

## **EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 5 January 2012 at 5.00 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, third floor, the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting.)

### **Present**

Councillors Steve Wemyss (in the Chair)  
Margaret Adair  
Peter Eddis  
Caroline Scott  
Duncan Cope, Parent Representative  
Sion Reynolds, Teachers' Liaison Panel Representative

### **Also Present**

Carole Damper, Chief Executive of the Roberts Centre and  
Co-Chair of the 14-19 Partnership Board  
Dawn Saunders, Associate Director, Public Health Trust HQ  
Kate Slater, Senior Commissioning Manager, NHS Portsmouth  
Sharon George, Youth Support Commissioning Manager, PCC  
Teresa Deasy, Local Democracy Officer, PCC

#### **1 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 1)**

Councillor Scott declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in that she used to work some time ago in units for children with behavioural problems.

#### **2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2011 (AI 3)**

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

It was pointed out that Councillor Caroline Scott had not been recorded as present at the meeting. The clerk agreed to correct the record accordingly.

**RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.**

#### **3 Review on targeted support for children and young people who demonstrate behaviours that may put them at risk (AI 4)**

Carole Damper explained that she was co-chair of the Children's Trust 14-19 Partnership Board with Rachael Dalby. She explained that the partnership included members from Education, Schools, Health Services and third sector providers of services relevant to young people.

Carole explained that two workshops had been held for the purpose of reviewing the model for future targeted youth services. Both groups had expressed the opinion that, apart from Social Care, there was no generic

agency to refer young people with behaviours that might put them at risk. However, in many cases it was not appropriate to refer a young person to Social Care as the level of risk was not considered to be serious enough to warrant intervention from Social Care. Schools reported that they had dealt with situations where pupils exhibited some behaviours which were a cause for concern but teachers were not sure which agencies could help them, as these concerns were not serious enough for Social Care. She explained that the type of risky behaviours were low-level absence from school, sexual health issues and suspected low-level substance abuse and certain behaviour issues as examples

Carole Damper referred to the fact that funding levels had recently been reduced in this area. It had been planned to develop an integrated targeted youth support service in Portsmouth with three proposed area-based teams: North, Central and South. However, there had been announcement just before Christmas that there was now only funding for two teams. There had been scope for one of the teams to be run by the private or voluntary sector.

Sion Reynolds, in his capacity as Head of Social Education at Mayfield School, expressed surprise that the workshop participants had felt that there was nowhere to refer young people about whom they were concerned. At Mayfield he explained that they made use of the Health Improvement and Development Services (HIDS) team at Portsmouth City Council and they also liaised with the Sex and Relationships Education Forum. HIDS representatives would visit the school and put on extra classes for small groups of pupils and would also conduct one to one sessions with pupils as appropriate.

Carole Damper went on to explain that the method of allocating funding was a disadvantage to the provision of service to meet the holistic needs of children and young people. Funding was often directed towards the provision of a specialist service and these specialists work only with young people in relation to their specialist area which may be one aspect of their lives. She commented that the workshop participants had felt strongly that there was a need for a lead professional to be responsible for dealing with young people at an early stage when perhaps an issue can be managed before it escalated into a severe problem. The responsibility of the lead professional would be to work with the young person in a preventative way and to bring in a higher level of specialist only if needed. The way to do this would be to skill up front line workers so that they could perform a more holistic initial role with young people. Too many front line staff members were not offering a wide enough range of services.

Councillor Wemyss commented that there seemed to be more concern about the provision of services rather than the effect on young people. He commented on the fact that many people whose attendance record at school had not been particularly good could still manage to have reasonable success in their lives. Carole Damper explained that the context of these behaviours had to be examined: for example, pupils who occasionally miss school but who have a secure family background and circle of friends are less likely to come to harm than those who do not. The way these issues are put into context is via assessment with resilience factors. Professionals look at the balance between identified risk factors against the resilience factors.

Kate Slater said that early intervention was the key to helping young people in before their problems escalate to become more serious issues.

Councillor Scott commented that in her previous experience in working with young people those presenting problems were dealt with by a specialist social worker, a psychologist and other specialists. These specialists would discuss what was best for the child with one of the experts taking the lead; but there would always be the option to consult other specialists. Carole Damper explained that children presenting with problems continued to be dealt with in that way. However, current thinking was that it was important to tackle potential problems at an earlier level by skilling up front line staff in order to prevent the issue from becoming more serious.

Sharon George advised that Richard Harvey deals with young people in school who exhibit behaviours that are likely to put them at risk. The sort of behaviours involved were poor attainment, absenteeism, behaviour and learning difficulties etc. Richard dealt with young people up to the age of 16 but it could be extended to age 19.

Dawn Saunders commented that the school nursing service had been doing some good work with absenteeism due to illness. The work involved assisting parents to educate and nurture their children. Families with multiple issues could put their children at risk. She referred to the Children's Trust Board priority D.

Carole Damper mentioned that schools were represented on the 14-19 partnership board and that they were very engaged with the work of the board. However, the School Strategy Board and the Schools Forum needed to get involved.

Dawn Saunders commented on the fact that all agencies need to - speak the same language which has been a problem in the past. However, things had greatly improved since the establishment of the Children's Trust Board. It was important to involve all those agencies that work with children, not simply education or health services.

Councillor Wemyss thanked the witnesses for their evidence and asked for figures to back up the points made. Dawn Saunders advised that information was available on the reduction in teenage pregnancies. There was also evidence to support that the abuse of alcohol among teenagers often led to a rise in teenage pregnancies. She added that this information was available from the school nursing service and agreed to provide the information to the panel.

Sharon George mentioned that the Youth Offending Team also had supporting data to the Children's Trust plan regarding school attainment levels in Portsmouth.

Panel members discussed whether it would be useful to have the information by ward or by postcode. It was agreed that information by postcode would probably be easier to sort than by ward and might be more useful.

Officers agreed to have this information available in time for the meeting of 23 February 2012.

Councillor Adair asked how parents and carers were involved with lead professionals dealing with their children. It was pointed out that lead professionals would look at the whole family. Sion Reynolds mentioned that at Mayfield School parents' evenings are not very well attended but it depended on the school. However, as mentioned previously, staff at Mayfield School worked closely with the HIDS team.

Kate Slater advised that information was available nationally on many issues affecting young people who demonstrate behaviours likely to put them at risk. In Portsmouth, there were high numbers of looked after children, children subject to child protection plans and children who were being dealt with by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). She commented on the need for a co-ordinated approach amongst the services dealing with children in order to develop an early intervention approach to reduce the human and financial costs to people in Portsmouth.

Carole Damper mentioned the parents' consultation document and it was agreed that she would forward this document for the next meeting of the panel.

Dawn Saunders agreed to present the needs assessment report that has been completed for Priority D of the Children's Trust Board for the next meeting of the panel.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. Dawn Saunders to provide information from the School Nursing Service (broken down by postcode) on the link between teenage pregnancies and alcohol abuse for the meeting of the panel on 23 February.**
- 2. Sharon George to provide information from the Youth Offending Team on school attainment levels in Portsmouth (broken down by postcode) for the meeting of 23 February.**
- 3. Sharon George to provide a copy of the parents' consultation document for distribution with the agenda for the next meeting of the panel on 26 January.**
- 4. Democratic Services to forward copies of the Portsmouth Children's Trust Plan and the report entitled "Tackling Poverty in Portsmouth – Needs Assessment May 2011" to members of the panel as soon as possible.**

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm.

TMD/DMF  
10 January 2012  
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