

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 13 July 2018 at 2.30 pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillors Neill Young (in the Chair)  
Tom Coles  
Frank Jonas BEM  
Will Purvis  
David Tompkins

#### **9. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Fuller and Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education.

#### **10. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **11. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2018 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel held on 16 February 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

#### **12. Review of school attendance and part time timetables in Portsmouth (AI 4)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table. The chair gave a brief summary of the review to date and said that the panel wanted to understand the wider impact of children not attending school across the city

Maggie Blyth, District Commander for Portsmouth, Hampshire Constabulary  
Maggie explained that Hampshire Constabulary is responsible for all policing in the city and this children missing school is a priority for the city. They have seen over the last 12 months a significant rise in serious violence in children aged between the ages of 12 and 17. This is reflected across the whole country. There is concern that some young people are committing a series of crimes and that many of these young people will be exploited as being under 18 they are vulnerable.

Hampshire Constabulary see these young people as children first, who need protecting and they know they can only do their job by working with other agencies. The police have been looking at what is behind their behaviour that makes them drift into crime, and one of the biggest indicators for the police is

the number of children that go missing on a repeat basis from home/care and school.

Children who are missing repeatedly are more likely to be exposed to other forms of exploitation taking place in the city. This is a continuing priority for Hampshire Constabulary to look at working with other sectors to reduce the harm. Hampshire Constabulary are working with partners to improve attendance at school and improving engagement in meaningful activities. It is recognised that full time schooling is not always appropriate for some children but there is a concern that without the wraparound that school provides that children can quickly link with other children in the city as Portsmouth is a small city.

There are particular forms of criminal exploitation related to county lines which is the running of drugs from outside and inside of Portsmouth. Established criminals are using young people to transport drugs as it is easier for them. There are also issues of grooming linking with CSE. County lines is just one issue and they are looking at how to work with other agencies to ensure young children do not get drawn into this activity which seems very tempting as they can earn hundreds of pounds each week rather than attending school.

In terms of repeat offenders, Hampshire Constabulary are seeing a small cohort of children who are repeat offenders who are involved with more serious criminality. The District Commander was in a conversation with the YOT yesterday where it showed that a smaller number of first time entrants into the youth justice system but they are coming in at a more serious level. She was keen to work more closely with schools in partnership to ensure that early signs of vulnerability are quickly addressed. The police treat them as children but also work with others to hold them to account for their behaviours.

There is some good information sharing across the city as it is a small city which helps. Schools are generally good at reporting children going missing but this could be better and they know that schools do not always report despite there being a statutory duty for schools to do so. Anything the local authority can do to improve this would be welcomed. The District Commander said she had seen in some areas of the country they have a minibus that goes out to collect any children missing from schools and this can help with any children who are scared to come into school. In response to a question, Neil Stevenson added that academy schools still have a statutory duty to report missing children and each school should have a protocol to deal with this. Some schools do have minibuses and track children.

With regard to EHE, Maggie said she deferred to the report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner published last year on Elective Home Education (EHE) that shows clearly that if there is a statutory maintenance of a register of EHE children it allows everyone know from a statutory context where children are. Maggie said she completely accepted that some parents choose to EHE, however there is a potential issue that at times the local authority do not know who these children are if they are not registered at school or with a

GP.

The District Commander said a focus on understanding and tracking the city's missing population and tracking of these children is important. An acceptance was needed across schools and policing that this is something that needs to be tackled. She added that any practical ways to keep children in school, such as minibuses would be welcomed so that the police can work with headteachers to keep children in school.

Julian Wadsworth, Active Communities Network.

Julian explained that the Active Communities Network is a national Sport for Development charity operating in areas of high deprivation across the country. They have a programme in Leigh Park which has been running over the last 4-5 years and 16 months ago they developed a programme in Charles Dickens & St Thomas wards. In terms of Hampshire the charity has a reputation of successfully working with policing teams, Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner Home office and across LA departments including, Children's Services plus partners within voluntary sector.

Nationally the charity is secretariat to the cross party Parliamentary Violence Commission and very aware that youth violence is on the rise in Hampshire which is a highly complex situation. Parent/carer support is a major issue and if the support is not there this does not support that young child being retained in school.

Since they have been operating in the Charles Dickens area they have seen an array of different cohorts not in full time education who present with vulnerability and they are working particularly with a female cohort who were identified through their outreach work. There is a mixture of Elected Home Educated (EHE) children who have been home educated over a period of two years and have seen increasingly trigger factors such as vulnerability, drugs, there is no evidence of those individuals currently being exploited by organised crime gangs but there are increasing risk factors. The majority of EHE children they work with appear not to be home educated due to ideological reasons. Julian has a linkage with EHE groups and has nothing against them at all as many do flourish.

In response to a question, Julian said the charity do work around resilience, positive pathways, employability skills, and reduction of crime and do this using sport as well as cultural, arts and digital means. The charity is nationally known as sports development charity but in terms of the work in Hampshire it is a tool to offer engagement, build trusting relationships and offers pathway opportunities.

Julian who is a member and represents at the Home Office Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation UK forum said he was concerned about the increasing risk factors of children not attending school to Criminal Exploitation and Sexual Exploitation. He was also very concerned about the mind-sets of some of the young people coming through. They are seeing 10 and 11 year olds presenting with adverse child experiences who have already got educational difficulties. Julian said he is very concerned about the mind-sets

of these vulnerable children who refer to 15 and 16 year olds who are involved in gangs as their role models. There is increased risk of vulnerable young people of all ages gravitating towards Organised Crime Gangs & Urban Street Gangs and undertake drug running to make easy money.

There is a crossover between CCE and CSE and this has been backed up with latest data from the vulnerability unit looking at trends in themes. Hampshire is very affected by CCE and if the gangs believe police are picking up the most vulnerable children they will move to exploit more progressive students including those within FE. Julian felt there needed to be greater awareness in schools about pastoral care as the situation is fluid and OCG's are sophisticated in their approach.

Julian felt that looking at transitions was very important as children are very vulnerable at these stages. He felt that schools needed to increase Early Intervention and target Year 5/6 pupils to put more creative pieces of work in place in to change the mind-set of young people and offer pastoral support in both schools and community. There are other cohorts of really vulnerable young people, particularly females who do not present with serious risk factors of violence but present with risk factors of vulnerability.

In terms of what recommendations he thinks we should be doing as a city to support these young people better, Julian said in terms of pastoral welfare a more collaborative approach in years 5 and 6 is needed to help with the transition to secondary schools. He was also concerned about the increase of CCE and felt that CCE should be on the priority list. CSE already done great work in Portsmouth through multi-agency and MET groups. He considered that understanding of County Lines Criminal Exploitation of Children is key and needs more work in conjunction with a youth service offer across city. In terms of the wider cohort for retaining people it is very complex regarding EHE and more robust legislation is required from the government. The charity have a positive relationship with academies and are working positively but understands the complexity of joint working with local authority as they operate under a different level of business approaches.

With regard to part time timetables, Julian said that now there are a lot more complex situations and higher levels of vulnerability. It is a highly complex and difficult situation.

In terms of things he would like to see included in the panel's report, Julian said that although there are resource issues both nationally and locally, the year 5 to year 7 age group is vital and is where this is make or break for some young people. Julian said he is meeting with heads as he would like to see some awareness training for pupils and staff on CCE. Year 10 pupils on very limited timetables is a particular issue that his charity are currently dealing with and he has 5 or 6 young people on this model.

Education are working in a very difficult situation due to a lack of resources and external challenges. CCE has rapidly increased over the last 2-3 years. He is really concerned with those young people whose parents are not able or

willing to offer pastoral and parenting support may not realise they can skip school and are earning money but putting themselves in danger.

He approached a particular school about training and initially they were very sceptical however three months later they were very keen for the support due to a number of incidents that had occurred. The charity are doing as much as they can go to get schools on board but continue to deliver awareness and safeguarding, increasing credible youth development opportunities for young people within the community and operating robust safeguarding practices, which is equally important

### Children's Social Care

Sarah Newman, Deputy Director Children and Families, Adam Shepherd, Head of Assessment and Intervention and Jude Findlay, Service leader gave evidence to the panel from the children services perspective.

In terms of numbers Jude explained that there are currently:

- 197 home educated children, with 28 of these open to the Children and Families service.
- 166 children on part time timetables with 42 of these open to children's social care and 35 are open to early help.
- 210 non-attenders, with 69 open to CSC and 44 open to early help.
- 7 CSE children (Child Sexual Exploitation), 6 at risk of CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation). For part time there are 3 CSE and 5 CCE.
- Of those home educated there are 3 at risk of CSE.

Adam Shepherd said that those children who are not attending school and not open to children's social care or targeted early help may not be on anyone's radar outside school and therefore risks are not always picked up. Partners need to ensure these young people are not dropping through the net. Jude Findlay said that there are very few CSE toolkits (matrix of scoring children at risk of CSE) from schools and very few completed unless children are open to social care.

Sarah Newman added that where children are going missing from home, Children's Services are very alert to whether they are also at risk of being exploited. Where children going missing from school, schools are not making the link to exploitation as readily and that is a vulnerability across the system. Barnados are doing work around their exploitation tools and thinking about how we better engage with education so schools are much more alert if children are missing school.

Adam said that they have serious concerns about the use of part time timetables by schools. Out of the part time timetable list there are a significant number open to children in need, including those in need of protection and looked after children. / This is putting increased pressure on

families, carers and increasing the risk of exploitation. It also has a significant impact on the police, children's social care and the young person.

Sarah Newman added that when Children's Social Care get involved to address issues within families, including increasing school attendance, there is often improvement but when social care end their involvement - without careful oversight this can slip and the cycle resumes. It is increasingly important to work with services across the whole system so that improvement is sustained.

In response to a question referring to the figures given by Jude earlier, Sarah Newman agreed that potentially on a normal school day there could be up to 573 children out of school across the city at a particular time. Those children who CSC know are vulnerable will have services in place to support them. However, across the system we need to ensure that know about all of those 573 children and how vulnerable they are. Schools are getting better at reporting to the MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub) where school attendance is an issue. The targeted early help teams are picking up more cases and assessing young people who are not in school, to be clear of the level of vulnerability. They now need to ensure services are aware of all children who are not at school full time and stop this escalating so they are not exploited.

In response to a question regarding targeting school transition groups from primary to secondary school, Sarah Newman agreed that this was the right age group to target. From a CSC perspective they see where the needs of those children are not fully understood and there are issues that can be missed. Whilst community engagement is great, it has to be supported by schools having a sense about what is going on with each child in order to understand what is making them vulnerable and whether the right services are in place to ensure their needs are met.

In response to a question regarding part time timetables, Sarah Newman said they put more pressure on placements for children in care which can lead to placement breakdowns. Parents are not always aware that they can challenge part time timetables which means they cannot respond to their other needs and can put a huge strain on family dynamics. The Edge of Care service has been set up to work with adolescents where there are those kinds of issues to provide more support.

In terms of recommendations CSC would like included in the panel's report Sarah Newman added that there needs to be a link between children missing school and completing the CSE risk assessment so fully understand the implications of them not attending school.

Jude added that there is a pan Hampshire group looking at the CSE toolkits and it would be helpful if they could get schools to participate in this to ensure that the toolkit is right for them and to understand why it is not working currently. Neil Stevenson added that this could be due to time involved in completing the assessments. It should be the schools safeguarding lead

completing the toolkits and they are responsible for making staff aware of the toolkit.

In response to a question, Sarah Newman said that referrals into CSC always increase at the end of July, once the school summer holidays begin. The school pass on any concerns about children they are worried about so Children's Social Care can provide support. During the 6 week school summer holidays it is very important to talk to children in care about the next school term before they return to ensure that any issues with attendance are resolved before September. Jude Findlay added that there are also issues with post 16 adolescents who are not in employment or training turning to risky behaviours.

Adam Shepherd said some schools do not use part time timetables and he would be interested to know what the schools who do not use them do instead to keep their children safe. He would be keen that a recommendation about the reduced use of part time timetables be included in the report.

The meeting concluded at 3.35 pm.

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Councillor Neill Young  
Chair