



BROMLEY CIVIC CENTRE, STOCKWELL CLOSE, BROMLEY BRI 3UH

TELEPHONE: 020 8464 3333

CONTACT: Kerry Nicholls
Kerry.Nicholls@bromley.gov.uk

DIRECT LINE: 020 8461 7840

FAX: 020 8290 0608

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CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting to be held on Thursday 1 February 2024

**3b QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES
PORTFOLIO HOLDER (PAGES 3 - 4)**

Copies of the documents referred to above can be obtained from
<http://cde.bromley.gov.uk/>

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CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE 1 FEBRUARY 2024

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

1. From Debra Rose, Local Resident

Why is the council not engaging with Roots4learning, a specialist provider of education for children with SEND? The response to parents so far has been that the council only engage DfE and Ofsted registered providers yet they often use an agency, Supply & Demand Consultancy Ltd, who are not.

Reply:

It would not be appropriate to discuss commercially sensitive decisions relating to specific providers. The council has made it very clear in its correspondence that it will be willing to explore the commissioning of any new Alternative Provision in the Borough once it is appropriately registered and assessed as able to safely educate children. A teacher supply agency is not comparable to a community-based learning programme attended by children and young people.

Supplementary Question:

Bromley's policy at the moment is to use approved providers of education when a child is not in school – they will typically be called alternative providers. What happens when the child is not provided using those specific approved providers. What happens when the Council are not able to provide a full-time education using the providers that they currently have approved?

Reply:

The Council will always work with parents to try and ensure that their children are able to access their full education entitlement. Unfortunately for a variety of reasons some children are unable to access this education provision or even to access full-time education. The Council will continue to work with families to seek to ensure this is possible and work towards a full reintegration into full-time education at the earliest possible opportunity.

2. From Rebecca Lisney, Local Resident

What is the policy around oversight of children's education when they are unable to attend school? Who oversees the teachers who are going into homes and libraries, arranged by the local authority/agency, to ensure quality, value, curriculum and outcomes? Is it the council or the agency providing the teacher?

Reply:

The responsibility to monitor and oversee Alternative Provision varies depending on the situation and needs of the child and which agency is commissioning the additional

support, which can include the school or LA. In most instances, the LA Personalised Learning Service will maintain oversight of the learning and progress of children accessing the education put in place for learners unable to attend school for medical reasons.

All providers of education or Alternative Provision are required to maintain records for the tracking of progress and impact and to make these available for scrutiny and review as required.

Supplementary Question:

Are you saying that the policy is that they hold records which can be scrutinised and if so, who reviews these records and how often? Who reviews the assessments to make sure that what they say is happening is actually happening and what framework do you use to assess the quality of this provision?

Reply:

The answer is that it depends on the alternative provision put in place for the child or young person. It could be that an alternative provision is stipulated as part of a child's Education, Health and Care Plan in which case it would be reviewed on a yearly basis as part of the EHC Plan annual review. The frequency of assessment will also vary depending on the type of alternative provision put in place for the child or young person, their individual circumstances, the progress made, who commissioned the provision and the accountability around that. There is no single policy or arrangement that applies to all scenarios.

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE
1 FEBRUARY 2024

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY

1. From Councillor Alisa Igoe

Could the Portfolio Holder please explain what support the Council provides in its special guardian support plan for those undertaking the role of Special Guardian and what provision, under the financial support requirement, is there for ensuring the child or children have adequate living conditions?

Reply:

Special Guardianship Order assessments are undertaken in conjunction with a child specific support plan. The Special Guardianship Support Plan addresses areas of need not just of the child but also the prospective special guardians and what support may be available. This includes areas around Health, Education, Emotional and Behavioural need, needs around children's identity and self-care. The needs set out are specific to each child and therefore the suggested support may be different depending on the child's needs.

In cases where Special Guardianship allowance applies following an income and expenditure mean test, the allowance is paid to the Special Guardian(s) until the child is 18 years or no longer in the care of the Special Guardian. Currently, Bromley remains responsible for reviewing Special Guardianship allowances whilst children are cared for under the Special Guardianship order or until the children are 18 years old.

The permanency Service runs a duty service to respond to enquiries from the Special Guardians and where applicable young people subject to Special Guardianship Orders can also contact the service for advice and support. Post Special Guardianship Support is a needs-led service. Through our Permanency App, the Support plan and our quarterly Newsletter, families are made aware of how they contact the service for support if any need arise. There are no allocated social workers post Special Guardianship Order as children are no longer looked after. However, where there is a need for an assessment of needs, this is allocated to a practitioner in the Service to undertake the assessment and make recommendations for support going forward.

On an annual basis for the first 3 years post order, Bromley contacts the families where children were previously looked after to undertake annual reviews by way of checking in with families and to identify any support needs. These annual reviews are offered to families; however, they can also decline our involvement. The Service also undertake a review of financial arrangement to ensure the allowance is still meeting needs.

Bromley has a 5-year contract with the charity, KINSHIP (previously Grandparents Plus) to provide services under their Kinship Connected programme. This programme ensures Special Guardian families receive independent support from a leading provider in KINSHIP support. KINSHIP, in conjunction with the Permanency Service and Bromley Special Guardians have set up Kinship specific support groups in different locations across the Borough which are run online and in person.

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