

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development  
Committee

Meeting held 11 September 2017

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Cliff Woodcraft (Deputy Chair), Andy Bainbridge, Lisa Banes, Craig Gamble Pugh, Mohammad Maroof, Abtisaam Mohamed, Josie Paszek, Bob Pullin, Jim Steinke, Alison Teal and Colin Ross (Substitute Member)

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Gillian Foster, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)  
Sam Evans, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)  
Peter Naldrett, (Parent Governor Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)

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**1. DIANE OWENS**

1.1 The Chair reported that Diane Owens was attending her last meeting of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, as Policy and Improvement Officer, prior to taking up another post in Policy, Performance and Communications. He stated that Ms Owens had held the post of Policy and Improvement Officer for the Committee for the last four years.

1.2 RESOLVED: That the thanks and appreciation of the Committee be conveyed to Diane Owens for the excellent work carried out by her, in her capacity as Policy and Improvement Officer, over the last four years.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Booker, Kieran Harpham, Vickie Priestley (with Councillor Colin Ross attending as Councillor Priestley's substitute) and Ian Saunders, and from Joanna Heery (Parent Governor Representative – Non-Council Voting Member), Alison Warner (School Governor Representative – Non-Council Non-Voting Member) and Alice Riddell (Healthwatch Sheffield – Observer).

**3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

4.1 In relation to Agenda Item 8 (School Exclusions), Councillor Abtisaam Mohamed declared a personal interest as the manager of an organisation that delivers an

alternative provision for young people at risk of being, or who have been, permanently excluded from school.

- 4.2 In relation to Agenda Item 7 (Learn Sheffield and the School Improvement Strategy), Councillor Andy Bainbridge declared a personal interest as the City Council's representative on the Learn Sheffield Board.

## **5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom:-

(a) Diane Owens:-

- (i) stated that the issue regarding an update on the Sheffield Children's Safeguarding Board – Annual Report 2016/17, was included on the Committee's Work Programme 2017/18, and would be provided at the Committee's meeting to be held in December 2017;
- (ii) confirmed that she had circulated a short note on the work being undertaken in connection with the radicalisation of children and young people; and
- (iii) stated that she would contact the relevant officer to obtain the information regarding the activities of Youth Officers working on crime prevention in the Beauchief and Greenhill Ward, for circulation to Councillor Bob Pullin; and

(b) the Chair:-

- (i) agreed to send a letter to the Chair of the Youth Panel at Sheffield Magistrates' Court, with regard to further improving links between Young People's Services and Magistrates;
- (ii) stated that the existing contracts for Youth Services in the City had been extended, and asked that Diane Owens finds information on this issue to circulate to all Members of the Committee;
- (iii) stated that the Committee's request that the Corporate Parenting Board look at performance data for each of the six stages of the adoption process had been agreed;
- (iv) stated that the Committee's request in connection with the commissioning and delivery of the new contract for young people's services (which was that "the monitoring, quality and purchasing of services on an as and when needs basis to provide a degree of flexibility in provision, be included in the final contract") had been forwarded to Councillor Jackie Drayton, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families;

- (v) requested that the information on the ethnicity of adopters and foster carers in the City, which had been sent to Councillor Mohammad Maroof, on request, be circulated to all Members of the Committee; and
- (vi) stated that a date for the first meeting of the Sub-Group of this Committee, to consider the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Children's Services, with a view to identifying an area of focus for a more detailed piece of scrutiny work, had been arranged.

## **6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

- 6.1 Kaltun Elmi questioned what help and advice was provided to children and their families from BME communities, particularly those for whom English was their second language, who had received either a fixed- term exclusion or had been permanently excluded, both in terms of general support and in connection with the appeals process. Ms Elmi also stated that having Governing Bodies that challenged decisions made regarding their respective schools was very important, and queried the level of training offered to Governors to ensure that they were able to undertake their role effectively.
- 6.2 Tim Bowman, Head of Inclusion and Targeted Services, stated that the Local Authority would always offer support, including the provision of interpretation where required, to pupils and families from BME communities. He agreed that it was very important that governance in schools was strong, and that Governors were confident to challenge, and that parents understood the process and its implications. It was noted that this may have training implications.

## **7. LEARN SHEFFIELD AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

- 7.1 The Committee received a report of Stephen Betts, Chief Executive, Learn Sheffield, on the work of Learn Sheffield and the School Improvement Strategy, together with information on the work undertaken to identify and support young carers. In attendance for this item were Stephen Betts and Pam Smith, Head of Primary and Targeted Intervention.
- 7.2 The report contained information on the general objectives of Learn Sheffield, details of specific Sheffield Priorities, together with information on the key themes within the Priorities, the Sheffield School Improvement Strategy, work in terms of the identification and support provided for young carers and what the Improvement Strategy meant for the people of Sheffield.
- 7.3 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-
  - As part of the Strategy, Learn Sheffield had looked outside Sheffield in terms of looking for examples of best practice, and was shortly to undertake a peer review of the education sector in Camden. The information obtained as part of this work had fed into Learn Sheffield's thought process.
  - Whilst independent schools were not formally part of the process, some such

schools had a particular interest in certain activities, and some had bought in the moderation package on offer to them.

- It was suggested that the one identifiable feature of all successful educational facilities was quality teachers, and that the teachers in those countries with high attainment levels were held in high esteem. Learn Sheffield had studied the educational systems in those high-attainment countries in the world to draw comparisons in terms of their success, and had also spoken to Lucy Crehan, author of *Cleverlands*, a study of the best education systems in the world, to seek her views on this issue.
- In terms of the key theme regarding Workforce, under the Sheffield Priorities, the recruitment, development and retention of high quality teachers, school staff, leaders and governors, was a very challenging process. As part of this work, Learn Sheffield were working with Sheffield Hallam University who, in turn, were working with all teaching schools, as part of a project 'Partners for Attainment', to look at how the issue of recruitment could be collectively addressed. Whilst the suggestion of offering affordable housing and higher salaries to try and attract potential recruits was a good idea in principle, it was not that simple, and not strictly within the scope of the education sector. There were plans to undertake a survey to find the reasons as to why some teachers left the country to work abroad.
- All schools in the City were engaged in the process, although the level and nature of such involvement differed between the schools. For example, after the school or academy categorisation had taken place, a conversation was held with the leader of the school about the entitlement to support and challenge. If it related to an academy from a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), additional discussions with the Trust would often be required to ensure that the entitlement did not clash with the support and challenge in place from the MAT. It was hoped that Learn Sheffield could continue to work to a set procedure with all the schools, which had proved reasonably successful to date, rather than having to establish a separate process for each of the different types of schools.
- Whilst schools had not been required to contribute financially to the small growth in the Learn Sheffield team to date, on the basis that such work had been funded under the present contract, there was a likelihood that next year's revised model would require some form of school contribution.
- Whilst there were a number of advantages in terms of those education systems in the best performing countries across the world, there were also a number of disadvantages in terms of such education systems. It was suggested that schools were very much results-led nowadays, which, in many cases, had resulted in the interest and fun, in learning, being lost. Learn Sheffield was trying to set up a system which resulted in improved attainment levels, but also where all pupils received an education which prepared them effectively for further education or employment.
- There was a general acceptance, particularly given the training involved, that

all teachers in the City's schools had the relevant qualifications. However, there were concerns with regard to those establishments having more autonomy, such as academies, where there was sometimes less scrutiny with regard to the standard of teaching.

- It was accepted that in a number of schools, there was not enough information-sharing in terms of the identification of young carers. Learn Sheffield were aware of this, and had plans to create a strong, local evidence base in order to both raise awareness and increase the level of professional support that could be provided to young carers.
- An external review of Learn Sheffield would be commissioned, with this Committee possibly being included in this work, both in terms of contributing to the review and seeing the final report.
- Learn Sheffield had a very limited role in terms of training senior managers in leadership to aid recruitment and retention of good quality teachers. A limited amount of work had been undertaken in connection with this, on the basis that this was the role of teaching schools, although work was starting to take place, albeit mainly with those schools having a specific need for support.
- It was accepted that there was a need for more work to be undertaken in order to facilitate the return to the teaching profession of those teachers who had either left to teach abroad or had taken a career break. There had been a number of national programmes with regard to this work, although they had not been very successful.
- It was accepted that there was a need for a more universal approach regarding the needs and role of young carers. Whilst there was a need for openness, it was important that such young people were not stigmatised in any way. Different schools would have different ways of dealing with this particular issue.
- It was accepted that it was not easy for the public to find out whether Learn Sheffield was being successful in terms of its aims and objectives. Meetings such as this Scrutiny meeting, where elected Members could question its role in depth, were very effective. It was also accepted that Learn Sheffield tended to work closely with school leaders only, thereby having a narrower role.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) expresses its thanks to Stephen Betts and Pam Smith for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised;
- (c) requests that the final report on the findings of the pilot run by Sheffield

Young Carers, which sought to embed and develop best practice around identifying and supporting young carers within schools, be circulated to all elected Members; and

- (d) agrees that arrangements be made for the Chair, Deputy Chair and the Policy and Improvement Officer to meet to discuss how Members of this Committee could potentially be involved in future policy development linked to strategies in this area, which include the Sheffield Challenge Model, Sheffield Priorities and Sheffield School Improvement Strategy.

## **8. SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, People Services, containing a detailed overview and analysis of Sheffield school exclusion statistics for primary, secondary and special schools. The report also provided an analysis of officers' understanding of the factors that contributed to exclusions, together with details of the exclusion appeals process.
- 8.2 The report was supported by a presentation by Emma Beal, Service Manager, Alternative Provision, and also in attendance for this item was Tim Bowman, Head of Inclusion and Targeted Services.
- 8.3 Emma Beal provided a background and context in terms of the information provided, and reported on the key aspects of the provision developments with regard to service integration, as part of the Council's work to reduce exclusions. Ms Beal referred to statistics with regard to both fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates, and reported on the exclusion appeals process, the next steps and future work with regard to reducing the number of exclusions.
- 8.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- The reason as to why exclusions were recorded differently by schools was because they had different exclusion policies. Some supported the pupils in school, rather than issuing formal fixed-term exclusions, and some used alternative provision as opposed to permanent exclusion. It was accepted that the statistics may appear confusing, but it was not likely, given the different recording mechanisms, that they could be simplified in any way. Despite this, it was believed that the statistics represented a clear and accurate picture in terms of exclusions in Sheffield, which officers considered were clearer than in other local authority areas.
  - Fixed-term exclusion data was provided by schools on a voluntary basis, whereas there was a requirement for schools to share permanent exclusion data. There was a reluctance in terms of showing the data by locality in light of the potential risks of the children being identified due to the small numbers involved.
  - Budget cuts had impacted on this area of work, particularly making it difficult for schools to fund alternative provision for excluded children. A considerable

level of funding was allocated to education provision for a large cohort of children at the Sheffield Inclusion Centre, and it had been identified that there was a need to reduce this cohort, and integrate them back into schools. It was proving to be unsustainable to run both systems together, and an early help system was needed to stop problems later on.

- There were instances when excluded pupils were referred to Pupil Inclusion Centres, where some pupils were offered additional support in terms of reading and writing on the basis that, due to their behavioural issues, and consequent periods out of school, a number of them had fallen behind in terms of these core skills.
- There was a requirement on all schools in the City to accept a child who had received a fixed-term exclusion back into school. There were no details of any pupils not being accepted back in Sheffield.
- There were slightly different arrangements in terms of the exclusion appeals process with regard to academies on the basis of such establishments having a Board of Directors rather than a Governing Body.
- It was accepted that the City's performance in terms of fixed term exclusions in the primary sector was not good enough, and significant work was being undertaken in this sector to improve this, which had resulted in some level of improvement. School representatives met regularly, where they would discuss details of individual cases in order to see how, and where, lessons could be learnt. In addition to this, the primary integration protocol, which ensured pupils who were ready to be reintegrated back into mainstream school do so in a timely and supported manner, had been introduced this year. Also, specific provision had been made for those children deemed to be at specific risk of exclusion. Whilst the Authority was seeing the benefits of this combined work, in terms of improved performance regarding permanent exclusions, progress was yet to be made in terms of fixed-term exclusions.
- Detailed analysis of some of the cultural and behavioural challenges and a period of focussed work had resulted in a reduction in the number of exclusions of Roma children. However, it was acknowledged that more work was required in terms of reducing the number of pupils from the Roma, and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in general, being excluded as such pupils were still disproportionately represented in the statistics. It was accepted that there was a specific need to look in more detail at the high rate of fixed-term exclusions of pupils from BME communities, which would involve working very closely with the schools.
- The number of cases which proceeded to formal appeal was small, and they tended to focus on issues of process, rather than the reason for the exclusion.
- Whilst the Local Authority would always try and learn from examples of best practice, including looking at how private schools dealt with the issue of poor pupil behaviour, this was not generally possible as, realistically, there wasn't a comparative cohort in the private sector.

- In the light of the request now made by Councillor Mohammad Maroof, efforts would be made to look at whether the data with regard to the excluded pupils of Pakistani origin could be further broken down into sub-categories.
- The successful reintegration to mainstream of pupils from the Sheffield Inclusion Centre required improvement, and it was hoped that additional work and resources into this area would help to improve performance, both in the primary and secondary sectors. It was accepted that some pupils were in the Centre for too long, and that re-integration rates could be better.

8.5 A further question was raised by a member of the Committee, relating to the demonstration on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2017, protesting about the Council's Special Educational Needs (SEN) services, and the following response was provided:-

- 12% of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) had a completed Education, Health and Care Plan within the 20 week statutory limit between January and December 2016. This had increased from 3% in 2015, with nearly three times as many new plans completed. Officers acknowledged that performance in this area was not good enough, and were working hard to improve these figures. As part of this work, individual cases, where particular problems had been highlighted, would be reviewed, and officers had promised to meet regularly with the children's parents to review their cases. The main reason for the lower than expected performance in respect of the Care Plans was due to workload issues in connection with the requirement to transfer 2,500 statements into Care Plans.

8.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information reported as part of the presentation and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests:-
  - (i) the Policy and Improvement Officer to circulate the report considered at its meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016, which contained detailed information on the delivery of Education, Health and Care Plans, to all Members of the Committee;
  - (ii) that regular briefing notes containing information on a breakdown of the pupil exclusion rates in terms of electoral Wards, and further in terms of ethnicity, be provided to Members;
  - (iii) a further report on Special Educational Needs (SEN) and autism be included on its Work Programme 2017/18; and
  - (iv) that a further report be submitted to the Committee on the outcome of the review of alternative provision for excluded pupils, with a specific request that a broad range of stakeholders be engaged as part of the



review, including voluntary/community sector organisations and all elected Members.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

- 9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which set out its Work Programme for 2017/18.
- 9.2 The Chair stated that, as a result of the demonstration on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2017, protesting about the Council's SEN services, he and the Deputy Chair (Councillor Cliff Woodcraft) had requested a briefing on current developments.
- 9.3 He also stated that any suggestions in terms of additional items for the Work Programme, either for consideration or information, should be forwarded to the Policy and Improvement Officer.
- 9.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee approves its Work Programme for 2017/18, subject to the inclusion of the item now mentioned.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 10.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, at 10.00 am, in the Town Hall.

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