

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

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

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mrs Bennett	Mr High	Mr Oppler
Mr Blunden	Mrs Jupp	Mr Parsons
Mrs Duncton	Mr R Oakley	Mr Smith

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: - Mr Cloake, Dr Holt, Mrs Le Rossignol, Mrs Mullins, Mrs Ryan and Mr Wickremaratchi.

Declaration of Interests

69. Mr High declared a personal interest in Item 5 as having a family member with an Education, Health and Care Plan. See also minute 77.

Minutes

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

Cabinet Member Responses

71. The Committee considered responses from the Cabinet Members to recommendations made at the meetings of the Committee on 17 June and 17 July 2015 (copies appended to the signed minutes).

72. Resolved that: the Committee notes the responses from the Cabinet Members.

Services to Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

73. 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).

74. Jon Philpot, Principal Manager SEN and Inclusion, introduced the report and, along with colleagues from the service, provided a presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes). The following points were highlighted: -

- The Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was a more personalised document and included the voice of the child as well as the views of the parents.
- The requirement for other professionals, such as colleagues from Health, to input to the EHCP, along with the fact that it was a more complex, detailed document than was needed previously, meant that the service was facing

- difficulties completing them within the expected timeframe. This was compounded by the increase in requests for assessments.
- The service has worked hard to ensure that young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have been provided with greater opportunities to input into planning the service delivery and policy documents that affect them including the provision of short breaks, school transport and the anti-bullying strategy.
 - Feedback had indicated that young people found being assessed a worrying process, therefore the service was taking steps to address how the effects of this could be lessened such as ensuring clear communication, and talking to the young person, not just the parents.
75. Gráinne Saunders from the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum (WSPCF) addressed the Committee advising that the Forum was an independent charity which supported other parents and carers of children with SEND, sharing information and experiences to help build resilience. Key issues highlighted by parents as areas of concern were the problem of late diagnosis of SEND and a lack of early help. She also explained the importance of the benefits of the Local Offer and that the West Sussex system was perceived as a good model, although it was disappointing that a higher percentage of schools weren't engaged.
76. Peter Evans, Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life, highlighted the importance of ensuring the child's views were heard and represented in the assessment process. He also stressed the importance of the ongoing work across the services to improve the transition when a young person moved from being under the remit of Children's Services to Adult Services to ensure there was a relatively seamless continuation of support.
77. Mr Oppler declared a personal interest as having a foster child with a placement in a special school.
78. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -
- Queried what action parents could take if the EHCP had not been completed and finalised within the 20 week timeframe. *Claire Prince, Service Manager, SEN Assessment Team, explained that a formal complaint could be made to the Local Government Ombudsman. However it was often the case that the 20 week deadline was not met because negotiations were still ongoing with the parents in relation to part of the plan, e.g. agreeing the appropriate placement for the child. In this respect, as the parents were actively involved with the EHCP, and aware that the on-going negotiation to get a quality plan that was right for their child could mean a delay in finalising it, they were unlikely to feel it was necessary to make a complaint.*
 - Were reassured to hear that there had not been problems recruiting the additional temporary staff required to increase capacity of the service to assist in dealing with the reforms. *The Cabinet Member highlighted that it was imperative the grant funding from central government continued, as this money had funded these additional staff, and would be essential in maintaining the impetus in transferring the old SEND statements to EHCPs.*
 - Suggested that it would be useful for a map to be created that depicted the geographical spread of children with SEND across West Sussex so that any

- areas of high concentration, and hence additional demand on the service, could be identified.
- Raised concern regarding the perceived lack of information, particularly for new parents, in identifying the signs of SEND in their child. Members wondered whether a guidance leaflet could be produced and circulated to appropriate target venues that parents would regularly visit—e.g. GP surgeries, Children and Family Centres, etc. *Ms Prince explained that it was when a child started school that SEND was often first picked up, so when this occurred the school had a responsibility to take appropriate steps and signpost the parents accordingly. Gráinne Saunders explained that the WSPCF had attempted to get some of the Forum's published information made available in GP surgeries to try and help parents, but had been advised that unless the information had been endorsed by the NHS, it would not be displayed.* The Committee raised concern at the reluctance of the NHS to display literature it had not endorsed and suggested that this issue be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for a response.
 - Felt the term Local Offer was a little impersonal and suggested that it would be better to name it 'Your Local Offer'. *Heather McIntosh, Team Manager – SEND Information, Advice and Support Service, explained that the term Local Offer was in the statutory legislation but other authorities had used other names for it. Gráinne Saunders highlighted that parents of children with SEND generally knew and understood the term Local Offer and so it was important to retain this consistency, particularly to avoid confusion for parents that moved to other parts of the country and were seeking the Local Offer at a new authority.*
 - Queried how those children that may have undiagnosed SEND but were more isolated, either through living in a rural area or because the parents were less willing or able to engage with the County Council, were reached. *Jay Mercer, Interim Director of Education and Skills, explained that often these children saw other professionals such as Health Visitors and staff at Children and Family Centres who would raise awareness of these children and any concerns they had about them to the service. In addition with the responsibility for the Health Visitor service now transferred from the NHS to the County Council this should further improve knowledge sharing between services.*
 - Requested clarification regarding how free schools and academies worked with the service in relation to children with SEND. *Mr Philpot explained that the service worked closely with all schools to deliver the best outcome for the child regardless of whether they were a maintained school, free school or academy. Ms McIntosh highlighted that 79% of maintained schools were on the Local Offer site. Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, indicated that he would work with the Interim Director of Education and Skills to increase this percentage.*
 - Suggested that the Cabinet Member should consider seeking agreement as part of the budget setting process to ringfence the funding for fully implementing the SEND reforms.
 - Queried what problems had resulted from the retirement of operational and strategic leads from the service. *Mr Philpot explained that two members of staff in the post 16 provision area had retired at the same time leading to an issue with management shortages in this section.*
 - Asked what the contingency position was if a further SEND grant for 2016-17 was not provided by the government. *The Cabinet Member for Children –*

Start of Life indicated that this issue would be considered after the Government's Autumn Statement was announced on 25th November 2015.

79. Mandy Shipley, Senior Advisor Democratic Services, explained that once the framework was published setting out how Ofsted would inspect local areas on implementation of reforms the service would be carrying out a self-assessment against the published framework. The Committee agreed that the planned Task and Finish Group (TFG) on SEND reform should examine the outcome of this self-assessment against the Ofsted framework as the focus of its work.
80. The Chairman asked the Committee for expressions of interest for membership of the Task and Finish Group. Mr Blunden, Mr High and Mrs Jupp all indicated their interest in being part of the TFG. The Chairman explained that the Business Planning Group would be determining the final membership of the TFG.
81. Mr High proposed that the recommendation contained within the report be amended as follows: The Committee supports the Cabinet Member in seeking adequate funding to cover the cost of full implementation of the reforms **and for this to be ringfenced**.

The proposal was seconded by Mr Smith. The Committee agreed this proposal.

82. Resolved that the Committee: -
- (1) Notes the progress that has been made on the implementation of the reforms;
 - (2) Supports the Cabinet Member in seeking adequate funding to cover the cost of full implementation of the reforms and for this to be ringfenced;
 - (3) Agrees that the Task and Finish Group on SEND reform should examine the outcome of the self-assessment against the Ofsted framework as the focus of its work.

Forward Plan

83. The Committee considered the Forward Plan, November 2015 – February 2016 (copy appended to the signed minutes).
84. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

85. Mr Oppler raised concern that the recent redesign of the Children's Social Care Service had led to an increase in the workload of Social Workers and impacted on the ability of managers to provide support to their staff. *Mrs Shipley indicated that a report reviewing the redesign was due to be considered by the Committee in the new year so the service could be asked to address these issues within the report.*

Date of next meeting

86. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 25 November 2015 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 12.50pm.

Chairman