

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 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, Cllr T Slade, and Cllr O Walters

Co-Opted Members: R Cornish and E Prentice

42. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mark Saxby and Simon Welch.

43. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members on this occasion.

44. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

45. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

46. Action Sheet

The Committee received an update on the actions outlined in the action sheet. The Committee was advised that the contact details requested during the meeting held last January, as referenced on page 19 of the agenda pack, had been shared and were also provided below.

PALS (Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust)
dhc.pals@nhs.net

Complaints (Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust)
dhc.complaints@nhs.net

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

47. Public Issues

There were no Public Issues.

48. Members of Youth Parliament Update

The Committee was 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:

- In response to a query raised regarding the mental health surveys that were distributed, the Committee was advised that the aim had been to share them as widely as possible. This would be achieved by utilising contacts within their own schools, as well as their social media channels and the BCP Council's social media. The priority had been to share the surveys broadly, and the Members of the Youth Parliament welcomed any support that Committee Members were able to offer.
- The Interim Director of Education informed the Committee that they could share information regarding the mental health surveys through their school contacts.
- In response to a query raised regarding the involvement of the Youth Forum in the mental health surveys and any challenges associated with this, the Committee was advised that it had been difficult to gather input from such a diverse range of organisations. However, it was noted that demonstrating engagement with these groups would provide valuable insights and experiences across the sector.
- The Committee thanked the MYPs for their hard work and offered any support they might have needed in their work going forward.
- A Committee member offered the MYPs data produced as part of a political workshop she had participated in within schools to assist the MYPs with their work on political education.
- In response to a query regarding the meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Committee was advised that the MYPs planned to focus the discussion on the knife crime prevention campaign. The MYPs also intended to explore ways in which the Commissioner could support their future campaigns. The Committee expressed their eagerness to learn about the discussions that would take place during the meeting to assist in their ongoing work to address knife crime.

49. Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People Sufficiency Report

The Head of Children's Commissioning 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 Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) Sufficiency Strategy 2024 – 2028 set out how Bournemouth, Christchurch

and Poole Council (BCP Council) would meet its sufficiency duty as laid out in section 22G of the Children Act 1989.

The Strategy set out how BCP would provide sufficient, safe, secure, and sustainable homes for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People between 2024 - 2028. The required standard as a corporate parent was to ensure that the accommodation provision is at the level that professionals would want for their own children or family. Demand pressure and the reality that resources are finite meant that sufficiency was a policy imperative.

The briefing and attached appendices purpose was to inform the Committee of the agreed sufficiency strategy priorities between 2024 – 2028 and the progress achieved to date, alongside the immediate areas of focus during 2025 in order to mitigate any sufficiency risks.

Progress against the six priority areas would be reported into the Children's Service's Quality, Performance and Improvement Board as per the Governance process.

The Committee discussed the report, including:

- It was agreed that the final Governance and Quality Assurance Framework would be shared with the Committee once it had been agreed and signed off as final. **ACTION**
- In response to a query raised regarding the ability to hear the experiences of young people, the Committee was advised that the service had several methods for discussing these lived experiences and had collaborated with various organisations to facilitate this. Additionally, the Committee was advised about the avenues available for young people to provide feedback, such as the Children's Rights and Engagement team, which focused on targeted initiatives in the area. Practice weeks, during which the service engaged directly with young people locally. All the collected feedback was then incorporated into the governance process to identify key themes and trends.
- The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People advised the Committee that, as part of his role on the Corporate Parenting Board, care-experienced young people attend each meeting to share their experiences. He noted that all councillors were welcome to attend the Board meetings if they wished to hear these firsthand accounts.
- In response to a query regarding resource constraints and potential barriers, the Committee was advised that while there were some challenges, these reflect positive growth within the market. However, it was emphasised that attention must be given to how certain organisations were profiting. Over the coming month, efforts would be made to evaluate and address any organisations that may be capitalising on the young people in the area.
- In response to a query raised regarding the challenges faced by foster carer rates and the need for competitiveness, the Committee

was advised that the service was engaged with several regional frameworks involving independent fostering agencies. It was noted that work needed to be conducted to build partnerships in order to effectively utilise these frameworks.

- It was confirmed to the Committee that short break provisions encompass a variety of services, including respite accommodation with a registered caregiver and activities for children with additional needs. It was emphasised that there were no plans to cut these services, but there would be a review of the demand to ensure sufficient provision in the area. Discussions with partners were planned to explore how to deliver these services in the future.
- In response to a query raised regarding the OFSTED outcome for providers, the Committee was advised that only one provider had received a 'requires improvement' rating. In such cases, the provider was required to submit an action plan, and monthly meetings were held to monitor progress and offer assistance. The focus had been on partnership working and identifying needs. If the provider did not make timely progress, efforts would be made to understand the reasons and work together towards improvement.

RESOLVED that the Committee acknowledges and understands the Children's Services statutory responsibility to produce a Sufficiency Strategy in relation of the accommodation needs of Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People.

Voting: Unanimous

The Committee agreed to continue discussions outside the meeting regarding the best ways to address the barriers identified in the report and to reach an agreement on how the Committee will receive that information.
ACTION.

50. Children's Services Capital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28

The Head of Service Place Planning and Admissions 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 report set out the Education and Skills Capital Programme for the period 2025/26 – 2027/28. The report summarised available capital funding totalling £22.6 million and provided an indicative programme of investment of £21.4 million set against key budget headings aligned to improvement priorities across the service. The planned expenditure of available capital was set out in this report and showed a balanced budget.

The Committee discussed the report, including:

- In response to a query raised regarding the Belonging Strategy, the committee was advised that this strategy was linked to inclusion and incorporated how we worked across the system for all learners, including the most vulnerable. It focused on keeping as many

children as possible in mainstream provision so they could thrive and succeed. The new Head of Education was set to implement the strategy in either February or March.

- The Committee was advised that Alternative Provision varied according to the individual needs of young people. There was a growing trend in utilising alternative provision, but this was only implemented when necessary. The goal was to support children in returning to a mainstream educational setting, ensuring that Alternative Provision was not perceived as a final destination.
- The Committee was advised that the Alternative Provision Improvement Plan could be brought to the committee for further examination. **ACTION**
- In response to a query raised regarding the wraparound programme, the Committee was advised that it consisted of two work streams, including wraparound care. This care provided childcare services from 8am to 6pm, covering the beginning and end of the school day. The service collaborated with multiple partners throughout the sector to expand the number of available places. At that time, there were 700 wraparound places required, and with the funding provided, the service had successfully met the demand as well as an additional 50 places.

The Committee expressed their gratitude to the Interim Head of Education for her contributions during her time at BCP Council.

The Committee noted the report.

51. School Admission Arrangements 2026/27

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 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

52. IRO 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.

53. Portfolio Holder Update

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

- An update on the recently completed OFSTED inspection, with the report published on the 29 January 2025. Unfortunately, he was not permitted to disclose the outcomes until then but expressed gratitude to the entire Children's services team for their efforts during the inspection process.
- Information about the forthcoming OFSTED SEND inspection, expected within the next few months.

- A response to the question raised by Members of Youth Parliament regarding homelessness funding in BCP, revealing a total of £213,000 allocated to alleviate rough sleeping and support vulnerable groups, including young people. Several initiatives were planned to address these issues, such as additional outreach workers and emergency accommodation.
- An overview of the current concerns regarding youth homelessness, noting that around 5% of those seen sleeping rough in BCP were under 25, and highlighting the increasing numbers of young people living in precarious housing situations.
- An update on alternative provisions in BCP, indicating that data on missed sessions and pupil distance travelled was being collected, with plans to implement a new oversight system by the start of the new financial year to improve monitoring.
- Confirmation that the new Belonging Strategy's release had been delayed until the end of February for final tweaks and input from the new Director of Education.
- Progress on the development of the new Children and Young People's Partnership Plan, set for final design by the end of February, with scheduled democratic approval processes and a planned launch at the end of April. Members were encouraged to compare it with the previous plan.

54. Health Representation on the Children Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee approved the inclusion of the health representative at future meetings, starting with the next meeting scheduled in March.

55. Work Plan

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee considered its Work Plan.

56. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs such interest in disclosing the information.

57. Children's Social Care Improvement Journey Update

The Committee received an update on the Children's Social Care Improvement Journey and the recent OFSTED inspection.

The Committee discussed the exempt report and presentation.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 January 2025

The Committee expressed their gratitude to Children's Services for all the work they have done.

The meeting ended at 8.17 pm

CHAIR