

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 14 MARCH 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Eric Shaw (Chair), Fay Howard (Vice-Chair), Paul Baker, Rex Barnett, Andrew Bennett, Michael Bray and Nicky Sewell.

Co-opted Representatives: - Peter Crockett (Association of Swindon Special School Headteachers), Mrs Penny Summers (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education), Peter Wells (Catholic Church Diocese), Rachael Matthey (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteacher) and Sam Cantlon (Swindon Youth Forum)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Doreen Dart, Raymond Fisher, Mary Martin and Councillor Ellen Osa, Malcolm Barton (Church of England Diocese) and Dick Mattick (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers).

Councillors Mavis Childs and Peter Stoddart were also in attendance.

38. Declarations of Interest.

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

39. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2012, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Minute No. 36 - The Chair asked that the creation of a working group to consider Early Years Provision be considered for inclusion within this Committee's work programme for 2012/13.

40. Public Question Time.

The following questions were asked in accordance with Standing Order 28:-

Questioner

Mr Paul Sunners – Swindon Resident

Questions

1. To assist meaningful analysis and awareness at the level of the individual young person, how many young people were not engaged in education, employment and training in December 2011 and January 2012?
2. Based on the assumption that there is value in any statistical data/analysis: could this committee consider locally-specific data being presented in numerical and percentage forms aided where necessary by diagrammatic

representations?

3. What is the status of Nyland as an educational establishment in light of its reference in this report to Nyland Campus when information referring to its application for Academy status refers to Nyland Special School?
4. The current Out of Borough placement figure (56) represents a 14.2% increase in the OOB figure (49) given at the Swindon Children Trust Board meeting held on 31st March 2011 – the immediate projection figures for OOB placements (5) would see this increase rise to 24.4%. What implications does this have for the OOB placement budget 2012/13 and beyond?
5. The Swindon Children Trust Board and Local Safeguarding Children Board are each led by what is referred to specifically, as an Independent Chair. Is information available that defines the term 'independent' as it relates to these positions?

Response

The Chair responded that a written response to these questions would be forwarded on to Mr Sunners.

41. Performance Report.

Sue Wald (Director of Strategy and Commissioning) presented the Children Services Performance report to the end of December 2011, including updates for January 2012. She explained that the information was presented either as a number or a percentage depending upon how the information was required to be presented nationally. There had been an increase in the number of children coming into care recently and work was currently being undertaken to find out why this upward trend was occurring.

In response to a query from Councillor Childs, Ms. Wald confirmed that reasons had been given as to why all children had been taken into care but that not all the reasons had been recorded within the data submitted. She confirmed that these reasons would be recorded and that clearer statements would be made in any data provided in the future. A small number of children in care had been allocated a non-qualified worker and work was being undertaken to ensure that they would be moved to a qualified social worker. The number of children in care was at its highest for four years and had occurred in a relatively short period of time. Officers were currently monitoring this data to ascertain whether this trend was likely to continue.

The Chair asked why up to 30% of children left school with low levels of reading and writing whereas assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2 would indicate that this would not be the case. Paddy Bradley (Director, Schools and Learning) responded that the model was not set up to transfer skills at the different levels between Primary and Secondary Schools and that work was being undertaken at a national level to drive forward more of a reliance upon coursework for GCSE's, rather than qualifications.

Peter Wells (Catholic Church Diocese) asked whether there was any duplication in reporting the same information to the Swindon Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Section 75 Performance Group, the Children's Joint

Commissioning Board and the Swindon Children's Trust Board. Ms. Wald confirmed that there was some duplication, particularly in relation to integrated working, although each Committee had different terms of reference and therefore focussed upon specific issues relevant to that body.

Data relating to free school meals was based upon eligibility rather than actual take-up and it was confirmed that the threshold for claiming was quite low. Schools handled this issue very sensitively as it was not just about the child having a free school meal but about the other resources that the school could attract through take-up.

Resolved – (1) That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the performance updates in Children's Services to the end of January 2012.

(2) That future reports contain information in both numerical and percentage format.

42. Revenue Monitoring Position.

Steve Haley (Group Finance Manager, Children's Services) presented the latest projected outturn position on Core funded, Dedicated Schools Grant funded and Section 75 PCT funded Children Services 2011/12 revenue budgets.

All three budgets were projected a net underspend based on the position at the end of January 2012 and the overall budgetary position of the Children's Services Group Directorate was routinely monitored by the Children's Services Leadership Team, Corporate Board and Cabinet. The Children's Social Care placements budget had been relatively stable over the last two years but a recent increase in the number of children in care could have significant financial implications for the Council if this trend was to continue and this position was being carefully monitored.

In response to a query regarding Out of Borough Placements, Ms. Wald reported that consideration had been given to the Council operating its own residential units but that it was currently more cost effective to place children out of the Borough. It was agreed that an Out of Borough Placement task group should be considered as part of next year's work programme.

Mr. Haley circulated copies of a graph depicting the demand for children in care during 2010/11. All children were assessed to ensure that the provision was right for their individual needs and a multi-agency panel would decide whether a child needed to be moved out of Borough if their needs became too complex to be met within the Borough.

Resolved – (1) That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the projected outturn position on Core funded, Dedicated Schools Grant funded and Section 75 PCT funded children services 2011/12 revenue budgets.

(2) That consideration be given to the establishment of an Out of Borough Task Group as part of this Committee's work programme for 2012/13.