

**Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 29th November, 2007.**

**Present:-** Councillors P Choudhry (Chair), Dhillon, Maclsaac (Vice-Chair), Mann, O'Connor and Pabbi.

**Education Voting Co-opted Members**

Pat Parker, Diocese of Northampton  
Melvin Pearce, Parent Governor Representative

**Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members**

Sandy Hopkinson, Primary School Representative

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Finn and L Khan

**PART I**

**26. Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Maclsaac declared a personal interest in item 4 - Mental Health Needs Specific for Young People - as both his wife and daughter work for Berkshire Healthcare Trust.

**27. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of a request from Councillor O'Connor for further information regarding the Connexions summer timetable.

**28. Slough Borough Council Fostering Service Statement of Purpose and Foster Panel Annual Report**

The Interim Director for Education and Children's Services presented the report. The report was an annual statutory requirement regarding fostering activity within the Borough, the total cost of which in Slough is £3.3m. This represented the largest single head of expenditure by Education and Children's Services outside of the schools budget. The report included the Fostering Service's Statement of Purpose and the Fostering Panel's Annual Report. Members were required to review and agree these annually. Fostering was a crucial service within the Borough and therefore it was important to achieve high quality outcomes. The report presented a picture of a generally successful service which was addressing any issues in order to continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of provision. Councillors asked a number of questions including:-

- A Member asked if the reintroduction of the supported lodgings scheme, that had ended due to a lack of structured facilitation, was currently an

## Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 29.11.07

aspiration or if it was actually in hand. Officers confirmed that it had already been reintroduced and responsibility had moved to the Family Placement Team meaning a slightly altered service but with better capacity than previously.

- A Member questioned why the specialist carer scheme had not yet been implemented. Officers informed the Panel that between three and five children in care would be suitable for this scheme. It was possible that one or two of these would not be able to be accommodated within the scheme, as their needs were extremely specialised. The cost of out of Borough placements could be as high as £2,500 per week and a specialist carer scheme could bring this cost down to £1,000 per week. However as some needs may not be met and additional costs to fund the scheme would be incurred it may not save considerable financial resources. Members agreed that with the small numbers involved it may not be viable.
- Members asked about the high number of posts that were vacant within the fostering service. Many of these posts were vacant as they were due to be deleted. However, foster carer turnover was a different issue and it was noted that although this was high it was not unusual. In fact the number of foster carers within Slough had increased over the past year.
- A Member commented that it was an excellent report, that was both substantial and informative but requested information on what training was involved for foster parents. It was agreed that written documentation of this would be provided to all Members of the Education and Children's Scrutiny Panel.
- Members noted that there were a number of different types of foster placements and asked Officers the reasons for this. Officers established that the different kinds of placements were needed to meet different children's circumstances and needs.
- A Member questioned how foster children are monitored. The Panel were informed that foster carers were the monitors of the children, effectively acting in loco parentis and that foster carers themselves receive regular support and supervision from their Social Workers.

Members noted the precarious nature of foster care and felt that having an Officer specifically delegated to work in recruitment and retention was important and that removal of this post may be false economy.

### **Resolved –**

- a) That Members recommend to Cabinet that the post of Recruitment and Retention Officer in Children's Services should not be deleted from the forthcoming budget rounds because the retention and supply of foster carers was essential to an effective fostering service.
- b) That the report be welcomed and noted.

### 29. Mental Health Needs Specific for Young People

The Assistant Director for Inclusion presented the report to the Panel which provided information and answers to questions related to the mental health needs of young people in Slough. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Strategy (CAMHS) currently runs until March, 2008. However, a new action plan was being generated in connection with the strategy. Mental health should be linked to support across the whole community. Disorders fall into one of three categories: emotional, conduct and hyperactive disorders. There was significant support in place to assist young people with mental health problems. Between 1999 and 2004 there was no increase in prevalence in this area. However many health workers and those working with children would report that they had seen an increase in mental health disorders, although this was probably due to the greater awareness people had of mental health issues. There was a greater likelihood for mental health disorders to be prevalent in reconstituted families, families with low educational qualifications and those families with low household incomes. Boys were more likely to have a mental health disorder than girls.

In Slough there were some 30,000 people aged between 0 and 19. It was commonly reported that roughly 10% of these would have some kind of mental health disorder, roughly 3,000 children in Slough. 48% per cent of children in care and 45% of young offenders were reported to have some mental health needs. Support in place for children and young people consisted of four tiers of provision. The first tier comprised universal services that were available to all young people. The second tier services provided targeted support. The third tier provided specialist support for substantial mental health needs and the fourth provided support for acute needs. At this stage there was no fourth tier provision in Slough but a highly specialised resource was available at Berkshire Adolescent Unit in Wokingham. The key was to ensure that in this area of work the services were complementary and there were no gaps in provision but also no unnecessary overlap. The CAMHS service at Tier 3 was based at Upton Hospital and had an open caseload of 1,242 children and young people.

Recent events had highlighted some of the shortcomings in the CAMH service. The CAMHS Partnership Board attempted to tackle these issues but there was no significant positive change in service delivery, therefore the issues were escalated to the Children's Trust Board. The Chair of the Board raised this at Director level. The concerns centred around more and improved services, responsive to the needs of the community particularly in relation to minority ethnic groups, accessible services throughout 24 hours and over seven days and the transition from services for young people to those for adults. There was now ongoing activity in mental health services provision and much of the work had come back to the Partnership Board to drive it forward. At present there was a tendering process in place for mental health needs provision. It was confirmed that the Berkshire Health Care Trust (BHCT) was submitting a tender for this. Members raised a number of issues including:-

## Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 29.11.07

- A Member noted that the data on mental health needs was notably thin and questioned the reasons for this. It was also suggested that perhaps GPs could collate some of this information. Part of the reason for the lack of data was that many of the service providers were relatively new. Unfortunately this aspect of the work had not been addressed as effectively as would have been hoped. The small team were a reactive service dealing with issues as they arose rather than monitoring them on a more global level. With regard to collecting information from GPs, this would perhaps be more effective now than previously although it was envisaged that this would be difficult.
- Members requested the reasons that gaps in provision had occurred. The gaps identified in the Slough CAMHS service reflected concerns on a national level. BME issues were important as there were different mental health concerns within different cultures. The number of older young people in adult wards was also a serious matter for concern, this had occurred five times in the last four years locally and appropriate support was needed. Twenty-four/seven access was an issue but had now been dealt with as there were psychiatrists on call.
- There were a number of different therapists and life coaches available and Members wanted to know the number of these. Many were part of services supporting behavioural needs which were delivered by the local authority rather than the NHS. The original service of three teachers had since moved to an associate model, whereby the local authority interviewed a range of professionals and, if considered appropriate, took them on to engage in the behavioural therapy of children. Schools were able to buy in these services when they feel it is appropriate. The service now had about 20 different professionals who had helped towards significant changes in the young people and were viewed as highly important.
- A Co-opted Member commended the excellent work that had been achieved by the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) provision in primary schools. This had been very effective as there was already some provision in place and the SEAL programme could be moved quickly on. It was noted that there was a conference held in March between the primary and secondary schools to roll out a similar programme at secondary level.
- Members asked what the ethnic composition was of those using the service and also whether these were local people or were transient migrants. As the CAMHS tier three services were provided through the BHCT the information regarding service users was not currently available. However, there was a general concern that referrals were not reflective of the overall community and it was felt that the mental health agenda was not engaging with certain minorities. Diversity within the CAMHS team was a secondary issue; with all undergoing diversity training.

## **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 29.11.07**

- It was confirmed that within the Education and Children's Services Directorate, regarding the budgeting and financial concerns of mental health need provision, it was identified as being an area that could benefit from additional funding.
- A Member noted that were nuggets of good practice in the report but that it was very concerning especially the apparent gaps in the service. The Member also asked whether the tender was being considered by anybody else other than the BHCT. The Officer confirmed that there were some private agencies interested in it and the PCT had accepted that they may have to provide further finance for these services.
- A Member asked if there were any plans for a referral service through the judiciary. The meeting was informed that the Youth Offending Team has a mental health needs worker and anyone involved in the team will be assessed and if necessary referred to other services. There were a large number of people who had fallen through the net and were not picked up at tiers one or two, therefore more provision was needed in these areas. This would assist with the caseload for tier three as less referrals should come through. It was noted that looked after children had a system in place where referrals could be obtained immediately and there was support available to assist in mental health matters.
- An Officer commented that this was a very new field of work and was one of society's last taboos. Many in society would not even consider that there was a mental health problem. The Panel were informed that although there are significant areas for improvement in the service it was at present a far more robust service than had been available previously.

### **Resolved -**

- (a) That the consultant from the Health Care Trust, Pauline Herring, be invited to the January meeting to address certain issues raised regarding children's mental health needs.
- (b) That the report be noted and a vote of thanks be given to Robin Crofts.

### **30. PFI Report - Post Opening of Beechwood and Arbour Vale Schools**

It was confirmed that the three schools had now been opened (Penn Wood opened February 2007 and Arbour Vale and Beechwood Schools in September 2007) and were all very successful, being enjoyed by both children and those who had been to visit. This was a great achievement for a small Authority.. The newly opened schools were a tribute to the Headteachers involved for their vision of learning. It was noted that combining a main stream and special school on one site was a radical move. Initially parents were very concerned about this but many of these parents have become champions of the project. It was also noted that help was provided to schools in Gambia through the donation of the old furniture from the schools.

## **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 29.11.07**

The Chair thanked the Officers involved for their work on the PFI project and for making it so successful both on time and within budget. A Member congratulated the Officers involved and confirmed that she had taken part in an extraordinary and excellent visit to the schools concerned. However she noted that some knowledge should be gained from the issues that arose during the project, especially the pressure that was put on the Headteachers involved. Officers agreed with this comment and reported that a small amount of additional funding had been agreed by Cabinet to support each of the schools throughout the project. In addition, a 'lessons learnt' review is to take place if resources can be found.

The Members requested that some kind of formal recognition be given to the officers involved for their hard work. The Director of Education and Children's Services undertook to find out what could be done.

### **Resolved -**

(a) That the report be noted.

(b) That a formal recognition be made to the Officers involved in recognition of the successful completion of the project.

### **31. Minutes of the Slough Schools Forum held on 7th November 2007**

**Resolved -** That the minutes of the Slough Schools Forum Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007 be noted.

### **32. Annual Performance Assessment (APA)**

Officers informed the Panel that Children's Services was a statutory requirement and was carefully regulated. It received an annual graded report from the CPA with a final grade being awarded for the overall position. All of the grades received by Slough were grade three, this equates to good on a five point scale, which begins with zero as the lowest and ends with four as the highest grade. The recommendations received in the assessment were generally unsurprising and fitted with the self evaluation by Slough. Although it was felt that in some of the recommendations OfSTED did not fully take into account the reasons behind the Council's position.

The recommendation to improve levels of attainment at 11 was based on the fact that attainment at 14 and 16 was very good. Slough had one of the weakest performances at 5 and the results at 11 reflected this. The figures used for this were from 2006 and were therefore not the most accurate reflection of current circumstances. The capacity to improve recommendation was in relation to workforce planning. It was also felt that this did not reflect the current circumstances as a number of positions were being held open prior to deletion. Overall it was felt that this was a solid performance but with some room for improvement.

## **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 29.11.07**

Members thanked Ian Sandbrook for his excellent work as Interim Strategic Director.

**Resolved** - That the report be noted.

### **33. Forward Work Programme**

Details of the work programme for the Panel were noted and amended to include a report on the School Organisation and Planning terms of reference and that Pauline Herring from the Berkshire East PCT be invited to the January meeting.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted and additional items be added to the Forward work programme.

### **34. Membership Issues**

Melvin Pearce informed the forum that his term as a governor of Slough Grammar School would be ending shortly this would be his last meeting.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the membership position be noted.
- (b) That a note of thanks for Mr Pearce's work be recorded.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)