
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 09 March 2017

Present:

County Councillors:

I Grundy (Chairman)
S Barker
J Chandler
M Danvers
A Erskine
A Goggin
C Guglielmi
T Higgins
P Honeywood
R Howard
M McEwen
C Sargeant
A Wood

County Councillors in attendance:

Cllr K Bobbin

The following officers were present in support of the meeting:

Robert Fox, Scrutiny Officer
Jennifer Reid, Committee Officer

1 Apologies and Substitution Notices

Apologies were received from Richard Carson.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2016

The minutes of the call in meeting held on 8 December 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Minutes of meeting held on 12 January 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record, subject to an amendment to attendance to record Richard Carson as attending the meeting, and were signed by the Chairman.

4 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

5 Educational Attainment Annual Report 2015-16

Members received PAF/04/17, the Annual Report on Educational Attainment for 2015-16 presented by Clare Kershaw, Director for Commissioning; Education and Lifelong Learning. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet member for Education and Lifelong Learning, and Tricia Smith, Senior Analyst Organisational Intelligence, to the meeting. In introducing the report the Cabinet Member commented on the significant progress in education standards made in the previous year.

Members received a presentation from the Director for Commissioning; Education and Lifelong Learning, highlighting the key headlines from the three reports which provided an overview of outcomes, full data and data broken down by district. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes. The Director explained that the reports did not contain reference to historical data as had been shown in previous years due to the shift in assessment and curriculum in 2016, meaning like for like comparison was not possible. However, she was pleased to report that all indicators had improved in terms of the national position and national averages.

The Director outlined the four key priorities for Essex:

- Every School in Essex to be either Good or Outstanding
- To ensure outcomes for children are in the top quartile nationally
- To improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- To develop the School Led Improvement System (SLIS).

Further details were provided and discussion held around the following areas:

Ofsted

This was a key priority in 2016 and over the previous 2 years. At the end of the academic year 92% of primary schools were now graded as good or outstanding which compares to 65% at the end of 2012/13. Secondary schools graded as good or outstanding had gone from 58% to 90% and Special schools from 79% to 100% over the same period. This trend was continuing with inclusion of results from the first term of 2016/17, 95% of secondary schools are now graded good or outstanding. In response to Members' questions, the Director confirmed that there were only two secondary schools in Essex which were maintained, the rest were all academies, both of which had been graded as good. Approximately

one third of all primary schools, a minority of special schools and all Grammar schools were academies. All Grammar schools were graded Good or Outstanding. The Director agreed to provide a further breakdown of Ofsted grades by maintained, academy and grammar status. As a result of the improvements resources could now be focussed on schools requiring improvement and assisting in maintaining Good grades rather than just on schools graded inadequate. Referring to the district profile, the Director acknowledged that there were some districts which needed to be focused on including Braintree where there were 7 schools that were not graded good or outstanding and Colchester where four schools require improvement. Of particular note were the Basildon, Harlow and Tendring figures where intense work had been undertaken since 2013. At the end of the academic year there were no schools graded as inadequate and work would be undertaken with schools requiring improvement to achieve good status.

End of Key stage outcomes

- Early years - outcomes at the end of 2015-16 had significantly improved and were in the first quartile nationally for the first time for that indicator. This was recognized by both officers and Members as an important improvement due to the impact of a good start on later achievement. One area where significant work was undertaken around improving school readiness, supporting parents, effective practice and supporting failing schools was in the Braintree District including. Pupils achieving a good level of development in this area had increased to 72% from 52% in 2013.
- Phonics - in 2013 when the screening check was introduced 67% of year 1 pupils in Essex achieved the expected standard. in 2016 the figure had risen to 81% in line with statistical neighbours and the national average. Essex had moved from 63rd in 2015 to 58th position nationally.
- Key stage 1 - during 2016 both key stage 1 and 2 outcomes had moved from being reported via levels to comparison to expected standard. There had also been changes to assessment and curriculum meaning the curriculum is harder. Therefore only national benchmarking and not historic data could be provided for reference. Essex was significantly above the national average for all areas and moved from the third to the second quartile overall.
- Key stage 2 – the change of curriculum has meant that the number of children achieving the expected standard in all areas had gone from 81% to 56% this year. However this was due to the changes in the curriculum and nationally 53% of children achieved the expected standard in all three areas making Essex three percentage points higher than the national average. Essex also out-performed its statistical neighbours. Figures were provided in each of the individual areas of reading, writing and Maths with only Reading falling slightly below the national average. It was hoped that results will be improved for 2016/17 with a year's experience of the new curriculum. Work will focus on supporting and challenging those schools where outcomes fall in the bottom quartile and schools where children achieve two of the three expected standards to aid in ensuring all three standards are achieved. Areas of focus within districts would be Epping

Forest and Tendring, although Tendring had already made significant improvements from a low baseline. Basildon was noted for the first time performing above the national average.

- Key stage 4 – the curriculum and assessment process had significant changes during 2015-16 and further changes were expected from 2016/17 onwards. Performance measures had moved from 5 A*-C GCSEs including in English and Maths to just A*-C in English and Maths. Based on this figure Essex outperformed the national average and statistical neighbours. The new measure being looked at was Progress 8, measuring progress between KS2 and KS4 in 8 subjects and including vocational courses. Compares individual pupils and schools and allows comparison with similar pupils and schools. The national median is zero so above expected progress would be positive figures and below expected progress would be minus figures. Essex as a whole performed slightly above the national average of -0.03 with a score of 0. Work would be undertaken with those schools who had not achieved the expected level of progress. Confidence intervals were provided by the DfE and all results were within these intervals indicating that accurate data had been produced. A national minimum floor of -0.5 had been introduced and work would be undertaken with any Essex schools who had not met this floor. On looking closer at results by district, key points noted were the improvements required in Braintree, Castlepoint and Tendring and good performance in particular in Maldon as well as Epping Forest, Colchester and Chelmsford. Work at Secondary level is normally with individual schools and takes into account unique circumstances of the school. Members requested a breakdown of results by school for their districts and the Director agreed to circulate this to all Members. In 2016-17 some GCSE outcomes would be moving to a 1-9 grading system with the remainder following over the course of the next few years. At the time of the meeting it was unclear how the grading system compared to the letter system and further clarification was awaited from the DfE. One of the key challenges in this would be in educating employers in the new grading system. Students who were re-sitting English and Maths would continue to use the letter system until the end of 2017. There was also a change to exam focus and 'mastery of knowledge' over coursework in non-vocational courses. Members requested that before the 2016-17 report was brought before the Committee, a session was held to brief Members on the new grading system. Attainment 8 outcomes were provided in the report and although Essex performed slightly ahead of the national average, this measure was not being measured by the DfE.
- Key stage 5 – in the measure of 3+ A*-A grade A-levels, traditionally Essex had performed well in this area and this trend had continued with results putting Essex in the top quartile nationally. Higher or degree level apprenticeship take up had continued to increase to 5.4% of all apprenticeships. This was seen as key to improving the recognition of achievement through apprenticeships. Achievement rates, whilst still below the national average had improved to 70.3%.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

The number of children not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is monitored during November, December and January. There had been a very good improvement to 4.4% of the cohort being NEET or unknown, the lowest for four years and a reduction of 2.9% since 2013/14. In actual number of children this equated to around 140 children. Another significant improvement was the reduction in children whose status was unknown. The Cabinet Member recognised that there would always be some children who would be unable to access education for various reasons so it was unlikely that the total NEET figure would ever reach zero. In response to a question, the Director confirmed that the figures displayed in the graph on page 71 of the report were incorrect for % NEET, however the other figures were labelled correctly.

Attendance and Exclusions

- Attendance - due to how data is provided, figures shown for 2015/16 included autumn and spring terms only. Primary absence had fallen from 4.7% in 2012/13 to 3.7% and Secondary from 6.1% to 4.8% in the same period. These figures included both authorised and unauthorised absence. The Director confirmed that Essex still prosecuted for term time holidays and where a child was educated elsewhere due to bullying or other issues this would not have been counted as absence. Teachers are unable to take term time holidays under their terms and conditions. Most schools do produce Home/School agreements however these are not contractual or obligatory. Figures do not include children who are home educated as the Local authority would not have responsibility unless there was a safeguarding issue. In Essex less than 1000 children were registered as home educated. Members noted that there was a reduction in overall absence for Children in Care (CiC), however they referred to the level of persistent absence. The Director confirmed that this was monitored and tracked by the Virtual School and persistent absence is tackled as a priority.
- Exclusions – although figures for permanent exclusions in secondary schools has risen slightly since 1024/15 the overall trend since 2002/7 had shown a significant decrease and remained well below the national average. Where a pupil had been excluded, Essex had a duty to educate and this was done through alternative provision (previously known as Pupil Referral Units) or through a home/informal setting. It was noted that this figure would never reach zero due to situations where the safety of other children had to be considered and that many children who had been excluded had additional needs.

Children in Care (CiC)

The report included provisional data only as the validated data was unable but this would be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel once available. Not all CiC would be included in this data as there were certain criteria under the data regulations including length of time in care that needed to be met to be included within the data. The director commented on the NEET figures showing a good

result especially where the difficulties of engaging post 16 children who had entered care during year 10 or 11.

The Director acknowledged the impact of the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group of the Committee on educational attainment that had been reported on at the meeting of the Committee in November 2016. In particular with recruitment and retention of teachers and improving outcomes for vulnerable children.

The Chairman, supported by Members, thanked officers for their hard work and success in improving progress, with an acknowledgement that there are other factors outside statistics that contribute to children receiving a good education.

Actions

1. *Claire Kershaw to provide Ofsted rating data broken down by maintained/academy/grammar status.*
2. *Claire Kershaw/Robert Fox to arrange pre-meeting session regarding changes in grading scales at key stage 4 before next year's report.*
3. *Claire Kershaw to circulate school level data for each district to all ECC Members.*

6 Carers Services from 2018

Members received PAF/05/17, regarding the redesign of the carers support service presented by Phil Brown, Acting Head of Commissioning, Vulnerable People. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Anne Brown, Cabinet Member for Communities and Corporate, and Helen Gilbert, Senior Commissioning Delivery Officer, to the meeting.

Cllr Barker declared a Code interest as Deputy Cabinet Member for Adults and Children.

In introducing the report the Cabinet Member explained the background to the re-design of the service as a result of a low baseline and The Care Act 2015. The services from 2018 would be a further development from this re-design. It was also confirmed that this related to services for adult carers only and not Young Carers.

Members received a presentation from Phil Brown, Acting Head of Commissioning, Vulnerable People, (a copy of which is attached to these minutes). The presentation outlined the progress so far, how feedback gained on the existing service and engagement with Healthwatch Carer Ambassadors,

Carers and Providers contributed to the re-design and the range of services to be provided. Key features of the redesign included:

- Improved identification of carers and support for carers in health settings including GP Practices and Hospitals.
- replacing existing grant funded provision with a contract for 3 years with the opportunity for a further 2 year extension to allow longer term development
- To have all support for carers delivered through a single provider
- A range of access to information and advice to include web based and face to face to meet carers' needs.
- More information on accessing personalised breaks.

The presentation also provided a timescale for the re-design with draft specification due shortly for completion and review through engagement with partners by June 2017 when the key decision to tender would be taken. The contract would be awarded in Oct 2017 for Commencement in April 2018. The full specification would also be reported to the Committee at its meeting in June 2017.

In response to Members' questions, the Cabinet Member and officers provided the following further information:

- In developing provision and whether to go to tender, consideration was given to the existing provision of services by Action for Family Carers through a range of voluntary groups which was considered effective and meeting the needs of carers based on their feedback. Factors included cost, local services, volunteers and carer-led services rather than statutory services.
- Recommendations made by the task and finish group of the Committee looking at the Carers strategy had been taken on board.
- Out of hours service will be available for emergencies and in recognition of carers' working patterns outside of caring responsibilities. There will also be emergency planning in early stages with carers to help them deal with situations.
- 1 in 10 of the population provide unpaid care according to ONS (2010), which would equate to 146,000 people in Essex, however it is believed that real figures are much higher than this.
- The service is aware that there are many people providing care who do not consider themselves carers and do need support. Part of the new service will be to work on identifying carers. Officers referred to the leaflet 'supporting Carers in Essex and agreed to circulate this to all Members.
- A key development had been the recognition of ECC employees as carers and providing better support as an employer. Approximately 25% of ECC workforce have caring role and support had been provided through manager training and a carers' page on the intranet.

The Chairman referred to the National Carers Week in June 2017 and officers were already planning communications for during this period, in particular around

awareness through GPs and hospitals.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for the report and looked forward to receiving the update at the meeting of the committee in June 2017.

Actions

1. *Phil Brown/Robert Fox - Carers Services to come to June 2017 meeting of the Committee*
2. *Helen Gilbert– to circulate Supporting Carers in Essex leaflet to all ECC Members*

7 Young Carers Task and Finish Group

Members received PAF/06/17, a report from the Young Carers Task and Finish Group Scrutiny in a Day workshop held on 19 January 2017. Councillor Anne Brown and Phil Brown remained in attendance for this item and in addition were supported by Tim Frances, Youth Work Commissioner (Curriculum & Policy).

Members noted the recommendations made in the report and invited a response from the Cabinet Member and officers.

Councillor Brown thanked the task and finish group for their hard work and commented on the value of the work used to help shape the service.

The Cabinet Member recognised the difficulties with GPs and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the need to use the Health and Wellbeing Board to encourage collaboration on issues such as Young Carers. The Cabinet Member also recognised the issues with housing and the need to work with local councils to provide varied housing and accommodation.

Tim Frances welcomed the endorsement of the co-produced action plan and confirmed that work was already starting on completing some of the actions in the plan. In the previous month presentations had been delivered to primary and secondary head teachers with the aim of raising awareness, reducing the stigma of being a young carer and alleviating pressures on young carers. Schools were invited to work towards the young carer benchmarks of the Healthy Schools award and the national Young Carers In Schools award. Work would be undertaken with Virgin Care, following the finalisation of the pre-birth to 19 contract, to ensure identification of young carers and referral for assessment. Virgin Care would not be providing young carer services as part of the contract and further procurement would take place.

Members had a number of questions and comments

- Members were concerned about the impact of changes to housing benefit for 18-21 year olds and tenancy issues following bereavement. The Cabinet Member and officers acknowledged these issues and that they

needed to work with local councils who provide housing around these issues. They also commented on the value of a key worker network in addressing these issues.

- Councillor Danvers queried the work of Virgin Healthcare with Young Carers and the Cabinet Member agreed to circulate information regarding the work of Virgin Healthcare in other local authorities to Members of the Committee.
- Cllr Howard referred to the discrepancy in funding for young carers between Essex and other local authorities. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide a written response.
- Members were concerned about issues raised by young carers regarding access to mental health services, stigma and feeling left out. Members identified an opportunity to work with the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee task and finish group working on mental health in young people.
- Members commented on the need to ensure care is provided so children do not have to be young carers.

Actions

1. *Cllr Anne Brown/Robert Fox - to provide Information on the work of Virgin Care with other local authorities to be circulated*
2. *Cllr Anne Brown/Robert Fox - to provide a written response to Cllr Howard's query regarding differences in funding for work to support Young carers in comparison to other local authorities.*

8 Questions raised by members of the public at the meeting of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2016

Members received PAF/07/17 providing a response to questions raised by members of the public at the meeting of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2016 relating to Pre-birth-19 contracts.

Members noted that responses had been provided directly to the individuals who raised the questions but commented that it was useful for the Committee to have sight of these.

9 Future Meeting Dates

Members received PAF/08/17 regarding future meeting dates.

Members were asked to note two changes to the dates listed in the report

1. The meeting due for 14 December 2017 would be moved to 8 December 2017

2. The meeting due for 8 March 2018 would be moved to 15 March 2018.

Therefore the following proposed dates for Committee meetings and activity days were agreed:

2017

Thursday 8 June 2017
Thursday 13 July 2017
Thursday 14 September 2017
Thursday 12 October 2017
Thursday 9 November 2017
Thursday 8 December 2017

2018

Thursday 11 January 2018
Thursday 8 February 2018
Thursday 15 March 2018
Thursday 12 April 2018
Thursday 10 May 2018

10 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next committee activity day was scheduled for Thursday 8 June at 10.30am

Cllr Ray Howard, supported by the other Members of the Committee gave thanks to Councillor Ian Grundy and Cllr Maggie McEwen as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee as well as officers supporting the Committee.

The Chairman also gave thanks to the officers and to all Members for their hard work and contributions over the previous four years, especially those Members who were not standing in the May 2017 elections.

Chairman