

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 01 December 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chairman

Cllr L Lewis – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr E Coope, Cllr B Dunlop, Cllr N C Geary, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr S Moore,  
Cllr L Northover, Cllr S Phillips, Cllr Dr F Rice, Cllr R Rocca,

Co-opted Members: Ms E Hall, Academy Parent Governor  
Mr P Martin, Parent Governor  
Mr M Saxby, Diocesan Representative  
A Brandon, and Cllr George, Members of Youth Parliament

108. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Nathan Collins and Sarah Lockard.

109. Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members.

110. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Kelly declared an interest as a Governor at the Tregonwell Academy and Bournemouth Collegiate and in relation to Agenda item 6, as Bookkeeper to the Parent Carer Foundation so would not take part in that discussion.

111. Confirmation of Minutes

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 September 2020, having been previously circulated, be signed by the Chairman and confirmed as a correct record.**

112. Action Sheet

The Chairman advised that he had received communication from a Committee Member regarding an update on children carrying knives within BCP and that he would ensure this information was sought and circulated to the Committee. **Action**

The Chairman referred to the recent Ofsted focused letter and advised that due to timing, it was not possible to have a report to this Committee but that the Corporate Director, Children's Services would make a statement

regarding it and that a report would come to the next Committee, then detailed scrutiny would be undertaken by a Working Group.

The Corporate Director, Children's Services advised that in response to the Ofsted outcomes letter, there had been an overwhelming response from Children's services, the Senior Leadership Team and Political parties with a strong desire and resolute to address all the issues as soon as possible. The Committee was advised that the Learning and Improvement Plan was now an action plan which addressed all the 15 recommendations, and in addition would include a transformation programme to bring practice to the forefront of process.

The Committee was advised of the planned governance process which would support the improvement process, including scrutiny, and the Corporate Director advised that this work had already begun before the Ofsted outcome because of the knowledge and need to improve.

The Committee briefly discussed the statement, and the following was highlighted:

- A Committee Member, as a Corporate Parent, stressed the importance of ensuring Looked After Children (LAC) were at the forefront of the improvements.
- A Committee Member requested sight of the improvement plan for Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny as soon as it was available. **Action.**

The Chief Executive emphasised the comments of the Corporate Director and advised that the improvements to Children's Services would be progressed and adopted corporately across BCP Council.

**The action sheet was noted.**

113. Public Issues

The following question was received from member of the public and the response provided by the Chairman as detailed:

"Could the school nurses run stop smoking groups on school premises as lunch time clubs. Children addicted to cigarettes are vulnerable to exploitation by older children/adults involved in crime. They can easily be identified by the wider community, including potential exploiters, as they smoke both on the way to and from school. Expecting a child to ask a parent to take them to another place for help is not appropriate as the parent will either smoke themselves or be angry that the child is smoking. As it is a health matter, the children could be guaranteed confidentiality from parents.

This statement is particularly relevant to agenda 7 regarding people entering the youth justice system."

Question received from Susan Stockwell.

### **Response**

Reducing smoking prevalence was one of four key priorities for the Children and Young People's Public Health Service (previously Health Visiting and School Nursing). Reducing smoking in pregnancy, increasing smoke free homes and reducing adolescent uptake, could have lifelong impact on Cardiovascular disease and life expectancy.

There were several ways in which the service expected to work with schools to improve key outcomes including reducing smoking by;

- Supporting schools to develop whole-school approaches to smoke-free schools and colleges in consultation with young people and staff, including; policy development, smoking prevention activities as part of wider wellbeing / PSHE curriculums (led by adults or young people) complemented by staff training and development.
- Supporting schools (directly or working with local partners involved in smoking prevention and cessation activities to deliver interventions) to:
  - Integrate information about the health effects of tobacco use, as well as the legal, economic and social aspects of smoking, into the curriculum
  - Deliver interventions that aimed to prevent the uptake of smoking as part of PSHE
  - Offer tobacco education in the classroom with additional 'booster' activities until school leaving age. These might include school health fairs and guest speakers.
  - Work in partnership to design, deliver, monitor and evaluate smoking prevention training and interventions

It was also expected that the service would signpost to Adult Health Improvement services, which in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole was the LiveWell Dorset Service, who could provide adult family members with support to reduce smoking and increase smoke-free homes.

114. Item requested by a member of public for scrutiny

The Chairman referred to the request for Scrutiny with accompanying documentation together with the briefing paper provided by Children's Services and advised that the purpose of today's discussion was to decide as a Committee whether it was felt scrutiny should be undertaken.

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

- A Member highlighted the Local Government Peer Review which took place in January 2020 and requested it be circulated to the Committee. **Action**
- A Committee Member, who was recently Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, advised the Committee that BCP Council was

aware that improvements were needed with regards to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and it was being driven in part by the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was also highlighted that whilst improvements were required, all the special schools across BCP were rated as good or outstanding and that many mainstream schools across BCP who support SEND pupils, did so without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

- The Chairman advised that he felt banding, funding and co-production were important issues which needed investigating further, but that scrutiny should only take place where value could be added, or improvements made. Co-production was defined as strategic or individual decisions made around family whilst considering the views of family.
- There were some discussions around the banding and the advantages and disadvantages of it. The Service Director for Community Learning and Commissioning advised that the banding structure provided less strict definitions of how the needs of a pupil should be met and enabled schools to act in a more innovative and flexible way. The Committee was advised that it was the content of any EHCP which was more important for any child and family. It was also highlighted that the banding system had been introduced and approved by the Schools Forum, a body which was made up of Headteachers from across BCP.

The Chairman concluded that he felt the Committee wished to carry out some scrutiny in this area and suggested he would discuss it further with Officers, then email out some options for progression to the Committee.

**Action.**

The Chairman summarised the discussions which included banding, funding, the Local Government peer review and the EHCPs.

**RESOLVED that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would undertake scrutiny in this area, which specific areas to be decided.**

115. First-Time Entrants to Youth Justice

The Service Manager, Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service, 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 report summarised the latest local information on rates of young people entering the youth justice system. The reduction that had been seen in the previous two years had continued and further steps were being taken to divert young people from the justice system.

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

- There was some clarification provided over the figures shown in the tables within the Report and in response to a query, the Service Manager advised he did not have the data for the current number of 10 to 17 years olds within the System. **Action**
- There was some detailed discussion around avoiding the criminalisation of young people and how the use of the other methods were always considered which avoided the need to go to court. A Member expressed concern about young people getting criminal records, which could show on a DBS check, and affect life chances and the Service Manager sought to reassure by advising that if a young person entered the youth justice system there would have been enough evidence to take them to court, even if that route was not used. The Service Manager detailed the multi-agency decision making process and advised that where possible informal outcomes were preferred. The Committee was made aware that new legislation came into effect on 28 November 2020 to reduce the need for youth cautions and convictions to be disclosed in future DBS checks.
- In response to a query regarding the number of Looked After Children (LAC) or previously LAC that were included within the data, the Service Manager advised he did not have that information to hand but could share after the Committee. The Committee was advised that a multi-agency group (the JYS) scrutinised all cases of Police being called to care homes to ensure it was a reasonable call out and that the child was not criminalised unnecessarily as a result. The Committee felt it would be beneficial to consider the impact of that in data in future. **Action.**
- The Chairman advised he was pleased to see a reduction in figures and in response to a query whether the complex safeguarding team had assisted in the reductions, the Committee was advised that there was some overlap in working and establishing good working links had been essential recently. The Committee was advised that the design of the service was to help prevent exploitation, reduce exclusions and improve education provision which should assist in further reducing the first-time entrant figures
- In response to a query, the Committee was advised that the Youth Justice System did track and record ethnicity, learning, speech and language, but currently did not track poverty and deprivation element. A Member felt it was important to consider how to track this to ensure improvements were made. **Action.**
- In response to a query, the Committee was advised that a strategy was being developed for next 3 years, which involved early intervention to assist children to stay in school, avoid contact with police and at the higher level, support from the CAMHS service and YJS to provide a trauma focused service.
- There was some discussion about the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children and young people who were currently in the YJS and it was noted that whilst the BAME community did not make up a high percentage of first time entrants, however children from those groups may progress to the court and custody stage faster, receiving restrictive orders. This could be a result of cumulative

disadvantages, such as poverty and engagement with education. A Member advised that grouping all BAME together was not helpful and did not reflect the different groups and outcomes of BAME young people. The Service Manager, YJS advised that a response to this was required across all agencies and that work needed to be done to consider and address the cause of these differences.

The Chairman summarised the discussion as follows:

- Considered data and clarity over rates shown
- Clarity over what would be shown on DBS check and reassurances provided
- Consider collecting data about poverty levels within YJS and whether data corresponded to BAME.
- Discussed whether BAME children and young people would travel through the system faster and that more work was required in that area.

**RESOLVED that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress being made to reduce the rate of first-time entrants into the youth justice system.**

116. The Determination of Admission Arrangements 2022/23 for Maintained Mainstream Schools

The Service Director – Community Learning and Commissioning 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.

In line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2014 and associated legislation, BCP Council was statutorily required to determine its admission arrangements annually. This report requested Cabinet to determine the 2022/23 admission arrangements for its maintained community and voluntary controlled schools. The arrangements remain unchanged from the previous academic year.

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

- In response to a query regarding the distance measuring specified for Hillbourne Primary School, the Committee was advised that those arrangements were historic and due to the school not being oversubscribed, it was not a priority to address and amend them at this time.
- There was a large discussion over delayed entry to entering the school system, particularly referring to summer born children. Clarity was provided between deferred and delayed entry to the school system and it was acknowledged that whilst research had found that delayed entry could be positive to the child's education, it was advised that that consideration was given to requests on an individual basis however it was the general approach to not approve

requests as it presents issues throughout the rest of the school system.

- The Committee considered and discussed the advantages and disadvantages at some of delayed entry and many Members referred to personal family experiences of summer born children
- The Corporate Director advised that summer born children's attainment was closely tracked by the Local Authority, but as regulations currently stood delayed entry or back-yearing was not permitted
- The Portfolio Holder advised that whilst she found the discussions and subject very interesting, the recommendation to approve the admission arrangements of the maintained schools related to a very small number of schools across BCP and any changes would not consider the interests of the majority of pupils across the conurbation.
- The Chairman noted the conversation with interest and referred to the personal experiences highlighted by himself and others on the Committee regarding summer born children but concluded that this area was outside the remit of this item and that the discussion be noted.

The Chairman summarised the discussions as follows:

- Acknowledgment of historic differences between measuring distances of some schools
- Application to different year groups and delayed entry. A Committee member requested further consideration be given to this area.

**RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approve:**

**(a) the admission arrangements for maintained community and voluntary controlled schools in accordance with Part III, Chapter I, Section 89 of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act and Section 1 of the School Admissions Code 2014**

**(b) the Coordinated Admissions Scheme for the administration of the 2021/22 year in accordance with Part III, Chapter I, Section 89 of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act and paragraphs 2.202.22 of the School Admissions Code 2014.**

117. Children's Services response to Covid- 19

The Service Director – Community Learning and Commissioning 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 purpose of the Report was to ensure that all members of this Committee were fully informed of the way that Children's Services had responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report provided an update summarising Children's Services response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and to provide assurance as to how it would

continue to work with partners to meet the needs of children, young people and their families during the course of the pandemic.

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

- In response to a query regarding laptops being provided to vulnerable children during lockdown, the Committee was advised that BCP successfully bided for funding through a Government scheme. The Committee was advised that due to schools also being proactive in lending IT equipment to vulnerable children, the 1000 laptops secured exceeded the number requested and the surplus was provided to the virtual school for its use. The Committee was advised that some issues had been encountered with their use, but it was generally down to issues such as poor WIFI and not the equipment. It was noted that these laptops would remain with the child to use throughout their education journey and did not need to be returned.
- The Committee was advised that the college diverted students to assist COVID patients, in support of their studies, by assisting them in any way they could such as dropping off food provisions
- In response to a query regarding how the link worker model worked, the Committee was advised that Children's Services was keen to have oversight of vulnerable groups during the pandemic, so it redeployed staff to ensure all vulnerable pupils had remote learning support and were also supported for their general wellbeing. It was noted that the newly introduced 'Team around the school' was continuing to offer this support moving forward.
- A Committee Member advised that whilst acknowledging the Ofsted concerns, it was clear to see that the staff within Children's Services all worked very hard to support children across BCP and thanked them for all they do
- In response to a query regarding what Children's Services had learnt from the pandemic which could help shape the future, the Committee was advised that the schools experience of remote learning had come been positive and marked a change in how schools could respond in the future. The Committee was also advised of the positive joint working across the Council and third sector to support schools and all other services which supported children and young people
- The Corporate Director echoed the comments about staff resilience and collective working, she advised the pandemic had highlighted inequalities and the way in Children's Services needed to respond proactively and agilely to the challenges of some families, children and young people.
- A Committee Member requested that some of this learning be used to improve the rates of Look after Children (LAC) currently not on school roll or in education and the need to apply some targets and reduce the inequalities identified. The Committee noted that there was a Report coming to the February Committee to consider children who were identified as 'Not in Education, Employment or training



CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
01 December 2020

(NEETS) and there was a request that the report included focus on those areas. **Action.**

The Chairman summarised the discussions as follows:

- The Committee was pleased at the way schools in BCP stayed open during the pandemic
- The success of securing and distributing laptops to vulnerable children
- Clarification over the Link worker model
- Clarification over the college students helping with self-isolating people
- The need for learning to help improve services in the future, with particular reference to NEETS and LAC.

**RESOLVED that Children's Services response to the COVID 19 pandemic be noted.**

118. Forward Plan

The Chairman referred to the item which was due to come to this Committee regarding Budget Overview and Shaping 2021/22. The Committee was advised that this date was too early for the item to be properly considered and it was therefore proposed that a one off working group would be arranged to consider it in detail and feedback any views to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

A Committee Member requested further information regarding the Childcare Sufficiency Review and the Corporate Director confirmed that she was happy to brief the Member outside of the Committee. **Action.**

A Committee Member expressed frustration that he was still waiting for data on Child Exploitation, County Lines and numbers of Children in Care and would appreciate an update. **Action.**

119. Dates of Future Meetings

The Chairman highlighted the additional meeting which had been arranged for 24 February 2020 in order to manage the large number of items on the Forward Plan.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

CHAIRMAN