
NOTICE OF MEETING

HOUSING & SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL

FRIDAY, 26 JUNE 2015 AT 9.00 AM

CONFERENCE ROOM L - CIVIC OFFICES

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Membership

Councillor Darren Sanders (Chair)
Councillor Ryan Brent (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Margaret Foster

Councillor Gemma New
Councillor Stuart Potter
Councillor Phil Smith

Standing Deputies

Councillor Dave Ashmore
Councillor Jennie Brent
Councillor Hannah Hockaday

Councillor Ian Lyon
Councillor Lynne Stagg
Councillor Matthew Winnington

(NB This Agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: www.portsmouth.gov.uk

AGENDA

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declaration of Members' Interests**
- 3 **Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March and from the visit to All Saints Hostel on 23 March 2015 (Pages 1 - 8)**

RECOMMENDED that the minutes from the meeting held on 20 March and the visit to All Saints Hostel are noted.

4 Support Services for people ages 16-25 living in isolation

The panel will discuss the continuation of the review, witnesses to be called and the proposed timetable.

5 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting to be agreed by the panel.

Members of the public are now permitted to use both audio visual recording devices and social media during this meeting, on the understanding that it neither disrupts the meeting or records those stating explicitly that they do not wish to be recorded. Guidance on the use of devices at meetings open to the public is available on the Council's website and posters on the wall of the meeting's venue.

18 June 2015

Agenda Item 3

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

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NOTES OF MEETING WITH JANE SPENCER, MANAGER, SOCIETY OF ST JAMES', ALL SAINTS HOSTEL, 23 MARCH 2015

Present: Cllr Darren Sanders (Chair, Housing/Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel), Cllr Phil Smith (Member, HASC Panel), Jane Spencer

Background:

The meeting aimed to gain evidence from Ms Spencer about isolation among 16-25-year-olds, many of whom reside at the hostel.

All Saints is a supported housing facility for residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with high support needs that lies between those at the Foyer and those at Victoria Road South.

Questions and discussion

1. How do people arrive at the hostel?

There was direct access - people in the target group could turn up and ask to be admitted. However, this is now conducted through a housing panel that allocates provision based on need. There are procedures in place to deal with those who present outside of normal office hours. These are led by PCC's housing options department.

2. What are the entrance criteria?

Aside from the details above, First Wessex, which owns the Foyer, All Saints and Victoria Road South, asks that entrants are able to pay two weeks' rent - £10.74 - upfront as part of its tenancy arrangements. As per First Wessex policy, anyone residing in any of the three centres who is in arrears - even if it is less than £100 - cannot be transferred to any of the other centres regardless of need.

3. Why do people arrive at the hostel?

The Southwark judgement a few years ago - which allowed teenagers who had been evicted from their parents' home the right to approach the local authority for a home and to be given it if they were deemed to need Looking After - has increased the number of 16 and 17-year-olds at the centre. Previously, it was usual to see two or three 16 or 17 year olds n a year: now there are times when almost all 22 residents are 16 or 17 years of age. That is one reason.

There is also what I call the 'disposable child theory'. I have had many parents say to me 'They are old enough. I do not have to look after them. You do it instead.' Sometimes, they want us to teach the life skills they did not. In other cases, there has been abuse or neglect by the parents, leading many of the children we see to be lacking boundaries in what can and cannot be done in life. Part of our job is to teach them those.

4. How is the hostel set up?

There is a communal room on the ground floor and three floors of bedrooms - 22 in all. Each floor has a kitchen and showers for those living there. The ground floor can be used for people with some physical disabilities.

Each room has a small sink for shaving and similar things, a work desk, bed, room to hang stuff and draws. First Wessex provide bedding and a starter pack with plates and cups to get the young people started. All kitchens should contain pots and pans for cooking.

Staff are on duty to support young people 24/7. We make regular checks of the building to maintain safety but go to a lot of trouble not to be seen as security guards constantly invading their space.

Residents can come and go as they please, within limits. Alcohol and tobacco are allowed, but other drugs - including legal highs - are not.

5. Given that there are locked rooms, what can be done to reduce isolation among residents?

Sometimes, people with mental health conditions will self-isolate so they need extra services, which we provide. Especially in the early stages, we are in regular contact with residents - often multiple times a day - and we always work on a plan to get them back into some form of mainstream life.

Bear in mind that we are dealing with people who have often been let down by the ones they love and thought they trusted. This makes many of them angry, especially when they see complete strangers offering to help. We must be sensitive to that. So we put together plans with them early on. However, we know we discover key aspects as we go along.

There are two things that would enable us to pick up people feeling isolated while they are here. The first is to access the CCTV in the building. Data protection means only the landlord can access CCTV footage. We cannot. That means we are less able to spot trouble, especially on the floor where we do not have our office.

The second is to have full disclosure of information at the start. That has not always happened and we have been left to discover things that affect how we handle individuals after they have been sent here. That is frustrating, especially as the design and intention of the systems we have in this city is good.

6. How would you reduce isolation further if money were no object?

Firstly, I would make sure all cases remain open to social care for the first couple of weeks after people arrive here to provide consistent support and respond to issues

as they arise. This will help us and PCC assess properly what help is needed and whether the work we provide is right for them.

The second is to have a financial system that helps people with the sort of chaotic lifestyles many people who come here have. We are already starting that. The Society of St James' has set up a fund to pay the upfront rent First Wessex wants. This means people who need our help cannot be turned away by the landlord because they cannot pay the rent in advance at the point they become homeless because they have no income in place. Instead the Society of St James will pay the rent in advance to the landlord to enable them to access homeless accommodation quicker and reduce the level of stress associated with being young and homeless.

The second is to have a 'grace period' of up to six weeks, whereby the young people who come here can receive the sort of benefits they would if they were at college while we agree a plan with them. Too often, they cannot go out because they have no money when they arrive here and are being told to get training and a job the second after they have often been kicked out of their parents' home, a really traumatic experience. That makes them sink into themselves.

If they have that grace period - even if it's a taper or paid back in instalments once they get a job - then they will be able to find their feet without this extra stress. The fact we go through a housing panel, rather than have direct access, minimises the possibility of fraud, but the principle could help people a lot.

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