

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chair

Present: Cllr E Coope, Cllr J Kelly, Cllr S Moore, Cllr L Northover,  
Cllr S Gabriel, Cllr M Haines and Cllr R Lawton

Also in attendance: P Martin, Parent Governor  
E Hall, Academy Parent Governor  
N Collins, outgoing Member of Youth Parliament (MYP)  
Z Susic and D Rees-Coshan, MYPs  
H Maftah and A Hodges, Deputy MYPs

76. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Lewis and Mark Saxby.

Councillors Geary and Rocca attended virtually forgoing any voting rights.

77. Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members on this occasion.

78. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

79. Confirmation of Minutes

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 January 2022, having previously been circulated, be agreed as accurate and signed by the Chair.**

80. Action Sheet

A Service Director advised that they were looking for dates for the permanence planning briefing and that the Committee would be notified soon.

81. Public Issues

There were no public issues on this occasion.

82. Full ILACS (inspecting local authority children's services) report

The Corporate Director of Children's Services 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 purpose of the report was to enable the Committee to gain an overview of the outcome of the full ILACS inspection and consider where detailed scrutiny should be focused.

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

- In response to a query regarding recruiting overseas staff, the Committee was advised that the service would assist with visas, offer a permanent post and have a lengthy introductory buddy scheme. It was also noted that the staff being recruited currently did not reflect the diverse population of BCP, but more work could be done in this area.
- The Committee was advised that the recruitment of social workers was a national issue and that the front door was a challenging space which currently had 87% agency staff filling the roles. It was noted that the overseas recruited social workers were being placed at the front door which would reduce the use agency staff. The Committee was advised of the details of the social work recruitment and planning and made aware of the difficulties when rated as inadequate in comparison to neighbouring authorities who were rated as good and outstanding.
- The Committee was advised of work ongoing to stabilise the workforce and comparing BCP's offer with others locally, including what package could be offered which would be attractive enough to entice agency staff to become permanent and provide more stability for the children and families being worked with
- The Committee discussed houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) and was advised that Ofsted found that the care provided to children in HMOs was not at an acceptable standard. At the time of the inspection, there was 14 young people in HMOs and that had now been reduced to one. A Committee Member advised that this matter was going to be considered by the Corporate Parenting Board and suggested sharing a report for information to ensure no duplication of work. **ACTION – add to action sheet**
- The importance of communication between social workers and service users was discussed together with the permanence of social workers to enable service users to feel comfortable and build a meaningful and productive relationship
- In response to a query regarding how best practice could be shared from the areas which had demonstrated improvements with those rated inadequate, the Corporate Director advised that this would come through the improvement plan
- In response to a query regarding what improvements had been made since the inspection and publication of the findings, the

Committee was advised that some improvements had been made with pre-birth assessments by considering work done, reissuing toolbox training for social workers and changing the assessment process.

- The Committee discussed the varied workload of staff in different areas and it was noted that some had very large caseloads in comparison to others. The service directors had been considering this and acknowledged that good or outstanding authorities had approximately 15 cases per social worker. Work was being undertaken to try and address this but staffing issues caused delays. The Committee was advised that an update on this could come back to the Committee at a future date. **ACTION – add to action sheet**
- In response to a query regarding the Ofsted rating and range across the country. It was noted that BCP was currently 'Inadequate' which was the lowest rating, however mentoring work was ongoing with Hampshire, who were rated 'outstanding'. The benchmarking process Ofsted used was explained to the Committee and the Corporate Director advised her priority was to stabilise the service and build solid foundations to move it forward.
- The Committee was advised how the improvement plan would be managed and the ways in which it could be monitored and audited. A new Department for Education (DfE) advisor would be starting soon and the ambition was to achieve the improvement detailed in the plan by the end of the Ofsted monitoring visits, within the next 18 months.
- In response to a query regarding staff surveys, the Committee was advised that there were BCP wide staff surveys and more specific surveys for children's services staff. The surveys could be anonymous however, staff can add the team they work in if they want to. The questions remained the same to enable benchmarking but there was an ability to add free text.
- In response to a question regarding staff morale, the Committee was advised that some staff were disappointed with the outcome as they felt they had worked hard to demonstrate improvements, which were not recognised. The Corporate Director stressed the importance of not dwelling on the result but moving forward together on the improvement journey.
- In response to a query about how the Committee could support Children's Services in their improvement journey and could any lessons be learnt, the Corporate Director advised that as she had only just taken up her post, so felt unable to comment on past scrutiny, but that the improvement plan would help focus the leadership team and committee on what was required and needed to improve.
- In response to a query regarding the legacy case management systems, the Committee was advised there of the issues experienced with the case recording and the steps that needed to be taken to improve in this area
- The need to increase Special Guardian Orders and kinship arrangements was discussed, to move away from using long term

fostering. The Committee was advised that the CPB was considering this issue.

- In response to a query about specialist workers for child exploitation, the Committee was advised that BCP had a small team of specialist workers who worked with exploited children and young people, it was planned to make the offer wider to focus on prevention. The Committee was reassured that all social workers would do an assessment around exploitation.
- The Committee wanted to thank all the staff for their hard work and wanted them to know it was fully supportive of the improvement journey they continued along. **ACTION – add to action plan.**

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- Staff retention and recruitment
- Houses of Multiple Occupations
- Areas that had shown improvement and how transfer good practice
- Varied caseloads
- Range of standards and how measure progress including timescales.
- Staff input into the process and what Committee can do to help
- Case management recording
- Special Guardianship Orders and Kinship placements.

The Chair concluded by thanking the outgoing DfE advisor, Anthony Douglas, for all his work with Children's Services and the Committee.

**RESOLVED that the Committee hold an additional meeting to fully scrutinise the Children's Services Improvement Plan at the earliest opportunity.**

83. UK Youth Parliament: Members of Youth Parliament – Annual Report, election update and welcome New Members

The Participation Development Worker and outgoing Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) 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 the report was to provide an annual report, an update on the elections and to welcome the newly elected Members and Deputy Members of the Youth Parliament.

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

- In response to a query about what advice the outgoing MYP could give to the newly elected members, he advised them to not hold back on their ideas, as they had got great support for their schemes, which had proved really successful

- In response to a query regarding advice for the Committee Members on how they can support the new MYPs, the committee was advised to continue to make themselves accessible, help the MYPs understand the democratic processes, be interested in their projects and do what they could to support the MYPs achieve their aims
- The Committee congratulated the MYPs on their successful campaigns and welcomed them to the Committee and thanked the outgoing MYPs for all their hard work and wished them every success in the future
- In response to a query regarding one of the top priorities being health and wellbeing, the Committee was advised how this came about and the process that the MYPs would follow to focus their campaigns. It was requested that a progress update come back to the Committee at an appropriate time. **ACTION – add to Forward Plan.**
- The item was concluded by an MYP thanking the Participation Development Worker and the outgoing MYPs for all their support and work.

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- Thank you to the outgoing MYPs and Participation Development Worker for all their work
- Fantastic election results including the high voting figures
- The focus of the new MYPs

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted, and an update report come back to Committee at an appropriate time.**

84. SEND Improvement Plan Update

The Director of Education 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 report provided an update on the delivery of the Written Statement of Action (WSOA). BCP Council and Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were required to deliver a number of actions to transform special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services across the local area.

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

- In response to a query regarding the Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings, the Chair requested a focused report on the ones due to commence around the time of the next meeting – **ACTION – add to Forward Plan**
- In response to a query regarding co-production, the Committee was advised that the service was advertising to employ a coproduction worker and participation worker, their roles were explained and how they would benefit the young people worked with. It was also

highlighted that a Youth Worker was going to progress the co-production charter to ensure a wide range of views were sourced.

- In response to a concern regarding one Participation worker being inadequately resourced, the Committee was reassured that although the service was looking to employ one member of staff, they wouldn't be the only person seeking the views of young people and would not be working in isolation.
- A Committee Member who also sat on the SEND Improvement Board, advised of the upcoming Ofsted monitoring visit scheduled for 27 April 22 and enquired whether the Committee could have an update following that. **ACTION – add to Forward Plan.**
- The Committee was advised of the way internal progress and monitoring was being used to help detail the improvement journey to the Department for Education (DfE).
- In response to a query regarding the permanent and fixed terms exclusions highlighted at focus area 37, the Committee was advised that work was already ongoing in this area such as pre exclusion conferencing and details were provided of how actions can have previous actions feed into them. The Service Director advised she would bring some updated figures to the July Committee. **ACTION – add to Forward Plan**
- In response to a query regarding how the Committee could provide the robust scrutiny needed, it was advised to test the improvement plan by asking for evidence and proof of the improvements being detailed.
- In response to a query regarding whether the Committee could be provided with an overview of financial situation regarding the high needs block, it was advised that the service was held to account for the high needs block expenditure at the SEND Improvement Board and the report could be shared with this Committee for information. **ACTION – add to the action sheet**

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- Coproduction
- Ofsted visit on 27 April and requested feedback
- Permanent exclusion ongoing work
- Robustness of scrutiny and how the Committee can help
- Budget information

**RESOLVED that Committee Members review the updates made in the delivery of the Written Statement of Action.**

85. Portfolio Holder Update

With the agreement of the Chair, the Portfolio Holder update was moved to follow the SEND Improvement Plan Update.

The Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Council Priorities and Delivery, provided a verbal update regarding Improvement number eight of the SEND Improvement Plan and the Capital investment around inclusion work.

The Committee was advised that the Council allocated 10 million to invest in SEND capital investment, but due to the inspection and other factors it had not come forward in the last financial year.

The Committee was advised that an invitation had been sent to all schools asking for expressions of interest for funding innovative ideas for keeping SEND pupils in mainstream education. It was advised that 34 responses were received, and work was being undertaken with between five and ten of the schools who responded and a dedicated team of officers. An update would be provided at the earliest opportunity.

The PFH requested that when considering the High Needs Block, the Chair liaised with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board as budget issues would normally be considered at the Board. **ACTION – add to action sheet**

86. Post-16 Provision and Youth Offer – to include apprenticeship programme and provision for those without good GCSE

The Virtual Headteacher 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.

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the work that had taken place to increase the number of children in care accessing apprenticeships and how the Virtual School had supported those young people who had not achieved GCSE results at a high enough grade to access an apprenticeship.

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

- The extended role and duty of the virtual school was discussed and clarified, and it was noted that it extended to all pupils who had a social worker, whether it be children in need, children on a child protection plan and children in care. However, it was noted that the role was different for those children in care where funding was provided via Pupil Premium. It was advised that for children in need or on child protection plans, the support provided would be at a strategic level with no assigned caseworker
- In response to a query, the Committee was advised that in relation to the Post 16 cohort and the course they were looking to provide, it would initially be piloted with the children in care, but it could be opened up to more young people who were in contact with a social worker, if funding could be sourced in the future
- A Member advised she requested this on the Forward Plan some time ago, but the focus was different to what she was really interested in where a pupil did not get the relevant GCSE requirement, or equivalent to progress in education, took time away then wanted to

retake in an easily accessible and flexible program to get the the necessary qualifications to progress their education or employment opportunities.

- The Committee was advised that there was courses available through Skills and Learning, but they were for 19 year olds and over who would be assessed and taken in on one of the three intakes throughout the year. The Committee was reassured that in relation to children in care, these restrictions weren't there as funding was available to enable the fast track of pupils through the functional skills course detailed in the report.
- The Virtual Headteacher advised she would discuss this issue with the Skills and Learning manager to see if accessibility and flexibility could be increased for all post 16 pupils. **ACTION – add to action plan**
- In response to a query regarding partners to work with for apprenticeships, the Committee was advised the Virtual Headteacher was working closely with the Dorset Chamber of Business and had a good relationship with local businesses. However, they did struggle to find college or education providers to accredit the apprenticeships. They would welcome any discussions with local business to promote and progress apprenticeships.
- Two Committee Members, one who managed leisure centres and one who was the Chairman of Seascope advised they would welcome apprentices and the Virtual Headteacher advised she would make contact to discuss further. **ACTION – add to the action sheet.**
- There was a discussion over the low numbers of apprenticeships being taken up at the Council and the Virtual Headteacher clarified that the report only referred to children in care and care leavers and there was difficulties was finding industries and apprenticeships the young people were interested in.
- The impact of covid was discussed, including many employees still working from home in a flexible manner, making offering work experience more challenging for employers.

The Chair summarised the discussions as follows:

- Extended role of the virtual school and college
- Barriers to getting right qualifications or moving into apprenticeships
- Covid and the increase in my flexible working.

**RESOLVED that the Committee note the content of the report as an update regarding the work that the Virtual school had undertaken to increase the number of children in care accessing apprenticeships.**

87. Items for Information

There were no items for information on this occasion.

88. Forward Plan

The Chair referred to the updated Forward Plan which was circulated to the Committee by email.

The Chair highlighted the visit to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which had been on hold on the forward plan for some time and it was noted that the Corporate Director would investigate whether access would be possible. **ACTION – add to the action sheet.**

89. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates for future meetings were noted.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

CHAIR

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