

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 17 October 2017
TIME:	1.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors W. Johnson (Chair), P. Birkinshaw, G. Carr, Charlesworth, Clarke, Clements, Ennis, Franklin, Frost, Daniel Griffin, Hampson, Hand-Davis, Phillips, Pourali, Sheard, Tattersall, Unsworth and Williams together with co-opted member Ms P. Gould.

In attendance

Councillor Saunders.

33 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs K Morritt in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

34 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillors G. Carr, Charlesworth and Tattersall each declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to minutes 36, 37 and 39 in so far as discussion related to their positions on the Corporate Parenting Panel.

35 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th September, 2017 were approved as a true and accurate record.

36 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Area Inspection and Barnsley Self-Evaluation

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director, People, BMBC

Margaret Libreri, Service Director, Education, Early Start and Prevention, People, BMBC

Richard Lynch, Head of Service, Commissioning, Governance and Partnerships, People, BMBC

Sue Day, Interim Service and Strategy Manager, Assessment and Referral Service, People, BMBC

Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children, People, BMBC

Karen O'Brien, Designated Clinical Officer for SEND, Barnsley CCG

Councillor Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Safeguarding)

Councillor Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Achieving Potential)

The item was introduced by the Service Director, People, Education, Early Start and Prevention. Members were reminded that the inspection of local area arrangements had commenced in May 2016, with 40 areas inspected to date. It was noted that the inspections were jointly conducted by the CQC and Ofsted, and considered the wider

arrangements within an area, and did not solely focus on the Local Authority. Members noted the focus of the inspections to ascertain whether areas could effectively identify children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), assess them and improve outcomes for them.

The attention of Members was drawn to the self-assessment recently undertaken, and to the strengths and weaknesses identified. The strengths included areas such as; leadership and governance; joint commissioning; early years provision; Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within timescales; the virtual school for Looked After Children (LAC); cross agency partnership working; prevention and early intervention programmes in mental health; and information and advice services for parents and carers.

With respect to the areas of improvement, Members noted the following had been identified; improving educational progress for those with SEND, especially at Key Stage 4, and for those without statutory plans; building the capacity of mainstream schools to identify those with additional needs and provide effective support; improving attendance and reducing exclusions of pupils with SEND; increasing participation of young people, carers and parents in co-production to shape and improve arrangements; improving data sharing across partners; improving the transition of 16-25 year olds; improving access and waiting times for support services; improving quality assurance in relation to EHCPs; and improving performance management arrangements in order to evidence how outcomes have been improved.

Questions were asked in response to the report and introductory presentation, which included the following points:-

- Should Barnsley receive an inspection, it was felt that the self-assessment was accurate and would give an indication of the outcome. A solid foundation could be evidenced, with plans in place to deliver improvements.
- Questions were raised about how well the needs of parents, carers and young people were met, and it was suggested that this was an improving picture, and the area where improvements would make the most significant difference was building the capacity in mainstream schools. In the majority of cases this was the best place to identify needs and to meet them.
- Members queried whether any particular group was not as well served currently, and it was acknowledged that outcomes for those without a statutory assessment, but with SEND, categorised as SEN Support, were not as good as they needed to be, and that this included for attendance rates and exclusion. It was noted that this had been identified as an area for improvement. There was a growing demand for EHCP assessments, and it was acknowledged that this may be reduced should the needs of those identified as SEN support be met more effectively.
- Challenges were made around the rate of exclusions in light of the strict policies adopted by a number of the Academies within Barnsley. It was noted that Barnsley had positive partnership arrangements and this included strong working relationships through the Alliance Board, and challenges were issued to secondary heads to use other mechanisms such as Fair Access Protocols or to trigger Early Help Assessments, to work with families to try and avoid exclusions. It was noted that regular updates were provided by schools, which included details of exclusions, and efforts were made to ensure these were as short as possible.

- Members questioned the funding associated with supporting those with SEND, noting some of this was already within schools' budgets, but that additional finance was provided for those with an EHCP or SEN Statement through the Local Authority. It was noted that nationally Barnsley was relatively poorly funded, and that some schools within the area did have a greater proportion of pupils with SEND, which could be attributed in part to their exclusive nature and previous record of working with the cohort in question. It was noted that there was no strong geographical pattern to this.
- Members acknowledged that the Council had statutory responsibility for all those identified with SEND, whether these be pupils in academies or maintained schools. It was noted that the 'narrowing the gap' subgroup were looking at a model to identify areas of improvement and of success and establish a peer support network between schools in order to facilitate this. Members also noted that a network of SEND Coordinators existed to share best practice.
- Issues around the sharing of data were probed, and it was acknowledged that this was an area requiring improvement, and work was underway to ensure the sharing of public health data.
- Questions were raised around transition, and whether additional finance was available to support young people with SEND 16-25. It was confirmed that no additional finance was available but a working group was established to consider the offer to this age group, recognising the need for services to be joined up and be focused on the individual.
- Members stressed the importance of the voice of the child and the engagement of parents and carers and challenged how these were taken into account. It was noted that there were plans in place to re-establish the parent/carer forum, with the details of which due to be consulted on in the near future. Members were reminded of the 'all about me' sections in plans, and that improving EHCPs had been identified as a priority.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) That the witnesses be thanked for their attendance.

37 Update on Family Centres

The following witnesses were invited to the meeting:-

Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director, People, BMBC

Margaret Libreri, Service Director, Education, Early Start and Sufficiency, People, BMBC

Nina Sleight, Head of Early Start, Prevention and Sufficiency, People, BMBC

Claire Gilmore, Early Start & Families Strategy and Service Manager, People, BMBC

Laura Hammerton, Family Centre Development Manager, People, BMBC

Councillor Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Safeguarding)

Councillor Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Achieving Potential)

The Head of Early Start, Prevention and Sufficiency spoke to the report, previously circulated, which reminded Members of the restructuring undertaken and the implementation of early help for families through the Family Centres. The report provided an update following the consideration of the subject by the committee in January, 2017.

Highlighted were the significant numbers accessing the service, with the greatest number of families having children in the 5-9 age group. From inception to September 2017 there had been 1,598 referrals to the Early Help Panel. Work had taken place with Children's Social Care to strengthen the Step Down arrangements, and weekly professional early help and social care consultation meetings were now taking place offering support and guidance to early help practitioners.

Members heard how clear governance arrangements were in place, which included Family Centre Advisory Boards aligned to Area Councils, and a borough-wide Early Help Steering Group for Children and Families, with reporting to the Children and Young People's Trust and Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Board. Members also noted that a robust performance management framework was in place which provided a strategic overview of the impact being made, and that a multi-agency workforce development programme had been implemented.

In summary Members were told that progress had been made, but that there were still areas which required improvement. Questions were invited and the discussion included the following amongst other things:-

- Questions were raised whether WIFI would be provided in all Family Centres, and it was noted that work is currently ongoing to roll out the corporate network to make this so. This was to be completed by the end of the financial year.
- Members challenged why some centres were operating under their capacity, and what was being done to address this. It was noted that since the launch of Family Centres there had been a communications plan to publicise the offer, and each centre worked to promote themselves locally. There were high registration rates, with numbers increasing monthly, but promotion of the service remained high on the agenda to ensure families who required the service were engaged. If any particular concerns were raised, then further 'deep dive' investigation would be undertaken to try to understand the issue and rectify this.
- Concerns were raised around the Star system, and how this was time consuming, and whether there was capacity to undertake this assessment with families. In response it was felt that, although time consuming, this was an essential part of the process in gaining the right support. Both families and officers generally thought it beneficial. Efforts were being made to encourage partner organisations to use the system, or embed the principles in their working.
- Members raised questions about the distribution of facilities, and were assured that careful analysis was undertaken to map facilities to the needs of the area. Members were reminded that the same service was provided wherever the service was accessed be it a hub or via outreach provision. Again Members pressed the need to ensure families were aware of the offer, when this would be provided, and at what location. Members requested that they be sent information regarding the 'offer' in their local area so they could promote this in their communities.
- Concerns were raised regarding the Step Down Process being implemented too early, and Members heard how an action plan had been develop to ensure Step Down processes were adhered to and used appropriately.
- Members questioned the disproportionate figures relating to the South & Penistone area, when compared to others. It was noted that this covered two

Area Councils, which could account for higher figures. It was suggested that this could also be attributed to the popularity of provision located at Kirk Balk school, and that lessons could be learned from this in order to increase numbers engaging in other areas.

- It was acknowledged that the Family Centre model had been arrived at through restructuring, and the Council withdrawing from providing childcare in areas which were already served by other providers. In light of the financial savings made, members praised the positive impact the service was having in engaging with families and providing support where required. This was most obviously seen in the rises in numbers of families with children aged 5-11 engaged, which would have previously not been able to access support through the previous model of Children's Centres focused around pre-school ages.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That witnesses be thanked for their contribution; and
- (iii) That Members be sent information regarding the Family Centre 'offer' in their local area so they could promote this in their communities.

38 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as described by the specific paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, as follows

<u>Item Number</u>	<u>Type of Information Likely to be Disclosed</u>
39	Paragraph 2

39 Children's Social Care Reports

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

Mel John-Ross, Service Director - Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, People
Councillor Margaret Bruff – Cabinet Spokesperson, People (Safeguarding)

An introduction was given to the report circulated; highlighting that much of the information remained unchanged as August was an atypical month given that Schools weren't in session.

The attention of Members was drawn to a number of areas where further detailed information had been provided. These included the source of referral for Early Help Assessments, and more detailed information relating to the education of Looked After Children.

In the ensuing discussion, a number of areas were discussed, including the following:-

- Questions were raised regarding the proportion of care leavers who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). It was acknowledged that this was difficult to benchmark with other areas. It was recognised that this was lower than the corporate target, that this was not good enough and was a

priority for this to improve. Members requested that additional detailed information be brought to a future committee meeting regarding this.

- The number of Looked After Children going missing was discussed, and questions were raised about the context to these figures. It was suggested that the duration was not the only factor worthy of consideration, and Members were reminded of the authority's Corporate Parent Responsibility.
- Members queried the caseloads of social workers, suggesting these were higher than helpful for both officers and children. In response Members heard that, although higher than was ideal, there were no vacancies contributing to this, and the Council operated a rolling recruitment policy to ensure this was not an issue. Members were reminded that the needs of children were of primary importance, and of late there had been increased demand. However, it was recognised that services had to be mindful of budgets.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That witnesses be thanked for their attendance: and
- (iii) That additional detailed information be brought to the committee regarding care leavers who are NEET.