



Minutes

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 6 February 2018, in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.31 am and concluding at 12.45 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), Mr M Hussain, Mrs W Mallen, Mr B Roberts, Mrs L Sullivan, Mr G Williams and Ms K Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs M Aston and Mr M Moore

GUESTS PRESENT

Mr M Appleyard and Mr W Whyte

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr J Fowler, Ms L Nankin and Mr T Vouyioukas

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr D Babb, Mrs J Ward and Mr S Lambert.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of 5th December 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Mrs I Darby asked that the Membership of the permanent exclusions inquiry be updated following some changes to Committee Membership.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A public question had been received after the deadline for this meeting, The question would be taken at the next meeting on 27th March 2018.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman informed the Committee that the first evidence gathering session for the Permanent Exclusions Inquiry had taken place and that he had been interviewed by Ofsted as part of their inspection of Children's Services.

6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Mrs W Mallen had visited her local Children's Centre.

Mr A Collingwood had spoken to users of his local Children's Centre and was meeting with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to discuss further.

Mrs M Aston emphasised the importance of ensuring sufficient outreach workers to support vulnerable people as part of the new Early Help service.

7 CABINET MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The Chairman welcomed Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to the meeting.

Mr Appleyard explained the current position around the performance of the Educational Psychology Service.

Members sought clarification and assurance on the following:

- Current resourcing and recruitment of permanent staff .
- Timescales for undertaking assessments and completing Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP).
- Support for pupils prior to an assessment for an EHCP.
- Monitoring of the action plan.

In response, Mr Appleyard explained the following:

- The Service was on track to have all Special Educational Needs statements converted to Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) by the 31st March 2018.
- There was a backlog of 20 old educational psychology assessments required to complete new Education and Health Care Plans which would be completed by the end of April. After that, the Educational Psychology Service expected new assessments for EHCPs to be processed within the 6 week statutory timescales. There were currently sufficient staffing resources to deal with this work.
- The focus for the service was for children and young people to receive the right support early to prevent the need for an EHCP.
- Educational attainment of pupils was published by the Department for Education each year.

8 OFSTED INSPECTION

The Chairman welcomed Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Mr T Vouyioukas to the meeting.

Mr Whyte and Mr Vouyioukas explained the outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection of the Council's Children's Services.

Members asked questions and sought assurance around:

- The work of the improvement board since the last inspection in 2014.
- The findings of the inspectors' case audit work.
- The quality of case work.
- Staffing and recruitment and retention issues.
- The reasons for the apparent slow pace of improvement since 2014.
- Cases of children being left in potentially risky situations for too long.

In response Mr Vouyioukas explained that:

- The Improvement Board, working with the Council and its partners, had been satisfied that systems were in place that would show improvement in the service. However during the inspection Ofsted were concerned about a number of cases they had audited.
- Although the current judgement remained the same, Ofsted identified some improvements since the 2014 inspection.
- There was an internal process of auditing to ensure good casefile quality.
- Quality issues identified by inspectors on some casefiles related to a lack of:
 - promptness of decision making,
 - risk assessments and
 - timely and measurable interventions.

However there were also some examples identified of very good practice.

- One area of the service had higher caseloads and staff turnover than others and it was the intention to replicate good practice from elsewhere in the service to areas where there were issues.
- Of the cases that inspectors had audited, none had been identified as having the highest level of concern (requiring immediate action). Issues identified were around drift and delay. All issues identified were addressed during the inspection.
- The service would learn from the cases that Inspectors had identified issues with and use the internal quality assurance process to develop action learning sets to ensure improvement. External checking would also be used to supplement the internal quality assurance programme.
- There had been positive feedback on the service for foster carers although more in-house foster carers needed to be recruited.

Mr Whyte explained that:

- Although the overall judgement had not changed, there had been some positive changes within the service since the last inspection, although the pace of improvement was too slow.
- There had been good progress on staff recruitment and retention but it would take 6 to 12 months to see outcomes as new staff progressed.
- Occasionally agency staff had to be brought in because of a need for certain expertise and this meant that some children experienced a higher number of social workers working with them than the service would like.
- There was data available on staffing and turnover which could be shared with the Committee.

Action: Committee and Governance Advisor

- Children and young people were now members of the Corporate Parenting Panel which was important so that children and young people could share their views directly with the service.

9 VOICE OF THE CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON INQUIRY - RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr J Fowler, Youth Service Manager
- Ms E Dover, Youth Worker
- Robin, Guest Young Person
- Laura, Guest Young Person
- Annabelle, Guest Young Person
- Eve, Guest Young Person

Mr Fowler introduced the item and explained that a task and finish group would be set up to progress recommendation 4 further.

The young people introduced themselves and in response to Members' questions explained the following:

- The Mind Of My Own (MOMO) App was a good thing to help children and young people get their voices heard but publicity about the app and take up needed to be higher.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Youth Forum was well attended and a good opportunity for children and young people to get their voices heard either individually or through a representative.
- A website for young people should be improved to make it easier to find information and an area where children and young people could easily find what had happened as a result of their feedback. (You Said, We Did).
- An improved website would need to be well publicised to all young people so that they could get their voice heard.
- Children and Young People were involved regularly on the interview panels when recruiting staff to Children's Services.
- There had been improvements in the service that children and young people received from GPs and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) because of work completed by the CAMHS Article 12 young people's participation group and members of the SEND Youth Forum and Youth Voice.
- The CAMHS website was a good example of what a website could look like and this had been improved after input from children and young people.
- The young people present felt that their voices were being heard and that they could identify changes that had happened as a result.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED to delegate the RAG rating of the recommendations to the Chairman with the ratings being shared with the Committee and Cabinet Member after the meeting.

10 PERFORMANCE REPORT - Q2 2017-18

Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services presented their respective reports.

Mr Appleyard explained the following about the high levels of permanent exclusions:

- Projected figures were showing an expectation of fewer permanent exclusion this year than the previous year.
- It was important to address issues early to prevent permanent exclusions, which were always a last resort, and to use an holistic approach to tackle the issue.
- Examples of good practice were being shared with schools to help deal with permanent exclusions and help teachers address poor behaviour.

The Chairman explained that the Committee were doing an in depth inquiry into the issue of increased permanent exclusions.

- In response to Members questions Mr T Vouyioukas explained that performance target setting needed to take account of outcomes for children and young people.
- The educational outcomes for children looked after were not as good as the service wanted them to be, although a high percentage were attending good or outstanding schools.

11 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the work programme and requested that the following be considered for inclusion:

- Ofsted improvement work
- The annual educational standards report
- Issues related to home schooling

Mr Vouyioukas explained that it would be helpful for Officers to understand what outcomes the Committee were aiming to achieve from scrutinising particular work programme items.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee was confirmed as 10:30am 27th March 2018, Mezzanine Room 1, New County Offices, Aylesbury. There would be a private pre-meeting for Members at 9:45 for a 10am start.

CHAIRMAN