

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

Present:

Councillor Hugo (in the Chair)

Councillors

Clapham	Critchley	Owen	Wing
G Coleman	Mitchell	Stansfield	

Dr Elaine Allen, Roman Catholic Co-opted Member

Ms Helen Sage, Diocesan Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration

Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children)

Mr Stephen Ashley, Independent Scrutineer for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership

Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services

Ms Moya Foster, Head of Targeted Intervention Services

Ms Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director of Children's Services

Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion

Mrs Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 September 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, December 2020 to April 2021 relating to the portfolio of the Leader of the Council (Children) and the Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration. Members noted that the Forward Plan contained one decision relevant to the Committee: 'To progress the acquisition of the former Job Centre Plus building at 43 Queens Street to accommodate Children's Services in a single location, in line with the preferred model following the Ofsted review.'

Members questioned how the proposed purchase of the building was progressing as well

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

as seeking clarification on whether the intention was for all Children's Social Care staff to be housed in a single building. The suitability of a town centre location was also questioned.

Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children) reported that the vendor was seeking an unrealistic price for the property and as such the purchase had not proceeded. She advised that the intention was to find a suitable premises for the whole of Children's Services to be housed in a single building and that ideally a town centre location would be preferred due to its accessibility.

5 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Committee noted that two Executive decisions had been taken within the remit of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee since the previous meeting.

Questions were asked in relation to EX44/2020 '2020-30 Education Vision' with assurance sought that the Council's vision as outlined in the document would be achieved in light of its reduced influence over Academies. Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services highlighted that the Education Vision was not a Local Authority document and as such it had been developed with partners, including Blackpool's Academies, over a series of months. She went on to point out that an open and transparent relationship between the Local Authority and the Academies was of paramount importance. The Committee acknowledged the benefits of Blackpool having established an Education Improvement Board, particularly for a Local Authority of its size.

6 BLACKPOOL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - IN THE COMMUNITY

Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services updated the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme of 'In the Community'. She reminded the Committee that following the Youth Justice Board and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Prison and Probation inspection in October 2018, Blackpool's Youth Justice Service had received an inadequate rating. Mrs Booth reported that whilst progress had been made since the inspection, she acknowledged that the service still had further work to do to improve practice.

Reference was made to the significant work which had been undertaken with a group of young people involved in anti-social behaviour and was cited as a good example of multi-agency working with the police, Families in Need, Children's Social Care, the Community Safety Team and the Youth Justice Service. The Committee proposed that further work was still needed with regard to anti-social behaviour as despite agreements being in place with families, the negative behaviour from some young people continued. Ms Moya Foster, Head of Targeted Intervention Services advised that a robust support system was in place to offer assistance to parents and carers of children with vulnerabilities and specific needs and that work was ongoing to further strengthen links with families.

The Committee requested that a briefing session be provided in order to provide Members with a complete overview of the improvement plan and the cumulative progress to date. In addition, the specific names of the lead persons from the partnership as identified within the agenda report were requested.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

The Committee agreed:

1. That a briefing session be scheduled to provide a detailed overview of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan and which should include information on the progress made to date;
2. That the names of the officers responsible for each theme of the Improvement Plan be circulated to Committee Members.

7 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT - STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Mrs Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director of Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on the Children's Social Care improvement plan theme of 'Improving the effectiveness of strategic partnerships to improve outcomes and protect children.'

Reference was made to 'Working Well Together with Children and Families' and the 'Neglect Strategy' which were both documents which had recently been launched in conjunction with Children's Services. The Committee asked that Members be included in the circulation of such documents going forward as well as requesting that the two documents cited be provided to Committee Members as soon as possible.

The Committee was informed that consideration was being given on how best to embed a better understanding and identification of neglect in key workers, specifically within primary schools. In response to a request for additional details of this work, Mrs Richards reported that the Council's Principal Social Worker had led on the provision of training following the launch of the Neglect Strategy, which focused on the identification of signs of neglect at the earliest opportunity. Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion assured the Committee that significant support had been made available to schools alongside a wide range of training provision on neglect.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mrs Richards outlined the six different forms of neglect and the profile tool utilised by practitioners to help identify how signs of neglect might manifest at different age groups.

When asked about which partners still required significant improvement, Mrs Richards reiterated that a general overall improvement was sought to support better outcomes for Blackpool's children. Members discussed the inclusion of third sector partners, with Mrs Richards advising that although there was some good third sector partner engagement, further strengthening of these relationships would be beneficial. Specific detail around individual providers was sought, as opposed to considering the third sector as a whole and Mrs Booth, Director of Children's Services reiterated that further work was needed in the development of the voluntary hub to ensure all third sector partners were adequately included.

The Committee sought assurance that any anticipated increased demand over the Christmas period could be adequately dealt with, particularly in light of the current lockdown restrictions and the increased demand this could generate. Mrs Booth reported that due to a proactive approach by the Council, schools and partners there was no anticipation of a significant increase of demand following the current lockdown. Committee Members praised the support which had been accessible to schools during the pandemic, providing feedback of the out-of-hours advice and assistance that had

MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020

been offered by the Council.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the 'Working Well Together with Children and Families' document and the 'Neglect Strategy' be requested for circulation to Committee Members;
2. That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Members should be included in the circulation of relevant documents going forward;
3. That further updates on the improvement of relationships with third sector partners be reported back to a future meeting of the Committee.

8 CHILDREN SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP

Mr Stephen Ashley, Independent Scrutineer for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) attended the meeting to provide an update on the Pan-Lancashire safeguarding partnership arrangements.

After providing a brief summary detailing the formation and structure of CSAP, Mr Ashley reported that since the launch date in September 2019, the partnership had made significant improvements to practices but that further work was needed to ensure continued progress.

Members were advised that current structures which had already been in place had been utilised as the basis for CSAP groups, such as the Neglect and Domestic Abuse groups. In addition, he reported that the Getting to Good Board provided a useful basis for CSAP to undertake scrutiny work and would be utilised as an analysis tool to measure impact and progress. Mr Ashley noted the good progress made by Blackpool, stating that many positives could be identified including the strengthening of partnerships during a particularly difficult period.

Mr Ashley concluded by reporting that he was in the process of completing CSAP's initial annual report, following which he intended to produce future annual reports to run from April to April each year. In addition, he would be aiming for the completion of up to four scrutiny reports per year.

The Committee agreed: To invite Mr Ashley back to future meetings of the Committee to present the CSAP Annual Report and subsequent scrutiny reports.

9 SUMMER 2020 EXAMINATION RESULTS AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION

Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion presented a report outlining the projected outcomes for children in the 2020 summer examinations at GCSE and A-Level and the anticipated impact on attainment of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Turner reported that a significant proportion of pupils who applied to go to university in September 2020 had been successful despite initial disappointment when grades had been moderated downwards by an algorithm created by the Department for Education. This had also been evident at GCSE level, initially affecting the opportunity for pupils to progress on to college or work and apprenticeships. Once the algorithm had been

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

discounted and the awarding method reverted to centre assessed grades, this allowed children to progress onto their chosen destinations. The Committee requested information on the specific numbers of pupils who had been unsuccessful in gaining a place at their chosen university as a result of the algorithm process as well as the number of examination retakes and appeals, which Mr Turner agreed to circulate to Members following the meeting.

The Committee was informed that Ofsted inspections had been suspended and Mr Turner advised that this would potentially have an impact upon the progress that Blackpool schools that were not yet 'Good' would have towards achieving a grade of 'Good' or better. The Committee questioned whether schools would still be making progress towards their improvement, suggesting that continued development despite the reduction in Ofsted inspections should be aimed for. Mr Turner assured Committee Members that a support package was available to all schools via Blackpool's Education Improvement Board and that progress had not ceased with regards to each school's improvement journey. He anticipated that sufficient progress would be achieved and that monitoring via the Education Improvement Board and Academy Trusts would continue.

The Committee sought information on next year's cohort of pupils who would be due to sit their examinations in summer 2021, seeking clarity on any support that would be provided to pupils to compensate for any learning which had been missed as a result of the pandemic. Mr Turner informed Members that schools would be in receipt of a catch-up grant of £80 per pupil which could be used to provide additional tuition for pupils. In addition he advised that on-line learning packages, remote teaching and the provision of recorded lessons would all be made available for any pupils who were required to miss school due to Covid-19. Decisions were still to be taken with regards to the summer examinations, with the suggestion that pupils might only sit examinations for core subjects.

The support being offered to schools was praised by the Committee and the importance of protecting staff and pupil well-being was noted. Members discussed the system of assessing pupils' well-being via the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School survey (PASS), with the benefits of collecting data on pupils year-on-year to generate a clear profile being considered. Mr Turner confirmed that the PASS assessment had been implemented across all Blackpool schools, with a long-term funding commitment being made to the assessment programme.

In response to a question on whether Blackpool had experienced an increase in applications for pupils to be home schooled, Mr Turner reported that Elective Home Education (EHE) had seen an initial surge of cases in September 2020, with approximately 90 per cent of new applications being as a result of the Covid-19 situation. As such, Mr Turner anticipated that a proportion of these would be temporarily home schooled and would apply to return to school once the pandemic had subsided. He informed the Committee that 1.6 full time equivalent members of staff had been recruited as EHE Officers to support families who chose to educate their children at home.

The Committee agreed: That the town-wide Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) survey data be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

10 SCHOOL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC SCRUTINY REVIEW - FINAL REPORT

The Committee considered the final report of the scrutiny review of the School Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Committee agreed: To approve the School Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic report for submission to the Executive.

11 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2020-2021

The Committee reviewed the contents of the Workplan for 2020/2021. As part of its monitoring of the implementation of recommendations and actions, the Committee received a progress update from Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion on the recommendations resulting from the review of Inclusion in Education which were due for a November 2020 update.

In relation to R3 'The appeals process should be clearly explained to parents via the provision of a simple information leaflet clearly explaining the process, to be produced by the Council's Admissions Team and issued by Academies,' Mr Turner reported that the appeals information was now clearly outlined and accessible to parents via the Council's website and as such was now easier for parents to access and navigate.

With regards to R6 'That the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion work with all academies to identify the support required within each school for pupils in need of mental health provision, for example in the form of counselling sessions from appropriately trained specialists. Once the support required had been identified, to work with the academies to put that provision in place and report back to the Committee on progress in approximately twelve months,' Mr Turner advised that a full time equivalent counsellor, based at Educational Diversity was now available to provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to all schools. The service included a free four week placement on referral through the Athena panel. Mr Turner agreed to report back to the Committee on the impact of the counselling service in twelve months' time.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was noted as Thursday 28 January 2021, commencing at 6pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.15pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser
Tel: 01253 477255, E-mail: Elaine.ireland@blackpool.gov.uk