

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

Meeting held 25 October 2012

PRESENT: Councillors Gill Furniss (Chair), Andrew Sangar (Deputy Chair), Rob Frost, Keith Hill, Talib Hussain, George Lindars-Hammond, Karen McGowan, Mohammad Maroof, Lynn Rooney, Colin Ross, Nikki Sharpe, Clive Skelton and Stuart Wattam

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Jules Jones, Education Non-Council Voting Member
Paulette Kennedy, Education Non-Council Voting Member (Parent Governor)
Joan Stratford, Education Non-Council Voting Member
Alison Warner, Education Non-Council Voting Member

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Gillian Foster.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 There were no items identified.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest from Committee Members.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 There were no public questions or petitions submitted to the meeting.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th September 2012 were approved as a correct record, and, arising therefrom it was noted that;

(a) with regard to a joint meeting between the Children, Young People and Family Support and the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees to discuss apprenticeships in the City, a meeting had been arranged for November 2012 between the Committee Chairs and Policy Officers to progress this, and a date for the joint meeting would be circulated in due course;

(b) James White, Children and Young People Services, provided a brief update

on the appeal made to the AQA examination board over GCSE marking, stating that there was nothing new to add at present, but that he would keep the Committee updated on any future developments;

(c) David Molloy, Policy Officer, reported that the Sheffield Youth Council would be invited to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee towards the end of the municipal year 2012/13 in order for them to inform the work programme for the municipal year 2013/14, and it was noted that Councillor George Lindars-Hammond would act as a liaison between the two groups;

(d) with regard to concerns raised by a Committee Member at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, it was confirmed that there were no links to Sheffield with the recent child sexual exploitation case raised in Rotherham, and

(e) with regard to the school attendance item intended for this meeting of the Committee, it was noted that the officer preparing the report was off work presently, and that this item would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee instead.

6. EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Children Young People and Family Services, regarding Education Outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC), and in attendance for this item was Iain Peel, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Learning, and Steve Mather, Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children Services.

6.2 Mr. Peel informed the Committee that there was currently a cohort of approximately 550 LAC in the City , and that 420 of these were at school age; 68% of whom were in the secondary school phase.

6.3 Mr. Peel reported that school attendance figures amongst LAC had improved, but Members were disappointed that there were not more national comparisons drawn in the report, to which Mr. Peel replied that the way in which data was now reported by the Government over a three year period had made it difficult to draw these comparisons in this municipal year.

6.4 Members wished to know more about the Pupil Premiums allocated for LAC, and how these were being spent. It was noted that all LAC drew up a Personal Education Plan (PEP) working together with an educational specialist, and the spending of their Pupil Premiums was reviewed every six months.

6.5 Mr. Mather explained about the role of the virtual school for LAC, and how this benefited LAC by giving them some consistency in their education.

6.6 Members wished to know which strategies for improving attendance had been the most effective for LAC, to which Mr. Peel replied that there had been an intensive mentoring programme, which had helped in some ways, although some children had dropped out of this scheme. Work was also taking place using care leavers as advocates and mentors. There would be more work in the next academic year

with regard to the mentoring scheme to ensure that factors such as transport were not preventing children from attending.

6.7 Some Members wished to know which schools were producing good results for LAC, but James White, Children and Young People Services, was keen to emphasise that there was no one particular school which was doing well with LAC, as a great deal depended on the child in question. This was a volatile cohort, with many complex and changing needs.

6.8 LAC usually stayed at the school to which they were allocated, even if the school was not meeting the floor standards required of it, as the school was a constant in the child's life. It was proven that attainment was worse for LAC who changed schools more often than those who did not. Those children who changed schools regressed in their attainment by approximately six months every time they moved.

6.9 Members wished to know whether all foster carers were putting the necessary emphasis on education, and it was reported that valuing education was essential in the criteria when selecting foster carers. Mr. Mather assisted as an advocate for the education of LAC, and worked closely with foster carers to ensure that this was the case.

6.10 It was noted that most children's homes were now smaller residential homes, like family homes, and that the larger 'institutions' did not exist anymore. Most of these new homes accommodated three to four LAC.

6.11 It was noted that at the time of the last Ofsted inspection, 23 LAC in Sheffield has gone on to University places, which was an exceptionally high number.

6.12 It was noted that pupils attending the secure unit at Aldine House were making significant progress in educational attainment. The attendance figures were excellent, largely due to the fact that the secure unit meant that attendance was compulsory, unless a child was ill. This consistent attendance was driving up educational standards amongst the pupils at Aldine.

6.13 With regard to the expenditure of Pupil Premiums, Members were keen to see what was working, what needed improving, and whether the correct target groups were being focused upon, and if these groups were not making progress, what further could be done to use Pupil Premiums more effectively. They were also concerned that Pupil Premiums were not used to 'prop up' core budgets.

6.14 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee;

(a) notes the contents of the report now submitted and thanks the officers for their attendance at the Committee, and

(b) requests that an overview of the use of Pupil Premiums monies be brought the Committee as a future agenda item, to see what was working, what needed improving, and whether the correct target groups were being focused upon, and if these groups were not making progress, what further could be done to use Pupil Premiums more effectively.

7. POLICY UPDATE

7.1 David Molloy, Policy Officer, provided Members with a detailed overview of several key policy updates, including;

- School funding reform arrangements for 2013-14
- Measures to improve adoption and fostering
- 55 new Free Schools to open in September 2012, twice as many as this time last year
- Urgent reforms to protect children in residential care from sexual exploitation
- £100m to expand early education and childcare
- Cash boost for disadvantaged school children
- Places for National Citizen Service autumn roll-out
- Examinations for 15-19 year olds in England – Commons Education Committee Report
- Measuring happiness
- Twice as many students not taking key academic subjects than to the English Baccalaureate

7.2 It was also noted that Jules Jones was to volunteer to sit as a representative of the Committee on a working group being set up to look at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Sheffield, alongside Members of the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 22nd November 2012 at 2 pm in the Town Hall.