



Minutes

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 5 December 2017, in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.30 am and concluding at 12.37 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

Mr A Collingwood, Mrs I Darby, Mr D Dhillon (Chairman), Mrs W Mallen, Mr B Roberts, Mrs L Sullivan, Ms J Ward (Vice-Chairman), Mr G Williams and Ms K Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr D Babb and Mr M Moore

GUESTS PRESENT

Mr M Appleyard and Mrs J Teesdale

OFFICERS PRESENT

Miss S Callaghan, Ms J Davies, Mr J Huskinson and Ms Y Thomas

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr M Hussain, Mrs Luisa Sullivan, Mr K Hamblin, Mrs M Aston.

The Chairman informed the Committee that Mr N Hussain was no longer a member of the Committee.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST



There were none.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2017 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Ms K Bates to the meeting and invited her to present her question.

The Future of School Run Children's Centres

I have been on the governing body of Bowerdean Nursery School, High Wycombe since 2000 and in the role of chair since 2006. In July 2013, as an Outstanding Nursery, we were approached by Bucks County Council about opening a new nursery site and taking on the running of a children's centre. Following substantial refurbishment by the county council costing nearly £1 million, in April 2015, Mapledean Nursery School and Mapledean Children's Centre were born.

The previous children's centre had been under-performing. With a new and experienced co-ordinator, this has completely changed. We now have a team of four whose knowledge, experience and commitment has transformed the centre and the services it offers to the community. They work out in the community delivering targeted 1:1 support and yet are able to keep the centre open every day running vital group activities. We already facilitate numerous other services, such as Health, Speech and Language, midwives, Family Resilience, Freedom Programme, working from our premises, sharing information about families and making sure that help is delivered in a timely and appropriate manner. We have excellent facilities: good parking and accessibility, a training room, interview rooms, flexible spaces, kitchen, wifi etc. Our work has been focussed on the under-fives and their families, because that was the original brief, not because we choose to limit our contribution to the community. We are well on the way to delivering many of the features listed in the Early Help review document. We already operate on joined up thinking. We have the capacity to grow into an Early Help base.

However, my question to the committee isn't just about Mapledean Children's Centre but it serves as an example which is applicable to other centres.

We have to face the fact that you may choose to close the centre. Whilst I clearly think that this would be a huge loss to the community and a mistake in the long run, I should point out just how physically integrated the nursery and children's centre are.

We share the building. We each have an entrance, but internally there is a connecting door. The boiler for the whole building is situated in the children's centre. Security, communications,

heating, electricity and maintenance are shared. Closure of one part will have a financial impact on the other part.

So my question is this:

What plans are there for protecting us, and others like us, who are schools that manage Children's Centres?

Karen Bates

Mapledean Children's Centre, Chair of Governors

The Chairman then welcomed Mr P Dart, Programme Director – Change for Children to the meeting and invited him to respond.

Following the question and response, Members made the following points.

- It would be important to consult with all 35 Children's Centres before making a final decision on the Early Help Review, even if this meant delaying the final decision to make sure the right decision was made.
- It was important that service provision wasn't just based on a geographic desktop exercise, it was also vital to understand how communities accessed services.
- Where there was current successful provision and valuable skills in Children's Centres, it was important that this was retained and not lost as a result of the Early Help review.

Members also asked questions about:

- How Children's Centre's performance was assessed when deciding at which centres to make changes.
- How communities were being engaged in deciding the future of Children's Centres.
- Whether a lack of funds was driving the need to reconfigure Children's Centres.

In response Mr Dart explained that:

- A careful needs analysis had been undertaken to identify where the need for early help services was greatest
- It was more important to ensure the provision of key front line workers rather than physical buildings.
- In some areas of the County outreach was a more effective way of providing the services that residents needed, rather than providing services in a central location.
- The Early Help Review would be happening anyway regardless of funding, motivated by a desire to support those in most need more effectively and help them to access services easily.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that they were satisfied with the response that had been given to the question

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for chairing the last meeting and updated the Committee on his visits and attendance at:

- His local Children's Centres
- An adoption panel
- A Youth Voice Event attended by around 60 children and young people who raised issues around mental health provision and financial training in schools, apprenticeships and vocational learning.

6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Ms K Wood updated the Committee on her attendance at the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and visit to social work teams.

Ms Wood re-iterated Mrs Darby's and Mr Williams' comments at the previous meeting about the need for good emotional support for social workers, which still appeared to be lacking in some areas. Ms Wood also commented that there appeared to be low morale in some but not all of the teams she visited.

Mr Williams had met with the Principal Social Worker and discussed improved access to parenting and mentoring courses.

Mr Williams had also had discussions with the virtual school and Dr Challoner's Grammar school in developing a framework so that admittance criteria could be made more supportive of children looked after.

Mr Collingwood encouraged all Members of the Committee to attend an adoption panel.

7 CABINET MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The Chairman welcomed Mr M Appleyard, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and invited questions from the Committee.

Mr Appleyard introduced Miss S Callaghan, Service Director-Education.

Following concerns raised at previous meetings about the performance of the Educational Psychology Service, Mrs I Darby asked questions about the current resourcing of the service and the ability of the service to manage the conversion of all the Special Educational Needs (SEN) statements to Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) by the March 2018 deadline.

In response Miss Callaghan reported that:

- Two new Senior Educational Psychologists had been appointed.
- All SEN statements had now started to be converted to EHCPs and she was confident that the deadline would be met. However, it was important that the quality of the new EHCP was not compromised in order to meet timescales.
- Differences of opinion between parents and psychologist about some of the plans could potentially lead to delays but everything was driven around the needs of the child.

8 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The Chairman welcomed Mrs F Gosling-Thomas, Independent Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and Mrs J Davies, Head of Quality Standards and Performance to the meeting.

Mrs Gosling-Thomas explained the work of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) and summarised performance over the past year. Mrs Gosling-Thomas informed Members that the Board's annual report for 2015/16 had just been published.

Members asked questions and sought assurance about the following:

- Resourcing caseload levels of the Barnardo's RU Safe service.
- Ability of the Board to sustain improvements with reducing resources.
- Referrals and re-referrals from partners and application of the thresholds.
- Joint working between the BSCB and the Select Committee.
- How the Board listened and took account of the views of children and young people.
- The reasons for increasing numbers of children looked after.
- Engagement of partners with the Board.

In response the following points were made:

- The widening of the agenda and the partnership approach to tackling exploitation had strengthened the RU Safe service. There had been no reduction in provision for children and young people.
- More information about the reason for the drop in active RU Safe caseloads would be provided to Members.

Action: Julie Davies

- The Board currently had sufficient funding to cover its core work programme and had been successful at attracting funding for some important additional work.
- Increasing demand was an issue for all partners. The Board was working to support all agencies to ensure each was able to respond effectively and provide help at an early stage to prevent issues escalating.
- An analysis of referrals showed that a large number were from the police related to domestic violence; action is in hand to manage the volume of referrals more effectively.
- The Board had communicated the referral thresholds to partners effectively consistency in applying the thresholds was now the challenge. For example, ensuring new staff had a good understanding.
- Schools were encouraged to call and discuss potential safeguarding issues before making referrals if possible.
- The Board consulted to get the views of specific groups of children and young people such as those looked after, care leavers and children with disabilities.
- The Board received presentations from children and young people and provided a young person zone on the website to improve engagement.

- There needed to be a whole system approach to reducing the numbers of looked after children. Reducing demand at the front door should eventually lead to fewer looked after children.
- Partners on the Board were now actively participating and where a partner missed two meetings in a row, the Chairman would issue a letter.

9 NEW FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS AND HIGH NEEDS

The Chairman welcomed Mr J Huskinson, Finance Director to the meeting.

Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Miss S Callaghan, Service Director-Education and Mr Huskinson presented the report.

Members asked the following questions and sought clarity on:

- The impact on schools of transferring funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- Understanding more clearly the numbers of schools receiving more or less money.
- The impact on the pupils at those schools that would lose funding and how the Council would ensure there were no negative outcomes for those pupils.
- The detail of funding for each individual school.

In the discussion the following points were made:

- Some schools would not get increased funding and there was some protection in place. However those schools would have lost funding under the previous formula too.
- Money could only be transferred into the High Needs Block during the next two years, therefore the savings objectives within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy would have to be delivered within this timeframe.
- The Education and Skills Strategy was key in protecting vulnerable groups of pupils during the redistribution of funding through the new formula. Schools had agreed to transfer funding into the High Needs Block specifically to help support vulnerable children.
- There was an additional £10m of funding available to Buckinghamshire this year and next and this would be used to continue to close the attainment gap.
- There were still improvements that could be made in helping parents complete application forms to attract additional funding from the Department for Education (DfE) e.g. pupil premium funding.
- More detail about the distribution of funding was available in the Schools Forum meeting papers from October 31st and November 28th and a link would be provided to Members.

Action Committee and Governance Adviser

10 PREVENTING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

The Chairman welcomed Ms Y Thomas, Head of Equalities to the meeting.

Ms Thomas, Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Miss S Callaghan, Service Director – Education presented the report.

Following the report, Members asked the following questions and sought assurance about:

- Helping schools and parents to intervene early to prevent issues.
- Partners being engaged in informing and preventing cyber bullying.
- Preparing young people to be able to deal with and prevent bullying incidents.
- Anti-bullying policies and the link to exclusions.
- Funding for the anti-bullying work of the Council.

In response the following points were made:

- Some schools worked individually with parents around behaviour issues and prevention, although this was not happening consistently across all schools.
- A bi-annual cyber bullying conference was held which web partners had contributed to. Partners had also provided advice on preventing cyber bullying on their websites.
- The support that Councils would be able to give to schools in future could be reduced as budgets reduced.
- Early help services would be key to helping children and young people and their parents in intervening early and preparing them to be able to prevent and deal with bullying incidents.
- It was important to build positive relationships with schools to deal with prevention and bullying incidents as articulated in both the Education and Skills and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategies.
- The Head of Equalities had a good relationship with Head Teachers which was effective in helping schools share good practice around managing behaviour and bullying.
- It was important to support schools in managing behaviour before things got to the stage of exclusion.
- Fair Access Boards were important in bringing schools together to get transparent and consistent approaches to implementing exclusions.
- It was important to challenge schools where it was thought an incorrect decision had been made on exclusions.
- It was thought that Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, which covered areas such as behaviour and relationships, would become mandatory in schools and a PSHE Lead Officer had been appointed to help schools understand their responsibilities in this area.
- There were no plans to reduce the budget currently allocated to anti-bullying.

11 PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS INQUIRY - DRAFT SCOPE

Resolved: Members AGREED the draft scope for the Permanent Exclusions Inquiry.

Ms Ward, Mr Williams, Mr Moor, Mr Collingwood, Mrs Darby and Mr Collingwood were happy to be included in the inquiry group.

The Chairman asked other Members to let him know if they wanted to be involved.

12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Resolved: The Committee NOTED the work programme.

The Chairman asked Members to contact him if they wanted to arrange to shadow front line social work teams or adoption panels.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee to take place on 6th February 2018 at 10.30am in Mezzanine Room 1, New County Offices, Aylesbury.

Private pre-meeting for Members from 9.30am

CHAIRMAN

CSCL Select Committee 5th December 2017 – Item 7 – Cabinet Member Update

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE UPDATE

Following the Children’s Social Care and Learning Select Committee on 17th October 2017, members of the Committee requested a regular update on progress made by the Educational Psychology Service against the Action Plan as previously set out.

The following specific areas were highlighted by committee members:

1. The urgency of recruiting and retaining educational psychologists.
2. The length of time it was taking to improve performance.
3. Monitoring of the action plan and how improvement was being driven.
4. The details of the pilot schemes being set up.
5. The impact on children and young people currently with no plan or intervention.
6. Budgeting for the service.
7. How confident the service was that it could improve.

Progress, to date, on the areas highlighted above includes the following:

1. A planned recruitment programme for EPS is now underway. This programme has started with a comprehensive recruitment campaign for the PEP role initially, which has included advertising in the Association of EPs (AEP), The Guardian enhanced advert and audience match extra, various job boards, and social media targeted advertising. This has been at a cost of £2,800. This campaign is due to close on the 10 December. Immediately following this PEP recruitment campaign will be a targeted advertising campaign for EPs which, as well as multi-platform recruitment initiatives, will also include an newly created EP landing page on our Careers website, targeted advertising with training Universities (UCL, UEL and Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust) and an Open Evening recruitment event at the Meeting House in Euston. This comprehensive campaign will cost between £10-£15K. In terms of the EP campaign, these roles are already being advertised on our careers website, job boards and the AEP website on a rolling basis but our aim is to deliver a more targeted recruitment campaign in December/January as per the outline above.

We are pleased to report that an interim PEP has been appointed, whilst we are actively recruiting to the permanent post. The post holder will start on 4 December.

2. In order to support ongoing service improvement we have clearly identified our areas of development, linked to the priorities in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy, and these are reflected in our improvement plan. Delivery against this plan is monitored through weekly touchdowns, and a monthly core group meeting, as well an overarching scorecard that provides statistical data for ongoing monitoring. Evidence of improvement includes the number of EHCPs completed within the statutory timescale which has increased. for example in June 2017 16.4% of EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks. By September 2017 this has increased to 20.5%. In terms of

conversions from statements to EHCPs, our performance in April was 19.8% but by October it was 50.8%.

3. Ongoing monitoring and strategic oversight of the implementation of the reforms sits with the established Integrated Services Board (ISB) and this has been integral to creating shared ownership and accountability across the local area. An integrated dashboard is under development to ensure a shared narrative is in place and appropriate challenge can be made to support continuous improvement. The board's aims are to:
 - Provide strategic oversight of the SEND strategy, with clear accountability for improvement, inspection readiness and transformation.
 - Further develop an integrated approach across Education, Health and Social Care to enable the objectives of the SEND reforms to be met.
 - Re-design/streamline service delivery to create an effective service that meets the needs of children and families.
 - Establish and agree shared principles across all services.
4. The SEND Pilot (SENDIAN) aims to ensure children with SEND have their needs identified and met at an early stage, without the need to progress to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) unless there are complexities that make this appropriate. This involves 80 schools and settings in the Aylesbury area and will start on 1 December. SEN Officers will work closely with SENCO's in targeted schools and early years' settings to get to know their cohort of children with additional needs and provide advice and support. A frontline multi-agency team will be created to identify and meet children's needs without the need for referrals. This approach will ensure appropriate assessments are completed at an early stage and support/interventions will be designed collaboratively. Top up funding will be available, which is ring-fenced from an existing budget, to enable schools to act on the advice given. Depending on the package of support co-produced, professionals may also work alongside the child in the school setting to help meet their needs.

If, after this work, it is jointly felt that an EHCP needs assessment is required, the request will progress through the 20 week process in a more timely manner, as the assessment reports will already have been completed during this preventative stage. An EHCP would then be co-produced with the family on this basis.

5. It is anticipated that the following improvements will benefit those children and young people not in receipt of an EHCP as it will both enhance early SEN support in schools and settings and, in conjunction with the above, improve timeliness and appropriateness of EHCP assessment:
 - EHCPs that are needed (as part of the pilot) will be completed within the statutory 20 week timescale.
 - More children will be able to remain in mainstream settings on SEN support

- Schools will be better supported to implement the graduated approach and make best use of their notional SEND funding
 - Where produced, EHCPs would be co-produced with families leading to a reduction in complaints, appeals and tribunals
 - A reduction in the number of requests for EHCP
 - Only children with the most complex needs would have an EHCP
 - Communication with families throughout the process would be improved
 - Key agencies across health, education and social care would work more collaboratively together including completing joint assessments
6. Budgeting for service improvements and ongoing recruitment will be derived from savings made as a result of reconfiguring the service. We had planned to do this through a restructure but have halted this, as we do not want to destabilise the service when we have to meet our timeline for conversions.

