

**IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
17th September, 2014**

Present:- Councillor J. Hamilton (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Astbury, Burton, Clark, Reynolds and Roddison and co-opted member Mrs. J. Jones.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lelliott and from co-opted member Mr. M. Smith.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

19. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

No members of the public and the press were in attendance.

20. COMMUNICATIONS.

The Scrutiny and Member Development Officer reported that an additional meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission would be held to consider Rotherham's GCSE performance and the Ofsted status of the Borough's schools. A date would be circulated in due course.

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9TH JULY, 2014.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 9th July, 2014, were considered.

Reference was made to Minute Number 15 (Young People Missing from Home and Care) and the importance of the Corporate Parenting Panel continuing to have the issue of children and young people who went missing/ran away as a standing item.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

22. RECYCLING GROUP.

Resolved: - That Councillor G. Reynolds be confirmed as the Improving Lives Select Commission's representative on the Recycling Group, 2014/2015.

23. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT.

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Performance and Quality Manager (Neighbourhood and Adult Services Directorate) that outlined the progress against the partnership action plan called the Children and Young People's Plan, which was created and monitored by the Children, Young People and Families' Partnership.

The Plan, which covered the period 2013-2016, was no longer statutory, but it was considered good practice to have one. The Plan had six priorities: -

- We will ensure children have the best start in life;
- We will engage with parents and families;
- We will reduce the harm to children and young people who are exposed to domestic abuse, alcohol/substance misuse and neglect;
- We will focus on all children and young people making good progress in their learning and development;
- We will target support to families in greatest need to help access learning/employment opportunities.

In addition, the priority “We will work with partners to eradicate child sexual exploitation” was also one of the six priorities and was monitored as part of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board.

Monitoring took place twice a year to highlight progress made on delivering the actions. Progress against the actions had been assigned a RAG rating.

The data submission included a performance monitoring report and case studies of successful interventions.

Overall, of the 159 actions, 25% were rated as Green, 65% were rated as Amber, and 10% were rated as Red.

The performance at each priority was considered and the Improving Lives Select Commission asked questions about the outcomes and performance.

Priority One: - We will ensure children have the best start in life: -

12 of the actions in this priority were rated as Green, 28.5 were rated as Amber and 11.5 were rated as Red.

- What work was being undertaken relating to ensuring that the prevalence of breastfeeding at 6 – 8 continued to increase?
- Were pre-birth CAFs continuing to be initiated, as these really did influence healthy starts for children;
- Best Start in Life audits conducted by Public Health;
- Two-year old early entitlement – were the most vulnerable and hard to reach families accessing their entitlement?;
- Obesity rates following the start of the universal infant entitlement to Free School Meals;
- The take up of dental health was disappointing – what was stopping a better take-up?

Priority Two: - We will engage with parents and families: -

35 of the actions under Priority Two were rated as Green, 10 were rated as Amber and 1.5 were rated as Red.

- What was the impact of the Early Help Support Panel in working with families to ensure that they were receiving the appropriate level of interventions?
 - Further work was needed to promote the Panel and encourage practitioners to attend, which will improve intelligence gathering;
 - Promotion towards Health Visitors and Schools Nurses would be a focus;
 - The production of case studies that showed how the Panel could operate effectively would be really beneficial.

Priority Three: - We will reduce the harm to children and young people who are exposed to domestic abuse, alcohol/substance misuse and neglect: -

14 of the actions had been rated as Green, 8 had been rated as Amber and none had been rated as Red.

- What impact had the Integrated Youth Support Service training had on alcohol use?;
- What impact would the peer review into neglect have?;
 - The peer review had been postponed in order to allow Officers to concentrate on the Ofsted inspection;
- Social Care timelines and the length of time it took to get a management decision – were these being met and what impact did they have on outcomes for children.

Priority Four: - We will work with partners to eradicate child sexual exploitation: -

This priority was managed by the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children's Board and had its own dedicated sub-group focussing on child sexual exploitation consisting of the Chief Constable, senior service representatives and National Working Group representatives.

- There was a quarterly progress report on issues relating to CSE that was considered by the Cabinet;
- The National Working Group had awarded the team in Rotherham an award based on current practice, which was recognised as some of the best in the country;
- The Jay Report would be scrutinised fully at a later date;
- The Multi-Agency Support Hub team was starting to gel together to ensure intelligence was shared and appropriate responses were made.

Priority Five: - We will focus on all children and young people making good progress in their learning and development: -

4.3 of the actions had been rated as Green, 23.3 had been rated as Amber and 2.3 had been rated as Red on this Priority.

The Improving Lives Select Commission would have a meeting focussed on this Priority in the future.

Priority Six: - We will target support to families in greatest need to help access learning/employment opportunities: -

Six of the actions for Priority 6 had been rated as Green, 33 had been rated as Amber and one had been rated as Red.

- A critical post had not been back-filled during the long-term sickness of the postholder. This was concerning.
 - This work had been picked-up by other staff members in the Education Welfare Team as part of an enhanced approach. Funding for this post had ceased in July, 2014.
 - The use of apprentices to support critical areas of work and also act as role models.
- Only 28% of teenage mothers were accessing learning.
 - Alternative arrangements were in place for teenage mothers and the Integrated Youth Support Service had a contract with GROW to provide one-to-one support with teenage mothers in education.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and the progress made in monitoring the Children and Young People's Plan be noted.

(2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission receive a further update in early 2015.

(3) That consideration be given to conducting a spotlight review on the Council's use of apprentices.

24. CONSULTATION - CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CODE.

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Principal School Organisation and Risk Management Officer (Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People's Services Directorate) outlining the consultation document that the Department for Education was conducting on proposed changes to the school admissions code.

The proposed changes included two significant potential amendments: -

- To allow schools to give priority to applicants eligible for the Pupil Premium

- To bring forward the timetable for determining the admissions arrangements so that objections can be received by the Schools' adjudicator before the start of the admissions round: -
 - This would allow objections to be resolved more quickly and enable a greater number of parents to apply for school places on a lawful basis.

The consultation document asked six questions. The Admissions Service had provided a draft response for the consideration of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

- 1. State-funded schools give priority in their admissions arrangements to children eligible for pupil premium or service premium funding: -**
 - The proposed answer included that, in Rotherham, approximately 90% of applicants consistently received their first preference. Analysis showed that most pupil premium eligible children made a preference for their nearest and catchment area school. The proposed answer also made reference to the potential difficulties in collating information about eligibility for pupil premium as part of the admissions process, this was normally collated by the school census when children had been admitted.
- 2. Admission authorities of primary schools to give priority in their admission arrangements to children eligible for the early years pupil premium or service premium who attend a nursery which is part of the school: -**
 - Rotherham's nursery provision varied and some areas had more provision than others, which could lead to local children being unable to obtain a place at their local/catchment area school.
- 3. Create a rolling deadline for admissions authorities to comply with the determination of the schools adjudicator: -**
 - The proposed response was that the admissions authority could not see any issues with the proposal as long as all parties had sufficient notice to implement any changes.
- 4. Bring forward the deadlines for objections, determinations and the publication of admission arrangements and to change the timing and length of consultations: -**
 - The Admissions Authority could not see any issues with the proposal so long as all parties had sufficient notice to implement.

5. Admission of summer-born children: -

- The proposed response was that the Admissions Authority felt that the proposal clarified the position for parents and carers and did not significantly impact on admissions.

6. Minor technical drafting changes: -

- The Admissions Authority did not envisage any problems from the proposal but did think that the changes should be drafted as 'may' instead of 'must', to allow individual authorities discretion to implement where it would be beneficial depending on their circumstances.

Discussion on the consultation questions and the proposed answers followed, and the following comments were made: -

- Reducing the timescale for submission of objections was not a positive development.
 - The Principal Officer confirmed that the proposed reduction in timescales would relate to the timeline regulating annual admissions consultation, which was reported back to the Schools' Adjudicator, and not the timeline that parents and carers had to submit their application for a school place.
- One Member expressed a concern about specific areas where there was only one choice of school, which happened to be a faith school. There was a potential for children living in the immediate area who did not share the same faith to miss out on being educated with their neighbours.
 - The Principal Officer explained that as faith schools were funded through Dioceses they also had the ability to apply their own admissions criteria.
- It was noted that Rotherham was a net importer of children from other local authorities. This meant that parents and carers in other local authorities had chosen to select a Rotherham school/s as their first preference. Rotherham's provision was amongst the best locally, which was especially reflected in GCSE results and the favourable number of Rotherham's schools that were rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. All agreed that this was positive news.

Resolved: - (1) That the draft response submitted by Rotherham's Admission Authority be approved and it be submitted to the Department for Education.

(2) That the Improving Lives Select Commission receive an update on the outcomes of the consultation where they led to implications for admission to school in the Borough.

25. CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME).

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Service Manager, Education Welfare Service, and the Children Missing Education Officer (School Effectiveness Service, Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People's Services Directorate) that outlined the current work being undertaken in the Borough regarding Children Missing Education (CME).

The Improving Lives Select Commission considered the issue of Children Missing from Education at the meeting held on 12th June, 2013 (Minute No. 7 refers).

A brief overview included: -

- All children of compulsory school age who were not on a school roll and who were not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school (including Elective Home Education, privately or alternative provision) would be classed as 'CME';
- Section 436A of the Education Act required all local authorities to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children residing in the area who were not receiving a suitable education;
- It did not include children who were registered at a school but who were not attending regularly;
- The CME duty complimented and reinforced duties that existed for schools and the Education Welfare Service to monitor poor attendance;
- Maintained and academy schools were required to make regular absence returns to the Education Welfare Service where attendance of individual pupils gave cause for concern.

The submitted report outlined the previous structure of the CME team when there was only one Officer working in the area. It outlined the streamlined service, improved partnership working with a range of agencies and information sharing pathways had been put in place, in addition to improved IT capacity for tracking, recording and reporting to enable de-registering where appropriate.

- An appropriate escalation system was in place;
- The Education Welfare central management team and the CME Officer were co-located in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) based in Riverside House;
- Termly up-dates were being provided to the CYPS Directorate Leadership Team and the Lead Member for Children and Young People;

- The creation of the Fair Access Admission Panel had increased awareness amongst headteachers of the CME picture across the Borough;
- A temporary increase of staff members from the Integrated Youth Support Service and the School Effectiveness Service had been arranged to focus on the processing, tracking and investigation of CME. One permanent monitoring post and temporary business support had been brokered, funded from the Education Welfare Service and the School Admissions Service;
- Home visits were undertaken over the summer holiday, 2014. By the end of August, 2014, 565 referrals had been followed up;
- The Services was more able to identify vulnerable groups.

Data: -

The Education Welfare Service Manager reported on the numbers of cases that had been dealt with over the two previous school years: -

2012/2013: -

- Opened 973 new investigations;
- Closed 726.

2013/2014: -

- Opened 1,211 new investigations;
- Closed 1,413.

As at 12th September, 2014, there were 468 current, open active CME referrals.

Staff and service capacity remained an ongoing issue. The CYPS Directorate Leadership Team had accepted a plan to extend the capacity of the CME function on a temporary basis.

Risks and uncertainties included the temporary nature of European Structural Funding for an EU Migrant Education Engagement Officer, which had ceased in July, 2014. This work had been covered by the wider Education Welfare Service but capacity was limited to sustain this approach.

Discussion ensued and the following issues were raised: -

- What evidence was accepted to remove children from a register when they no longer lived in the area? Did it have to be beyond reasonable doubt, for example?
 - It had to be believed that the child had left the area as far as possible. The Service worked with other local authorities and border agencies to determine whether a child/ren had left the area;
- What did the 'open analysis' stage cover?

- When a child/ren did not take up their reception place, risks were acted upon quickly and an Education Welfare Officer was assigned to the case and external and internal agencies were contacted, including housing and benefits agencies, to determine whether the family had moved within Rotherham or left the Borough all together.
- As of 12th September, 468 children were classed as CME.
 - The data could be broken down further to provide a baseline.
- Were there any children that the Service did not know where they were at all?
 - Yes, 348 children were not registered with any school.
- Were there any common threads when a child was classed as CME?
 - Yes, location – the majority of cases were based within central Rotherham.
- Were comparisons with regional and national performance available?
 - Rotherham's numbers were broadly in-line with regional neighbours from liaison meetings that took place. National figures were not produced by the DfE;
- Were holidays taken in term time affecting the CME number?
 - Work was ongoing with schools to try to keep children on roll when an end-date to the holiday was known. Fixed-penalty notices were applied for unauthorised holidays but children would be kept on roll where possible to ensure they were tracked. Where there was unauthorised holiday taken and a child failed to return children were being de-registered.
- Can ethnicity data for CME be accessed?
 - Yes it could be, but it had not been included in the submitted report;
- What work was being undertaken with children who were home educated?
 - The Local Authority had recently launched a policy regarding expectations around Rotherham's Elective Home Educated children. Children who were officially home educated were not included in the CME figures.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be received and its content noted.

(2) That the impact of the additional staffing resources to the Children Missing Education agenda be noted.

(3) That the Improving Lives Select Commission continue to receive regular updates relating to CME issues.

26. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved: - (1) That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Wednesday 5th November, 2014, to start at 2.00 p.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.

(2) That a further meeting be arranged to consider Rotherham's overall school performance.