

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON TUESDAY, 07 APRIL 2015 AT 2.00 PM

Present:

Councillor E P Foley - Chairperson

Councillors:

P A Davies	D M Hughes	R L Thomas
D K Edwards	M Jones	H J Townsend
C A Green	G Phillips	D B F White
P N John	H J Townsend	R E Young

Registered Representatives & Co-opted Members:

Mr W Bond (Special School Parent Governor)
Mr T Cahalane (Roman Catholic Church)
Mr R Thomas (Primary School Parent Governor)

Invitees:

Councillor H J David	-	Cabinet Member – Children & Young People
D McMillan	-	Corporate Director – Education and Transformation
S Cooper	-	Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing
N Echanis	-	Head of Strategy Partnerships & Commissioning
S Roberts	-	Group Manager School Improvement
C Turner	-	Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
E Walton-James	-	Group Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
S Jones	-	Child Protection Coordinator (Education)
Supt M Jones	-	South Wales Police
Det Insp M Conquer	-	South Wales Police
Sgt D Thomas	-	South Wales Police

Officers:

R Keepins	-	Scrutiny Officer
M A Galvin	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer – Committees

161 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

162 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

163 PRINCIPLES DOCUMENT

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation submitted a report in order to inform the Committee of the Children’s Directorate’s revised Principles Document to inform the planning for school improvement.

She confirmed that the rationale for the revision was to ensure that plans for further school improvement take into account the current context of falling rolls, a number of surplus primary

and secondary school places, a number of Head Teachers reaching retirement age in the next 5 years and financial constraints, all of which means that a Strategy for sustainable provision is required

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation added that a set of Principles and criteria (Appendix 1 of the report referred), to underpin the future of education and learning provision which could then be applied to establish a Strategic Development Plan for the next 10 years has been developed. These criteria would provide a framework upon which decisions would be made.

A Member queried the graphs on page 13 of the report, in that data in 2015 reflected that there were 13,000 pupils currently in primary schools throughout the County Borough yet the projected number in secondary schools for 2020 was estimated to be only 9,500. She questioned the validity of this latest figure on the basis that most if not all young people would naturally proceed from primary schools into secondary schools.

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation advised that the way this data was calculated was fairly complicated, and rather than explain this at the meeting, she felt there would be more merit to provide this information to Members outside of the meeting. The data shown however she added was accurate as there were robust methods in place on how this was calculated.

A Registered Representative stated that throughout the report and supporting information, there was reference to outdated legislation. These papers quoted the School Organisation Proposals 2002, where in actual fact, these had been superseded by the School Organisation Act 2009 and the School Organisation Code 2013.

The Group Manager School Improvement advised those present that she took these comments on board.

The Registered Representative accepted this, but confirmed however that the bodies to be consulted over the reports proposals as shown in Section 5 of the Appendix to the report, were few in number as they were wrongly taken from the School Organisation Proposals 2002.

This list of bodies was far longer under the 2013 Act, and therefore he was concerned that not all the views of interested parties would be sought. These were far more expansive and wider ranging he added.

The Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships advised that the document before Members, was basically setting out the Directorates vision and principles for Bridgend, rather than reflecting different pieces of legislation.

A Member noted from the report that there were 5 primary schools and 1 secondary school that had significant surplus capacity at present, and he asked if he could have details of which schools these were.

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation advised that she would share these details with the Member outside of the meeting and also provide clarification on surplus places for each secondary school.

The Corporate Director – Education and Transformation further stated that The LA were exploring options option to look at combining primary and secondary schools within the County Borough on the same site, such as they did in the school in Llanharry, creating an all through campus. This may help alleviate surplus places. She emphasised that

the Authority were not looking to close secondary schools as the 9 secondary schools fulfilled adequately the needs of the communities they served.

One proposal to reduce surplus places would be to consider making better use of space at schools, as this would allow for space at schools to be used and hired by other organisations to generate income, and for community use. He advised Members that the aim of the Authority was to reduce surplus places in schools to 17% by 2017.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People reiterated the comments made by the Corporate Director – Children and confirmed that whilst there was an aim to reduce the number of surplus places, the overriding factor was to provide and maintain the best quality education opportunities for our pupils through the provision of state of the art schools.

Conclusions:

Following detailed discussion the Committee agreed to make the following comments and conclusions:

Principles Document

Members expressed concerns over references in the principles document to 'School Organisation Proposals' from 2002, which has now been superseded by the 2009 version and the School Organisation Code from 2013. Members were particularly concerned over the references made in the Principles Document to 'Interested parties' whose views would be sought, in that the information is directly taken from the 2002 document and omits numerous other parties as well as a strict consultation process, which are stated in the School Organisation Code 2013.

Federations

Members expressed concern over the lack of a policy as yet for the federating of schools. The Committee discussed the need for a strategic approach to federating schools, rather than an opportunistic one that seemed to be occurring when Headteachers were due to retire.

Further to this the Committee agreed the need for the Task Group to either make the decision to deter schools from looking at federating until the workstreams and options have been completed or, if there is an agreement that schools are encouraged to already consider federations, the Task Group make themselves available to support this. Members agreed that from their own experience as school governors, schools that are already exploring federations would benefit greatly from more involvement from the Task Group such as attending governor meetings to provide advice and guidance such as the feasibility and suitability of possible federations.

A general request was also made for training and briefing sessions for Governors on the federating of schools.

Additional Information

Members requested that they receive figures on the surplus places for each Secondary School in the County Borough.

The Committee requested that they receive further clarification over the surplus data for Primary Schools and Secondary Schools as the graphs did not appear to correlate.

Members requested that they receive clarification as to the definitions for the term 'small' schools both in relation to Primary and Secondary.

164 CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing submitted a report, in order to provide the Committee with information in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) within Bridgend County Borough and outlined the actions and strategies adopted to respond and prevent incidence of CSE.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised Members that Child Exploitation was a problem in society both historically and in current times with incidents that had occurred previously in Rotherham and Oxford, where a significant number of children had fallen foul of this by being not sufficiently protected in the system by Police, Social Workers and Council Officers.

He confirmed however, that there were very robust safeguarding methods in Bridgend to minimise or prevent child exploitation altogether, through agencies that worked together to prevent this occurrence being both reactive and proactive to this issue.

Paragraph 3.1 of the report gave a resume of what Child Exploitation was, and the type of people who carried out this crime. He confirmed that facebook and other social media sites had made it easier for perpetrators to prey on victims, including interaction on on-line gaming sites, where vulnerable young people could virtually speak to people all over the world, including on a one to one basis.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report then confirmed that the Authority was committed to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community from CSE, and as such all practitioners had access to a number of key documents which provided guidance and structure to their practice. Details of these were contained in the report.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support then confirmed the methods by which Practitioners in the Safeguarding Service were trained to ensure they were aware of the complexities, signs and risks within the parameters of CSE, including assessment of children and young people, particularly those categorised at “risk”. Those at risk were then investigated accordingly.

The prevention of CSE was assisted through weekly CSE meetings consisting of representatives from multi agency groups. These meetings ensured continuity and oversight of the actions identified within safeguarding plans, continuous evaluation of risk posed to the persons in question, as well as identification and monitoring of those persons who pose risks to children. This part of the report also gave certain statistical information as to the number of young people who had been identified as being at risk of CSE, including the number that were subject to Child Protection procedures and children that were Looked After. He advised that currently 10 young people in Bridgend were being protected, all of which were subject to Risk Assessments and Child Protection Plans.

He then referred to joint working arrangements that were in place with the South Wales Police and ABMU, as well as Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) that were in place. MAPPA were a set of arrangements in place to manage the risk posed by the most serious sexual and violent offenders.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that training in respect of CSE was undertaken in schools for Year 8 pupils, with this regularly reviewed and adapted, to keep it up to date and relevant, responding to emerging potential threats to children, for example through ‘Sexting’.

Further support work with regard to CSE was also carried out through other safeguarding groups such as the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF), which comprised of practitioners that supported professionals working in the Council to ensure they have the knowledge to identify risk indicators early, understand the most effective form of intervention and prevent further abuse. Also the Western Bay Children's Safeguarding Board (WBCSB) was an important group that had been established, with one of its strategic priorities being to drive down cases of CSE.

The Chairperson then invited the Child Protection Co-ordinator (Education) to give a Presentation on behalf of the South Wales Police and Bridgend Child Protection Department, following which there ensued some questions to the Invitees from Members.

A Member noted that the Presentation on CSE given to Members was given to Year 8 pupils in schools. She felt however, that these pupils were around 14 – 16 years old, and queried whether children younger than this ie in primary schools should also be educated in CSE, as young people were introduced to social media sites far younger than the age of 14.

The Child Protection Co-ordinator (Education) advised that the Child Protection Departments of the South Wales Police and the local authority first started looking at educating young people in CSE in 2003, where a scoping exercise was undertaken from which it was established that young people aged 14 and above were most at risk to CSE. Under the All Wales Care Programme the South Wales Police did give some coverage of CSE as part of other packages of education for young people which had been shared with younger children of primary school age. She would however look into the feasibility of the presentation also being made within primary schools, however, there was a significant resource and cost implication attached to this.

A Member pointed out that on-line grooming of a young person by a sexual offender often took place quicker than if the individuals were face to face, and he was shocked to have been made aware of the type of web sites that were only too easy accessible to children and young people. He noted from earlier debate in the meeting, that children often used codes when using social media sites, particularly when communicating with friends and acquaintances on-line or via texts, almost like a different language. He asked if parents were able to access any information on this new texting language.

The Child Protection Co-ordinator (Education) advised that Police Liaison Officers did do some training in order to educate older people in the use and pitfalls associated with social media sites. This had previously been partly funded through "Operation Thistle" which was an intelligence operation through which Police had arrested a number of people in Newport who had carried out acts of sexual exploitation, and seized money from them under the Proceeds of Crime Act, to further fund CSE prevention.

Superintendent Jones added that a CSE Awareness session had been held last month, in order to further educate people, though there was a difficulty in expanding training opportunities in CSE, due to the current financial climate. Funding avenues were continuing to be explored however, not just for young vulnerable people but for older vulnerable young people too (in transition from Childrens to Adult Services).

The Chairperson felt that it would be advantageous if training could also be extended to school governors as well as the pupils themselves.

In response to a point made by a Member, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that there was a need to influence Welsh Government to open up avenues for dissemination of training for all age groups in respect of CSE. There was useful information however that could be accessed free on the CEOP Police site, address www.ceop.police.uk,

where there was a Section for parents, carers, children and school teachers. He added that the site refreshed too with updates when they occurred.

He further added that there were 400 Looked After Children within the Authority, and that Foster Carers, although not only qualified, were well trained in their role of supporting these young people.

A Member was aware of the financial restraints the Council had and were continuing to face, and in view of this, and the reduction in staff facing all areas of the Authority, he asked if the stress levels that Social Workers inevitably encountered were sufficiently managed.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the type of work these Officers processed inevitably made them vulnerable to periods of stress over and above perhaps employees in other areas of the Authority. There were processes in place however in the Department to support staff when the demands of the job were at their highest.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support added that Social Workers often also worked together on the more traumatic cases, rather than in isolation. There were also regular team meetings convened and at these staff openly talked about any traumatic cases. New starters in these positions were also talked through the pressures associated with this line of work when they commenced their employment.

A Member noted the failings that had taken place in Rotherham and Oxford, whereby there had been a breakdown in communication between the multi-agency groups which resulted in child exploitation. He asked what Bridgend had in place to ensure a similar occurrence didn't take place in the County Borough, and if it did, what procedures were put in place to ensure young people were safeguarded after the event.

A representative from the South Wales Police confirmed that there were 4 main areas that were monitored by the Child Protection Division of the Police. Three of these were risks that children and young people could be exposed to, namely, sex and drug exploitation and domestic abuse. The fourth area related to the abuse of vulnerable adults.

If a person came to the Police making a complaint with regard to any of the above potential problems, this would trigger the following events:-

- The Police would take a crime report
- They would link in with BCBC to arrange for joint visits of the young person to be carried out
- A Strategy discussion would be undertaken before the young person was visited to by a Social Worker
- If it was a case of CSE a Section 147 investigation would be carried out involving the Police and Social Services
- An investigation would be conducted by representatives of the Police and Social Services
- Further work would be initiated with SARK's

A Member asked if crimes such as CSE were often organised crime.

A representative of the Police confirmed that there was an investigation carried out previously by the Police named 'Operation Barkley', where there was evidence of links to this sort of crime, ie Sexual Exploitation. This usually concerned Care Homes and outside areas vulnerable to incidents of anti-social behaviour, and indicated some form of group behind it.. There had been some missed opportunities in the past, however, a Taskforce Group had now been set-up that met monthly, in order to ensure effective sharing of information between the appropriate multi-agency groups. There were currently 10 cases of CSE being investigated.

A Member felt that while it was advantageous for multi-agency teams to regularly meet in person around the table, the sharing of information in relation to issues such as CSE should be available to all multi-agency groups, in order to enhance further effective joint working. She noted that a representative from SERAF was invited to the Taskforce meetings, and asked if they always attended these meetings as a matter of course.

The Police representative confirmed that SERAF were represented at most of these meetings, but not all. A representative did attend Review meetings and were actively involved in the Risk Assessment of a young person and any stages in relation to the re-evaluation of these.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support added that certain information could be and was shared between statutory agencies extremely quickly through other methods rather than through meetings. It was dependent on what was required sharing, and in particular, how important it was. Any urgent cases were discussed between key partners the day they were received.

Development of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) were looking to being introduced, in order to strengthen the systems in place for safeguarding. This would result in physically bringing representatives from each multi-agency group into one location, to make it easier to work share including from database systems, etc. This was being supported by the Local Police Commissioner.

A Member pointed out that on page 15 of the report there was reference made to the All Wales Protocol CSE 2008, however, she pointed out that this had since been superseded by updated legislation.

The Child Protection Co-ordinator (Education) acknowledged this and apologised to Members, as the current legislation was statutory guidance produced by Welsh Government in 2011 and the All Wales Protocol CSE 2013.

A Registered Representative added that the BCBC web site also required updating, in terms of Child Protection data, which Officers duly noted and assured would be updated.

A Member pointed out that there were individuals other than Looked After Children that needed to be borne in mind when considering exposure to risks such as CSE, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). It was put forward that educating people with ALN in the risks associated with social media and CSE should also be undertaken as they were considered very vulnerable..

The Child Protection Co-ordinator acknowledged this and confirmed that older vulnerable people were supported through initiatives such as Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA).

She added that as well as working with schools, she was also looking to extend training in respect of CSE to the Bridgend College.

A representative assured Members that support services did continue for persons older than 18 years of age, albeit by different methods than the ones subject of today's report.

A Member referred to the numbers of offenders who were prosecuted for CSE and asked if the Police were satisfied that enough support was being given by the Crime Prosecution Service. He noted that there had been 34 cases of CSE outlined in the report, but evidence showed there was only one successful prosecution. He asked why more prosecutions were not being achieved.

A representative of the Police advised that it was not a straightforward process in terms of achieving successful investigations into CSE that resulted in a prosecution for a number of different reasons, none more so than successfully obtaining enough evidence from the victim,

who was often a young and vulnerable person, to prosecute the perpetrator. She added however, that the one successful prosecution did in turn lead to another 6 victims being identified, so therefore further convictions would follow. She further added that levels of success in exposing people who committed acts of CSE could not always be measured by prosecutions alone.

Conclusions:

Following detailed discussion the Committee agreed to make the following comments and conclusions:

Raising Awareness

The Committee strongly supported the work that was being undertaken by the Authority and its Partners in relation to preventing, and raising awareness of, Child Sexual Exploitation.

Members suggested that awareness be raised with parents over the risks associated with social media. The Committee proposed that the CEOP website be advertised more widely by schools; on their newsletters to parents for example.

The Committee suggested that presentations on CSE should be expanded out to Youth Clubs and Youth organisations where a wide range of youngsters could be reached. This would also assist in raising awareness with youth leaders etc.

The Committee recommended that CSE be included in training for School Governors to ensure that they are aware of the subject and issues surrounding it.

Members expressed concerns over the way in which Personal and Social Education is taught in Wales in that it is statutory for all schools, but the topics and focus is the decision of each individual school. It was felt that educating over issues such as CSE should be key to PSE lessons. The Committee therefore recommended that Officers take the opportunity to feed into the Welsh Government Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales specifically relating to PSE Education.

Partnership Working and Sharing of Information

Members expressed concerns over information gathering and sharing between partners in that some may have more advanced systems and processes for gathering intelligence and information. Members suggested that there should be a clear strategic approach to information and intelligence sharing that goes beyond a local basis.

In view of improving shared working with partners and protecting children and young people, the Committee further recommend that the opportunity is taken to ensure that the new electronic system that is being introduced, (CCIS), incorporates methods by which data is made available and shared with partners that automatically flags up vulnerable youngsters.

The Committee proposed that the Directorate set up a business plan for CSE, as a management tool for all partners to sign up to in order to consolidate all the work that is being undertaken in this area and furthermore to enable progress and outcomes to be recorded and monitored.

Prosecutions

The Committee queried whether enough attention was being paid to learning lessons from previous cases of CSE, particularly in relation to prosecutions, whether they were successful or not, to try and get to a stage where more prosecutions are progressed.

Future Work

The Committee felt it was key that there is a continuing link with the CSE and agreed to task this to Cllr Martyn Jones who had already established relations with the Police in this area. Members were keen to ensure that this incorporate a relationship with the Joint Task Force and asked that the Scrutiny Officer explore ways that this can be progressed.

Members proposed that they receive an update in six months time where they would wish to see evidence of a business plan that is being implemented and used by all partners.

Additional Information

The Committee requested that they receive further information in relation to the links between CSE and children with ALN, specifically:

- The number of CSE cases in Bridgend where a child has ALN;
- The work being carried out to educate and protect children with ALN from CSE.

Members proposed that the presentation provided to schools should be adapted specifically for pupils with ALN.

165 **SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORTING FRAMEWORK – NOMINATIONS FOR JOINT RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PANEL**

The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report that requested Committee to appoint Members to sit on the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel in respect of the Social Services and Annual Reporting Framework

Resolved:

That the following Members be appointed to sit on the above Joint Research and Evaluation Panel:

Councillor P John
Councillor D White
Councillor P Foley
Mr W Bond

166 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report outlining the items due to be considered at a meeting of the Committee to be held on the 11 May 2015, and further sought confirmation of the information required for the subsequent meeting following the Annual meeting of Council in May 2015. The Committee noted the changes to the FWP from the report in that the item on the Remodelling of Children's Residential Care would be postponed and that Estyn would be in attendance to present the Committee with their 'Findings' letter.

Conclusions:

The Committee noted the topics due to be considered at a meeting of the Committee scheduled for the 11 May 2015.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm