

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.10 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Alison Swaddle (Chairman), Prue Bray, Andy Croy, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Ken Miall, Andrew Mickleburgh and Malcolm Richards

**Other Councillors Present**

Councillors: Sarah Kerr

**Officers Present**

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist  
Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools  
Adam Davis, Assistant Director Children's Social Care  
Nick Hammond, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact  
Mustafa Kamara, Senior Public Health Programme Officer  
Tony Penge, Contract Manager for Places Leisure  
Kelli Scott, Service Manager Children with Disability and Early Help  
Beverley Thompson, Service Manager Sports and Leisure

**27. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Darryl Ward and Councillor Jenny Cheng.

**28. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

Members reiterated that they would like to receive a report about home educated children. It was requested that any data available and the educational outcomes of homed educated children be included in the report. *Subsequently it was agreed to add this item to the 17 March 2020 meeting of the Committee.*

The Chairman stated that a query had been received in relation to the statement on page 10 which read: *"In response to a question Jim Leviers stated that home educators would have to register with Ofsted when they reached a certain number of children."*

Officers clarified by reading out point 3 on page 4 of the guidance issued by the Department for Education:

*An 'independent school' is defined as a school that is not maintained by a local authority or is not a non-maintained special school, and at which full-time education is provided (a) for five or more pupils of compulsory school age or (b) for at least one pupil of that age who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989) or has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.*

The document that Officers referred to can be found in the link below:

## **29. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **30. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

## **31. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

### **31.1 Sarah Kerr asked the Chairman of the Children's Services O&S Committee the following question:**

#### **Question**

In relation to agenda item 36, Youth Offending Service, I note that on page 58 of the agenda under Operational Practice, it mentions that preventative and early intervention work will be done in schools. With this in mind, I'm surprised it doesn't mention a restorative justice programme being introduced in the Borough's schools. Restorative justice has been proven to be successful in the justice system and in schools, and Andy Couldrick, previous CEO of this Council, started rolling it out across various services, including schools, but for some reason, this project stalled, despite the reported success it was having. Will the Youth Offending Service consider rolling this out more fully?

#### **Answer**

The implementation of restorative approaches in schools was previously supported through Police and Crime Commissioner funded Youth Workers being attached to specific settings, the Youth Offending Service was not involved in this project.

Some schools in the Borough do adopt a restorative practice approach in relation to wider behaviour management practice. Where schools are engaged in this approach they select their own training based on needs and preferences. Schools that adopt a restorative approach to behaviour management do so as part of their strategic decision making in relation to their school ethos, adopting strategies that they believe will best deliver their vision. Where schools make reference to a restorative approach this is usually found in school behaviour management policies.

Whilst the Youth Offending Service engages in restorative approaches, as part of its juvenile justice, this occurs on a smaller scale, with the overarching aim of reducing the risk of children becoming criminalised. Some examples of this include 1:1 work with children and delivering training to children's homes in the Wokingham area. As part of the Youth Justice Plan, it has been agreed that in 2020 the Restorative Justice worker will deliver training to Foster Carers and the Fostering Team, the aim of which is to reduce the occurrence of children in care becoming criminalised.

The Youth Offending Service would be happy to engage with colleagues in any developments of restorative work in schools.

#### **Supplementary question**

Thank you, I noticed that it was mentioned about the Foster Carers and the Foster Carers Team and the schools that I am aware that currently have this, St Crispin's is a good

example of one of the schools have gone down this route and benefited from this funding. There were other schools in the phase 2 roll out though that were going to benefit from the programme, what can we do for this to continue?

### **Supplementary answer**

Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care stated that this depended on what approach schools used, the Youth Services did not have the resources to fund this.

Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools stated that schools were using their own training budget for this.

Councillor Miall stated that around eight years ago the Council had cut the funding for youth support due to Budget constraints. He believed that the Council should consider investing in this service again if the resources became available.

Officers were not able to ascertain where the funding for this service had come from, it was possible that this might have been a one off funding grant. Some Members suggested that this deserved further consideration, including a cost/benefit analysis.

## **32. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Nick Hammond, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact presented the Children's Services Performance Indicators report which was set out in agenda pages 15-24.

Members felt frustrated that the data contained in the report was not up to date and that this was an ongoing issue. It was explained that this report had been written for the November meeting which was postponed, and due to the timelines it had not been possible to update the report.

The following point arose from questions and discussions:

- Members agreed that the format of the report was much improved but asked that trends be included in future reports;
- Councillor Helliard-Symonds expected the data to be more up to date as a result of a new software which was implemented last year;
- Nick Hammond stated that monthly data could be made available to the Committee, but this would not necessarily tie in with quarterly reports;
- Adam Davis stated that it was important to be selective with data to avoid an overload, it might be more productive to concentrate on the narrative;
- Members asked that the next report to the 21 January meeting contain more up to date information;
- Members asked why the Early Help indicator did not contain national statistics. Nick Hammond stated that there was no statutory return for this indicator. Also, Early Help was not a statutory service and different authorities used different approaches, therefore it was not comparable;
- Members asked why the number of referrals for Early Help Assessments was lower than the number of Early Help Assessments. Kelli Scott, Interim Service Manager Early Help stated that not all referrals led to assessments, and also not all families engaged with the service;
- Members were pleased to note the improvement in dashboard 3 – Children's Social Care Front Door;
- Members were concerned with the percentage of children in care who have more than one allocated social worker in 12 months (dashboard 5) and asked Officers what

actions were being undertaken to improve this indicator. Adam Davies stated that a recruitment and retention campaign was underway; the service was seeking to employ more permanent Social Workers and reduce the number of agency staff;

- Adam Davis stated that the service had employed a dedicated recruitment and retention member of staff, this was already making a difference;
- In response to a question Nick Hammond stated that there was no obligation for care leavers to keep in touch, therefore the service could not force care leavers to keep in touch;
- Nick Hammond stated that work was being undertaken to understand, on an individual basis, the reasons why some care leaver were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET);
- Nick Hammond stated that there were good links with Housing and the use of B&B's was being reduced;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that there were around 80 care leavers in Wokingham. Members asked that figures as well as percentages be included in future reports;
- There was questioning around the number of children missing from home/care (dashboard 7) as members felt that 53 was a high number. Officers explained that this referred to the number of incidents not the number of children. Members requested information on how many children this related to, how long the missing incidents were and to separate the number of incidents of children missing from parental home or from care in future reports;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that the number of incidents was higher in the summer and children missing were always a cause of concern;
- Members noted the improvement in the percentage of return home interviews carried out on time;
- Councillor Helliar-Symonds stated that last year there had been a Social Worker Recruitment and Retention Working Group, the resulting report contained various recommendations. She asked if this report had been taken into account in setting up the Social Worker Recruitment and Retention Strategy. Adam Davis stated that this strategy was not yet finalised and that this report was being taken into account.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Future reports would contain more up to date information;
- 2) Future reports would include trends; and
- 3) Officers would provide more information around dashboard 7 and the narrative behind the figures.

**33. TAKE UP OF SPORTS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE BOROUGH**

Beverly Thompson, Sports and Leisure Manager and Tony Penge, Contract Manager for Places Leisure presented the report which gave details of the take up of sports and leisure activities by children and young people in the Borough.

Beverly Thompson stated that the recommendation was that children should exercise for 60 minutes every day, Wokingham scored well in this regard in comparison to national statistics. Members asked for further clarification on the National Picture on Physical Activity graph as the numbers were not clear. Beverley Thompson agreed to check the graph and report back.

Some of the points that were made during the presentation and discussions are listed below:

- Wokingham employed a Schools Sport Co-ordinator for three days a week based at Bulmerhshe School who oversaw school games and offered mentoring for Physical Education staff;
- Elite athletes received sponsorship from the Council;
- Beverly Thompson stated that care leavers and Looked After Children (LAC) were entitled to free use of leisure centres. This was made possible with the new leisure contract and had not incurred a cost to the Council;
- In response to a question Beverly Thompson stated that the take up of the free membership at leisure centres by care leavers was low, mainly because it was difficult to know who they were;
- In response to a question Beverly Thompson stated that she could find out how many LAC had leisure centre cards and inform the Committee;
- Beverly Thompson stated that all swimming pools now had been fitted with hoists;
- Tony Penge stated that one initiative that proved to be successful in encouraging participation was allowing people to play football without the need to hire the whole pitch out, by paying only £1 to play. There were a variety of after school activities available, and many classes for mothers and babies;
- Members were interested to know how the service promoted sports take up. Beverly Thompson stated that the activities were advertised on social media, schools and various other places;
- Members asked about the methodology used to work out the data in the report. Beverly Thompson stated that a snapshot of 500 people had been used by Sport England;
- Members were interested to know how to promote sports activities to those children that were currently inactive and to minority communities;
- In response to a question Beverly Thompson stated that swimming sessions for women only had been tried in the Borough, however this had stopped as result of complaints;
- It was recognised that girls tended to drop out of sports activities at around the age of 14. Tony Penge stated that the service was looking at the possibility of adopting a scheme produced by Les Mills which targeted this age group;
- Councillor Croy stated that in his experience young people tended to use basketball hoops at school during break times;
- Members were interested to know if there were enough fields in the Borough for sports activities. Beverly Thompson stated that there had been improvements to Cantley Park for example, with additional lighting having been recently added, allowing people to play all year;
- Members felt that the Council should invest to make fields useable all year round;
- Members were informed that there were 116 clubs in the Borough. Members pointed out that it was important to also encourage informal play;
- Councillor Bray was interested to know what the offer was for people who did not like team sports. Tony Penge stated that those people could use gym equipment, classes and trampoline;
- Members asked for an update on the Grays Farm project. Beverly Thompson informed that this was on hold awaiting the final plans for the new road;
- Members noted that although Wokingham was statistically above the national average, the take up of sports activities was low;

- In response to a question Beverly Thompson stated that if she could she would improve sports facilities at all schools;
- Members were informed that there were other initiatives to promote exercise, such as incentivising walking and cycling to school and health walks;
- In response to a question Beverly Thompson stated that the Council had funded Park Run in the Borough

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### **Sports and Leisure Activities presentation (attached)**

#### **34. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS**

Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools presented the Schools Performance Indicators and Ofsted reports, this was set out in agenda pages 31- 42.

Gillian Cole stated that there was a new inspection framework from 2019, there were significant changes in both style and report format.

Members asked what was meant by 'gaming' and 'off-rolling' mentioned on page 32. Gillian Cole stated that some schools had been gaming the system, this meant that schools were discouraging some children from undertaking certain subjects and unofficially excluding children (by asking the parents to take their children out of the school as their children were at risk of a permanent exclusion).

Gillian Cole stated that a Section 5 inspection did not investigate governance arrangements. A Section 8 inspection was more detailed and did look at governance, only a Section 8 inspection could change the school's overall rating.

Members asked that, when available, the final data on the 2019 outcomes be presented to the Committee with a breakdown by individual schools. Councillor Helliard-Symonds asked that information on Edgbarrow Secondary School be included in the report as many Wokingham's children attended that school.

In response to a question Gillian Cole stated that there were two officers in the Borough who were employed to give support to children with English as an additional language (EAL). These two officers were bilingual in Arabic and Polish. The funding for this service came from the de-delegated element of the schools' budget (for maintained schools). She stated that there was a significant number of languages spoken in the Borough. Some support was also given through university students.

In relation to the destinations of 2019 cohort who were not going on to study A levels, Members were curious to know why the number of apprenticeships was not higher. Gillian Cole stated that it was a different department that was responsible for apprenticeships, the Committee could invite the relevant officer to explain more about apprenticeships.

**RESOLVED** That;

- 1) When available, the final educational outcomes for 2019 would be brought back to the Committee; and
- 2) The report be noted.

### **35. JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

Mustafa Kamara, Senior Public Health Programme Officer presented the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Update report which was set out in agenda pages 43-54.

Mustafa Kamara stated that the report contained a list of 50 indicators which highlighted areas of inequalities, population needs and service gaps across all areas of health and social care. He stated that he was involved in the analysis of the data but was not involved in setting up strategies to tackle the issues identified in the report.

Mustafa Kamara stated that four problem areas were highlighted in the report, these were: respiratory tract infection admissions, MMR vaccination, mental health and sexual health.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Members were surprised that the indicator 18 stated that the number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) children in Wokingham was decreasing. Children's Services Officers believed that this was incorrect and disputed this statistic;
- In response to a question Mustafa Kamara stated that the data contained in the report had been collated from various sources;
- Members expressed concern over the rate of self-harm related hospital admissions and suggested that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider investigating this issue. Councillor Miall agreed to contact the relevant officer.

Mustafa Kamara stated that a website had been created in order to facilitate the collection and accessibility of data. This website was designed to automatically update data points in real time. He urged Members to visit the Berkshire Data Observatory.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### **36. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE**

Kelli Scott, Interim Service Manager Children with Disabilities and Early Help presented the Youth Offending Service report which was set out in agenda pages 55-59.

In response to a question Kelli Scott stated that the service had linked with West Berkshire before Christmas and volunteered to take part in a pilot inspection. This was due to take place in February and would be over a five day period.

Members asked what was the c-card scheme which was mentioned on page 57. Adam Davis believed that this card gave access to sex education and health services. He stated that since the production of this report, it had been decided to re-instate the scheme.

**RESOLVED** That the report be noted.

### **37. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered its forward plan and added the following items:

21 January 2020

Corporate Parenting Board Review

17 March 2020

Ofsted Inspection Action Plan – 6 month review

Home Education

**38. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

That under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the act as appropriate.

**39. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN**

The report was discussed in a part 2 session.