

HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Housing & Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 20 March 2015 at 9.30 am held in Conference Room B, floor 2 of the Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

Present

Councillors Darren Sanders (in the Chair)
Phil Smith

Also present

Maria Cole, Residents' Participation Representative

16. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alicia Denny and Sandra Stockdale.

17. Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations.

18. Minutes of the meetings held on 6 and 27 February 2015 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel held on 6 and 27 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the chair of the panel.

19. Review: Support services for young people (aged 16-25) living in isolation (AI 4)

The chair welcomed the guests to the meeting and introductions were made around the table before evidence was given.

a) The panel heard from Leon Runham-Cuenca, Portsmouth Young Persons' Services Manager, Two Saints Ltd, Portsmouth Foyer

Leon introduced Sarah McLean and Natasha Chaplin, social work students who are currently based at Portsmouth Foyer.

Leon explained that the Portsmouth Foyer provides accommodation and a network of support for homeless young people. The support network is essential to enable young people to develop life skills required to moving forward in their lives. The young people can be care leavers or come from a challenging dysfunctional family, and go from the school environment to a hostel environment. The Foyer allocates a community involvement worker to an individual who will tailor a package (pathway) to their individual needs and their personal interests. The Foyer offers support in many ways from education and training programmes, developing and improving life skills and developing self-worth and confidence.

The following anonymous case study examples were discussed:

Child A is a 14year old male living in Paulsgrove who is too old for holiday clubs. He doesn't want to attend the Hillside Youth Club due to the reputation of the troubled youngsters who use the facility. He is basically 'on his own' either at home feeling isolated or hanging around getting into trouble during the school holiday period. His school does not provide any holiday services. This is a crucial period ie 14-16yr old age and child A could quite easily take the wrong path, purely due to boredom and the lack of facilities and services available to this age group.

Child B is from a stable family background but dropped out of college and didn't know what they wanted to do. She experienced pressure from her parents to return to college or find work. She chose to volunteer at her local riding stables which she knew well. This gave her the confidence to pursue further higher education.

Sarah and Natasha included the following points from their work place experiences:

- Do not feel services are accessible to young people.
- Challenging behaviour in one of the children's homes was not managed challenged or managed, it was accepted behaviour.
- There is a pocket of children which early intervention misses. Need something for them to do to prevent them from taking the wrong path.
- There is a Facebook/Xbox generation who although are on their own in their home they are interacting with other peers.
- There are less services for young people to access north of the city.
- There are plenty in the city but many young people cannot afford the bus ride into the city.
- Young people often have an aspiration but do not know how to access that service to get involved.
- The services which are provided at The Foyer should be accessible in other areas.

b) Jo Bennett, Leasehold and Commercial Services Manager, Housing and Property Services

The following points were raised by Jo:

- Youth clubs do try to attract and keep young people so that as many as possible are supported and tracked.
- When young people reach 16 there becomes a lull in their lives. They go from having the school environment, of having to attend every day and being taught in a classroom, to suddenly not having to do either. Young people need guidance.
- A support network for young people is essential.
- Those young people living in a stable family environment are likely to continue on a structured path with the involvement of their parents encouraging them either to attend college or find work.
- Young people from care and supported living often reach 16 and just want to leave all services alone.

- Both Hillside Youth Club (HYC) and the Paulsgrove library are well attended by young people, some of whom do not interact well and do not attend school regularly. HYC does attract some troubled young people but they are able to access services at the centre.
- The library is now run by volunteers and offers young people access to pc's.
- If you can add an external influence to the lives of young people they have far more chance of succeeding and taking the right path.
- The Army Cadet Corps and the Scout Association are active in our housing areas and encourage young people to actively join in. This gives them the opportunity to interact with others, gain confidence and engage in new activities/adventures.
- Young people need a focus.
- Need to reach the 'invisible young person' who sits in their bedroom alone playing on electronic gadgets. How do you get to them?
- Putting young people on the Somerstown community group PATCH and getting them involved has given them a sense of purpose.
- School council gives young people a voice.
- With 30+ children in a class, there will always be the chaotic top layer and those with educational needs, and then those in the middle - the invisible ones. The ones who just get on with it but no-one recognises.
- It is all about getting services to young people. This is very difficult with budget cuts which is why the voluntary sector is now so heavily involved.
- National Citizen Service is a way for 15-17year olds to make friendships, learn skills they do not teach in class and go on a residential. They learn to budget and keep volunteering and grow in confidence. All for £50.
- Liberty Gas are taking on young people from deprived areas in the city as apprentices. These young people are working on properties they live in, are learning a trade and then going to work. This is changing the benefit mind-set of many and stopping the sit at home mentality.

Lucy Wingham agreed to finalise details of the visit to All Saints hostel and to notify members of the panel.

20. Date of next meeting (AI 5)

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 am.

Chair of the Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel