

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel, 14 September 2017

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
14 September 2017**

PRESENT:

Councillor Chris Wakefield - Chair; Councillor Susan Philips, Vice-Chair, Councillors Simon Bull, Malcolm Davies, Cheryl Johnston and Don McQueen.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Nicola Greene - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services (arrived at 6:15pm)

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Charlotte Baker - Young Carers Support Worker

Mike Felstead - Service Manager, Standards - Children's Social Care

Jo Fry - Youth Services Manager

Neil Goddard - Service Director for Community Learning and Commissioning

Sue Hall - Team Manager, Child Health and Disabilities Team

Sue Ross - Director, Adults and Children

To see a copy of the public reports that were considered by the Panel please visit:

The meeting commenced at 6:04pm and ended at 7:44pm.

SECTION I - BUSINESS RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL

There was none.

SECTION II - BUSINESS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

47. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and everybody present introduced themselves.

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Dove, MacLoughlin and Stollard. Apologies were also received from Co-Opted Members Mrs Marchiori-White, Mr Hogg and from community witness Rosa Trout.

49. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members.

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50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

The Chairman explained for the purposes of transparency that he was the Vice-Chair of the Bournemouth Parent Carer Forum in a voluntary capacity.

With reference to clause number 58 Councillor McQueen explained that his son was a pupil at a Bournemouth School and would be effected by decision concerning the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. It was confirmed that this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest under the prescribed regulations.

51. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record subject to an amendment to clause 33 to clarify that Carole Aspden, former Service Director Children and Young People had taken early retirement to care for her husband.

The Panel reviewed the action points arising from the meeting on 20 July, detailed in the Action Sheet circulated at '4'. The Panel noted the outcomes and actions outstanding and those added from the last meeting of the Panel.

52. PUBLIC ITEMS

There were none.

53. ITEMS CIRCULATED BETWEEN MEETINGS

The following items were circulated to the Panel for information since the last meeting of the Panel. Members were asked to confirm whether further scrutiny was required in respect of the items below:

- a. Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others Annual Report 2016/17

No questions or comments had been received from any Members of the Panel.

DECISION MADE:

That no further scrutiny was required on the topic and that the Panel have read and considered the information contained in the report.

54. YOUNG CARERS SUPPORT SERVICE

The Youth Services Manager attended the Panel and introduced a young person, who had used the service; and the Young Carers Support Worker. The Chairman explained that this was to provide the Panel with an update on the Service since it came back in house in April 2016. The decision to bring the service back in house was made partly in response to concerns that the service wasn't meeting all legislative requirements. It

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also meant that there were greater opportunities for different ways of delivering the service. When it was transferred back to the Council there were 263 registered young carers with the project. The service was reviewed against the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014 and some temporary resource was brought in to increase provision and raise awareness of the service.

One of its aims was to increase awareness of Young Carers across the borough. This has started with working with schools to encourage them to sign up to the Young Carers in Schools Award, an accredited scheme with awards related to the quality of Young Carers support in the school. To date 11 schools had signed up and one was awaiting to hear about achieving a bronze assessment. It was believed that nationally only about a quarter of young carers were known about, therefore the Service was working to identify other young carers. To date with increased liaison with schools that number has risen to 358 young carer families in Bournemouth. The service had looked at areas geographically across Bournemouth to determine where young carers were. There was information and advice available on the B-Town Youth Website for young carers but this was only aimed at children aged 13 and above. The service was therefore looking at ways to communicate with and reach younger carers. The Service has developed activity provision during the school holiday periods and 2 or 3 different activities were provided each week. The main aim for the service in the future was to increase provision across sectors - at present the service sat within the youth service but young carers ranged from 5 years old upwards and to keep working with the schools in order to get more signed-up to the accredited scheme.

A young carer attended the meeting and gave the Panel his perspective on using the Service and how it had helped him as a young carer. He was referred to the Young Carers Service through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Sussed support service for young people. The young carers services had helped him cope with anxiety and he reported that they had 'turned his life around'. It had helped to know that there were other young people in the same situation. The Chairman thanked him on behalf of the Panel and commented that it was good to hear a heartfelt story and that the service was supporting young people in difficult situations.

DECISION MADE: That a more in-depth report be brought to the Panel meeting in January.

55. TRANSITION PLAN

The Team Manager for the Child Health and Disabilities Team attended the meeting to provide the Panel with an update on the current position of the service. There was work taking place to stabilise the service which previously had a backlog. This was now bedding down and creating stability and continuity of the service. The duties of the service within the Children and Families Act had been expanded and the team had been researching what would be the right way for Bournemouth to deliver these services. It had been decided that the best way forward would be to deliver through a 16-25 year old model which was in keeping with what Bournemouth wanted to achieve. Given the current situation of shared services proposals the team had been liaising with colleagues in Poole in order to ensure that both authorities created a model which

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would not conflict with that the other was proposing in order to help ease any future transition.

It was noted that there had been some difficulty in recruiting to a number of posts in Adult Services. This was partly due to the fact that both children and adult legislation was involved and social workers tended to specialise in either one area or the other. The Service would use a Pod structure which would reflect the structure now employed in children's services. There was an aim to move forward with a transitions POD within the next couple of months.

The Chairman asked how soon we could realistically see this service come together. The Director for Adults and Children advised that difficulties in recruiting meant it was impossible to provide an exact timeframe but that a recruitment campaign was currently underway and the aim was to attract high quality candidates. It was confirmed that although these posts have not been recruited to the Young People were receiving a good service as an additional post had been brought into the area, assessments were being received in a timely manner and the team had developed a good relationship with adult services. The Service was able to operate with a degree of flexibility where Young people were not just moved to adult services when they reached the age of 18 which had not previously been the case. It was acknowledged that the assessment process needed to start sooner but families no longer had the feeling that they were 'dropping off the cliff edge' at the point of transition.

The Chairman questioned how partnership working was going with Education and Health services. The Panel were advised that a Transition operational group was attended by education colleagues but in some cases, there was more work to be done with mental health colleagues. Continuing Health colleagues worked with the team on assessments. In response to a question about the numbers requiring the Transition Service it was confirmed that there were 99 18-25 year olds under the adult service, 15 that the transitions service was currently working with and approximately 25 young people from 16-18 who would be moving up shortly. It was reported that families on the whole were positive but were still anxious about the whole process and there was improvements to be made. There was support available and the aim was to enable young people and families to manage anxieties in a positive way to get them use to the different milestones.

DECISION MADE: That a paper be brought back to the Panel in order to feedback to the Panel on the completed service.

56. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL UPDATE

The Panel considered a verbal update from Councillor Nicola Greene, the Cabinet Member for Education and Children and the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The last Corporate Parenting Panel was held on 4 September and focused on permanency for Looked After Children (LAC). The Panel were told about the LAC Pod from where the team manager and a number of social workers attended the Panel. All teams were now fully staffed and the team presented as very enthusiastic which was well received by the Panel including CLICK members. CLICK gave a very moving and heartfelt presentation on permanency with some interesting personal stories provided by the young people with both positive and negative experiences of permanency. The

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CPP Chair advised that she was pleased to hear that the presentation was also going to be delivered to the Social Work Teams. The Chair of the CPP reported on the changing nature of the cohort of young people in care in Bournemouth. The overall number of LAC was going down which was a trend that was expected to continue. The number of Separated Children Seeking Asylum (SCSA) was rising and it was anticipated that the cohort would eventually form about 10 percent of all LAC. The Vice-Chair asked if there was anything that CLICK wanted to raise that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel could respond to. The Chair of CPP advised that if members wanted to invite CLICK on a particular issue that was up to the Panel to decide but also advised that CLICK members were very busy and that CPP had been agreed as the most appropriate forum. However, dialogue between the Panels should remain open. In response to a question from a Member on whether there was positive interaction to improve the number of stable placements or if it was something which was just happening the Panel was advised that the Service's overall aim was to find a settled and secure home for all LAC.

A Member asked how the SCSA were supported in Bournemouth and was advised that very few were in foster placements but were making positive progress in semi-independent supported lodgings. There was initial anxiety about having sufficient placements for them but it soon became clear that the focus of the SCSA was living in the town centre, getting back into education and improving their English. There had very distinct needs which were being supported by a charity International Care Network. The Panel discussed the relationship with Schools and health and were advised that the CPP would be considering Health issues at its meeting in November including the Annual LAC report on health.

57. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) SERVICE

The Service Manager, Standards, Children's Social Care informed the Panel that the report provided a summary of the Service provided by the Independent Reviewing Officers and outlined the statutory requirements of the report including the legal context and why the report was required. The report included information of the values of the IRO service and the profile of the team and the work that they do. Members raised a number of queries and comments surrounding the report including:

A Member asked about the Caseload for IROs and was advised that the recommendation was that each IRO dealt with approximately 50-70 cases. However, the actual situation was more complex as each IRO had other work that they did outside of the IRO role although the caseloads did remain roughly equivalent to the 50-70 recommendation.

As soon as a child comes into care the process for arranging a review would be triggered as one must be held within 28 days of coming into care. All agencies and people involved with the case would be invited to attend the review and look at the care plan to determine whether it is working.

In response to a question the Panel were advised that there were very regularly disagreements with other professionals and informal challenge was a regular occurrence. This was normally picked up and acted upon which meant the need for formal challenge was much less infrequent and would only occur if something happened to a child which they were effected by. Ofsted had previously stated that this informal

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challenge was not listened to but the Service Manager reported that this situation was now much better.

A Member asked how the part-time nature of the job worked for the IROs and the Service and was advised that the IROs job does not need to be full time and in many ways, it was better to have more bodies to provide a greater level of flexibility. In a case study, it was noted that the IRO was often one constant for the LAC and it was felt that they were battling on behalf of the young person.

A Member asked about the chart that appeared in the report at 6.2 regarding the number of LAC reviews which were completed on time. It was noted that it was not possible to provide numerical data on this due to the fluctuating number of reviews which were scheduled to take place each month, which could vary significantly. The reporting system in place was not accurate enough to allow for further investigation into this issue. It was noted that the collection of this data was no longer a statutory responsibility.

DECISION MADE: That the Panel had scrutinised and challenged the IRO report received and thanked both the Service Manager and the IRO team for their work.

58. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK CENTRAL SERVICES DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The Service Director for Community Learning and Commissioning advised the Panel that the briefing note was provided for information purposes to update the panel on the current situation in advance of the Pre-Panel presentation which would be considered by the Board immediately prior to the October meeting. A report on the issues was due to be considered by the Schools Forum on 20 October. The Panel was informed that the pressure on the budget was due to greater numbers of children and a higher number of children with additional needs. The Panel was advised of a small amendment to the report which clarified that the overspend brought forward was £2.803m.

In response to a question about the role that the Schools Forum had to decide on the overspend, it was clarified that the Schools Forum had agreed previously to carry forward the overspend from last year. It was noted that the Local Authority set the budget in consultation with the Schools Forum. The Schools Forum had the power to refuse the Local Authority's request to roll forward the overspend; the Local Authority then had the right of appeal this decision to the Secretary of State. In order to recover some of the previous overspend, the budget had been set for the current year with a 1.5% reduction per pupil spend. This still enabled the minimum funding guarantee to be met and therefore the Schools Forum were not able to overturn this decision.

It was clarified that the decision that Cabinet may be asked to make would be whether to appeal to the Secretary of State, the decision of the Schools Forum not to carry forward an overspend or a decision on the shortfall in the budget. However, at this stage the Schools Forum had not yet been asked to make a decision on whether to carry the current overspend forward but the Schools Forum had previously stated that it would not want to. The next Schools Forum meeting was scheduled for 20 October after which further discussions would be required. The minimum funding guarantee for next year had been set at 0.5% increased spend per pupil for next year which would have

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further implications, information on which would be brought back to the panel. Bournemouth had always been in a group of the very lowest funded schools and changes to the national funding formula should be positive for Bournemouth. The figure which had been received from central government was larger than expected but clarification on what exactly was required to be funded through it was still awaited from the government.

A Member sought clarification on the reason why the number in alternative provision had fallen. It was explained that this was children in mainstream schools who required a different offer to the standard curriculum. It was used for supplementing and supporting children in mainstream schools and it had reduced slightly but this was thought to be a natural fluctuation in numbers of children requiring the support. There had been no attempt to reduce the provision available.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services advised that this was a national issue and that there was growing awareness of the problem.

DECISION MADE: That the Panel had commented on the points raised in the briefing note and noted the current situation

59. FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman presented the Forward Plan to the Panel and advised Members that the November meeting would be themed around mental and emotional health for children and young people and given the comments made earlier in the meeting it was felt that it would be important to invite representatives from the CCG and other health professionals.

It was noted that the agenda for the October meeting may be subject to some further amendments.

The Chairman requested that if any members had any further items they wished to be included on the agenda these should be forwarded to him.

DECISION MADE:

That the forward plan and suggested agenda items be considered and amended as appropriate by the Chairman's agenda group.

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