

Challenging and Vulnerable Children Sub Committee

Tuesday, 25th May, 2010

PRESENT: Mr J Fryett in the Chair

Mr J Daulby and Mrs Hill

In Attendance:

Mr A Rees – Education Leeds
Mrs R Phillips – Education Leeds
Mr C Whiteley – Education Leeds
Mrs D Leonard – Legal Services
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

18 OPENING REMARKS

In the absence of Sue Knight, John Fryett, Deputy Chair assumed the Chair and welcomed everyone in attendance

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Knights, Mr Forbes and Councillor Gruen

20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the held on 15th September 2009 were submitted for comment and approval, the following meeting held on 12th January 2010 having been inquorate.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2010 were also submitted for comment and approval

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2009 and 12th January 2010 be accepted as a true and correct record

21 MATTERS ARISING THE MINUTES

Minutes - 15th September 2009

Review of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee Terms of Reference (Minute no.5 refers). The Chair sought an update regarding the Sub Committee's Terms of Reference.

Mrs Leonard from Legal Services confirmed that revised Terms of Reference had been approved by the Leeds Admissions Forum at it's meeting on 1st October 2009.

Review of the Fair Access Protocols 2009/10 (Minute No. 6 refers). The Chair noted that the East wedge had operated without a Project Director for some time but the recruitment process had began, any progress?

In responding Mrs Phillips from Education Leeds said that a Job specification was currently been finalised

Minutes 12th January 2010

Report on the Recording of Fair Access Panel Statistics (Minute No. 16 refers). In passing comment the Chair said that Panels were now receiving statistics on a monthly basis, this was welcomed and assisted the Panel greatly in it's deliberations.

22 TRENDS IN THE ADMISSION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2008 – 2010

The Sub Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which provided a summary of the trends in the admission of looked after children for the period 2008/10

Addressing the report Mr Alun Rees said that the purpose in bringing a report to the Sub Committee was to provide an analysis in the admission of looked after children seeking in-year transfers either between Leeds Schools or from out of the area placement into Leeds Schools. The data supplied was for "legally looked after Children"

Mr Rees said that in the 2008-09 academic year there were 65 in-year transfer requests from the social worker/ carer of a child looked after by Leeds. Of the 65 requests 43 took less than 20 days for a school place to be allocated and the child to enter the school roll, 22 children were not placed within the 20 day limit.

Referring to the 2009 -10 academic year Mr Rees said there had been 59 school transfer requests for looked after children to date during the 2009/10 academic year. It was reported that of the 59 only 4 had taken longer than 20 days to be resolved.

In seeking clarification the Chair asked: if and when a child became looked after and moved address, was it a case of remaining with a secure educational place rather than moving to a school closer to the new address?

In responding Mr Rees said there was no hard and fast rule, the involvement of a Social Worker and their opinion was a major factor but it was a fine balance between distance and stability

In passing comment Mr Daulby suggested that children from challenging backgrounds do not necessarily go through the appeals process?

Mrs Phillips said that Officers within the Admission Team would attempt first preference, however, if a school had an issue with admission, a Panel would seek to place at a reasonable preference and encourage Social Workers to accept the offer made rather than appeal for first preference, if the offer was reasonable

Mr Rees suggested that foster parents would prefer the child attends a local school in order that the child may integrate easier into the community

In summing up the Chair suggested that all parties appeared to be getting smarter and swifter as they become more familiar with the process

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the positive trends in the timeliness with which requests for in – year school transfers of looked after children are being met
- (ii) To note that there is good evidence that this trend is also reflected among the particularly vulnerable unaccompanied asylum seeker children in the care of Leeds
- (iii) Support the production of an Annual Report which would assist in the monitoring of trends

23 LEEDS INCLUSIVE LEARNING STRATEGY

RESOLVED – That in the absence of the report author, it was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Sub Committee

24 CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION UPDATE

The Sub Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which provided an insight into the work of the Children Missing Education (CME) Team

Addressing the report Mr Colin Whiteley said for the purposes of the Team CME is defined as:

- Pupils who are on roll at a Leeds School but have stopped attending and cannot be located
- Children of school age found to be living in Leeds but not on the roll of a school

For pupils who had disappeared, the team would attempt to locate them , ensure they were safe and put back on roll at a school. Pupils found not to be on roll at a school, the team would ensure they are put on the roll of a school.

The Chair asked how; children missing from home, were dealt with?

In responding Mr Whiteley said children missing from home or “runaways” were dealt with by the Police, they were not categorised as a child missing education.

Mr Daulby asked if it was possible to estimate the number of children missing education at any one time?

Mr Whiteley, in responding said it was only a guess but possibly 200 to 300 at any one time

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

25 FAIR ACCESS PANEL UPDATE

The Sub Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive Education Leeds which provided an update on the operation of the Fair Access Panels.

In addressing the report Mrs Rachel Phillips reported that the Secondary school snapshot showed that to date there had been a 4% increase in the volume of cases considered by the Panels across the City, compared to the end of year totals for the last academic year. There had also been a 9% increase in placements indicating that more children were being offered a school place by Panel, without the need for appeal as well as more schools accepting children wishing to transfer school.

Schools were also developing stronger relationships with schools outside of their own Wedges. This was enabling them to provide managed moves for children who would benefit from a 'fresh start' in a new school, for many reasons including for example in response to severe bullying.

Mrs Phillips said that overall the data showed that the majority of requests for East and South schools were from children who did not have accessible educational provision and therefore required a school offer from the Panel however, in the North East and North West many of the applications were for a change of school and many of those cases had suitable, accessible educational provision available to them

It was reported that the Academies, Foundation schools and Aided schools were all participating and playing their part in the admission of Fair Access Children.

In summing up the Chair said that Panels are now more intelligent as to what's happening, the provision of statistics on a month by month basis is proving to be very useful

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (iii) To receive the Annual Statistics in October 2010 which will also include placement of primary school children

26 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members received and considered the Sub Committee's Work Programme for the period 2010/11

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the scheduled Work Programme for 2010/11

- (ii) To update the Work Programme to reflect decisions made at today's meeting

27 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That the next meeting be arranged for Tuesday 19th October 2010 at 4.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds