

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 9th July, 2012

Present:- Councillors: Sally Davis (Chair), Dine Romero (Vice-Chair), Liz Hardman, Mathew Blankley, Anthony Clarke (In place of David Veale) and Ian Gilchrist

Co-opted Non-voting Members:- Chris Batten and Peter Mountstephen

Also in attendance: Ashley Ayre (Strategic Director, People and Communities), Liz Price (Children's Planning Manager), Maurice Lindsay (Divisional Director for Children, Young People and Family Support), Charlie Moat (Care and Young People's Service Manager), Caroline Haworth (Bath Area Play Project) and Jenny Drew (Off The Record).

17 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. She offered a special welcome to the pupils from Marksbury Primary School who were in attendance to give a presentation to the Panel.

18 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor David Veale and Co-optees Sanjeev Chaddha, David Williams, Dawn Harris and Tess Daly had sent their apologies to the Panel. Councillor Anthony Clarke was present for the duration of the meeting as a substitute for Councillor David Veale.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There were none.

21 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

22 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

23 MINUTES - 21ST MAY 2012

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

24 YOUTH DEMOCRACY & PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW (PRIMARY / YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT FEEDBACK)

The Chairman introduced this item and asked the two pupils in attendance from Marksbury Primary School to deliver their successful presentation from the recent Primary Parliament.

Charlotte and Katie introduced themselves and the title of their presentation 'Special Gems for Special Friends'.

They spoke about the ethos of the idea:

- All about encouraging friendship
- Our idea is that gems can be given out to children when they have done something significant and special for a friend or another child
- This is something you could focus on for a term or even the whole year
- We do this in our whole school and it works brilliantly!

What are the gems?

- Amethyst – sharing ideas and listening to each other
- Amber – you help others to learn
- Ruby – you make others feel good
- Diamond – you know what to do when things go wrong between your friends

Amethyst

- You might make sure you listen to all people as you are playing a game
- You share your great ideas with others

We found the amethyst the hardest gem to earn so we are working hard on our listening skills

Ruby

- Encourage someone when they are feeling down
- Tell someone that they are good at something

- For example, in our class Will clapped when Henry had earned a diamond gem and so Mrs Brightwell awarded him a ruby gem for making Henry feel good about what he had done.

Why have gems?

- Gems encourage friendship, equality and unity
- Gems can be collected as a class and you can record how many you have in a treasure chest
- This makes children feel excited, pleased and rewarded for being a good friend.
- “It makes you feel like you’re helping the whole class and you feel happy about it because your class are happy.”
- Most importantly, lots of children say “you want to get gems!”
- The Gems show achievement for friendship which otherwise might go unnoticed.
- Gems can help outside of school too – you might be reminded of trying to use them in situations after school, at home or at clubs.
- Children and staff can give them out when they see children being friendly. This means that friendship can be recognised and rewarded wherever and whenever it happens.

How could you do this in your school?

- You can get small beads to act as gems or you can use sequins
- You can start a new total each term so you don’t have to buy lots of gems or sequins
- You can put up signs that explain how to use the gems
- You could offer a prize or treat when a class have earned a certain number of gems
- We could send representatives from our school council to show children and staff how to use the gems and how they work.

The People and Communities Strategic Director asked how many schools at the Primary Parliament showed an interest in taking part in a similar project.

Charlotte and Katie replied that a couple had shown an interest in the project.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she was really impressed by the presentation and asked successful was the project across the school.

Charlotte and Katie replied that all pupils want to take part in the project.

The Chairman offered her congratulations and thanked them for attending on behalf of the Panel.

25 CHILDREN'S CENTRES BRIEFING

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Services introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that the local authority has had 2 Ofsted Inspections of Children's Centres since the framework was introduced by the DfE in 2010. St. Martin's Garden Children's Centre received a Good Inspection in December 2011 and First Steps Twerton received a Good in January 2012. He added that since then the nursery at St. Martin's Garden Children's Centre received a separate day-care inspection, which was Outstanding and First Steps received a day-care only inspection for their Moorlands Children's Centre which was also Outstanding.

He spoke of how services to Children's Centres in B&NES are integrated and offer good multi-agency working across all the early years sectors, enabling the Council to achieve the best for children under 5, no matter where they access services. Sirona Health & Care continue to deliver services alongside the Children's Centres in a way that is not common in other areas and which supported their successful application to become an Early Implementer of the new Health Visiting programme led by the Department of Health.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked if any further information was available regarding 'Payment by Results' which was mentioned in section 4.9 of the report.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that they were still awaiting Government guidance on this matter. He gave an example of how the process works with regard to Complex Families. The Government has allocated £4,000 per family assisted, with £3,200 being paid upfront to the Council and the remaining £800 on completion of the case.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked in relation to section 4.10 of the report what the likelihood was of cuts to this area of the Service.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that they were still awaiting the Government's decision on the Comprehensive Spending Review, but did expect some form of cuts to the Early Interventions Grant and were therefore working prudently on that basis.

Chris Batten asked if there would be any staff implications if cuts were to be made.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the Council was looking at how it could maximise the use of the centres as a commercial opportunity, but could not rule out staff reductions at this stage.

Chris Batten asked if any of the centres would close.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that that would depend on the nature of the cuts.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked in relation to section 4.11 of the report if there would be any need for additional centres in the future.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that there may be a need for new nursery or day-care facilities at the existing centres and therefore the Council may need to obtain funding from Section 106 agreements / Community Infrastructure Levy.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what the centres were doing to reach people such as young mums.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Services replied that the centres are notified of every new birth and then make first contact in the case of it being a young mum

The People and Communities Strategic Director added that it was worth noting that the Council does not have a large number of young teenage mums.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked why some centres were being used more often than others and was there a plan to get more people in to use the services.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that he would ask the Early Years & Extended Services Manager to follow up on the differential use of the centres. He added that the centres in areas of high density are more active and that each area has a business plan.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Accept the briefing within the paper as an overview of the current position for Children's Centres & Play.
- (ii) Note the progress of Children's Centres since the last report came to Overview & Scrutiny in September 2010, including recent Ofsted Inspections.
- (iii) Be aware of the future landscapes for Children's Centres regarding Payment by Results and the provider/commissioner split within People & Communities restructure.

26 PLAY SERVICE BRIEFING

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Services introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them of some of the key elements and outcomes of the new services.

- (a) 2 Family Play Inclusion Workers working in targeted areas across the authority to engage isolated or disabled children in open access play. Outcomes: 146 children reached in the first year (against a target of 60). Children who feel isolated by conditions such as ASD, now are supported to access play. Children, whose parents are suffering from poor mental or physical health, are often totally isolated in their own homes, are now supported to play. Small bespoke group work is done with children and parents together in open spaces, in an inclusive way, giving parent's

confidence for children to play out. More able children (physically and emotionally) are supported to attend local Community Play Ranger services.

- (b) The long established Community Play Rangers continue to operate in targeted areas, giving confidence to children and communities that 'playing out' is safe when they are there. These services work in partnership with schools to develop and use play as a catalyst, resulting in improved behaviour and increases in self-esteem, supporting social and emotional learning and participation. The Community Play Rangers support children and parents to take risks and to learn through social skills through play at parks in communities.
- (c) 'Wheels for All' is a project to support disabled children to access adapted bikes with a range of opportunities after school and in the holidays. A temporary project officer has been recruited to develop this project. This is part funded by Sport and Active Leisure. It contributes to disabled children being more physically active. Fun days and taking part in Paralympic type activities will be run over the summer.
- (d) Finally the Play Team continue to support the Midsomer Norton Skate Park and were successful with their joint bid between the Somer Centre; Midsomer Norton Town Council and Wansdyke Play Association, to the Reward Fund to build a community run café in the Somer Centre and to further develop the park into a community run Skate Park.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if there was any additional capacity available to expand the work of the Family Play Inclusion Workers.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that no spare funding was currently available and that therefore another service would need to be de-prioritised.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist wished to offer his congratulations to the team for all their hard work. He asked what ideas they had for future development.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that it was indeed a brilliant team of officers led by Caroline Haworth of the Bath Area Play Project. He added that there was little funding currently available but that he was sure the team involved would continue in their high standard of work.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Accept the briefing within this paper as an overview of the current position for Play.
- (ii) Note the progress, re-prioritisation and re-shaping of commissioned services since the Play Services were cut in 2010-11 to be preventative and enabling services.
- (iii) Note the contribution Play Services play in supporting schools with children's physical and emotional health and well-being.

27 FAMILY AND FRIENDS CARE POLICY

The Care and Young People's Service Manager introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that an early draft of the policy document was considered by the Corporate Parenting Group at its June 2012 meeting. He added that the group made some comments on the document which have been reflected in the current draft. The group also asked that the draft be brought to the Panel for scrutiny and further comment before being submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The policy reiterates the Bath and North East Somerset approach to supporting families in the community; maintaining children within their families and avoiding the need for children to come into care unnecessarily. It also sets out our approach to looking after children in care within their family and friends network when this is assessed as the most suitable way to meet children's needs.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she felt that it was a great policy that clearly outlined the difference between the types of carers.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked how the policy was customised for B&NES.

The Care and Young People's Service Manager replied that he felt B&NES was very true to the legal framework as set out in the national guidelines as it believes very strongly that children should be looked after by their family members.

The Chairman thanked him for the report on behalf of the Panel.

28 SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the report details the process, contents, judgements and main findings from the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission's Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services undertaken between 9th – 20th January 2012, and outlines how the Council's Children's Service and its partners have responded to the inspection report's recommendations for areas for improvement.

He added that the Inspection report has been shared with staff across the Children's Service and all teams have discussed its contents, judgements and recommendations for areas for improvement. Some actions have been taken immediately to improve practice and management oversight and learning points from the inspection have been used to inform further work in the re-design of the Children's Social Care Service.

The Children's Service reviewed the Ofsted recommendations for actions immediately, within 3 months and within 6 months and identified themed areas for improvement in terms of (i) practice and management and (ii) service management – Children's Service and cross-services. Managers and staff across the Children's Service were invited to contribute to the Improvement Plan. Actions, and underpinning actions, were identified for each area of improvement with lead officers,

completion dates, assurance methods, desired outcomes, progress ratings, evaluation of impact, and review dates established for each.

Actions have been implemented to progress all areas of the Improvement Plan, and those due for completion by May and June 2012 have been formally reviewed. Particular attention was paid to providing guidance, revising processes and systems to improve case recording and managerial oversight, improving in-service quality assurance and off-line auditing arrangements and practice, and enhancing staff supervision, training and reflective practice. Arrangements are in place to evidence that improvements have been effected, and will be sustained, which will include feedback from service users and partner agencies.

Councillor Anthony Clarke asked if he was confident that colleagues within Healthcare were also prepared to up their game.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service replied that he was and had asked the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to hold both parties to account.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist commented that he would have found it helpful if the two judgements that were deemed to have been inadequate could have been formally addressed within the report.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the information relating to those judgements was on the Care Quality Commission's website and that he would be happy to pass that onto the Panel.

Peter Mounstephen commented that recognition is required for the enormous task that is being carried by officers. He also urged the improvements to move at a sustainable pace.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Note the report, the actions taken to respond to recommendations for areas for improvement, and the progress reported thus far.
- (ii) Note the arrangements proposed for reviewing and reporting progress to the Local Safeguarding Children Board; the Corporate Parenting Group; the In-Care Council; and the Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing.
- (iii) Request that the Director of Children's Service and Divisional Director, Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service present a further progress report to this Panel at its November 2012 meeting.

29 PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

The People & Communities Strategic Director addressed the Panel. He asked them to consider if they wished to hold a budget workshop this year as they had done in previous years.

The Panel indicated they would like to take part in such an event and asked the Democratic Services Officer to arrange a date for it to be held.

Family Justice Review

HHJ Ryder has led on the best way to implement a transformation in delivery of private and public family law.

Legislation is to be introduced in October to create a single Court system for dealing with family proceedings. Judges will work across High Court, Family Courts and Magistrates but will be Family Justices.

The aim is to speed up Care Proceedings, ensure Courts and all Court Officers are focused upon the rights/needs of the child/ren and reduce delay caused by the sequential commissioning of 'Expert' witnesses. A 26 week threshold may be introduced.

Critical to this will be the quality of social work assessments and recommendations made by the Local Authority. HHJ Ryder is clear that our work will help to determine the timetable for the case and whether any expert witnesses will be called. This has training implications and potential financial implications as Courts could rule that delays (and therefore extra expense) were caused by poor Local Authority (LA) practice and award costs accordingly.

New Inspection Framework for Schools

The framework will be fully implemented from September 2012 and replaces the current category of 'Satisfactory' with 'Needs Improvement'. Any school in such a category will be re-inspected within 24 months and if found to still be in need of improvement it could be placed in special measures. Such categorisation could then lead to the school being directed (by the Secretary of State) to become an academy.

Judgements around pupil progression and overall levels of sustained improvement across a school will also mean fewer schools will be judged to be 'Good'. This will impact upon all LA's but could effectively turn almost all schools in some LA's into academies.

Schools will only be judged 'outstanding' if teaching is outstanding.

Children in Care (CIC) in Residential Placements

The Office of the Children's Commissioner and DfE have published reports into CIC placed in residential care far away from home and potential exploitation of such children and young people.

Bath and North East Somerset Council currently has 2 children in residential children's homes, these are 11 and 40 miles from their homes. We have a further 6 children in residential schooling related to disability or special educational needs. The farthest distance is 127 miles. All children are regularly visited by their Social Worker and their placements are separately reviewed by our Independent Reviewing Service.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented re: the new Inspection Framework. She felt that 24 months was a short space of time for a school to make the required improvements.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that the Council was now reliant on more schools supporting each other via Teaching Schools. He added that of course they would maintain an observational role.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked if there was any prospect of the 26 week threshold period mentioned in relation to the Family Justice Review being shortened.

The People & Communities Strategic Director replied that if the majority of cases are not strongly contested they should be resolved within that timeframe. He added that the process as it stands is grossly unfair to the children concerned as the current average for resolving a case is 55 weeks.

The Chairman thanked him for his update on behalf of the Panel.

30 CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL RELATING TO SCHOOL MATTERS

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that the report invited them to amend the arrangements for co-opted membership of the Panel when dealing with schools matters.

She added that the proposal was to amend the non-statutory co-opted membership by replacing the two places allocated to DAFBY with 1 place allocated to the local Member of the Youth Parliament (MYP) and 1 place allocated to a Member of the Young Equalities Impact Assessment Group.

Councillor Matthew Blankley asked how the arrangement would work with regard to the MYPs as there was one for Bath and one for North East Somerset.

The Chairman replied that she believed they would attend alternate meetings and therefore support each other in the role.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked why the two specific Church groups were represented on the Panel.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that as far as he knew it was a statutory requirement that had passed down from the former Education Committee system. He asked through the agreement of the Chairman for the Democratic Services Officer to provide clarification on the matter.

The Democratic Services Officer replied that he would seek some further clarification and issue a response to the Panel.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Agree that the current arrangements for non-voting co-opted Education members of the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel should be amended.
- ii) Note the current statutory membership.

31 **PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. She reminded them that earlier in the meeting they agreed to receive a further progress report on the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services Improvement Plan at their November 2012 meeting.

Councillor Dine Romero suggested that at a future meeting the Panel receives a presentation from APEX who run Saturday and Summer workshops and conferences for children and young people.

The Chairman informed the Panel that she had been asked by the Divisional Director for Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service to receive a report on the Family Intervention Project at their November 2012 meeting.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to agree with all the above proposals.

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services