the level of reserves available to help mitigate any losses to funding and to look at what other Local Authorities were doing.
- The Council met with the primary schools through a Primary Executive Board as well as Schools Forum.
- Members agreed that the item would need to come back to the Committee for a fuller discussion at a future meeting.

ACTION: Governance Advisor.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services updated the Committee on the following:

- The Children's Services improvement journey was continuing and so far there had been a positive response from the press.
- There was now a focus on the reconfiguration of the service, known as 'Change for Children' which included four separate work-streams.
- There was a focus on integrating disability and special educational needs services.
- The priority was always to maintain a strong service for children during both the improvement journey and the reconfiguring of services. The Committee would be kept updated with progress.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The Munro system was not being completely disbanded but there would be a reduction in the number of teams to ensure that there was enough resilience.
- The improvements had not happened as quickly as the service would have liked; however; there had been a lot of hard work already undertaken to ensure changes were sustainable in the longer term.
- Buckinghamshire was looking at providing residential accommodation situated within the county as a way of reducing the number of out of county placements. A business case was currently being worked up for this.
- The improvement plan work was focused on ensuring the best outcomes for children; the transformation process was to prepare the service for the future.

8 PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS - FOCUS ON PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Chairman welcomed:

- Ms Laura Nankin, Head of Fair Access and Youth Provision

Ms Nankin highlighted the following:

- The report focussed on permanent exclusions from the primary school sector and the results of research that had been undertaken last year.
- There had been a large increase in the number of permanent exclusions from primary schools last year from 6 up to 24 with the majority being pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

- Schools had different thresholds for exclusion for example one school's interpretation of persistent disruptive behaviour may be different from another.
- A high percentage of pupils being excluded were known to social care.
- There was less free support for schools to help manage behaviour issues and an increased focus on behaviour by Ofsted which placed schools under more pressure to deal with behaviour issues.
- A permanent exclusion avoidance plan had been developed to focus on reducing the numbers.
- There had been some reduction in permanent exclusions (including in primary schools) during the current school year and a Task and Finish Group had been set up specifically looking at Secondary Schools exclusions due to weapons.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- To help reduce exclusions, there was now better communication and sharing of information between social care and education following a protocol that was rolled out in 2016. There was also a shared database where social care and education issues could be viewed together.
- In the secondary sector, if a pupil was excluded twice in a 3 year period they could not return to mainstream school.
- The Local Authority reserved 10 places in the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for excluded pupils. There were 32 places overall which meant there was an additional opportunity to spot purchase places as necessary and subject to the space being available.
- The process for challenging a permanent exclusion followed guidance set by central government and schools could not be forced to readmit children, however they could be charged £4,000 if a child was not readmitted.
- Some Members of the Committee considered that the appeals process appeared ineffective and should be an issue on which to lobby central government.
- Schools had to follow central government guidance when permanently excluding pupils and the Council would challenge a school if it thought the guidance had not been adhered to. Guidance was slightly ambiguous for schools but some cases did get overturned by governors.
- Permanent exclusions were spread across a number of schools, none stood out as having a particularly high number.
- There were some instances of physical assault in primary schools which had led to exclusion.
- The Committee considered that this subject would be useful to consider as a one day inquiry and could be added to the forward plan.

ACTION: Governance Advisor.

9 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE YOUTH SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr James Fowler, Youth Service Manager.

The Committee noted the report and the following points were made during the discussion:

- There had been a reduction in the budget for the Connexions Service and this had impacted on the type of support that young people could access. There had not been an increase in the number of schools buying in careers advice packages but this was the responsibility of schools.
- Street based youth work involved a team working directly with The Community Safety team and neighbourhood policing to help identify young people needing support and build relationships. There was good information sharing and partnership working with other organisations and key stakeholders and agencies.
- The Youth Service was a key partner with other teams within Children's Services including Early Help and in statutory discussions with individual children and young people.
- The service had been proactive in dealing with a reduced budget by restructuring the service into the current configuration working more closely with key partners.
- There was a training programme in place for volunteers and officers who worked in the service which included safeguarding training, Action 4 Youth also provided training to support the programme.

10 MISSING AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION SERVICES

The Chairman welcomed:

- Ms Alison Byrne – Early Help and Education Commissioner.

The Committee noted the report and the following points were made during the discussion:

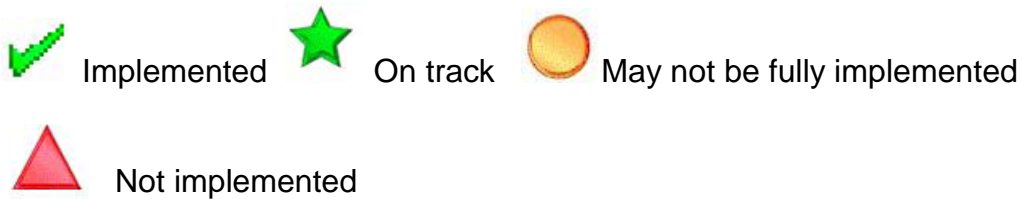
- The match funding from Barnado's followed a rigorous tendering process which encouraged bidders to come in and talk to Commissioners. Barnado's considered they were in a strict competition.
- Because of a lack of clarity about the split of financial responsibilities between the contractor and the Council the TUPE costs were high under the current contract and this had discouraged some of the other potential bidders. The new contract made the responsibilities much clearer which would address any TUPE issues in future.
- More return interviews for missing children were now being completed within the national standard of 72 hours and this included face to face conversations. Commissioners were still working with Barnado's to further improve this area of the service.
- Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board focused on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and monitored initiatives such as Hotel Watch to ensure they were being effective. Partnership working on CSE and missing children had improved significantly

11 CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE INQUIRY

The Chairman went through the progress of recommendations of the Committee's Children's Workforce Inquiry 6 months on. The following points were made:

- Recommendations 1 and 3 had been implemented now and there appeared to be good progress on recommendations 2 and 4.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman RAG rate the recommendations as follows



- Recommendation 1 – Tick
- Recommendation 2 – Green
- Recommendation 3 – Tick
- Recommendation 4 – Green

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED the status of implementation of recommendations from the Children’s Workforce Inquiry (6 months on) as above.

12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the future work programme.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is on 21st March 2017 10.30am in Large Dining Room, Judges Lodgings, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN