

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 June 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Carr-Brown – Chair

Cllr S Bull – Vice-Chair

Present: Cllr O Brown, Cllr P Cooper, Cllr E Harman, Cllr B Hitchcock,
Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr D Martin, and Cllr T Slade

Also in attendance: Elliot Prentice

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bobbie Dove, Cllr Oliver Walters, Simon Welch, Peter Martin and Mark Saxby.

2. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members on this occasion.

3. Election of Chair

Councillor Simon Bull took the Chair for this item. Councillor Sharon Carr-Brown was proposed and seconded for Chair and there were no other nominations.

RESOLVED that Councillor Sharon Carr-Brown be elected as Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

4. Election of Vice Chair

The newly elected Chair of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee presided over the election of Vice-Chair. Councillor Simon Bull was proposed and seconded for Vice-Chair and there were no other nominations.

RESOLVED that Councillor Simon Bull be elected as Vice-Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

5. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

6. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2025, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

7. Action Sheet

RESOLVED that the Committee note the Action Sheet and agreed for the items highlighted in the Action Sheet to be removed.

8. Public Issues

There were no public issues received on this occasion.

9. Members of Youth Parliament Update

The Committee were provided with a verbal update on the work of the Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) including an update regarding their campaigns.

The Committee considered the update and made the following comments:

- The Committee welcomed the MYPs call to action encouraging councillors to engage more actively with schools and young people in their wards.
- The Committee was advised that the MYPs were willing to support councillors in organising school-based activities to promote youth engagement in politics.
- The Committee discussed the potential for a youth-led training session for councillors, similar to a previous successful event, and the MYPs agreed to explore this with their peers.
- In response to a query regarding emerging themes from youth consultations, the Committee was advised that young people wanted schools to take a more proactive approach to mental health support, rather than relying on students to seek help themselves.
- The Committee was informed of a student finance campaign being developed by the MYPs, aimed at educating students from Year 7 onwards about university costs, maintenance loans, and alternative pathways such as apprenticeships and employment.
- The Committee expressed support for the campaign and encouraged collaboration between councillors and MYPs to promote youth voice and participation.

10. Recommendations from Portfolio Holders, Cabinet or Council

The Chair 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.

The Council's constitution provides that Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees may consider requests for work from a range of sources, including requests from Portfolio Holders, Cabinet and Council.

The O&S Committee was asked to consider a request for scrutiny recently made by Council and to determine the request in line with the associated constitution procedure rules.

Rebirth of Youth Services

At its 25 March 2025 meeting, the Council was presented with a motion and resolved to ask the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Debate at Council included the suggestion that the O&S Committee could assist in this matter by conducting a review of existing current youth provision, identifying gaps and opportunities for investment in professional youth work, detached youth work, and community-based youth services.

After discussing the request, it was agreed to include the 'Rebirth of Youth Services' motion in the work plan of the Committee. The Committee, in collaboration with Children's Services, decided that a report would be prepared to introduce the work and outline the existing services. This would enable the Committee to refine its framework.

Children's Services agreed to consider when they could provide the report and updated the Committee outside of the meeting. **ACTION**

11. Youth Justice Service Plan 2025-2026

The Youth Offending Service Team Manager 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.

To present the Youth Justice Plan for 2025/26. There was a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which had to provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. This report summarised the Youth Justice Plan for 2025/26, with a copy of the Plan appended. The Youth Justice Plan needed to be approved by the full Council.

The Committee considered the update and made the following comments:

- The Committee commended the depth and quality of the Youth Justice Plan report and welcomed the significant reduction in first-time entrances to the youth justice system.
- In response to a query regarding the reduction, the Committee was advised that the reduction was largely due to strengthened partnerships with police, who now had greater confidence in referring young people for effective intervention.
- The Committee discussed the overrepresentation of children in care within the justice system. Officers confirmed this was a national issue and outlined ongoing work to ensure joined-up planning and early intervention for these young people.

- The Committee was informed that an annual audit was underway, focusing specifically on children in care, to ensure coherence and effectiveness in support planning.
- In response to a question about diversion options, the Committee was advised that a range of outcomes existed and that further information could be provided in writing due to the complexity of the topic. **ACTION**
- The Committee praised the integration of the child's voice throughout the service and highlighted the importance of adapting communication methods to suit individual needs. Officers confirmed that all referred children were assessed by a speech and language therapist and issued a communication passport.
- In response to a query raised regarding mental health support, the Committee was advised that the service included a dedicated health team comprising clinical psychologists and mental health nurses, enabling timely assessments and support.
- The Committee was informed that the Discover U project had previously received lottery funding and that efforts were ongoing to secure continued financial support.
- The Committee expressed strong support for the project and suggested that similar initiatives should be made available to young people before they enter the justice system.
- The Committee advised of the importance of early intervention and the role of schools and social care in preventing youth offending.
- In response to a query raised regarding the development of a data dashboard to better visualise and monitor youth justice data, the Committee was advised that it was being explored.

RESOLVED that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the Youth Justice Plan so that Cabinet can recommend its approval to the Full Council.

12. Housing for Care Experienced Young People

The Director of Housing and Communities 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 Council provided and commissioned a range of housing for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) as part of their transition to independence. A variety of social and private rented accommodation provisions were offered depending on the assessed needs of the young person:

- Supported accommodation (onsite or visiting support)
- Joint Living Properties (shared houses)
- Self-contained accommodation (dispersed or clustered)

The Council held a number of powers which acted as assurance that the quality of accommodation was of the required standard and had several

additional measures in place to ensure accommodation quality was maintained alongside housing-related support for each and every setting.

A review of the housing needs of Care Experienced Young People was recently considered within a wider review of specialist and supported housing needs. A housing strategy outlining the future commissioning intentions was to be considered by Cabinet later in 2025/26.

The Committee considered the update and made the following comments:

- The Committee discussed the quality of accommodation for care-experienced young people, acknowledging improvements since the 2021 Ofsted inspection. While standards had improved, members noted that limited choice remained a key issue.
- In a query raised regarding whether the current housing provision met the standard they would expect for their own children, the Committee was advised that while accommodation met safety and quality standards, the lack of choice and flexibility was a concern.
- The Committee was advised that feedback from recent inspections of supported accommodation had been positive, particularly regarding the quality of furnishings and facilities.
- The committee raised concerns regarding the anxiety experienced by young people transitioning out of care at age 18, particularly regarding uncertainty around housing, finances, and support. Officers confirmed that earlier planning and wraparound support were being prioritised in the revised Joint Housing Protocol.
- The Committee was advised that the booklets used to support independent living was not sufficient for all young people. Officers acknowledged the need for more engaging and diverse resources, including digital tools such as apps.
- In a query raised regarding the importance of life skills education, including budgeting, cooking, and understanding tenancy responsibilities, the Committee was advised that alternative resources were being explored.
- The Committee was advised that personal advisors and housing support teams provided enhanced support, including home visits and financial guidance, particularly during the initial move-in period.
- Officers highlighted the importance of identifying and supporting the most vulnerable young people, who may not actively seek help or communicate their needs.
- The Committee raised concerns regarding the responsiveness of landlords to maintenance issues and the challenges of ensuring consistent standards across private and social housing sectors.
- Officers outlined plans to improve housing standards through education, enforcement, and a new two-year delivery plan as part of the housing strategy review.
- In response to concerns raised regarding delays in rehousing individuals in complex cases, the Committee was advised that legal processes and the necessity of maintaining tenancies could often prolong timelines. However, multi-agency collaboration would be implemented to effectively manage risks.

- The Committee was advised that a specialist housing needs assessment was underway to identify gaps in provision, particularly for high-risk young people with lower support needs.
- The Committee noted the importance of recognising care-experienced young people as a protected group and reaffirmed the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
- In response to a query raised regarding the use of HMOs for young people, the Committee was advised that placements with older adults were avoided unless specifically chosen by the young person. Any exceptions require director sign-off.
- The Committee was advised of the challenges of regulating the private rented sector and the need to balance tenant protections with landlord retention.
- The Committee praised the collaborative approach between housing and children's services and acknowledged the progress made since the last inspection.
- The officers agreed to share the missing document, 'Appendix X,' with the Committee after the meeting. **ACTION**

It was Proposed, Seconded and RECOMMENDED that the Committee seeks assurance that the new Joint Housing protocol has been successfully agreed and is working effectively to ensure our Care Experienced Young People are seeing an improved service and are in receipt of timely advice and safe housing that suits their individual needs and hopes for the future.

13. Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report 2023-2024

The Committee was advised that this was an information only item and that 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.

14. Portfolio Holder Update

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People provided a verbal update which included:

- Confirmation that the OFSTED CQC phone call for the SEND inspection had not yet been received, though it was anticipated imminently.
- A summary of the recent OFSTED annual conversation was provided. This formal discussion involved sharing self-evaluation and performance data, which informs future inspection planning.
- It was noted that a focused OFSTED visit is likely to take place in 2026, potentially focusing on care-experienced young people, as highlighted in the previous ILACS report. A further conversation with OFSTED will take place prior to this.
- The importance of the committee's role in providing challenge and support was reiterated, as this is valued by OFSTED.
- An update on the implementation of the Families First for Children reforms was shared, with current efforts focused on

governance. Although the council did not receive pathfinder funding due to its previous OFSTED rating, it is now required to implement the improvements.

- The Portfolio Holder will attend the Southwest Children's Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services meeting in Taunton, where learning from the Families First pathfinder programme will be discussed.
 - Pay and reward structures within Children's Services are under review, with particular attention to ensuring that out-of-hours social workers are not disadvantaged by new contracts, recognising the demanding nature of their roles.
 - An update from the Health and Wellbeing Board was provided, including:
 - The Children and Young People Partnership Plan, with thanks extended to the committee for their support at Council.
 - A verbal update on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy into Action and Place-Based Partnership, which includes four strategic priorities:
 - Starting Well (Children and Young People)
 - Mental Wellbeing
 - Living and Ageing Well
 - Healthy Places and Communities
- It was noted that children and young people were the top priority and featured prominently in at least two other areas.

15. Work Plan

The Committee was asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.

The Chair advised that the CAMHS paper and the SEND budget pressures paper would be brought to the September meeting, and that the School Permanent Exclusions paper was already scheduled for November.

The Committee agreed to collaborate over the summer to revise the work plan and discuss potential budget lenses for scrutiny.

A suggestion was made to consider the financial implications of alternative provision as a budget lens, which was supported by the Committee for further exploration outside of the meeting.

The Committee welcomed the successful relocation of the Mudeford Wood Playgroup to BCP Council premises in Highcliffe and expressed thanks to all involved for their support and contributions.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

CHAIR