

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee Meeting
27th March 2018

Public Question from Mr Paul Turner

I have personal experience relating to 'looked after' children over the past 30 years, and on behalf of all the children of Buckinghamshire, many of whom are vulnerable and cannot speak for themselves I ask the following:-

Children's Services use the criteria of 'good enough parenting' to determine whether a child should remain with his/her parent/s. If the select committee were to use the same criteria to establish whether Buckinghamshire County Council were 'good enough parents' in relation to the children in its care under a care order what would be the outcome? For birth parents judged not to be 'good enough', the removal of a child would be a distinct possibility, especially over a three-and-a-half-year period with serious concerns being consistently raised about the risk of further harm and neglect. Therefore, a radical solution should be found to safeguard children in Buckinghamshire, possibly removing them from the care of Buckinghamshire Children's Services who have proved to be inadequate as corporate parents.

Once again, the care of children in Buckinghamshire has been judged by Ofsted as inadequate, following a judgement of inadequate three and a half years ago. Isn't it about time the select committee admitted that children are suffering as a direct result of the inadequate parenting by Buckinghamshire County Council; admitted that three and a half years has been ample time to remedy the situation; and that Buckinghamshire has failed and continues to fail its children. It would seem the select committee which is supposed to hold decision makers to account have failed to do so, or at least failed to act when the decision makers have been unable to sufficiently improve the service.

I am assuming that all select committee members have read the Ofsted report and will have some very searching questions to ask for themselves, but just to point out a few comments from Ofsted. 'Serious shortfalls in some parts of the Service'; 'some children being left at risk and in unsuitable circumstances for too long'; 'weak oversight by managers'; 'Plans that do not demonstrate a full understanding of risks to children'; 'weak managerial oversight at all levels is a common feature in too many cases, as a result some children remain without the protection that they need'; 'Management oversight, in the majority of children's cases is inadequate'. I could go on.

How many children will tonight, face another night of uncertainty and at risk because of the failings of Children's Services? How long is the select committee going to tolerate this? It's time for a radical re-think.

Paul Turner