

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 19th April, 2017.

Present:- Councillors Brooker (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Chohan (from 8.04pm), N Holledge, Pantelic, Qaseem and Sadiq

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors M Holledge, Munawar and Nazir

Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Hamzah Ahmed (Slough Youth Parliament)

Apologies for Absence:- Jo Rockall
(Secondary School Teacher Representative)
Maggie Stacey
(Head Teacher Representative)

PART 1

51. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Brooker declared his daughter's previous attendance at Burnham Park Academy and his positions as Governor at Churchmead and Ryvers Schools. He also declared his membership of Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Foster Panel.

Cllr N Holledge declared her position as a Governor at Cippenham Nursery. Hamzah Ahmed declared his membership of the Local Safeguarding Panel and his position as Governor at Cippenham Primary School. Cllr Chahal declared his position as the Chair of Governors at Lea Nursery School.

52. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th March 2017

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2017 be approved as a correct record.

53. Action Progress Report

Resolved: That the Action Progress Report be noted.

54. Member Questions

No members' questions were received prior to the meeting.

55. Ofsted Monitoring Visit

The 2nd Monitoring Visit had been held in late February 2017 and focused on care leavers. This area of work was shared by SBC and the Children's Services Trust (SCST); the visit had been rigorous and had found several

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positive developments. As a result, the service for care leavers was providing a good example of joint working between SBC and SCST.

The visit had taken the form of a series of activities (e.g. review of case records, interviews with staff) and had explored areas highlighted as weak by the last full Ofsted Inspection. As a result, the progress made from the low base inherited in 2015 had been noted on matters such as accommodation. As part of this, Ofsted had visited care leavers in their new housing (e.g. YMCA) and also spoken to SBC housing officers on provision being made for care leavers.

However, improvement needed to continue; Ofsted stated that they thought the progress being made had been very recent. In response, SCST reminded Ofsted that only 5 staff from the time of the last inspection were now part of the 37 staff involved in the service at the time of the visit. This was an indication as to the level of culture change needed before making any significant improvements to the service itself.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The report on the visit highlighted 4 key areas for continued improvement. These would be resolved as follows:

Improving the reliability of performance information

This was recognised by all parties as a chronic issue. Tracking had improved, but still required further work; a Performance Management Team was dedicated to this area.

The lack of formal contractual arrangements with providers

A lead for commissioning had now been appointed; it would be their responsibility to investigate all contractual arrangements. At present, no such formal arrangements had been completed.

The need to strengthen partnership relationships for individual care leavers in health and adult services

A health professional would be working on this area; a key priority of their work would be to establish a system which offered all care leavers a choice in shaping their care package.

The embedding of some of the new protocols and practice developments

This was in motion (e.g. the intranet was being relaunched, which would outline the new policies put in place by SCST). However, the IT issues involved made it impossible to specify a deadline for this.

- The funding for staff in the care leavers' hubs had been committed to retaining the present level of employees in 2017 – 18. In addition, a 3 year budget was planned on this premise; however, the question would be reviewed annually, so an absolute commitment beyond the present financial year was impossible. As well as the increased number of staff

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(from 3 to 9) the number of care leavers on Child Protection Plans had reduced, which further assisted with making work loads manageable. Whilst the number of cases per worker was now closer to the standard guidance for an ideal workload (20), some cases were now living some distance from Slough; this complicated logistics for staff. SCST was working with local authorities in the areas concerned to manage this appropriately.

- Of the 37 staff in the service, approximately 35% of them were temporary. Whilst this was lower than the figure inherited, SCST wanted to align this with the ration in other hubs it ran (approximately 17%). However, SCST was confident that the quality of its workforce was improving significantly.
- The 3rd Ofsted Monitoring Visit was scheduled for 15th – 16th June 2017 and would focus on child protection. The 4th visit would be likely to occur in September 2017, and the subsequent full re-inspection must take place by mid 2018. There would also soon be an Ofsted / Care Quality Commission joint inspection of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service.

Resolved: That the 3rd Ofsted Monitoring Visit be added to the agenda for 25th October 2017.

56. Adoption and Fostering Inspection Outcomes Report

These services had both been inspected recently (fostering in December 2016 and adoption January 2017) and rated as 'requires improvement'. This was the 1st time that they had been inspected separately, and the process had been more than usually intensive (2 inspectors over 5 days).

Whilst the overall rating was 'requires improvement', positive aspects had been recognised by inspectors. These included:

- Service user involvement
- Adopters involved on interview panels
- Internal placements
- Permanency of placements
- Children well prepared
- Fostering recruitment

However, the Ofsted recommendations focused on a number of other areas:

- Formation of a detailed training programme
- Additional training for staff
- First aid
- Commissioning of post-adoption support

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

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- Both reports highlighted concerns over auditing. At present, neither service had put reporting formats or systems in place; however, both inspections also had confidence this would be rectified.
- The issue regarding complaints also involved the formalisation of processes. Whilst a case had been resolved, it had not been subject to a standardised process. Subsequently, procedures had been tightened to end this.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

57. Special Educational Needs and Disability

The service was working closely with SCST to make improvements. The report provided to the Panel covered the last 3 years, which had seen significant changes in legislation and the picture in Slough.

The Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) compiled by the service currently covered a range of service users from 2 – 25 years of age. This was a broad age range. The service was benchmarking itself on a national and regional basis. In terms of attainment, outcomes were above average whilst in other areas outcomes were in line with averages. However, it had been recognised that more SEND places were needed; hence the decision by Cabinet to fund these on 20th March 2017.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The proposed National Funding Formula could increase the pressure on SEND services. At present, schools were making decisions on the numbers of Teaching Assistants they could afford, the class sizes they could maintain and the areas of the curriculum they could cover; SEND provision would also be a challenge. However, there was no reason to believe that legal duties and responsibilities would change.
- SEND children with higher level abilities may need to be placed outside of the area in some cases. The service was working with state schools in all suitable cases to ensure the best placements for children.
- Funds allocated under EHCPs is dedicated to the recipient, and must be spent on their needs alone.
- The supportive environment created by local schools and the level of practice in place were valued greatly by the service.
- The potential cuts to the Education Support Grant had been anticipated and were being managed. As a result, any lowering of their level would not give rise to a sudden drop in available funds. The Dedicated Schools Grant could also assist in making good any shortfall.
- The Progress 8 measure was negative for SEND children, but less negative than either national or regional averages. Given the nature of the measure, this indicated that children in Slough were being kept at a level of attainment which more closely resembled those in mainstream education than comparator local authorities. This did not mean that the results were seen as optimal, and systemic approaches would be maintained to assist with improving performance. The fact that this was

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a new measure meant that there were not previous years with which to compare.

- The service was confident in the ability of Early Years Foundation Stage and Primary School staff to detect SEND with a high level of accuracy. Joint working with SBC's Public Health team also assisted with this; however, it was recognised that 100% accurate diagnosis was virtually impossible to achieve in such an area. However, it was hoped that treating parents with greater respect in the system and valuing their views and knowledge was contributing to a positive and supportive culture. The stability visible within patterns of diagnosis offered further support for this confidence.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

58. Education Psychology Services

This service had recently been transferred to SBC from Cambridge Education; the transition has been helped by the fact that the work and responsibilities have remained the same. The team consisted of 15 workers, who were assigned to service users between infants and 25 year olds. Around 20% of the workload was connected to the service's statutory role and SEND, but the majority of the work was undertaken in schools. This was done on the basis of local schools purchasing staff time as suitable, and was being used by most local schools (with many of these only held back from extending their use of the service by funding issues). Depending on the school's requirements, the time purchased could vary from 4 days per year to 2 days per week.

The service offered targeted interventions for all levels of need, and was based on assessment of the individual's needs. The team also worked with vulnerable groups (e.g. Looked After Children, those involved with the Youth Offending Team) and also received those who were referred to them due to concerns over a lack of academic progress. In these cases, the team was often having a positive impact (as recorded in the appendix included in agenda papers).

The greatest risk to the continued delivery of the service was recruitment. At present, the work of 2 full time equivalents was being delivered by locums. This use of agency workers raised issues of stability, cost and staff retention.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The cases referred to in Appendix A (as presented in the agenda papers) were those attending Slough schools. The total numbers were not available at the meeting, although would be circulated to members afterwards. It was hard to make an informed estimate, as some schools would involve 50 or more students, whilst others would be far more limited in number.
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) were encouraged to raise any concerns they had early in the process in order to initiate

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diagnostics. The subsequent approach was variable, depending on the case involved. It could involve working with teachers to devise appropriate in-class strategies, or may involve more formalised assessment through standardised testing. Supporting the child's social communication skills may also form a central element. However, the support for SENCOs to act as the first point of support was a consistent element.

- In order to avoid repeated changes of key worker for children, long term relationships were managed by permanent staff. Locums were employed on statutory duties, and also tended to be longer term than was often the case in other authorities.
- Whilst the service was well run (and attracted enquiries from other authorities for relevant advice), the decision to end the Soulbury Pay Scale for staff in the Psychology Service was an issue. The Director of Children's Services would be raising the matter; however, SBC was not alone in this arrangement. However, members expressed an interest in the matter, particularly:
 - Why the decision was taken to end the use of Soulbury?
 - What was the impact of the decision (financial and staffing)?
 - What would be the impact of a decision to reverse this?
 - How did SBC's policy compare with that in neighbouring authorities?
 - Given these questions, members also requested that a representative from Human Resources attend to answer questions.
- Feedback from schools was taken at the end of every term. This was then used to compile annual statistics, which were produced at the end of each academic year. As well as the hard data regarding outcomes, it also evaluated 'softer skills' of the service (e.g. punctuality, ease of staff to work alongside).
- It was currently difficult to make year on year comparisons, as this was only the 2nd year of the current Service Level Agreement. Given the greater number of schools using the service and the restructuring of the team since the previous Agreement, it was not comparable with its predecessor.

Resolved: That an agenda item on the Soulbury Pay Scale be added to the agenda for 18th July 2017.

59. Section 11 Audits

The last Ofsted Inspection had identified Section 11 auditing as a particular area for improvement. These audits were designed to ensure that all Council services understood their role in safeguarding, and were implementing policies to undertake this.

Senior Management meetings were discussing the matter regularly, with the Director of Children's Services having ownership. Online training had been the major issue; however, reporting was proving difficult with individual line

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managers asked to implement robust monitoring. The integration of audits with the 5 Year Plan also demonstrated corporate commitment.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The online training was at Level 1. Lists of staff who have not completed the course would be sent to managers at the end of April 2017.
- The commitment of senior managers to the process was harder to measure, which placed its risk rating as 'amber'.
- The Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board was accountable to SBC's Chief Executive. Quarterly monitoring of this was now underway, with the last meeting having been held in April 2017.
- The development of a Children's Early Help Commissioning Board had not been on track at the time the current Interim Director of Children's Services took her position. This placed the risk at 'amber', but was now due to meet in the near future; all parties were confident this would be completed by the new deadline of July 2017.
- Training for Councillors on safeguarding was available; however, this did not include the online course. The appraisal system should be used to measure the level of understanding possessed by the individual.
- Frontline staff were supported by further training well beyond the online course aimed at all staff.

(Cllr Chohan joined the meeting).

Resolved: That the online training on safeguarding children be extended to Councillors.

60. Examination Results Action Plan

White British students had been identified as a group underachieving in the overall examination results for Slough. On this basis, more detailed information had been sought to start finding any emerging patterns or possible areas for work. The matter had also been discussed with the HMI Education Inspector; the possible issue of low numbers magnifying the impact of any outliers had been raised, but not to the extent that further work would be invalid.

The percentages of students who were white British were 16% at primary schools and 17% at secondaries. As a result, those schools which had this amount or higher had been identified; in the case of primaries, this was 17 out of 29, and in secondaries 7 out of 14.

This did make the area one which could be mapped out; SBC already had a specialist advisor on secondary education and was about to recruit some for primaries. The matter would be discussed with these. However, members also needed to be aware that SBC was not in a position to impose; it could

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only co-operate and advise. Should any future conversations suggest that joint work on the matter should be pursued, appropriate methods would be employed (e.g. focus on clusters of schools).

Resolved: That an agenda item updating on white British underachievement in schools be added to the agenda for 18th July 2017.

61. Ofsted Inspections - Verbal Update

Only 1 inspection had been completed this term. This was at Pippins Primary, and rated the school as 'good'. Inspectors stated that it was close to receiving an 'outstanding' grading.

The frequencies of Ofsted inspections were highly variable. Some in SBC's area had not been seen for a decade. Officially, those rated as 'good' would be inspected at least once every 3 years, whilst those rated as 'requires improvement' would be subject to regular monitoring visits.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

62. Attendance Record

Resolved: That the attendance record be noted.

63. Date of Next Meeting - 18th July 2017

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.22 pm)