

Minutes of the meeting of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2012 at 7.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor Bradburn (Chair)  
Councillors Alexander, Bramall, Miles (until 7.45 pm), Small, Wales, Webb and Zealley  
Dr Chakrabarti and Mr S Pritchard (Co-optees)

**Officers:** G Tolley (Corporate Director Children's Services), M Bracey (Assistant Director [Education, Effectiveness and Participation]), M Grinyer (Head of Delivery – Setting and School Effectiveness), M Hancock (Assistant Director [Joint Commissioning]), N Rayner (Assistant Director [Children's Social Care]), G Sandmann (Head of Productivity) E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

**Also Present:** Councillor Dransfield, Ms Z Ravens (Acorn Childcare)

**Apologies:** Councillor McLean

#### **CYP14 MINUTES**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the Select Committee meeting held on 3 October 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **CYP15 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE**

From 1 April 2013 the Council had a statutory duty to have in place a properly constituted Health & Wellbeing Board and to consult appropriate bodies, including relevant Select Committees as to its Terms of Reference.

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director (Joint Commissioning) on the health and Wellbeing Board's proposed Terms of Reference and noted that:

- The Health and Wellbeing Board would be a committee of the Council and constituted as such. It would also be a partnership board and its structure needed to reflect this;
- The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board had also presented its proposed Terms of Reference to the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee and the Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group Board, prior to the Terms of Reference being submitted to full Council for approval on 9 January 2013.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Assistant Director (Joint Commissioning) be thanked for his report and attendance at the meeting.

2. That the report on the draft Terms of Reference for the Health and Wellbeing Board be noted.

## **CYP16 TWO YEAR OLD OFFER**

From September 2013 Local Authorities would be subject to a new statutory duty to offer free education of 15 hours per week to 20% of the most deprived two year olds across the country. This would increase to 40% with effect from September 2014.

Milton Keynes had run a successful pilot for two year old education since 2009 and was currently funding the education of approximately 500 two year olds across the borough. The number of eligible two year olds was likely to be approximately 800 from September 2013 rising to 1500 with effect from September 2014. A project had commenced to ensure that the new statutory duty could be met and that sufficient, high quality places would be available for all eligible children.

The Committee received a witness statement from Ms Z Ravens of Acorn Childcare who had been providing places for two year olds as part of the pilot and noted that:

- The provision of activities for two-year olds in a quality setting provided enormous developmental advantages;
- The provision provided eligible two year olds with an opportunity to learn by socialising and interacting with their peers, to vocalise with adults who had advanced language skills and gave structure to the day for both them and their parents;
- Children who participated in the two year old provision were 'learning through play' rather than in a formal educational setting;
- The scheme also provided opportunities for outdoor play which was equally important. Acorn Childcare participated in Forest Schools events to provide extra outdoor stimulus;
- Provision was targeted at disadvantaged families and enabled children's centres to work more closely with families;
- It was critical that there continued to be sufficient funding for this work in order to ensure high quality childcare to all social groups, regardless of income;
- Special needs assessments are not carried out until a child starts formal education but work to identify potential problems was started at this stage, often by a partnership approach with children's centres;
- Where special healthcare needs have been identified, these are managed appropriately;
- Eligibility for places was not decided by the service providers; referrals were made by children's centres, health visitors, social workers or other local partnerships;

- There could be problems with the provision of enough places in some areas; ideally places should be within walking distance of a child's home, but this was not always possible;
- Two year olds needed a higher staff ratio than either 3 or 4 year olds and a lot of pre-schools did not have appropriate facilities for 2 year olds;
- Where eligible families have engaged with the project, the children continued to attend and had moved up into the 3 year old stage. Once involved, most parents did not need much encouragement to continue with the scheme. Those who did participate appreciated the benefits of the scheme, although it was recognised that there might be a small minority of eligible but hard to reach families who had not yet engaged with the scheme;
- Milton Keynes had been building up its two-year old childcare provision since 2009 and there were approximately 500 children who had taken up the offer;
- From September 2013 the Council would need to offer places to 20% of all two year olds in eligible families, estimated at 800 children by the Department of Education in 2013/14, rising to 40% (1500 children) in 2014/15. Due to the continued growth in the pre-school population in Milton Keynes this may be an underestimate;
- £2m revenue funding had been promised by the Department of Education for 2013/14 and a further £800,000 in 2014/15;
- Capital funding from the government was only £500,000 which was not enough to create the physical space needed for the anticipated expansion of the service;
- As part of the Council's Organisational Transformation Programme (OTP) planning for Early Years placements was being carried out by the School Places Planning Team. Early Years provision had been brought in from the periphery of Children's Services to become a core activity. Milton Keynes was seen as a national leader in this field;
- The Free School Meals (FSM) criteria did not apply until children started formal education at aged four. However, the Council was using the same criteria for eligibility to assess the provision for two year olds. Since the FSM system had been changed to link into the Pupil Premium funding there had been a 15% increase in the uptake of free school meals;
- The Council had in place a team of qualified consultants who were working with childcare providers to improve the quality of service provision which included a range of initiatives. The Council was developing its own quality rating system as Ofsted inspections of facilities / service provision for this age group were infrequent;
- Children's Services were also working with the Public Health Team on 'school readiness' and strengthening the joint commissioning

process in order to be ahead of the compliance schedules for 2013 and 2015;

- An 'Early Intervention Grant' would be included as part of the 2013 Direct Schools Grant (DSG) budget. This would be ring-fenced for learning, but if under-spent could be used elsewhere within the DSG budget;
- The Council was concerned that the government's estimate of the future number of children requiring the free two year old provision was incorrect. The whole country was trying to provide quality care for this age group with what could be a finite resource. The Council needed to ensure that only quality provision was available. As with schools in Milton Keynes, only those providers deemed to be providing a quality service would be allowed to expand;
- There was a lot more work to be done over the next few months as the government would only fund good or excellent provision. Bad or inadequate provision for the two-year old age group was seen as being worse than no provision at all;
- There were plans to relax the current high pupil/staff ratio for two year olds which, although it would mean provision could be expanded, it could also have an adverse effect on the quality of that provision. The Council would need to continue to monitor how any changes in the regulations affected service provision;
- The role of the Local Education Authority (LEA) would change from a provider of services to a commissioner but it would need to be active in the financial side of improving quality.

RESOLVED –

1. That Ms Ravens from Acorn Childcare be thanked for her contribution to the debate.
2. That the Assistant Director (Education, Effectiveness and Participation) provides the Committee with written information about the training that is in place to improve the quality of service provision for two year olds.
3. That information about the qualifying criteria for Free School Meals be provided to the Committee for information.
4. That during the summer of 2013 the Committee will review the Council's progress towards its statutory duty to offer free education to 20% of the most deprived two year olds in Milton Keynes from September 2013.

## **CYP17 SUPERVISED CONTACT SERVICE**

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) on the progress of the Supervised Contact Service following Council's decision to establish Supervised Contact during care proceedings as an in-house service from 1 April 2012. The Committee noted that:

- Care proceedings were a time of high tension for all involved and all aspects of the process, including contact visits needed to be handled with care and sensitivity;
- Getting the process right made a huge difference to the welfare of the children involved;
- Supervised Contact for children in care proceedings had been delivered by an externally commissioned provider. However, service provision had become variable, sometimes good, but often only just satisfactory, or sometimes even poor, to the detriment of the welfare of the children and their families involved in care proceedings;
- The contract was put out to competitive tender following the Council's normal procurement procedures during 2011. However, due to the unsatisfactory response, Council agreed to provide this service in-house from 1 April 2012 in order ensure the quality and integrity of the service;
- The funding which would have been spent on an external service provider had been transferred to the in-house service;
- The Council had set up an in-house team of contact supervisors who were prepared to do the flexible hours necessary to provide this service effectively, although the level of activity was variable, depending on the number of proceedings going through at any one time;
- The Council had employed a very competent administrator as Service Co-ordinator who did the scheduling of contact meetings, arranged contact supervisor cover for each meeting, organised transport, booked venues and maintained records;
- The Courts were very appreciative of the new service and the Council's efforts to minimise problems. There was less 'spot purchasing' of contact supervisors which increased the reliability of attendance and supervision at contact meetings and was of benefit to all concerned.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) be thanked for her report and on the efforts of her staff to improve this service.
2. That the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) be asked to provide the Committee with a written breakdown of the costs of the service.
3. That as this was a new area of work for the Council the Committee may wish to carry out further scrutiny of the service later during 2013/14.

**CYP18 PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT 2012**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Delivery – Setting and School Effectiveness on the Annual Achievement Report

2012. The Annual Report provided a summary of outcomes achievement by children and young people in Milton Keynes in the academic year 2011/12. During the presentation the Committee noted that:

- 2012 had been a positive year for outcomes in Milton Keynes;
- Outcomes were improving rapidly at Key Stage (KS) 1 and KS2 but not at KS4 (GCSE);
- There had been a slight improvement at KS4 in 2012 which was the result of the work which had been done over the last few years. The KS4 results were still lower than they should be and there was more improvement work to be done in this area. However, it was noted that the 2012 KS4 results should be compared with what the same cohort had achieved at KS1 and KS2, rather than with the current KS1 and KS 2 cohorts;
- The Council was also committed to improving the attainments of those pupils with a Special Educational Needs (SEN) statement. There was an increased expectation that teachers would teach everyone in a class and that SEN pupils should be included as part of the whole class. Statement needs varied from pupil to pupil and they needed to be seen as individuals. In future, funding for the support of SEN pupils would be provided by the High Needs Block of the Direct School Grant;
- Quality First Teaching and Supplementary Schools had started to have a positive effect on the achievements of pupils of black and ethnic backgrounds;
- The Council was working to improve the quality of the governing bodies of those schools which did not have a good or outstanding rating;
- 2012/13 was the last year that the Council as LEA would have access to funding set aside for school improvement. From the 2013/14 school year this money would go directly to schools to enable them to arrange and pay for their own services;
- The Council, as LEA, was facing significant challenges in sustaining resources in order to provide support to schools. Via the Schools Forum, schools in Milton Keynes would be invited to contribute part of their DSG to the LEA to provide on-going support for school improvement work.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Performance and Achievement Report 2012 be noted.
2. That the Schools Improvement Team be congratulated on the continued upward trend in schools' performance and achievement.
3. That the Lead Member for Children's Services uses his best endeavours to ensure that there was sufficient funding available to enable the improvement work in schools to continue.

4. That the High Needs Block of the Direct Schools Grant be monitored to ensure that the funding is sufficient to provide effective support for Special Educational Needs pupils.

**CYP19 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

At its meeting on 10 October 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee approved the Terms of Reference for the Children and Young People Select Committee. These were ratified by Council as part of the Constitution on 31 October 2012.

RESOLVED –

That the Select Committee's Terms of Reference as approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and ratified by Council be noted.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.58 PM