

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 8 October 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor S Bains
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor C Miks
Councillor J Mutton (substitute for Councillor P Seaman)
Councillor H Noonan
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor D Skinner (substitute for Councillor J Lepoidevin)

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson

Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member: Councillor D Kershaw
Councillor S Thomas

Employees (by Directorate):

Y Corden, People Directorate
C Dutton, People Directorate
S Giles, People Directorate
A Harley, People Directorate
G Holmes, Resources Directorate
M Pickles, People Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate
T Savill, Resources Directorate
A Simpson, People Directorate

Apologies: Councillor E Ruane
K Jones and R Potter

Public Business

20. Declarations of Interests

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th September, 2015 were approved.

The Scrutiny Board discussed a number of Matters Arising from the last meeting:

- Further to Minute 14/15 'minutes from the previous meeting' officers were writing a report following discussions with officers at Birmingham City Council regarding Support to School Governors.

- Further to Minute 16/15 'Adoption Service Annual Report' Members noted that 52% of children over 5 years old in care were in long term foster placements.

22. **Quality Assurance - Children's Placements**

The Scrutiny Board discussed a briefing note of the Executive Director for People, which provided detail about quality assurance in children's placements.

The report noted that Coventry had approximately 600 children in the care of the local authority. The majority of these children live either with foster carers or in residential homes. The Council were committed to ensuring that it commissioned or delivered the best quality services possible within available resources. The report outlined how the City Council ensured that the placements it procured for looked after children provided good quality care and value for money.

The report detailed types of placements, location of placements, cost of placements, inspection of placements including Ofsted, the role of commissioning and the procurement process and the voice of the child. Appended to the report was a location map of placements in the UK and a case study of the quality assurance process.

The Board discussed the report with the Cabinet Member for Education, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and officers. The Board raised the following queries:

- Time taken to report to the Council on findings during visits
- Announced or unannounced visits
- Working with partners
- Placements a long way from Coventry
- Working with other local authorities
- Cost and quality of placements
- Internal and external placements
- Voice of the Child participation

Officers agreed to investigate whether the Regulation 44 visits were announced to the home prior to the inspection.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board recommend that:

- 1) The Cabinet Member's for Education and Children and Young People request that, the new Executive Director for People review Looked After Children Residential Care and Education and discuss issues with neighboring local authorities', in order to reduce the number of placements more than 20 miles away.**
- 2) A letter be sent from the Scrutiny Board to the Minister for Children**

23. **Early Learning for Two Year Old Funding**

Further to minute 27/14 the Scrutiny Board discussed a briefing note of the Executive Director for People, which provided a progress report about Department for Education (DfE) targets to ensure the provision of early education places for the 40% most disadvantaged two year olds in the city.

The eligibility for delivery of an early learning place was set nationally, with some flexibility for local authorities to set local criteria. From September, 2014 the guidance was updated and the programme was extended so that 40% of eligible 2 year olds would receive up to 15 hours of funded early learning a week.

National criteria had also been extended and as well as the free school meals eligibility criteria and a child in the care of the Local Authority (LAC) the following were also now eligible; Benefits (Working Tax Credit Income), Special Educational Needs, Children with Disabilities and children who had been adopted. Local criteria included, children subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan or a Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The report included targets and numbers of places being used, further work to expand provision in the city and target marketing to eligible families. Appended to the report was statistical neighbour take- up and west midlands take up.

The Board discussed the report with the Cabinet Member for Education, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and officers. The Board raised the following queries:

- Targeting marketing
- Improving outcomes and evaluating impact
- Barriers to increasing places
- Challenges to increasing participation
- Ofsted rating of Early Years settings

The Board requested further detail about;

- i) barriers to creating Early Years places and what was being done to address the barriers
- ii) the number of Early Years settings which were assessed by Ofsted as requiring improvement or inadequate

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board requested:

- a) a briefing note with further detail about barriers and assessment be provided**
- b) a progress report next municipal year**
- c) the Board look in more detail at the Early Intervention Policy**

24. Universal Infant Free School Meals/Pupil Premium Update

Further to minute 43/14 the Scrutiny Board discussed a briefing note of the Executive Director for People, which provided an update on progress made with the local implementation of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) and the impact on the Pupil Premium.

The 2014 Children and Families Act placed a legal duty on state-funded schools in England, including academies and free schools, to offer a free school meal (FSM) to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 from September 2014.

Capital funding was paid to local authorities in April 2014 and was subsequently allocated to all 82 eligible schools on a formulaic basis to assist in meeting the costs of, for example, kitchen refurbishment, new catering equipment and utensils. All Coventry primary schools were able to deliver the entitlement from 1st September 2014, although there were challenges for a small number of schools, particularly where major capital works were undertaken.

A Pupil Premium (PP) fund was paid to schools for several different groups of children including:

- Pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any census point over the previous six years (currently paid at £1,320 per primary pupil and £935 for secondary pupils);
- Pupils who are in care or have left care (currently paid at £1,900 per primary or secondary pupil);
- Pupils classified as a 'service child' or in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence (currently paid at £300 per pupil); and
- More recently an Early Years Premium has been introduced for disadvantaged three and four year olds receiving free pre-school education providing up to an additional £300 a year for each eligible child.

The introduction of UIFSM removed the incentive for parents who qualify financially for FSM to make an application and as a result schools had experienced some loss of Pupil Premium funding.

The Board discussed the report with the Cabinet Member for Education, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and officers. The Board raised the following queries:

- ways to improve accessing Pupil Premium funding
- allocation of Capital Funding
- concern about the stigma associated with free school meals
- reasons parents opt-out of free school meals

Officers agreed to look at promotion of the free school meal offer to privately and social rented providers. Officers also agreed to make amendments to the FSM/Pupil Premium application form to apply to children eligible for PP but not FSM.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board requested a review to look into why 15-20% of eligible children are not taking up the free school meal offer.

25. **Work Programme**

The Board noted the work programme and the additional joint meeting with Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) on 25th November, 2015 to consider Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

26. **Any Other Business**

Councillor M Mutton reported that Members were invited to Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) on 3rd Nov for the consideration of the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health which would have a focus on children and young people.

(Meeting closed at 4.00 pm)