

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 13th September, 2016

Present:- Councillors Lisa Brett (Chair), Matt Cochrane (Vice-Chair), Karen Warrington, Peter Turner, Sally Davis, Alison Millar and Liz Hardman

Also in attendance: Richard Baldwin (Divisional Director - Safeguarding & Social Care), Mike Bowden (Strategic Director - People & Communities), Lesley Hutchinson (Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), Sally Churchyard (Service Manager 11 - 19 Outcomes), Sam Plummer (Integrated Youth Team Leader - Somer Valley) and Jackie Deas (Deputy Safeguarding Lead for Children and Quality Assurance)

30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

31 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

David Williams (Diocese of Bath & Wells) had sent his apologies to the Panel. Claire Hudson was present as his substitute for the duration of the meeting.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

34 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Pamela Galloway, WWISE Network addressed the Panel. A copy of her statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and online as an appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

She thanked them for their support at the last meeting and wished to update them on the latest developments.

She explained that they have put forward a number of suggestions of how a suitable pool could be incorporated into the plans for the refurbishment of the Bath Leisure Centre and that they have been informed that GLL are looking at the feasibility,

potential income & costing implications and will be producing a formal report in due course.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if it was only the Bath Leisure Centre they had enquired about.

Pamela Galloway replied that the focus was on Bath currently as that site was undergoing a redesign process. She added that they plan to request a similar facility within Keynsham Leisure Centre.

The Chair thanked her for the update on behalf of the Panel.

Penny Hay, Child Friendly City Steering Group addressed the Panel. A copy of her statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and online as an appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

She explained that a brilliant opportunity had arisen which she felt would benefit the whole community and that she didn't want the Council to miss the chance as bids close on 31 October.

She said Bath & North East Somerset has been invited to apply to be a UNICEF pilot project, one of only 6 pilots planned in the UK. She added that Childs Rights Partners is a ground-breaking programme - systematically embedding children's rights in public services at both policy and practice level that has never been trialed before in the UK.

She informed the Panel that UNICEF offers a practical framework for working with and for children and young people including mentoring and peer support. She added that the Child Rights project supports us to work with children as rights holders and governments and services as duty bearers.

She said that in B&NES, we want all children and young people to have equal life chances with positive mental health and well-being, with higher aspirations. We know the Council has identified health and socio-economic inequalities and is working towards reducing these; this project would actively support the Council's work.

She stated that she believed systems would be improved by embedding a rights-based approach, not only to improve children's lives and give all children the same opportunity to flourish, but to improve local communities and society as a whole.

She explained that they are drafting the UNICEF bid now with Child Friendly Community partners and were inviting the Council to be a partner. She added that a modest amount of funding from the Council could leverage a strategic investment in the future for our whole community.

Councillor Karen Warrington asked if the profile of this work would enable national grants to be obtained.

Penny Hay replied that strategic national funding does exist and that she was due to have a meeting with Ben Woods (Group Manager - Economy & Culture) to discuss

the matter. She said that the Bath Spa Institute for Education were keen to take part in the project and had previously considered giving £3,500 to the project, but this had not been matched.

Jake Bishop-Ponte said that as part of the Child Friendly City Steering Group he had met with the Bath MP, Ben Howlett and also taken part in a debate with Councillors on local policies.

Councillor Alison Millar asked how much funding the Council would be asked for.

Penny Hay replied that if they were able to at least match the offer from Bath Spa that would be great. She added that a figure of around £20,000 over three years would enable an officer to be employed on the project.

The Chair asked if the figure of £3,500 would lever further external funding.

Penny Hay replied that it would.

The Chair thanked her for statement on behalf of the Panel.

36 MINUTES - 12TH JULY 2016

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

37 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Michael Evans addressed the Panel.

Children's Centre Services

He informed them that the Council is currently facing a significant budget challenge, including a £300,000 budget pressure in the current year for Children's Centre services. The Children's Services team have therefore been asked to review how the Children's Centre services are now working following the changes put into place a couple of years ago.

He stated that he would like to reassure all parents and carers that we are in the very early stages of looking at this - we have not yet undertaken the review, no proposals have been made and no decisions have been taken. He said that the Cabinet are completely committed to helping the most vulnerable and those in greatest need, which includes continuing to provide services that parents rely on.

He explained that some of the buildings are underused and often empty as many services are now delivered directly in people's homes or at other community venues. He added that we therefore need to look thoroughly at the use of the buildings and whether we run all of these in their current form, or whether for example, other local organisations might be better placed to run the buildings and make better use of the available space to offer alternative activities for their communities.

He said that we will continue to keep all parents and users of the centres informed as the review progresses and please be assured we will consult extensively on any ideas that come forward.

SEND – Home to School Transport

He said that a review of Home to School Transport for SEND pupils may take place soon as part of a discussion relating to expanding the number of SEND placements within B&NES.

Bath Community Academy (BCA)

He said that the Cabot Learning Federation would be commencing with a consultation with the Regional Schools Commissioner (DfE) on the future of the academy and we await the outcome.

Exam Results

He said that the initial figures relating to SAT / GCSE / A Level results locally were generally positive and that reports on these would come to the Panel in due course.

The Chair thanked him for his statement and asked if he could elaborate any further on the possible increase of SEND placements.

Councillor Michael Evans replied that there may be some Government funding available in the near future.

The Chair asked if it would be possible to keep education on the BCA site.

Councillor Michael Evans replied that conversations were at an early stage, but that it seemed positive that alternative arrangements could be put in place.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what the criteria would be for closing a Children's Centre.

Councillor Michael Evans replied that areas of need and vulnerability would be assessed and that if any were to close locations within a geographical area would be taken into account.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that if the management of the Children's Centres were to be cut it would be a much poorer service. She asked if parents of SEND pupils would be asked to organise their own transport.

Councillor Michael Evans replied that plans relating to Children's Centre Services really were at an early stage at this moment in time.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities added that they were considering piloting a personal budget system for families of SEND pupils.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the 200 pupils that attend BCA would be allocated places within B&NES and would they be provided with transport if necessary.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities replied that the Cabot Learning Federation has met with other Secondary School Head Teachers and that the Council has already committed that if required transport would be available for those pupils in Years 7 and 10 to reach St Marks School, where the majority of available places are. He added that some Year 10 pupils had transferred to Bath Studio School but he was not aware of any movement by pupils in Year 7.

Councillor Liz Hardman stated that a plan was required should BCA close within a year.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities replied that the decision was not in the hands of the Council, although it would be involved in the discussion. He said that the Cabot Learning Federation would have to submit a detailed proposal to the Regional Schools Commissioner for their consideration.

38 YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Eleanor Jackson addressed the Panel. She explained that she was speaking on behalf of Westfield Parish Council initially to convey that the recent changes to nursery provision in Radstock were not properly consulted upon.

She said that the Parish Council were looking to support the work of the newly appointed Youth Worker and that consultation was due on the needs of children in Westfield.

The Service Manager for 11 - 19 Outcomes gave a presentation to the Panel. A copy can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and online as an appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

Youth Connect – commissioned to help young people to be:

- Emotionally resilient
- Healthy
- Engaged in education, employment or training
- Safe

Youth Connect – commissioned to provide:

- Open access youth work
- Targeted interventions
- Statutory monitoring
- Support to other sectors to develop positive activities and support.

Developing a vision:

- Establishing a Youth Council
- Range of services including open access youth work and targeted support
- Multi-purpose shared facility for youth and community

Building on the work of Radstock Youth Partnership, we will:

- Consult with young people
- Scope model(s) of delivery
- Work in partnership
- Support voluntary / community sector to lead

The Chair thanked her for the presentation on behalf of the Panel.

39 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Paul Mortimer (EBM), Adrian Leggett (EBM) and Stephen Ravenscroft (Stone King) were present to answer questions from the Panel.

The Chair asked if they could confirm for the Panel that the Teckal Company would be a social enterprise, with all profits going back into the provision of services to schools.

Stephen Ravenscroft replied that there would be flexibility within the structure, but in pure terms any surplus would be retained within the company.

The Chair asked if they could expand on how a Teckal Company could continue to be used to help shape the role that the Council plays in a collaborative primary, values-led MAT with B&NES schools.

Stephen Ravenscroft replied that a Teckal Company would assume responsibility for services, but the Council could be involved in designing the shape / scope of services and be part of the commissioning services.

He added that their influence must be less than 20% at all times due to the Local Government Act associated and regulated company concerns. He said if B&NES were to become a Member of the MAT any services they provide to the MAT must be charged 'at cost'.

Councillor Karen Warrington asked if there were enough schools locally that had not yet committed themselves to becoming an Academy.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that 50 out of 80 schools had not yet converted although he was aware that 8 were in the process of doing so.

The Chair commented that she felt that this issue was not being discussed by enough School Governors.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that officers and EBM met with Governors in June / July and that they planned to meet again in October.

Councillor Alison Millar asked if the Teckal would be a Private Limited Company.

Stephen Ravenscroft replied that a Teckal could be managed under a range of options. He said that an example of a Teckal involving schools was Hertfordshire

County Council's 'Herts for Learning'. He added that this is a shared company in which the Council has shares in it alongside others.

He stated that other possible options were for it to be run as a Community Interest Company or a Charity.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that having looked at the options her initial preference would be a Co-operative MAT. She asked if current B&NES staff could work for both B&NES and a Teckal Company as she would like to preserve the level of support and expertise currently available.

Stephen Ravenscroft replied that staff from Hertfordshire County Council transferred to the Teckal.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked to what extent is all of this up in the air at present, given the changing educational landscape with Grammar Schools making a comeback.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that a Green Paper regarding Grammar Schools has been published, but that a lot of work was required over the next 18 months – 2 years and local solutions would be required.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to recommend that:

- i) The Cabinet Member instructs officers to conduct a detailed feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis of B&NES Council facilitating setting up a Teckal Company.
- ii) As part of this process it involves school leaders (Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors) particularly those who have expressed an interest in a Teckal Company with LA involvement.
- iii) If the pricing structure of the Teckal Company is unaffected by B&NES Council being a stakeholder in the MAT that we adopt a policy of engaging with any emerging MAT with a view to becoming a 20% stakeholder.

40 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair commented that the Panel recommended last year that IRO's had access to independent legal advice and it was welcomed that this is beginning to happen. She asked if the Council has commissioned specialist support for children who have been exposed to modern slavery.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for CYP & QA replied that the Council work closely with Unseen, who provide specialist care and support to survivors. She added that this issue is also covered in the LSCB training programme.

The Chair asked for further explanation regarding the figure that 52% of social work reports had not been signed off by managers.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for CYP & QA replied that this was raised at the IRO/Social Care Liaison Meeting in November 2015 and that the Children Social Care team were addressing this. She added that this did not mean that there had not been management oversight of their reports. She said that a progress update was due in October 2016 and that efforts are made to discuss reports prior to meetings taking place.

The Chair asked how were Independent Reviewing Officers involved as stakeholders in the development of the new case management system.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead for CYP & QA replied that this was a large project with discussions ongoing with officers working on the Liquid Logic project.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what needs to put in place to ensure that the quality of Care Plans is more consistent and that children see their Plan before their review.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that the roll out of the Child Friendly Care Plan was due.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked for an explanation why there appears to be a gap in the recording process for Care Plans and Pathway Plans for 16+ young people in Care.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that this would be resolved through Liquid Logic.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the following recommendations:

- i) That the Independent Reviewing Officers select to focus their attention next on children who are placed in the farthest reaches of Somerset and Wiltshire, as well as those outside the adjacent authorities.
- ii) The Panel would like to add its weight to the recommendation that the Assessment Policy on Tri-X is refreshed to reflect the risk associated with IROs Chairing reviews without an up to date assessment.
- iii) A number of comments have been made about inconsistency in reporting standards. The Panel requests that proposals on how Officers intend to address these issues are brought to a future C&YP PDS Panel meeting.
- iv) The Panel would like to add its weight to the recommendation that a policy and process be developed to ensure a Permanency Plan is submitted to the IRO in a set written format.
- v) The Panel recommends that therapeutic services for our most traumatized and abused children are enhanced and that appropriate resources be prioritized.

41 LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair stated that she was very impressed by the report and that the breakdown by Sub-Group was very welcome. She did though highlight the use of acronyms without definition.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) & Missing Sub-Group

She asked if B&NES Council regularly engaged specialist agencies to support complex cases.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that they try to cover most cases within the Council. He added that an expert on CSE has been employed to provide support.

The Chair asked what emphasis has been given to moving towards a whole place budgeting approach to service delivery.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities replied that the LSCB has received some guidance on this matter and that discussions were ongoing.

The Chair asked how open and effective is our information sharing with other statutory agencies.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance replied that she was confident that we have good arrangements in place. She added that the Board were going to look at this area of work in more detail over the coming year.

The Chair asked what steps have been taken by B&NES Council to ensure all teaching staff are appropriately trained in identifying children at risk of suffering poor mental health.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities replied that this would be picked in many areas of work including; PSHE Training, Public Health Award, Assist Training and Attachment Aware.

The Chair asked when B&NES Council was last subject to a Local Government Association safeguarding children peer review.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that the Council would need to request such a review. He added they had recently been involved in Peer Reviews carried out by Gloucestershire and Somerset on the topics of CSE and Social Work Supervision.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance added that the Council has also been involved in Section 11 Audits alongside other Local Authorities.

Councillor Liz Hardman if we can be assured that there are sufficient safeguarding measures in place, given the continuing financial pressures on funding, especially if funding is at a national or sub regional level rather than a local level, as well as the challenge of recruiting and retaining social workers.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance replied that the Board maintains a risk register so that it is fully aware of any financial pressures.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care added that there were currently no Social Worker vacancies, which was a positive position to be in. He said that the Council has worked hard on this area of work over the past 18 months and had introduced a Social Work micro site to its website.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how effective is our multi agency approach in dealing with missing children, bearing in mind the link between children missing from home or care and sexual exploitation.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that partner engagement on this issue has been brilliant and that the CSE / Missing Sub-Group is well attend by the right people.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance added that discussions with the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) happen alongside those of the LSCB.

The Chair commented that the CSE / Missing Sub-Group are to be congratulated on what appears in many respects to be an excellent example of good practice. She asked if the CSE information meetings result in joint action plans.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that they do.

The Chair asked what support is available to current, potential and historic victims of CSE.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that locally support is provided by BASE (Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation) and the Willow Project.

The Chair said that she welcomed the training provided to B&B's, hotels and taxi offices. She asked if training was provided for environmental health officers.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that the training had been well received so far, but they had not yet been able to train any environmental health officers.

The Chair asked how many abduction notices have been issued where they are appropriate to safeguard children from sexual exploitation.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that none have been issued as the current activity with the Police to disrupt incidents is working.

Jake Bishop-Ponte asked as PHSE lessons are being rolled back in some schools how will young people become engaged on this issue.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that they would look to provide information to young people in different ways. He said that the contact details for the Willow Project would be distributed and that further information would be shared with school's Equalities Teams.

The Panel **RESOLVED** the following recommendations relating to CSE:

- i) The CSE Sub-Group should extend its activity to focus on victims needs, the ongoing support and therapeutic interventions that children affected by CSE may need
- ii) The CSE Sub-Group should continue to strive to engage with all communities. The Rotherham Inquiry made it clear that the council had failed to work with and engage local minority ethnic communities and in particular the women of those communities on the issue of CSE and other forms of abuse. Both the Manchester and Rotherham reports made a series of recommendations about engaging with all communities, the C&YP PDS recommend the CSE sub-group evaluate these recommendations to see if they could be appropriately applied within B&NES.
- iii) The CSE Sub-Group should continue to strive for greater awareness and education among professionals and the wider community. The training provide to hotels and taxi offices should be extended to all those in frontline community roles, such as pharmacists, school nurses, bus drivers, housing officers.
- iv) The CSE Sub-Group should ensure professional attitudes and use of language are applied throughout B&NES Council. The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry and report recommended that the use of the term 'child prostitution' should be removed from all government documents and strategies. The recent Coffey report also recommended that there should be no references to child prostitution in any documentation. The dated language has been found in a number of areas and the CSE Sub-Group should review all of the Council documentation related to CSE and ensure that references to child prostitution are removed.
- v) Maintain robust leadership, challenge and scrutiny around CSE by the LSCB. The Rotherham Inquiry found that "the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board and its predecessor oversaw the development of good inter-agency policies and procedures applicable to CSE. The weakness in their approach was that members of the Safeguarding Board rarely checked whether these were being implemented or whether they were working." The report drew attention to the vital importance of the challenge and scrutiny function of the LSCB
- vi) Enhance coordinated, strategic responses and performance management. The Panel recommends the Council and LSCB establish joint commissioning arrangements for CSE, sexual assault, rape and domestic abuse support services; common thresholds for interventions across agencies; clear referral pathways; pooling of budgets across the police, council children's services and health services.

Children in Care and Quality Assurance Sub-Group

The Chair said that she felt that this Sub-Group was struggling with its identity in relation to IROs.

The Panel **RESOLVED** the following recommendation relating to the Children in Care and Quality Assurance Sub-Group:

The Panel recommends that the terms of reference for the LSCB Children in Care and Quality Assurance Sub-Group are reviewed and re-developed with the IRO and that clear objectives are set.

Communications Sub-Group

The Chair on behalf of the Panel congratulated the Communications Sub-Group on a very productive, outcome driven year. She asked if the new LSCB web-site was now live.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that it was scheduled to go live in October.

Policy, Procedure and Performance Sub-Group

The Chair commented that she would also like to extend the Panel's congratulations to the Policy, Procedure and Performance Sub-Group on having a very productive, outcome driven year.

She added that as a member of the local Police & Crime Panel as well as Chair of this Panel she would write to Police & Crime Commissioner Mountstevens regarding the lack of Sub-Group attendance by the Police in the sincere hope this regular absence can be rectified.

Professional Practice Group

The Chair commented that the work of the Professional Practice Group appears to be of a very high quality. She asked how the Professional Practice Group engages with the Connecting Families agenda, or with locally targeted interventions aimed at tackling domestic abuse.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance replied that members of the Group have taken part in Themed Reviews by the Board. She added that at the last Board meeting a Themed Review took place on Early Help. She stated that the issue of Domestic Abuse was a clear priority for the Board.

Serious Case Review Sub-Group

The Chair stated that the Panel should welcome the fact that the Serious Case Review Sub-Group also provides a mechanism for the LSCB to deliver reviews of cases that do not meet the threshold for a SCR. She asked what psychological support is provided to members of the Serious Case Review Sub-Group to help them manage their own personal response to cases.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance replied that each agency has its own counselling service and that members support each other.

Training and Workforce Development Sub-Group

The Chair said that the Training and Workforce Development Sub-Group is to be congratulated on the number of courses run. She said that she would have liked a scorecard of feedback from participants on the courses and that perhaps this could be included in the report next year. She asked how it monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of on-line learning.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance replied that it is not monitored currently and that they would give some thought on how this could be done in the future.

Task and Finish Groups

The Chair said that she welcomed the focus on children affected by parental imprisonment as this was an area that could be easily overlooked. She explained she is also Chair of the advisory Board of the government funded National FGM Centre and would be interested in conducting a private review of the output of this task and finish group personally.

Summary of activity

The Chair asked can nursery staff working with private providers of childcare complete a common assessment framework.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that they could.

The Chair commented that all recent evidence indicates that vulnerable children living in Foster Care do better emotionally and academically than those who remain with their families with social worker support. I am concerned that the B&NES stated aspiration to reduce the number of children coming into foster care is driven by cost rather than by acting in the best interests of the child. Can you provide an evidence based, academically accredited, alternative reason for this aspiration?

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that results could be due to the impact of the Virtual School and the use of Pupil Premium.

Councillor Liz Hardman said how thorough she thought the report was. She asked if the underspend of 2015-16 can be carried forward and are there plans to spend more money next year.

The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance replied that the underspend is multi-agency money and that the underspend is recognised as a contingency should Serious Case Review be required to be carried out.

The Chair commented that the Local Government Association commissions Safeguarding Children Peer Reviews with local authorities as a national programme available to all Councils at a time that makes sense for them. She added that the

LGA use the learning from the reviews to contribute to the developing body of good practice to be used by Councils in their own improvement journeys.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities informed the Panel that an Ofsted inspection regarding Safeguarding was due and therefore asked that any recommendation regarding a Peer Review on this matter be scheduled appropriately.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to recommend that B&NES Council requests a Local Government Association Safeguarding Children Peer Review within the next six months.

42 FUTURE PROVISION OF ADOPTION SERVICES

Councillor Liz Hardman asked has any progress taken place in setting up a Local Authority trading company for a Regional Adoption Agency and if so, what progress has been made in B&NES.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that Adoption West will be a trading company from April 2018.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what the future resource implications for Adoption West are.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that there would be no additional resource implications for the Council and that possible efficiencies may be achieved.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked would any redundancies occur when this new model is in place.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that none were planned.

Councillor Lisa Brett asked when B&NES Adoption Services were last reviewed, and will Adoption West also be subjected to an independent review of their adoption service every three years.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that a positive review of the service took place in November 2013 and that Adoption West would be reviewed on their service every three years.

43 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

Councillor Dine Romero addressed the Panel. She said on Saturday she had joined the Welcome Summit in Birmingham of all the Welcome Refugees groups in the UK. 500 other people were in attendance including a wide range of faith representatives and refugees from Syria, Poland, Nepal, and the Jewish community.

She said that stories of the refugee's journeys were told and that this was extremely moving, and at times, quite upsetting. She heard of how families had been torn

apart, some permanently and yet the refugees themselves always had something positive to say, invariably about the support and help they had received.

She stated that the most moving were the stories told by those that had come to Bath, and from those who support them here.

She said however it was clear that we, as a nation, are not doing enough as over 300 children have an acknowledged right to come to the UK, but are trapped, on their own, in the camps at Calais.

She stated that reaching Government figures and targets on those we will help is not good enough. We must do as much as we can, not as little as we should.

She wanted to ask the Panel to do everything it could to bring as many of these children to safety in Bath and NE Somerset, and also to support proposals to bring many more families to this area too.

She said she would be bringing a motion on doing more to Full Council in November which she hoped all Councillors would support.

Bernie Howley addressed the Panel. She said that B&NES had become involved with this issue before it was deemed compulsory and she thanked them for that. She urged them not to lose any momentum on the work they have done.

She stated that the support and structure that Councils can give can help children to settle into the area. She made a plea for members of the public to provide help through Fostering and Mentoring.

She explained that some children, referred to as “Dubs” were currently living in refugee camps in both Europe and other countries, were particularly vulnerable by virtue of the fact that they do not have an adult to provide them with the protection that they need and deserve.

She said that applications for young people aged 18 or approaching that age should be fast tracked.

The Chair said that the reason for there being a large number of young men in these camps was because they are the most likely to survive and therefore families in need would prioritise them in seeking to escape.

Bernie Howley said that they would also be seeking to leave affected countries as they would be asked to fight in war and would be killed if they refused to.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what happens to an Asylum Seeking Unaccompanied Child who turns 18 midway through the process of fostering and integration and is then deemed an adult.

Richard Baldwin replied that the Council was currently helping an 18 year with his application.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if any additional support was in place for local Foster Carers.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that two events had been held specifically held in March and September to provide them with information.

The Chair said that carers need to be prepared for the reality of the situation regarding the young people that may come into their care. She added that any placement needs to be right for both parties.

Councillor Sally Davis commented that she would encourage the Council to take as many children as possible as long as appropriate support was in place.

Bernie Howley said that if young people were placed in supported lodgings then they would need to be mentored adequately as they would be likely targets for radicalisation.

The Chair asked would the government pledge the same level of financial support per child if a local authority chooses to take above the minimum quota of Un-accompanied Asylum-Seeking Children required.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that he did not know. He said the intention of the Council is to receive 23 children over the next two years. He added that there were likely to be hidden costs within each case.

The Chair asked where does B&NES rank in terms of wealthiest Councils per head of population.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that he imagined that it was in the top quartile.

The Chair asked how many children had left Kent under the National Dispersal System which was introduced in July.

The Divisional Director for Safeguarding & Social Care replied that 45 had been dispersed with 5 of them coming to B&NES.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson commented that she felt that the Council had made a creditable offer of help to the current situation as a number of Local Authorities had not taken any.

The Chair commented that she had previously worked in refugee camps and said that the people there simply want to be safe, for their children to be able to attend school, to receive medicine and to have food to eat. She thanked officers for all their work so far.

44 PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

The Strategic Director for People & Communities addressed the Panel, a summary is set out below.

Connecting Families: He said that during August there had been some national press reporting relating to the Troubled Families Programme, suggesting the suppression of evaluation reports and over-stating of success in local areas.

He explained that following this the DCLG commented that: "It is wrong to say that any report on Troubled Families has been suppressed. There were several strands

to the evaluation work commissioned by the last Government and there is not yet a final report”.

He stated that locally, the Troubled Families work called Connecting Families is delivered by a small core team and wider partners both internal and the voluntary sector. He added that the figure of 215 families was allocated to B&NES by the DCLG for the three year programme. However, in B&NES partners supported significantly more than this number and were able to evidence that at least 300 families made positive outcomes in line with DCLG’s guidance.

Children Missing Education: He explained that all children who are deleted from roll or leave a school without a recorded destination school are defined as Children Missing Education and are followed up. This will include a small number of children excluded from school and awaiting a new school place to be identified / agreed, but also those moving school or moving home, where we do not initially know the new school they will attend as well as those who have not sustained the expected levels of attendance.

He added that all children recorded as Missing Education are followed up and data sought from a wide range of local agencies as well as through regional and national networks to confirm their destinations where necessary.

He informed the Panel that there had been a lot more movement during the last academic year, leading to a rise from 50 children identified in 2013/14 to 85 in the 2015/16 academic year. He stated they continuously review their practise to find ways of improving and sharing information and will be updating their policies in response to new DfE guidance which has just been published.

Bath Community Academy: He stated that on 18th July, the Cabot Learning Federation (CLF) which operates Bath Community Academy (BCA), announced to parents at the school that it would be commencing a dialogue with the DfE regarding the possible closure of the school. He added that officers are liaising closely with the school and CLF to ensure that any implications of this announcement are fully understood and managed appropriately. In particular, we have been working over the summer to support families with children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities to ensure they can give early consideration to the future education of their children.

New School for Mulberry Park: He said that they anticipate launching by the end of September the process to seek a sponsor for the new primary school being built a Mulberry Park. He added that the Panel will be advised when a sponsor has been determined by the DfE in the spring. The school is expected to open in September 2018.

Academies: He informed the Panel that there have been a steady flow of schools converting to academies, with the current figures at;

Primary – Maintained (47), Academy (14)

Secondary – Maintained (3), Academy (10)

Studio – Maintained (0), Academy (3)

Special – Maintained (0), Academy (3)

Total – Maintained (50), Academy (30)

He said that 4 more primaries were planned for conversion in November and 4 more were planned but with no specific date.

The Chair asked if Hospital Education would still be possible within a Teckal.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities replied that it would and that schools were supportive of this work.

The Chair asked what support was available within schools for apprentices.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities replied that this was due to be discussed at the Schools Forum this afternoon.

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

45 PANEL WORKPLAN

Councillor Liz Hardman asked for a Connecting Families update at a future meeting of the Panel.

The Strategic Director for People & Communities commented that in November the Panel would normally receive a report regarding the budget. He asked if the Annual Complaints report could also be added to the workplan.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked for an update on Children’s Centres.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Councillor Michael Evans said that it was more likely that the Panel would receive a report on the budget in January than November.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to add these items to their workplan.

The meeting ended at 1.20 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services