

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 July 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chair
Cllr S Gabriel – Vice-Chair

Present: Cllr L Lewis, Cllr D Butt, Cllr E Coope, Cllr M Haines, Cllr S Moore,
Cllr L Northover, Cllr S Phillips and Cllr R Rocca

Also in Ms E Hall, Academy Parent Governor Rep
attendance: D Rees-Coshan and Z Sasic, Members of Youth Parliament

18. Apologies

The Chair informed the Committee of the sad passing of one of its longstanding Members, Councillor Nick Geary. Committee Members respectfully remembered him, followed by a two-minute silence in his memory.

Apologies had been received from Peter Martin and Mark Saxby.

19. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest received on this occasion.

20. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members on this occasion.

21. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 June 2022, having previously been circulated, be confirmed as read and an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

22. Action Sheet

The Chair provided an update on the action sheet and advised of the reason why the Ofsted feedback had been removed from the agenda.

23. Public Issues

There were no public issues received on this occasion.

24. SEND Improvement Journey - Theme: permanent and fixed term exclusions

The Service Manager, Inclusion Team presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

In May 2021, BCP Council's Children's Services commissioned an Appreciative Inquiry into inclusive practices across schools in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. Recommendations were made to improve practice. In addition, BCP Council and Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were required to submit a Written Statement of Action following a local area Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection. Several of these actions aim to reduce exclusions.

The Committee discussed the report and comments were made, including:

- The Chair highlighted the change in terminology now being used as suspension and permanently excluded. It was noted that a pupil could be suspended for 45 days of a school year, however this was a rarity and support was often sought by the school before it got to that stage.
- It was highlighted that there was monitoring of which schools were permanently excluding pupils and the reasons behind it across BCP. It was noted that this data would be used to provide challenge to schools to reduce permanent exclusions, with the appropriate support.
- A Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) enquired about how to resolve the issue of the distraction these pupils caused to the school community and the Committee was advised that support was available to all schools to help pupils within the school environment, hopefully reducing disruption. The aim was to upskill school staff to ensure all pupils felt safe in the classroom and it was a productive environment.
- In response to a query regarding the setting up of BCP's Headteachers Forum, the Committee was advised that it was hoped all schools and academy trusts would want to be involved to discuss important issues affecting BCP schools. An MYP requested to be involved with any discussions at the Headteachers Forum regarding school uniforms. ACTION.
- With reference to the review of alternative provision, a Member highlighted that she had suggested some premises which would be suitable for alternative provision and could they be investigated ACTION.
- In response to a query about the rise in more than one suspension for pupils SEND support and EHCPs, the Committee was advised that there had been a national increase in suspensions and permanent exclusions following the return to school after Covid and the possible reasons for that were detailed. The Committee was reassured that SEND officers and schools worked together to support the needs of pupils.

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- In response to a query regarding the definition of a navigator, the Committee was advised they were part of the pilot scheme of 'team around the school' and navigators were members of the BCP team, based within schools, who would work with families and pupils to reduce inappropriate referrals into social care, increase attendance and prevent suspension and permanent exclusions. It was highlighted that the navigator would liaise with any other lead professionals involved with the child to create a joined-up approach. It was noted that the response had been very positive and was under constant review.
- In response to a query about how to encourage schools to participate in the programmes, the Committee was advised of the engagement work with teaching schools to look at what was being offered and to become part of delivery within teacher training programmes and also discussions were ongoing with Bournemouth University for training within social work degree.
- The Committee was advised that the Virtual school would be holding its first BCP conference in November and the main focus was around trauma and attachment.
- In response to a question about the Appreciative Inquiry, the Committee was reminded of how it was created and the recommendations which came out of it, it was noted that it was followed by the SEND inspection which resulted in the need for a Written Statement of Action (WSOA), which was actioning some of the recommendations from the Appreciative Inquiry. The Officer advised she would send a copy of the Appreciative Inquiry to the Member. ACTION
- In response to a query about the rise in EHCPs, the Committee was advised that there had been a large increase in requests for assessments nationally, as well as within BCP, the possible reasons for it were detailed, local authorities had greater responsibilities around SEND children, increases due to Covid and the increase in complex mental health needs
- In response to a query regarding permanent exclusion of children with SEND, EHCPs or looked after children and any differences in the way they were managed, it was clarified that any child who was looked after would have the support of the virtual school as an additional advocate, but any processes followed would be the same.
- In response to a query about children and young people who lived within BCP but attended schools in the neighbouring authorities, it was confirmed that all pupils who were resident within BCP would be supported by the inclusion team
- In response to a query regarding the disproportionate number of pupils with EHCPs and SEND being permanently excluded, the Committee was advised that schools were strongly encouraged to make contact before permanently excluding a pupil and the pre exclusion panel was set up to assist with that, but ultimately it was at the Headteacher's discretion. It was hoped that the Headteachers Forum would also provide support and guidance to schools.

- In response to a query regarding differentiation between expected standards of behaviour, the Committee was advised of the need for schools to be aware of the support available to them and the importance of ensuring that SEND needs were identified early on within the school setting
- In response to a query regarding the pre exclusion panel, it was highlighted that it would be a multi agency panel with specific individuals called upon depending on the individual circumstances. The aim would be to all work together to find solutions to prevent permanent exclusions, including hearing the young person's views in an appropriate manner.

The Chair summarised discussions as follows:

- Academy Trusts and how we engage them
- Uniform policy
- Alternative provisions
- SEND support and number of suspensions
- Navigator definition
- Training of teachers re trauma and attachment
- Appreciative Inquiry recap
- Rise in EHCPs nationally and across BCP
- Engagement with children from school
- BCP children attending schools in neighbouring authorities
- Pre exclusion panel

The Chair concluded that he would like to see more data shared with Committee to continue to monitor. ACTION.

RESOLVED that the Committee take note of the actions proposed to reduce exclusions in schools in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

25. SEND Mainstream Banding

The Interim Head of Performance presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The purpose of this paper was to outline the changes of the mainstream SEND banding descriptors and provide three banding value options for consideration. One option would need to be adopted by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council).

The paper outlined how each of the options would contribute to the long-term reduction of the overall overspend in the High Needs Block budget and the commitment required from both mainstream schools and the SEND Service to reduce growth in both Alternative Provision (AP) and Independent Non-Maintained Special School provision (INMSS).

Implementation of the adopted new banding value option would commence from October 2022.

The Committee discussed the report and comments were made, including:

- The Chair expressed surprise at the level of Headteachers who responded, however it was advised that the consultation was ongoing and it was hoped that higher levels of response would be received through that
- In response to a query regarding the proposed banding values, the Committee was advised that Teacher Assistant hourly rates were considered together with the notional funding of £6,000 provided for each child and it was anticipated that the new banding proposals would be sufficient to reduce the spend on alternative bespoke packages
- It was clarified that provision was always considered during an annual review however, a move from independent provision to mainstream would only be considered at a parent's request
- In response to a query, it was advised that the proposed banding would provide mainstream schools with enough funding and support to increase the number of pupils with EHCPs within their settings, which would free up spaces within special schools, thereby reducing numbers attending independent provision.
- The Portfolio Holder for Council Priorities and Delivery addressed the Committee and highlighted that the change in banding proposals was one of many strands to enable schools to ensure children and pupils were in the right place for them, enabling schools to support them and this was part of a bigger support package
- A Committee Member requested that, when considering the data going forward, the new EHCPs were separated from the current ones which should hopefully enable progress to be clearly identified sooner. ACTION
- In response to a query regarding if a pupil who received funding from banding spent some of the school year suspended, it was noted that the school would continue to receive funding unless a child was permanently excluded
- In response to a query regarding the increase in some of the banding, it was advised that schools need to be clear on what the funding under an EHCP was being spent on, it may not be for a dedicated TA, it could be sourcing other services such as play therapy
- In response to a query regarding schools buying back support from BCP, it was confirmed that BCP did not have the capacity to offer services to schools and although it was historically offered, schools decided that they would prefer to receive the funding
- The Committee was reassured that a robust framework was being developed to include analysis of the data and agreed that it should review this after it had been implemented for a year. ADD TO FORWARD PLAN

- In response to a query about whether minor adjustments could be made without the need for another full review of the banding, the Committee was advised that it was felt that would not be necessary as the increases should address any funding issues and were part of a much bigger support package being provided through the Written Statement of Action
- In response to a query to the Portfolio Holder regarding the pre exclusion panels the Committee was advised they should hopefully reduce further calls on resources and was one of the pieces of work being taken forward through the Appreciative Inquiry.
- The Portfolio Holder clarified that the funding being discussed was part of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which was ringfenced and was managed by the Schools Forum who expressed how they wished the money to be spent
- In response to a concern regarding the possible reduction of funding for some pupils, the way the pilot was undertaken was detailed and it was highlighted that overall schools would receive an increase, however if a child needed additional support over and above the banding funding provided, then consideration would always be given to it.

The Chair summarised discussions as follows:

- Headteachers responding to consultation
- Whether it was sufficient funding
- Annual reviews
- Increase of budget from BCP
- Number of pupils on EHCPs
- Discussion over the proposed new funding schools would receive

RESOLVED that the Committee agree to recommend the proposed option 2 detailed at Paragraph 17 of the report to Cabinet, with a review of its implementation by the Committee in 12 months should it be adopted.

Voting: For – Unanimous

Following a request the Chair moved the Members of Youth Parliament – Update to next on the Agenda.

26. Members of Youth Parliament - Update

The Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The MYPs began their two-year term of office on 1st March 2022.

The report outlined the MYPs work to date and their national and local priorities and plans.

The MYPs concluded their presentation by requesting Committee Members put the 11 October 2022 in their diaries for a participation workshop about heightening engagement between elected Members and the young people of BCP.

The Committee discussed the report and comments were made, including:

- The Chair agreed about the need to get young people involved with politics and in response to a query about what could be done, the Committee was advised that basic political education should be part of the national curriculum within PHSE. The Chair followed up that it would be interesting to know how many schools across BCP provided political education within its PHSE. ACTION
- An Officer highlighted the importance of hearing young people's voices across all BCP services and how that would heighten interest of the young people in local politics, with visits to schools by local elected members also discussed
- One of the MYPs talked about the area they lived in and how local politics was not looked upon favourably but that believed that through education and increased awareness, it could bring about positive change to local issues
- A Committee Member expressed gratefulness to the MYPs for their enthusiasm and drive and advised they would help in any way
- A Committee Member advised of the Lead Member for engagement and requested that the MYPs contact them to help with their projects and goals. ACTION
- In response to a query regarding the MYP elections and how some schools do not engage with the process, the promotion and increased awareness of the MYPs role and elections across BCP was discussed
- A Committee Member highlighted a possible connection with local youth organisations in addition to schools to increase awareness
- A Committee Member referred to the five campaigns which the MYPs had been chosen and to the difference the campaigns would make to the young people across BCP.
- In response to a query regarding equality for minorities a Committee Member expressed their interest on working alongside the MYPs with that campaign. ACTION
- A Committee Member highlighted a local resident who frequently visited schools to discuss faiths and the possibility of a visit to Westminster for any interested young people

The Chair summarised the discussion as follows:

- Participation event on 11 October 2022.
- Engagement of young people and how to encourage schools to do more
- Five campaigns

- The Chair concluded by saying to the MYPs to take every little victory throughout their campaign journey.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the report.

27. Children's Services Improvement Plan – Workforce Stability - Resource Management

The HR Business Partner presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

In the December 2021 Ofsted ILACs one of the areas of improvement for Children's Services was the recruitment and retention of a workforce that was experienced, competent and confident to deliver improvements, so that children no longer had multiple changes of social worker or personal advisor.

In the June Monitoring Visit this was also an area covered by the inspection.

The Committee discussed the report and comments were made, including:

- In response to a query about the stability of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Committee was advised that at the most recent monitoring visit it was noted that all the SLT were permanent and committed to the improvement journey and beyond. It was also noted that all the Service Manager posts were recruited to bar one, for which interviews were soon being undertaken. Ofsted considered that to be a stable SLT.
- In response to a query regarding the staff turnover rate, it was noted that this was tracked monthly and was improving through the recruitment and retention of permanent social workers and the work being undertaken on retention was detailed
- In response to a query regarding the MA training scheme, the Committee was advised of the 'grow your own' workforce development strategy and how it worked in practice. The enquiring Committee Member was advised that the full details of the scheme could be provided to them after the meeting. ACTION
- In response to a query about when a social worker leaves or goes on sick leave, it was clarified that there would be a handover and the family and young people would be notified, although this may not be possible with sick leave due to the short notice.
- The different HR payroll systems were discussed including the difficulties they caused and the Committee was advised that the new system should be in place within the next year
- In response to a query regarding staff turnover rate of the neighbouring local authorities, it was noted that there could be a difference in the way the data was being recorded and provided and the Committee was reassured that conversations had been

undertaken with them to support and improve the recruitment and retention programme.

- The Committee discussed the pay review and structure and the urgent need to address it within Children's Services, however also the need for balance and fairness for other Service Directorates, the implications of this were being considered by Corporate Management Board.
- Recruits from overseas were discussed and it was noted it had been broadly successful, although some lessons had been learnt and the plan moving forward was to recruit nationally within the UK.
- Clarification of over-establishment was provided which meant posts which were not part of future structures and planned budgets and would usually cover vacant posts or to meet a particular/additional demand. The Committee was reassured that a robust structure was being put in place to ensure that the new structure would be adequate to meet the need of the service.
- In response to a query regarding agency staff, the Committee was advised that most of the agency staff were based in the assessment team which was very difficult to recruit to due to the nature of the work. It was noted that other teams had much higher rates of permanent staff and staff could move between teams to enable learning, development and progression.

The Chair summarised discussions as follows:

- Stability through the SLT moving down
- Looked at monthly staff turnover rate and difficulties in systems for monitoring
- In house training social workers
- Pay grades and pay review across BCP
- Other directorates and the impact on them
- Over-establishment definition

RESOLVED that the Committee note the update report.

28. Portfolio Holder Update

The Portfolio Holder for Council Priorities and Delivery advised that with regard to inclusion, capital resources would be used to ensure schools had the right facilities to provide to the children and young people, with ongoing work in some schools

The government had provided an opportunity to bid for further free special schools and BCP would be putting in bids for this funding.

29. Forward Plan

A Committee Member requested that the review of youth services be added to the Forward Plan. ADD TO FORWARD PLAN.

30. Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting of the Committee would be 20 September 2022.

The meeting ended at 8:30pm.

CHAIR