

# **CHILDREN'S HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2018**

PRESENT:- Councillors Barbara Parry (Chair), Alan Bishop, Matthew Courtliff, Fay Howard, Nick Martin, Carol Shelley, Roger Smith, Caryl Sydney-Smith and Nadine Watts.

Spencer Allen (Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers), Steve Colledge (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteachers), Alison Paul (Association of Swindon Special Schools Headteachers), Jacquie Watt (Swindon SEND Families Voice), Carol Willis (Healthwatch).

Apologies for absence were received from Elaine Poulter (Parent Governor) and Liz Townsend (Church of England Diocese).

Also present: Councillor Mary Martin, Cabinet Member for Children and School Attainment.

## **18. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Barbara Parry made a non-prejudicial personal declaration of interest in respect of Agenda item 21 (Children's Performance Summary on the grounds of her employment by the Ridgeway School.

Councillor Carol Shelley made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest to Agenda item 21 (Children's Performance Summary) in her capacity as governor of Swindon Academy.

## **19. Public Question Time**

No public questions were asked or submitted for this meeting.

## **20. Minutes**

Resolved -That the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Mary Martin reminded members of the purpose of the Committee and commented that she expected the minutes to demonstrate and record the challenge and scrutiny that the Committee provided.

## **21. Children's Summary of Performance 2018/19 Quarter 2 Year to Date Position**

The Performance Lead, Children Services, submitted a report providing an update on the performance of Swindon Children's Early Help and Social Care services based on the provisional year to date position at the end of September 18.

The report captured the key headlines from the most recent performance dataset and provided additional service contexts and aspects of performance information which should be considered when reflecting on the overall direction of travel for Quarter 2 of 2018/19. The report also contained information on the Local Childrens Safeguarding position on Serious Case Reviews (SCR's), Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's), Electively Home Educated Children and Children Missing Education.

In response to challenge and questions by Members, information was provided:

- a) That the Early Help Hub effectively screened 90% (476) of families within 2 working days. The Committee scrutinised the reasons for the delay in supporting the remaining 10% (21) families and it was agreed that a briefing note would be circulated after the meeting.
- b) Members challenged the reduced number of contacts into the MASH. It was confirmed that a change in the Pathway resulted in open cases going directly to the social worker involved with the child and family rather than being re-triaged at MASH. This ensured support was provided more quickly and efficiently. The Committee heard that there were audits and checks and balances in place to ensure the process was working as expected. As this was a new system, scrutiny was in place via the department's monthly Performance Board. The Committee was further advised that there was a process in place to identify any performance variance and if this occurred, a management response was required and corrective action taken.
- c) That due to the high number of social care re-referrals, the department had commissioned a detailed audit to take place in November. This exercise would enable the department to review individual cases and determine reasons for the re-referral; action would then be taken as necessary.
- d) That decisions on 84% of MASH cases during September were reached within 24 hours. The Committee heard that the remainder of the cases had undergone risk assessments and exception reports are provided to the service management team and monthly Performance Board.
- e) That in respect of the Healthy Child Programme, the 2.6% (12) young children who would have missed the initial assessment are being followed up by Health Visitors to ensure these assessments are undertaken.
- f) That after monitoring a range of criteria as part of the Troubled Families Programme, 650 troubled families had attained successful outcomes since the beginning of the programme. This was due to effective partnership working with a range of internal and external stakeholders and the timely processing of information for the benefit of the Troubled Families programme. The Committee heard that on a recent visit to the Local Authority, senior officers from the Department of Communities and Local Government reviewed outcomes for families and dip sampled cases from the Troubled Families Programme. Initial feedback received was very positive and claims were approved.

- g) The range of positive activities in place to support looked after children. These included reviewing high priority external placements (including residential) on a case by case basis to ensure the best outcome for the child. The Committee heard that the work programme relating to this work included recruitment and retention of foster carers, discussions between the Placement Team and local providers to help children and young people remain in Borough and to commission agencies to develop "Local Homes for Local Children" initiative. The Committee was advised that actions within the work plan were aimed at reducing the number of placement moves looked after children undertake and improving placement stability.
- h) That the Fostering Team had undertaken a successful campaign to recruit local foster parents and the initial response had been positive. A more targeted campaign was being undertaken to recruit foster carers from various under represented backgrounds to help match children and families, for example from a similar ethnic background.
- i) That all statutory assessments had been completed.
- j) Elected Members challenged on the conversion of Statement of Special Educational Needs and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's). It was noted that 7 statements had not been converted and remedial action is in place to get them converted urgently.
- k) That Swindon compared reasonably with national statistics regarding Care Leavers who were in education, employment or training, although it was noted that there is a downward trend and action is in place to reshape this.
- l) That whilst the number of Serious Case Reviews of children who had died or received a life-threatening injury due to abuse or neglect was not gathered nationally, the Committee accepted (and endorsed) that research could be conducted with other Local Authorities to get an overview of the numbers. The Committee were positive that the Local Safeguarding Board would be gathering this information and asked for information in the March 2019 report.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Performance Lead, Children Services, be requested to circulate the following information to members of the Committee before the next meeting:

- The time it took for the remaining 3% of parents to receive support from the Early Help Hub.
- A copy of the exception report for the remainder of the 16% of MASH cases that were not determined within 24 hours.
- Reasons why 2.6% (12) young children would have missed the initial assessment undertaken by Swindon Health Visitors.
- A breakdown on the number of EHCP referrals and tribunal appeals upheld.
- The location of care leavers who were not in education, employment or training.

(3) That the local Children's Services Board (LSCB) Manager requested to undertake research with other Local Authorities regarding the number of serious

case reviews undertaken where a child has died or received a life-threatening injury due to abuse or neglect.

(4) That a Sub-Committee be set up to review the Children's Services Action Plan and report back to the Committee at a future meeting.

## **22. Specialist Resource Provisions and Provision for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pupils**

The Head of Education with the Special Educational Needs Commissioner submitted a report providing information on the specialist resource provisions (SRPs) which are based in Swindon schools to meet the needs of children and young people with special education needs and disabilities. At the request of Councillor Parry, Chair of the Committee, representatives from Red Oaks Primary School and the Hearing Support Service attended the meeting and informed the Committee on the range of facilities and provision available for children at the Resource Centre and on the work undertaken at the school. Tamara Turchet, Senior Advisory Teacher Hearing Support Team, Zoe Norman, Manager at the Special Resource Provision (SRP) at Red Oaks Primary School and Rachel Surch, Headteacher of the school, gave a presentation (attached to Minutes) on the services and support provision available for deaf and hearing impaired pupils in Swindon, particularly at Red Oaks Primary School.

Following the presentation of the report, the officer responded to members' questions and observations on the issues raised. The Committee noted:

- a) That the SRP takes children from the point of diagnoses during the Early Years and primary school stages.
- b) That the number of children using the services varied across Key Stages and that children in Key Stage 1 sometimes recovered following medical intervention and then returned to full time mainstream education.
- c) That support regarding financial, emotional and practical issues was provided to parents.
- d) That regular meetings were held with neighbouring Local Authorities to share good practice.
- e) That visual phonics was developed over time at Red Oaks Primary School and this linked BSL (British Sign Language) to the children's overall education. All children at the school use BSL.
- f) That recruitment of staff with a BSL Level 3 qualification was difficult and this affected pupils being admitted into the school. On further challenge the Committee heard that discussions were being held between the three families affected by this situation and local schools on the best way to ensure the children attended mainstream education and receive the support they needed.
- g) That factors such as the family environment, language use, levels of reading and writing and the ability to combine this with learning BSL affected the attainment and outcomes of hearing impaired children.

- h) That a benchmarking exercise with other Local Authorities regarding the education attainment of deaf children was conducted by the school.
- i) That due to parental preferences where they requested their child attended a local school, the number of schools providing special resource provision supporting pupils with various Special Educational Needs had grown in Swindon.

Resolved – (1) That the report be accepted with Members of the Committee appreciating the high quality of provision that is accessible to Swindon children and families.

(2) That the Head of Education be requested to circulate information regarding the benchmarking exercise conducted by the school regarding the educational attainment of the deaf children attending the school so that Members can review the impact and outcomes of the quality of provisions on children's educational attainment.

## **23. Education Other Than at School**

The Head of Education with the Special Educational Needs Commissioner submitted a report providing information on the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) service which included four separate services that supported a range of vulnerable children and young people. These include the Pupil Referral Unit, a Centre for Vulnerable and Anxious pupils, the Hospital School and an Adolescent Unit based at Marlborough House (NHS facility).

The Head of Education with the Head of the Pupil Referral Unit referred to the routine work to ensure there was challenge and scrutiny of the effectiveness of the support being provided within EOTAS and that the pupils were made to feel valued. This helped students engage with the service resulting in better outcomes for them.

Following the presentation of the report, the officers responded to members' questions and observations on the issues raised. The Committee noted:

- a) That the students welcomed the provision of education tailor made for them at the new Fernbrook Centre. The new accommodation has made a significant difference.
- b) That following the relocation to new premises, the Centres were able to support a higher number of vulnerable students.
- c) That positive feedback was received from Ofsted last year for the provision of full time education of vulnerable and anxious students attending Clapham Hobbs Centre, Fernbrook Centre and the Adolescent Unit based at Marlborough House.
- d) That pupils transitioning to the new premises were supported by various teams in Children's Services including Swindon Tuition Service.
- e) That discussions were being conducted with the three Swindon Associations of Headteachers to produce a graduated response to exclusions by delivering effective strategies. These would help support vulnerable pupils and enable them to remain in mainstream education.

- f) That the outcomes for the pupils attending the Centres were monitored and tracked and the results for the past year had indicated that pupils had positive Risk of Need Indicator outcomes. This was due to the implementation of individual programmes and guidance, resulting in 93% of students remaining in post 16 education. The Committee heard that the other 7% (4 students) were being supported by youth engagement workers.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

## **24.**

### **Exclusions from Schools**

The Head of Education with the Special Educational Needs Commissioner submitted a report providing information on the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions from schools, the reasons for those exclusions and the actions being taken.

The Head of Education with the Additional Provision and Reintegration Manager confirmed that the report linked closely to the previous report on Education Other Than At School (EOTAS), particularly relating to young people who attend the Borough's Pupil Referral Unit (Fernbrook). The Committee was advised that the overall number of permanent exclusions had decreased slightly from the previous year. The Head of Education referred to the exclusions data and explained that whilst there were only 2 permanent exclusions in the primary setting, this year saw some schools reporting an increase in behaviour management issues.

The Head of Education explained that due to this, discussions were being undertaken with Nylands School to increase provision and provide tailored support for pupils. He further referred to the discussions held with Secondary schools. Through the support of the Alternative Provision Working Party and the Fair Access Panel, pupils at risk of exclusions were able to transfer into another school where they would undertake a fresh start.

Following the introduction of the report, the Head of Education, together with the Additional Provision and Reintegration Manager, responded to the members' questions and comments. Members noted that:

- a) The Department had commissioned an external review across a number of Swindon secondary schools to identify good practice in order to reduce the number of exclusions. This was then cascaded to all schools.
- b) Pupils at risk of exclusion who were on Early Help Records were supported by the Early Help Hub and cases graduated to the Fair Access Panels if needed.
- c) There was no clear correlation between academic achievement and exclusions.
- d) The Fair Access Panel met every fortnight but had a limited remit. The Committee further heard that its aim was to support students moving to alternative schools and they worked closely with parents to ensure parental preference was considered when reviewing cases.
- e) Ethnicity profile of excluded students matched the profile of Swindon

students.

- f) There was no clear correlation between young people who were repeatedly excluded and mental health issues.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Head of Education be requested to circulate information on the number of exclusion cases reviewed by the Fair Access Panel over the past year

## **25. Pupils Electively Home Educated**

The Head of Education submitted a report providing information on the number of pupils who are Electively Home Educated (EHE), Children Missing Education (CME) and school attendance. He referred to two aspects of work where the Education Welfare Service was the lead service but was also supported by other internal and external partners which included the Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME) teams. The Head of Education further referred to the data and advised that a) the number of home educated pupils had increased nationally and this was reflected in Swindon; b) school attendance was better than the national average in primary schools, with secondary schools similar to the national average; c) schools were being supported by the Education Welfare Service (EWS) through the Traded Services agreement; d) support was being provided by the EWS to parents who opt for home schooling; and e) the process of identifying and monitoring children missing education was resulting in less children missing education.

Following the introduction of the report, the Head of Education, responded to the members' questions and comments. Members noted:

- a) That there were a number of reasons why parents decide to home educate their children and these included a breakdown of relationship with the school and opting for more vocational and creative studies.
- b) That in respect of missing children, the EWS liaise with the Police and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and occasionally if necessary Interpol to ensure child safety by identifying the whereabouts of a child, particularly if it was believed that the child had been taken out of the country. Swindon operates a robust policy of not removing children from the CME list until their whereabouts are known or all possible avenues have been exploited.
- c) That data reflected students accessing pupil premium were more prone to miss education. This issue is challenged by the Local Authority with Headteachers.
- d) That the Professional Lead in the EWS was offering support and guidance to the Swindon Secondary Attendance network helping them further support those pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- e) That in respect of pupils on part time timetables, guidance to schools was issued last year by the Local Authority and whilst schools recorded this information, a new system was being implemented by the Local Authority to overall monitor this information. The Committee were advised that this

monitoring was the responsibility of all partners and not exclusive to the Local Authority.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

**26.**

**Work Programme 2018-19**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Democratic Services on the results of the work programme consultation and the suggested priorities of the work for the Municipal Year, 2018/19.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the work programme be updated to include items recommended by the Committee:

- a) The next Performance Report be submitted at the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019.
- b) A joint CAMHS and TAMHS report be submitted by the Principal Office, Health & Wellbeing and the Executive Nurse CCG at the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019.