

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 5.00 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

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

### **Present**

Councillors: Councillor Steve Wemyss (in the chair)  
Margaret Adair  
Peter Eddis  
Lee Mason

### **Also Present**

Siôn Reynolds, Teachers' Liaison Panel Representative  
Mike Stoneman, Strategic Commissioning Manager  
Richard Harvey, Manager Targeted Services  
Bruce Marr, Preventing Youth Offending Project Manger  
Liz Robinson, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Teresa Deasy, Local Democracy Officer

#### **4 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 1)**

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **5 Apologies for Absence (AI 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paula Riches, Councillor Caroline Scott, Sharon George and Duncan Cope.

#### **6 Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 5 January 2012 (AI 3)**

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

Siôn Reynolds referred to paragraph 5 on page 4 and pointed out that the reference to Mayfield School in the third sentence was incorrect. He asked that the reference to Mayfield School be deleted and that the sentence should read as follows:

"Siôn Reynolds mentioned that parent evenings generally in Portsmouth are not very well attended but it depended on the school."

This amendment was agreed and it was also agreed to delete the last sentence of the paragraph.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2012 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.**

## **7 Priority D Commissioning Strategy (AI 4)**

Mike Stoneman referred to his appendix to the scoping document which was submitted to the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> December. He outlined the main focus of Priority D of the Children's Trust Plan. The focus of Priority D is on targeted support for children and young people who demonstrate behaviours that may put them at risk. The Commissioning Strategy focuses on three strands:

1. To develop an integrated target youth support service in Portsmouth (3 area based teams are proposed – north, central and south) offering support to the most vulnerable young people in Portsmouth.
2. To develop a range of open access structured youth activity programmes (positive activities).
3. To maintain and refocus a range of specialist tier 2/3 services, which would be delivered alongside the Targeted Youth Support Service.

The rationale for the changes include the need to achieve better outcomes for young people from the investment the City Council is making in youth services; reduce the level of duplication between different targeted youth services; free up the available resource and spend less on management / administration and more on front line delivery; reduce the number of young people who may require expensive specialist services; reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to specialist services; address geographical disparities in provision; and provide the third sector with greater opportunities for delivering 'youth services' in the City.

Councillor Wemyss asked for figures showing the success rate of the strategies employed to support them as vulnerable young people. Mike Stoneman referred to the main performance indicators that are used for Priority D and agreed to provide some figures obtained over the last three years and earlier years, if available.

## **8 Evidence from the Principal Educational Psychologist (AI 5)**

Liz Robinson began by explaining that the Portsmouth City Council's Educational Psychology Service employed nine Educational Psychologists, which was equivalent to 6.8 full-time employees. They dealt with young people in the age range 0-19 years. Their aim was to support good learning outcomes and good social and emotional development.

With regard to pre-school children, referrals would come from Paediatricians, Health Visitors, Social Care Services, nursery schools and child care providers, via the Early Years Panel.

Prior to September 2010, the Local Authority provided the Educational Psychology Service to schools. Since that time schools have been charged for “school action plus” element of the Educational Psychology Service. Since the change, the Educational Psychology Service has been in the process of organising service level agreements with schools. They are looking at schools which were taking up the service and those which were not. It is very important that all schools in the city have access to some form of Educational Psychology Service.

Another aspect of the Educational Psychology Services role was the provision of psychological assessments for children needing statements of educational need, which are commissioned by the Local Authority. The service also undertakes a monitoring role of children with statements in order to challenge schools to ensure that they are following the requirements of the statement.

Liz added that the service also worked with special schools and this continues to be provided by the Local Authority.

In response to questions from the panel, Liz explained that only those children identified as having a need for a psychological assessment were referred to the service.

Since the decision to charge for the service, Liz explained that the majority of schools had elected to use the service provided by Portsmouth City Council. Eight out of 10 secondary schools use the service. Priory School and King Richard School had not opted to use the service. Priory School has for some time employed an Educational Psychologist and they have extended the service provided to cluster feeder schools. In 2012/13, King Richard School would be using the service provided by Portsmouth City Council and Liz is waiting to find out what other schools will choose to do next year.

With regard to primary schools, 35 out of the 51 primary schools had opted for a contract with Portsmouth City Council’s Educational Psychology Service (academic year 11-12). In her opinion, only one or two schools had no educational psychology service provider.

Liz further explained that children with statements or going through assessment for statements and those being dealt with under the Fair Access protocol were also served by the Educational Psychology team.

Liz estimated that on average in a year, the service would deal with approximately 130 statutory assessments, approximately 100 annual reviews of pupils with statements, with specific cohorts at risk and about 750 young people.

Of the 750 children and young people, some will be seen for an assessment, others will be discussed with staff in schools, pre-school settings, or with other professionals on a consultation basis.

## **ACTION**

### **Liz Robinson to provide actual annual figures for service users per annum.**

As an example of the sorts of cases dealt with, there were, for example, cases involving children starting school with speech/language and communication difficulties which had been picked up by pre-school providers. She commented that, on occasions, it was important to deal sensitively with parents as many parents did not want to admit that their child might have additional needs or disability.

The sorts of secondary school examples might involve pupils being referred as a result of poor attendance, activities out of school which might be causing concern or reluctance to engage in school work. She commented that this type of scenario was typical of ones to be dealt with under priority D.

In these cases Educational Psychologists would meet with children/young people to assess whether there were any difficulties relating to learning, social/emotional or family etc. A report would then be written on the young person's needs and a multi-agency plan would be developed.

Carers/parents would be involved wherever possible and agencies such as Motiv8 could also be brought in.

In some cases poor parenting or family issues can be a major contributing factor and in such situations Educational Psychologists needed to work closely with other agencies.

The Educational Psychology Service works with the Harbour School. One example involved assessing pupils' cognitive skills and to determine whether the young person was liable not only to put themselves in danger but also whether there was a risk of harm to others and to assess the young person's understanding of risk.

Following a question about how the service might be improved, Liz said that she would like to see the service linked-in with the city council's various priorities. This is happening with Priority G: the Children with Disabilities Strategy, and there is scope for a contribution to priority D in terms of supervision, assessment and training. She added that she was not against the change in policy whereby schools would purchase Educational Psychology Service but she had some reservations about this. This was because she was concerned that it might mean that some children would have less or no access to an Educational Psychology Service. She would like to see all schools having core time for educational psychology facilities.

In reply to a question about what schools are required to do regarding provision of an Education Psychology Service, Liz explained that Ofsted would scrutinise a school to see if they were meeting needs and following the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. They would not be penalised if they were not using the Local Authority's Educational Psychology Service but they would need to demonstrate that they were drawing appropriately on external agencies for support.

Richard Harvey explained that the Special Educational Needs Team would process all statutory assessments. Very few parents were taking the Local Authority to tribunals, and it was believed that early intervention helped to mitigate against that.

In relation to how Portsmouth figures compared with those of other Local Authorities regarding statutory assessments, Richard explained that the trend in Portsmouth was rising in contrast to the national trend. Therefore, they were keeping a watch on that.

In Portsmouth there were a high number of children in special schools. Most pupils requiring specialist provision can access it in Portsmouth but some pupils need to attend provision outside the city.

Richard gave details of the special schools in Portsmouth:

- The Willows Nursery in Battenburg Avenue
- Cliffdale Primary in Battenburg Avenue
- Redwood Park in Highbury, Cosham
- The Mary Rose School in Locksway Road dealing with children from 0-19 with very significant disabilities
- The Harbour School which has five sites: Cosham, Tipner, Milton, Fratton and Stamshaw.

At this point, Councillor Wemyss declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in that he was the Chair of the Futcher School Trust, which was responsible for the Mary Rose School.

## **ACTION**

**Richard Harvey to provide background information on special schools in Portsmouth.**

### **9 Preventing Youth Offending Project (AI 6)**

Bruce Marr, the Preventing Youth Offending Project Manager, made the point that 3% of young people in Portsmouth were offenders. Since 1998 there had been investment in the services for young people. The Preventing Youth Offending Project was a champion service dealing with young people from 8 years to 18 years or for parents with a child from 0-18 years. The service would work with the whole family including parents and siblings. Very often parents would have one case worker and the child would have a different one.

The service provided was flexible with a central referral point. There were four agencies which refer clients to panel which is able to respond to need. The aim is to identify the need in the community. For example, if it is a behavioural issue, officers would meet with the offender or offenders and discuss changing their behaviour. They also worked with schools.

Bruce went on to explain the risk factors for young people accessing support services. The current thinking was there was too much silo working in which too many young people were having to deal with various agencies for support when it would be better to have one agency dealing with one particular client. The Preventing Youth Offending Service dealt with an estimated 100 to 120 young people per year.

When dealing with a young person, it is essential to establish a routine. Therefore, the client would have a meeting on the same day at the same time each week.

The Preventing Youth Offending Project operated a support and enforcement model with ASBOs as the final options. The support and enforcement model was about setting goals for young people. The agency was not there to be the young person's family or friend but they were there to challenge their behaviour.

Panel members asked for figures on crime among young people and the numbers of clients dealt with per annum over the last 5 years.

## **ACTION**

### **Bruce Marr to provide the statistics to the panel.**

Bruce explained that the most important challenge was to reduce repeat offenders.

The organisation was struggling to reduce First Time Entrants figures to below 300 however through data analysis and commissioning to respond to this last years First Time Entrant figure was 128. The type of crimes involved a considerable amount of shoplifting. Therefore, they had introduced a DVD campaign in schools. The majority of offences committed by young people were of quite a low level.

The organisation had introduced a triage system. If it is the young person's first offence and they admit it, the matter can be dealt with without recording the incident as an offence. In response to questions from the panel, Bruce Marr explained that the system was working but the incidence of re-offending was high. He added that there were about six people in the city committing about 20% of offences.

The number of young people needing to be supported and the pressures around the Priority D strategy have led to high demand and complex needs in the city. The Preventing Youth Offending Project would have to work hard to meet the need. The silo working means that many young people may get left out. The objectives to deliver contractual and moral outcomes were sometimes conflicting.

There was good interaction between the courts and the police. The magistrates involved in the Wessex YOT would be dealing with the Portsmouth project now that the services for Portsmouth were being centralised in Portsmouth.

In response to a question regarding the effect of parents, Bruce explained that the aim is to empower parents to change but sometimes this would take too long. Therefore, it is more effective to work on changing the behaviour of the child. It is important to identify and target those who are most in need. The agency wants to be more pro-active but there are capacity issues especially in relation to the proposals under Priority D. Finally, Bruce commented that 49% of young people in Buckland grow up in a household with no wage earner in the family. This leads to very low expectations. The risks to young people were mainly poverty, substance misuse and adult illiteracy among parents. He agreed to provide some figures to the panel.

## **10 Dates of Future Meetings (AI 7)**

The panel noted the dates for future meetings:

- Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February at 5.00pm
- Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March at 5.00pm

The meeting concluded at 6.30pm.

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TD/CB  
30 January 2012