

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 8 January 2020

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Johnson, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall (substitute for Councillor Murphy), Vice Chair.

Councillors Allen, Buchan, Goslin, James, Loveridge and McDonald.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Murphy.

Also in attendance: Kelly Blockley (Performance Advisor), Ed Coley (Head of Skills and Employability), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Skills and Participation), Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Isabelle Morgan (Inclusion and Attendance Manager), Jamie Sheldon (Democratic Advisor), Jo Siney (Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability), Paul Stephens (Performance Advisor), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.50 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

35. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct:

Member	Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Buchan	Agenda item 10, Fit and Fed	She is a trustee of Honicknowle Commnet LTD who delivered one of the programmes.	Personal
Councillor Mrs Johnson	All	Governor at Compton Primary School	Personal
Councillor Mrs Aspinall	All	Member of the Learning Academy Trust	Personal

36. **Minutes**

Members agreed the minutes of the last meeting held on 11 September 2019.

37. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There are no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

38. **Appointment of Vice Chair**

In the absence of Councillor Murphy, Councillor Mrs Aspinall was appointed as Vice Chair for this meeting.

39. **Mapping of Corporate Plan to Scrutiny Committees**

Members noted the Mapping of Corporate Plan to Scrutiny Committees report.

40. **Policy Update**

The Chair advised Members that this item was added to the agenda at the request of the Scrutiny Management Board in order to keep abreast of policy updates that linked to the panel's terms of reference.

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) directed Members attention to the 'open consultation' section of the briefing and highlighted there would be future opportunities for Member input into national consultations.

Members noted the Policy Update.

41. **Number of Children in Care - Verbal Update**

Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) provided Members with a verbal update on the number of children in care as follows:

- (a) the children in care population and those under child protection plans totalled 1648. Of this figure 949 had a child in need plan which meant that they met a statutory threshold for involvement by the Council in supporting them under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to offer support to the family. 266 children had child protection plans and 426 children were looked after by the Council;
- (b) the current figures fell in-line with statistical neighbours however child protection figures were slightly lower than England averages;
- (c) there were four core categories under which children could be made subject to a child protection plan: neglect, physical harm, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. The biggest group of children on a child protection plan was 150 children of the 266 children on a plan – they were on a plan as a consequence of neglect. 16 children were on a plan where physical harm was the primary concern and 14 children were subject to a plan as a result of sexual abuse and 86 under emotional abuse;
- (d) in terms of the length of time children had been on child protection plans –

this information was required to be reported to Government at the end of year (where a child was subject to a plan for more than two years). The majority of children had been on plans for less than a year however 20 children had been on plans for more than two years – this represented less than 10% of children on a child protection plan;

- (e) in terms of the 426 children in care, several of those children were looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act – this was where the council had a voluntary agreement with their parents to look after their children however the parents retain parental responsibility and the Council work in partnership with them - this totalled 56 children all over the age of five;
- (f) children in care proceedings or who had a care order (where the Local Authority were seeking or had obtained parental responsibility to share decision making) consisted of a group of over 330 children. There were 83 children actively in care proceedings. 255 care orders had been obtained and officers were working in a permanence framework with those children;
- (g) there were 250 care leavers between the ages of 18-21 – the local authority was required to retain a statutory responsibility to provide a personal advisor service for these young people and were supported by the permanency service.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (h) the figures provided may not have added up to the total figure of children in care as, when calculating, the child may not have had a children in need (CIN) code or they may have had dual roles (i.e. children in need and child protection status). Members were assured that future figures provided would correctly balance;
- (i) a breakdown of data specifying the number of children in care who were black or from an ethnic minority group would be provided to Members. It was highlighted that the expertise of the Council's staff group was diverse with practitioners being from a range of backgrounds. Social work training required them to be thoughtful, culturally sensitive and have a consideration of diversity on ethnicity, gender, culture;
- (j) support for care leavers started early in a young person's care journey; after the age of 16 young people were allocated a personal advisor who would work alongside a social worker to support the young person. At the age of 18 a young person in care would receive a six month review of care to check on progress; this was a statutory requirement. Barnardos were currently undertaking a project regarding the care journey;
- (k) there was a range of things the council could do to prevent the need for a child being looked after; family group conferences would be organised to establish what support from the child's extended network could provide to support the child and the parent to negate the need for social care involvement. Every effort was made to keep the child at home if it was in the

best needs of the child.

Agreed that –

1. the breakdown of data of children in care from black and ethnic minority backgrounds would be provided to Members;
2. a summary report of the Care Leavers Peer Challenge (from Cornwall Council) is to be provided to all Councillors as they are all Corporate Parents;

42. **Pledges Update**

Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Judith Hardwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) presented the Pledges Update.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) Pledge 41 – a lot of work had gone into reshaping the Fostering Service; a Service Manager post had been created and a marketing company had been appointed to market the in-house fostering offer. It was hoped that positive results would be evident from September 2020;
- (b) Pledge 47 – this pledge was also supported around the marketing company. The Council was aiming to be accredited via the Fostering Network to be a foster friendly employer (Fostering Friendly Plymouth Initiative);
- (c) Pledge 48 – this was progressing well and focused upon offering work experience opportunities for looked after children and care experienced young people. Members were encouraged to email pledge48@barnados.org with potential work experience ideas or opportunities;
- (d) Pledge 40 – this was part of a four year piece of work and was progressing well; good support had been received from the Teaching Schools Council and the Plymouth Education Board was functioning well. The Standards Partnership was now up and running.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (e) the group of children referred to in Pledge 41 and the need of in-house foster care was different to those children with complex needs; these children were currently placed with independent agency foster carers and had needs that could be met in a family environment. Those with complex needs were supported with differently trained staff;
- (f) Officers worked hard to keep children as close to Plymouth as possible unless it was considered unsafe for them to do so; the figure of those placed more than 20 miles of the city would be provided to Members;

- (g) Pledge 41 focused upon work experience opportunities other than employment; the Virtual School and different sections of the Children's department already provided a range of opportunities for young people however the pledge was to develop this further to grow the current resource; the figure for those young people in care who were currently undertaking training and work experience would be provided to Members;
- (h) Pledge 45 was completed however there was a report on the agenda regarding young carers; it was recognised that the pressure on services including the NHS and Local Authority was a nationwide issue however the Council's approach of linking in with schools and working with them to help identify young carers was considered to be effective.

Members noted the update.

43. **Corporate Plan Performance Report**

Paul Stephens (Performance Advisor) and Kelly Blockley (Performance Advisor) presented the Corporate Plan Performance Report. Members were advised that the report included indicators relevant to the panel's terms of reference; it was indicated what was being measured and why, the movement of the indicator and what was being done to address decline.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- (a) the trends of each indicator was written in narrative form;
- (b) live data was used in the scorecard report; information surrounding apprenticeships identified that the take-up of apprenticeships had slowed down since the introduction of the levy;
- (c) the council was expected to receive approximately £715,000 additional funding from the Government for early years; a formula for distribution had not yet been devised;
- (d) the percentage of pupils where a school was rated as good or better by Ofsted was measured by pupils other than schools; to rate by schools was considered to skew the results as some schools could have 2000 pupils and yet another could have 300 pupils;
- (e) there was a drop in figures if key stage 4 pupils achieving the basics; it was acknowledged that it would take time for the improvements put in place to work through the system. It was highlighted that there was one school in Plymouth where performance was significantly below average however if this data was removed the evidence proved that results were in line with last years' figures;
- (f) Officers would revisit the data in page 39 of the agenda pack regarding the percentage of early years setting judged as good or better and would feed back results to Members.

Members noted the update

44. **Fit and Fed Programme**

Louise Kelley (Sports Development Manager) provided Members with a short video on the Fit and Fed Programme.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) the Fit and Fed Programme was a local initiative with funding from the Department for Education; Local Authorities bid for £9m of funding demonstrating how they might coordinate an approach to provide holiday provision in summer holidays towards disadvantaged children or those in receipt of free school meals. Plymouth was successful in securing some funding for this project and was the only council in the South West to have been selected, along with 10 other local authorities;
- (b) the target for the programme was to engage 1000 children however the Fit and Fed Programme engaged with 1628 and the majority of those were in receipt of free school meals; looked after children and children in need were a part of the programme as it was considered that they would benefit from this opportunity;
- (c) all minimum standards were met including providing nutritional food and engaging in activities every day; the evaluation for the programme was due at the end of the year and would be forwarded to Members once available.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (d) the Department for Education commissioned a company to undertake an evaluation of the programme; results had not yet been received however the council also collected data;
- (e) the Department for Education had confirmed that £9m would be available for this programme this year and local authorities were encouraged to bid for money;
- (f) several people had booked their child onto the programme however didn't turn up for a variety of reasons;
- (g) data regarding the age and gender of the children that attended the programme could be provided however information such as those from military families or looked after children were not actively collected;
- (h) the proportion of looked after children was not known however efforts could be made to collect this information by cross referencing names with the help of the Virtual School Team;
- (i) the funding from the Department for Education for this programme was

intended for children on free school meals; it was considered that some children in need in the city were missing out an initiative that would greatly benefit them therefore referrals from internal agencies for looked after children were identified and accepted;

- (j) £604,660 was secured from the Department for Education for the programme; this was spent on items such as food, activities, staffing, advertising, printing and the promotional video;
- (k) the CaterEd Summer Hunger Programme complimented the Fit and Fed Programme;
- (l) no home educated children attended the Fit and Fed Programme.

The Chair thanked Louise for her attendance and update.

Members agreed to note the update.

45. **New Ofsted Framework - Report only**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) presented the New Ofsted Framework report.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) the new Ofsted inspection framework for settings and schools came into force from September 2019;
- (b) based upon records of previous inspections it was estimated that 24 schools and academies would be inspected during the academic year 2019 – 2020.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (c) in terms of collective worship in schools, it was not known if the new framework would have a greater emphasis on compliance; Ofsted were due to visit Plymouth this term to do a workshop with schools on the new framework. This was intended for school leaders however may be beneficial for Councillors that were governors;
- (d) Ofsted would continue to look at the data from schools however would also work with the leadership and management team of schools to understand how they tailored the curriculum to have the greatest impact on the children;
- (e) between September to December 2019 there had been 16 Ofsted inspections; outcomes of those inspections were in line with the evaluation risk assessment. Eight schools retained the same judgement of good or requires improvement, five had improved and two had declined in their ratings.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and Service Director for their update.

Members agreed to note the update.

46. **School Attendance Consultation - Report only (To Follow)**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) and Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) presented the School Attendance Consultation report.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) Penalty notices could be used by schools to address unauthorised pupil absence. In order to issue a penalty notice the Local Authority must have a Code of Conduct that has been developed in consultation with Headteachers/Principals, Governing Bodies and the Chief of Police. Plymouth City Council held a statutory consultation in relation to changes to the Code of Conduct. The proposal was to increase the threshold set within the Code of Conduct, from 8 unauthorised sessions (4 days) to 11 unauthorised sessions (5.5 days) and also use the school's attendance policy as a threshold, before a penalty notice could be issued;
- (b) schools had highlighted that the rise in unauthorised absences was having a detrimental impact on childrens' education and attainment; it was therefore important that the local authority was able to introduce a fair system whereby schools, children and parents could be supported;
- (c) the Cabinet Member would be proposing that Option 2, detailed in the report, would be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (d) a good level of responses to the consultation was received; parents submitted the majority of consultation responses however there was fair representation from schools and governors;
- (e) schools were required to keep attendance registers everyday therefore absences could be easily monitored; regular communication was scheduled to take place so parents were aware of the potential changes to policy.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer for their update.

Members agreed the contents of the report and endorsed the next steps of the report through to Cabinet.

47. **Elective Home Education**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Jo Siney (Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability) and Isabelle Morgan (Inclusion and Attendance Manager) presented the Election Home Education update.

Key points highlighted to Members included:

- (a) the Department for Education consulted on a number of proposals for legislation which would affect local authorities, parents of children who are not attending state-funded schools or registered independent schools, and proprietors of some education settings. The consultation closed on 24 June 2019 and Officers supported all of the proposals and continued to await the government response to the consultation;
- (b) the ultimate goal was to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people who were at risk of missing out on education; it was important to ensure that their educational, health and social needs were being met;
- (c) the numbers of those home educated were slowly increasing and officers were working to reduce that trend over time; particular attention was upon the potential abuse of the system.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (d) the numbers of children and young people that were returning to mainstream education after being home educated were recorded however the figures were very few; it was highlighted that there were a variety of reasons for home education;
- (e) at the last home education engagement event a representative from the Devon Schools Partnership attended to advise parents of their offer; officers were working to engage home educated children in activities across the city;
- (f) 391 children in the city were currently on record as being home educated; a breakdown of data including school year/ key stage would be provided to Members;
- (g) if it was considered that a home educated child was not receiving suitable home education then officers would make every effort to provide advice and make improvements; the local authority had powers of enforcement by issuing a school attendance order however this was a lengthy process through the courts;
- (h) every parent would have a visit from the local authority to assess why their child had been withdrawn from mainstream education and how they intended to educate their child; some parents were dissatisfied with their child's school or considered that their needs were not being met;
- (i) the traveller community were allowed 200 missed school sessions per

academic year – these would be all authorised absences;

- (j) the law said that a child's education had to be full time and suitable for their age and needs; officers were establishing this baseline with parents and were flexible in their approach to their learning needs.

The Chair thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for their attendance and update.

Members noted the report.

48. **STEM - Plan Refresh**

Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Ed Coley (Head of Skills and Employability) and Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) presented the STEM – Plan Refresh report.

Members were advised that Plymouth's position as a STEM city and the ongoing work to grow STEM jobs in the city was to be celebrated. It was highlighted that we were in the midst of a technological and digital revolution and the city was pioneering with its citywide STEM strategy. The report detailed the activities from the previous year with the highlight being the first STEM conference on the Hoe and the successful event at the Lido.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (a) STEM plans and activities for 2020 were still being developed however ideas would be welcomed; officers acknowledged STEM activities not yet included, namely British Science Week and the Crest Awards;
- (b) the Careers Hub had an Enterprise Advisor whose role involved facilitating opportunities in the city; STEM opportunities included AI (artificial intelligence), medical sciences, digital technology etc;
- (c) the importance of promoting the role of women in STEM was recognised; there was a women in STEM group and the city's STEM Coordinator was a woman who was encouraging other women to get involved;
- (d) £41,000 had currently been spent on the STEM programme; it was considered to be an extremely cost effective programme.
- (e) the city's STEM programme was considered successful and far reaching due to the variety of STEM work on offer other than the focus on one specific area.

The Chair thanked officers for the update.

Members agreed to note the update.

49. **Young Carers**

Lisa Cornish (Leadership Associate SEND) and Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) presented the Young Carers update.

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) Lisa's role focused upon young carers in schools and their education, this was considered a hidden area of need in schools;
- (b) officers had been working closely with the majority of schools across the city (97%) in order to provide training to help them identify and support young carers; young carer leads were appointed in these schools;
- (c) a Young Carers Conference showcasing best practice and professional speakers had taken place;
- (d) young carer leads attended network meetings; the success of these were growing with the first having 4 people in attendance and the most recent with 40 people signed up. This was an opportunity for leads to share experiences and expertise;
- (e) in 2018 data indicated that there were 700 young carers identified in the city; in 2019 there were 924 young carers identified and this information was split into school year group, gender and if a child had SEND (special educational needs or disability);
- (f) there was a young carers awareness day in January and a carers week scheduled for June;
- (g) the Young Carers Education Support Team was due to be launched; this was a collaboration between the local authority and three schools in the city in order to produce a unique model of support; this team would be able to undertake research and apply for grants, bids and funding.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (h) work was ongoing to identify young carers in the city who were currently not known to the local authority in order to provide them with support; it was highlighted that it was ok to be a young carer and this wasn't something for a child or young person to be ashamed of;
- (i) some children were unaware that they were young carers as caring for a relative was just part of their normal everyday life.

The Chair thanked Lisa for her update and praised the collaborative piece of work currently being undertaken with Barnardos to provide support to young people.

Members agreed to note the update.

50. **JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) - Verbal Update**

Jean Kelly (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families) advised that the update on the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) was initially added to the agenda to outline the process for a future inspection however an inspection had since been undertaken. This item was therefore intended to inform Members of feedback from the JTAI which was both positive and yet highlighted key areas for learning and development.

Councillor Laing (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) took the opportunity to thank everyone involved with the JTAI and the colossal amount of work undertaken – it was considered to be a valuable experience and would form an important part of the service improvement, would strengthen relations with partners and would ultimately benefit young people.

The Chair thanked Jean Kelly and Councillor Laing for their brief update.

It was agreed, due to time restrictions, that the JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) Feedback and progress on the action plan would be added to the panel's work programme for the 4 March 2020 meeting.

51. **Work Programme**

Members discussed the work programme and made the following additions/ changes:

- JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) to be added to the 4 March 2020 agenda;
- Financial Reporting to be added as a standing item to future scrutiny agendas.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall highlighted to Members her role as Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board and the importance of the panel regularly monitoring financial information in children's social care.

52. **Tracking Decisions**

Members noted the tracking decisions item and progress made.