

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th April, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Bal (Chair), Abe (Vice-Chair), Brooker, Chahal, Davis, M Holledge, Malik, Matloob and Sohal

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Ajaib, Hussain, Mann and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- James Welsh - Catholic Diocese of Northampton
Jo Rockall – secondary school teacher representative

PART 1

46. Declaration of interest

Cllr Brooker declared his interest as a family member has used the CAMHS service in Slough. Cllr Bal declared an interest as his daughter is an employee of Slough Borough Council (SBC).

47. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th March 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th March were approved as a correct record.

48. Member Questions

No questions were submitted prior to the meeting.

49. Raising Pupil Achievement/ School Improvement Services

The report discussed by the Panel had previously been taken at a meeting of the Panel in 2014. Subsequently it had been put out for consultation with schools and received no responses. As a result, the report remained as it had been previously.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- Violent crimes within schools were not statistically commonplace. They were treated quickly and decisively when they occurred and were also covered in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process. Some data on racially motivated incidents and health and safety matters were recorded, but a granular analysis of violent incidents was not available.
- Academies and free schools were only covered by statutory reporting; as a result, Cambridge Education (CE) did not have the same level of access as to schools which were part of the local system. However, the fact that two thirds of these schools agreed to autumn visits did improve transparency, and all reasonable requests were adopted by

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 15.04.15

academies and free schools. Those schools operating in the Slough area also interacted with others as part of a perceived 'community of schools' on a series of vital issues (e.g. safeguarding, looked after children).

- The lack of responses to the consultation process had not been a concern, as local schools had contributed to the formation of the policy.
- Success was measured through a cycle of monitoring, challenge and improvement. The autumn visits were part of this; these lasted 2 – 3 days and examined governance arrangements, teaching and pupil outcomes. Any concerns raised in the visit would be discussed with the school.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel recommend that the SBC Raising Pupil Achievement Strategy and Policy be adopted by Cabinet.
- 2) That the Panel recommend that the SBC Protocol for Working with Academies and Free Schools be adopted by Cabinet.

50. Schools Exclusions

The guidance issued in 2012 had been applied across SBC (including academies and free schools). The report presented details on exclusions and related procedures, how CE intended to reduce the number of exclusions, the statistics and comparisons with local and national benchmarks and the support available for parents.

SBC and CE encouraged a culture of inclusivity. This involved a commitment to encourage (where possible) children to remain within mainstream schooling inside the SBC area; specialist schools supported this system where appropriate. As part of this schools had worked on supporting children with challenging behaviour and avoiding exclusions unless necessary.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- 12 exclusions had occurred since September 2014. When problems arose, a meeting was set up with parents and (where possible) the pupil to discuss matters. Exclusions were avoided unless necessary; however, relations between a pupil and the school could break down or serious incidents could make a student's position at an institution untenable. Alternative mainstream provision would be sought where appropriate; the formalised arrangement for managing the process involved headteachers and schools and was constructed in accordance with national guidance.
- Permanent exclusions had a major negative impact on education and future life chances, and therefore were avoided unless required. SBC had been one of the first local authorities to adopt managed moves to support pupils, but this was now standard policy across the country.
- Schools were required to adhere to statements for children with special educational needs (SEN). CE would liaise with schools on this, with

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 15.04.15

educational psychologists asked to evaluate the appropriateness of actions undertaken. If the pupil concerned was subject to a managed transfer, the School Access Officer would evaluate the case.

- Pupils who were excluded had to be placed in education within 6 days. SBC had responsibility for children who lived in the area although it may use schools outside the SBC area. The number of children placed in schools outside the borough had been reduced significantly in recent years.
- An increase in the number of school places available locally had facilitated managed moves. However parents had the ability to decline proposals; in these cases parents would be consulted in negotiations to find an alternative solution.
- Schools were responsible for deciding when an exclusion would be required. The School Access Officer would intervene as a broker at this point; academies were also part of this procedure.
- The appeals process involved parents approaching the relevant governors' body if the exclusion lasted over 15 days. The next stage would involve an independent appeal.

Resolved: that the Panel note the report.

51. Community Learning and Skills Service 2013/ 14 Self-Assessment Review

SBC had run shared services with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for 2 years; the report presented to the Panel was a requirement for Government funding. The first year of the arrangement had focused on the establishment of the system; the second year had seen substantially increases to the number of residents enrolling. The number of apprenticeships had also risen. However, as the first wave of graduates had moved to employment the system was now handling more people with long term employment issues. The system involved JobCentre Plus, children's centres, the youth service and the Inner City Deal Programme; the last of these was funded by the Cabinet Office and targetted at 16 – 24 year olds.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Given the presence of the trading estate, SBC was encouraging local businesses and colleges to get involved in apprenticeships. The number of apprentices taken on by SBC had risen from 12 to 20. However, SBC's ability to have a direct impact on local employers was limited.
- The adult skills budget had decreased nationally, with students taking English as a second or other language (ESOL) having to receive a proportion of it.
- The work of children's centres was highly specialised and those it sought to benefit could be subject to a wide range of issues (e.g. self esteem, parent / child relationships). As a result the work was targetted through work in small groups, as well as involving more general support on wider barriers to employment (e.g. English, maths).

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 15.04.15

- Aspire were working on a construction pathway, with apprentices to be given support with the Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) and health and safety in the workplace to increase their employment prospects.
- Should reduced funding lead to a need to identify priorities, then employment and employability would be used to allocate spending. It was also likely that SBC would still be required to offer universal provision.
- SBC also worked with the probation service, and offered shorter programmes where appropriate. Full term apprenticeships with SBC lasted one year at present, with funding lasting one year and one day. Loans for college education were available should further study or qualifications be suitable.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel would receive information regarding Manor Park.
- 2) That retention data would be included in future reports on this matter.

52. Corporate Parenting Panel- Annual Report 2014

The Ofsted inspection had led to a strengthening of the Panel's role, especially in terms of scrutiny and challenge. The 'voice of the child' was central to the new strategy, which would alter the Panel's role over the period May 2014 – April 2016. The first year had centred on the embedding of the new culture, leaving SBC with a significant amount of work to complete in the second year of the strategy. Over the coming year, engagement with local youth would be a major element of their work; for example, they had previously been invited guests to Panel meetings but would now be appointed as full members.

Wider partners were also involved to cover matters such as housing, health and education. They were currently welcomed to meetings, with relationships to be strengthened during 2015 – 16. The Transformation Board was offering enhanced training for Councillors.

As a result of these initiatives, a series of measures had been taken. The children in care pledge had been revised as had the care leaver's charter, whilst the website had been redesigned and a survey of foster carers undertaken.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- Looked after children most frequently identified changes in their social worker as a problem with care. Formal complaints would be evaluated in 2015 – 16 by the Panel.
- The changes made in 2014 – 15 by the Panel had largely been introspective in nature. Given the improved position of the Panel it was now intended to increase the external focus of its work.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 15.04.15

- If SBC was experiencing increased response times, then it was the role of the Panel to highlight this and challenge SBC on the causes of the trend.
- The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel were included in its terms of reference. Should an alternative arrangement be sought to increase the potential for constructive challenge in an apolitical context then the terms could be amended.
- To improve the quality of the information presented to the Panel, consistency in the reporting was an area for work. In addition, the frequency and areas of reporting were also being discussed.

53. Safeguarding Improvement Plan: Progress Report

The previous report had centred on an independent review by the Local Government Association (LGA). 2 reviews had been commissioned as a result of this; one into safeguarding practice and another on practice for looked after children. The latter had now been completed and its findings were largely consistent with the LGA report.

Overall there had been considerable progress; the focus had been on ensuring that the fundamental aspects of safeguarding were in place, with the recruitment strategy tailored to support this. As a result the family justice reforms were being implemented well. The quality of reports had improved and the 'voice of the child' was now being recorded more clearly. However, in future a single improvement programme covering all areas would be needed. Strategic partnerships would need to be strengthened and the consistency of practice increased. SBC had also agreed to increase funding for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and since April 2014 the care team had been co-located with Thames Valley Police. The next phase of developing partnership working would be the full inclusion of health partners.

Whilst both the number and the proportion of social work staff who were permanent members had increased in most areas, the table included in the report had seen the proportion of consultant practitioners who were permanent had decreased in March 2015. However the recruitment of 2 more permanent team members had resolved this. The focus on early help had also helped ensure effective interventions, whilst the 'Team Around You' pilot was designed to improve the consistency of care.

Simplifying partnership working arrangements and clarifying the focus of safeguarding were the subjects of ongoing reviews. Sub groups dedicated to education, health, early help and partnership would be involved in the process, whilst Deloitte were helping to create a unified single improvement plan. This would involve a single scorecard, which would be shared with members once available.

The Panel raised the following matters in discussion:

- The establishment of the new organisation for children's services would be a complex process and could distract SBC's attention. This had led

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 15.04.15

to its categorisation as a risk but was being considered at all stages, and was scheduled to be completed during the autumn term of 2015 – 16.

- Agency staff often worked across the South East and London as well as the placements they had in Slough. The selection process for agency staff was rigorous and included an interview. They were used given the shortage of qualified social workers, although a national recruitment campaign was being launched with 2 specialist providers used to source suitable staff. Also the quality of training had improved and students were being recruited through the 'Step Up' programme. In addition some temporary staff would move to permanent contracts, although others preferred to retain the flexibility of temporary work.
- A letter had been sent to the Chief Executives of the relevant NHS organisations regarding the MASH.

Resolved:

- 1) That an update on the transfer of children's services be provided at the meeting on 14th July 2015.
- 2) That the next report would provide further information regarding the length of time for which agency workers were employed.

54. Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

The provision of the service included tier 2 services (which were delivered with partners) and life long mental health. The recent national discussions regarding a parity of esteem between mental and physical health had led to a consensus that action early in life had the best long term results.

At present CAMHS was seen as a highly specialised service with limited access. There were 5 specialists dealing with case work; the new system being established was working with schools, identifying issues and geographical areas with high levels of mental health concerns. Groups of local young people at risk would also be identified, and work would be undertaken on getting the correct referrals to the service. The results of the initial trials in the Thames Valley area would be apparent by the end of summer 2015.

Schools had shown increased support and the remodelled service was being developed with service users and other local children.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- A wide range of causes were diagnosed when children's and young people's mental health was researched. These included bullying, abuse, early attachment issues and a lack of accurate diagnosis. Issues relating to family break up also appeared to have a significant impact.
- Workers at different tiers have embarked on collaboration to standardise evaluation of autism amongst local children.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 15.04.15

- The Education Early Endowment Foundation bid had been made and if successful may help funding for local services. The Care Commissioning Group was supporting SBC's aim to share tier 2 and tier 3 services.
- A backlog of specialist cases had developed, with each consultant holding 30 – 35 complex cases in their workload. A handful of these cases were tier 4.
- Clinical colleagues and schools were involved; the overall message was for early intervention.

Resolved: that the Panel approve Slough's commitment to the ten key actions under the mental health challenge shown in Appendix 1.

55. Forward Work Programme

Resolved:

- 1) That the agenda for 14th July 2015 include items on teacher recruitment, SEND reforms, school places (if available) and the transfer of children's services.
- 2) That the item on the 'Team Around You' pilot be deferred until October 2015.

56. Attendance Record

The attendance record was noted.

57. Date of Next Meeting - 14th July 2015

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.22 pm)

This page is intentionally left blank