

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

17 July 2015 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mr Blunden	Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr Parsons
Mr Cloake	Mrs Mullins	Mr Smith
Mrs Duncton*	Mr R Oakley	
Mr High	Mr Oppler*	

In attendance by invitation: Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life) and Mr Hunt (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills).

Apologies for absence were received from: - Mrs Bennett, Dr Holt, Mrs Jupp, Mrs Ryan and Mr Wickremaratchi.

*Mrs Duncton left at 11.30am and Mr Oppler left at 12.45pm.

Declaration of Interests

54. No interests were declared.

Minutes

55. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Amendments to the starting school application process

56. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Care, Wellbeing and Education and Interim Director of Education and Skills (copy appended to the signed minutes). Richard Barker, Senior Manager Pupil Entitlement, introduced the report and provided a presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes) highlighting the following points: -

- The school catchment area online search facility would be available by September. The intention was to expand the functionality of this facility over time, for example creating more seamless links to the starting school application form and enabling parents to submit in-year applications on line.
- The Community Child Health Information Service had very recently informed the County Council that a data sharing protocol had been agreed so the provision of information used to identify those children due to start school would resume. However the data received would not be as comprehensive as previously.
- Over 90% of school applications were currently submitted online, indicating that parents expected to find information about schools and the application process online.

57. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -

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- Welcomed the new online system and felt the information it provided would be of great assistance to parents trying to understand the catchment area boundaries for schools in their locality and the school application process.
- Queried how the service would engage with those parents who did not have internet access or those without English as a first language to ensure they were aware of the school application process. *Mr Barker explained that a range of targeted approaches for raising awareness would be used. These would include using social media to both identify ethnic groups and direct them to information about the process, and putting up eye-catching posters in GP surgeries, nurseries, Children and Family Centres and Schools.* Members indicated that the local knowledge they had of their division could be useful in identifying other suitable locations for displaying these posters, such as specialist supermarkets used by ethnic groups, and suggested that all Members be contacted to ask whether they would be willing to do this.
- Queried how those in the military would be made aware of the school application process. *Mr Barker explained that the only military base situated in the County was Thorney Island and there were good communication links between the County Council and the regiment there. As the regiment was in the process of changing, the authority had been in contact with the new officers moving in to ensure they were aware of the school application process.*
- Were reassured that the new status of schools encompassed by the Worthing Age of Transfer scheme would be reflected on the website.
- Queried whether it would be possible for officers to cross reference the number of applications for school places actually received versus the number expected, to highlight discrepancies. *Mr Barker explained that officers would have a good idea of what the number of applications should be so could identify any major inconsistencies. However anecdotal evidence from other authorities who did not write to parents about the process indicated this didn't appear to adversely impact the number of applications received. The duty was on the parents to make the application but it was hoped that the efforts being put into publicising the process would raise awareness sufficiently to ensure the correct level of applications was submitted. He suggested that, to gauge the impact of the change to the process, a further report be brought to the Committee in a year's time assessing whether it had been successful.* Members welcomed this suggestion.
- Were concerned that it would be difficult to identify those children whose parents had deliberately disengaged from the application process and not enrolled their child at school. *Mr Barker advised that it was the duty of the authority to identify those children missing education and engage with the parents to assess the reasons why or whether the child was being home educated.*
- Welcomed the proposal to introduce the requirement for parents to verify their address following allocation of a school place to help address the issue of fraudulent applications for places.

58. Resolved that the Committee: -

- (1) Requests that all Members be offered the opportunity to obtain posters about the school application process to display in key locations within their division;

- (2) Requests that a further report to the Committee be provided in a year's time to assess the success of implementing the scheme;
- (3) Supports the adoption of the new approach to admission arrangements for September 2016.

Safeguarding Children – Practice Improvements and development of strategy relating to Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation

59. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Care, Wellbeing and Education, Director of Family Operations and Head of Safeguarding (copy appended to the signed minutes).

60. Sam Bushby, Head of Safeguarding, introduced the report and updated the Committee that the interview process for a Service Development Lead for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) had been successful.

61. Annie MacIver, Director of Family Operations, highlighted that the addendums to the strategy had been created due to the heightened priority surrounding Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation that had developed since the Strategy was originally published.

62. The Committee made comments and asked questions, including those that follow. Members:-

- Requested clarification regarding the scope of the new role of Service Development Lead for CSE. *Ms Bushby advised that the postholder would be assessing suitable measures responsible agencies could take in helping to prevent CSE, such as investigating the suitability of the County Council developing a personal, social, health and economic education (PHSE) programme for schools. In this respect the role had more of a multi-agency focus with the postholder leading on developing relationships with the District and Borough Councils and other outside organisations rather than looking in isolation at how the County Council responded to CSE.*
- Queried whether the programme of showing the drama 'Chelsea's Choice' to Year 8 students at West Sussex schools and academies would extend to Special Schools and Independent Schools. *Ms Bushby indicated that alternative methods of raising awareness about CSE were being explored for use in Special Schools as 'Chelsea's Choice' would not be suitable. No plans were currently in place for preventative work in Independent Schools; however the new Service Lead would be tasked with exploring potential options and resourcing for a programme for these schools.*
- Requested clarification regarding whether the County Council had the opportunity to comment or object when either new Independent Children's homes were proposed for West Sussex or existing homes wanted to expand their provision. *Ms MacIver explained that where planning permission was needed the County Council was consulted and so could make comments on the suitability of the proposal. Members suggested that it would be beneficial for the County Council to develop a policy document setting out some of the issues arising as a result of expansion of the Independent Homes sector in West Sussex, such as the resulting strain on resources for the Police and County Council. This document could be shared with District and Borough*

Council Planning departments to act as guidance when considering planning applications from the Independent sector.

- Queried whether County Council staff had access to the Police Missing Persons Database. *Ms Bushby explained that they didn't but as the Police 'missing team' was co-located at County Hall North they kept staff informed about missing children. The County Council also kept records, via Frameworki, of children that went missing so it had its own database of information.*
- Welcomed the recent Member Day on Safeguarding and were particularly impressed by the presentation by Barnardo's. *The Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life explained that the opportunity would be explored for repeating this presentation at the proposed CSE Summit in September.*
- Requested clarification regarding how the self-protection programme on CSE for Children Looked After would be delivered. *Ms MacIver indicated that the new Service Lead would be tasked with proposing a targeted offer for this cohort to be delivered by both internal staff and partner agencies. The intention was to fund this within existing resources, but if this was not possible the funding shortfall would be highlighted as an issue needing urgent resolution.*

63. Resolved that the Committee: -

- (1) Requests that the Cabinet Member explore the options for providing a CSE awareness programme to the Independent School sector.
- (2) Requests that the service develop a policy document setting out the issues in relation to development of the Independent Children's Homes sector for use as guidance by District and Borough Council Planning Departments in West Sussex.
- (3) Supports the proposed addendums to the Children Looked After & Care Leavers Strategy (2014-17) relating to Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation, for approval by the Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life.

Forward Plan

64. The Committee considered the Forward Plan, August – November 2015 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

65. The following actions were agreed in relation to upcoming decisions: -

- Mandy Shipley, Senior Advisor, would circulate the report in relation to the Think Family Programme from 2016/17 to 2020 to all Committee Members.
- Mrs Shipley would circulate a link to the on-line video about the work of Beechfield to all Committee Members.
- The intention was that the Committee would not preview the October/November decision regarding the next stage of the consultation for the future organisation of education across the STARS area schools. Following the outcome of this consultation, should the Cabinet Member propose to make a decision about specific proposals in relation to schools and the organisation of education in this area, the Committee would preview that decision.

66. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

67. No items were suggested.

Date of next meeting

68. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 24 September 2015 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 1.15pm.

Chairman