

**REPORT OF THE EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
SELECT COMMITTEE  
2017/18**

**Children’s Landscape in Bromley  
Adult Education Update**

Meeting Date: Wednesday 28 JUNE 2017

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Education Children and Families Select Committee met on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017 to review the Children's Service Landscape in Bromley.
- 1.2 Other issues that Members considered included a report setting out progress on implementing the Children's Service Improvement Plan and an update on Adult Education.
- 1.3 Information Briefings provided to the Select Committee in advance of the meetings included an update on the performance of schools in the Borough, information on changes to legislation relating to children (Children and Social Work Act 2017) and the impact of these changes on the Local Authority, an overview of 30 hours funded childcare for 3 and 4 year olds and a review of high needs arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Bromley.

## **2. Executive Summary of Recommendations**

- 2.1. **That the provision of communications support within the Council be reviewed to ensure sufficient capacity to disseminate key messages and information within the Bromley partnership.**
- 2.2 **That an in-depth analysis of the Children's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a comprehensive review of the changing demography of the Borough be undertaken to inform the provision of services over the next 5 to 10 years.**
- 2.3 **That the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families make further representations, once the review of the changing demographics of the Borough is completed, to the Government to ensure that adequate funding for the Local Authority and its partners to enable them to meet their increasing obligations to vulnerable children and families in the Borough.**
- 2.4 **That work to foster a transparent, honest corporate culture to ensure that Members are provided with accurate information to enable them to provide the necessary support to Officers through respectful challenge.**
- 2.5 **That maintenance of the office environment be kept under review to ensure that the recent improvements that have been made are sustained and that the working environment is conducive to a happy, healthy and productive workforce.**
- 2.6 **That the Local Authority and Bromley Safeguarding Children Board work with partner organisations to actively encourage attendance at and engagement with multi-agency training events.**

**2.7 The Committee supports the need to analyse the impact of early intervention and to develop policies which prevent children from being taken into care or requiring considerable support.**

**2.8 That in the 2018/19 Municipal Year, the Education, Children and Families Select Committee monitor progress made against the issues and recommendations within the reports submitted by the Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley (in October 2016 and April 2017).**

### **3. Portfolio Scrutiny**

3.1 As part of its regular work the Select Committee was briefed by the Portfolio Holder for Education Children and Families on the engagement and activities he had undertaken since the Committee's last meeting. The Portfolio Holder was questioned on the following matters:

- The mechanisms in place for ensuring that the improvements delivered in the Youth Offending Service (YOS) were monitored and remained on track.
- Common factors contributing to the failure of Bromley Youth Offending Service and Children's Services.
- Concerns raised by Bromley Head Teachers in relation to the impact of the proposed National Funding Formula.
- Accommodation for children from homeless families resulting in long travelling distances to schools for families placed out of Borough in temporary accommodation.
- Update on the abolition of the 50% admissions figure for faith schools.
- Planning for future education sites within the Borough.

### **4. Adult Education Update**

4.1. Carol Arnfield, Head of Service for Early Years, Schools Standards and Adult Education provided the Committee with an update on Adult Education following a restructure of the Service in 2016.

4.2. On 10 February 2016 the Council's Executive endorsed the reorganisation of the Adult Education Service, known as Bromley Adult Education College (BAEC). The reorganisation encompassed a refocusing of the curriculum offer to increase the level of resource used to support vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, a reduction in staffing levels across the service, and withdrawal from the Widmore Centre in Bromley. In August 2016, the Kentwood Centre became the new administrative centre for the Service. The Governing body of BAEC was dissolved at the end of the 2015/16 academic year and a new body, known as the Community Learning Advisory Consortium (CLAC), Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Education Children and Families, was formed.

4.3. Whilst the restructure has reduced the volume of courses open to public enrolment, BAEC continues to retain a reasonably wide range of provision

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within its mainstream offer for members of the public. Up to the end of April 2017, a total of 462 courses had taken place for the 2016/17 academic year. The accredited provision on offer retains a strong focus on English and maths, including GCSE and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Managers continue to work in partnership with Job Centre Plus to offer specific training and qualifications for unemployed adults, including Universal Job Match, CV writing, and interview skills.

- 4.4. Work is underway to address any areas for improvement identified during the Ofsted inspection conducted in February 2017. Ofsted concluded that the reorganisation of the Service had been well managed and successful with regard to bringing about a closer integration of the work of adult education with that of the Council. Many of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted in February 2017 had previously been recognised by the Service as part of its own self-assessment process. Actions to address the issues are built into a quality improvement plan.
- 4.5. The Committee notes that the restructure has helped to focus the work of BAEC, ensuring that it is well placed to help the Council meet its stated aim of focusing support on the Borough's more vulnerable residents and enabling a more joined up approach with that of other Council Services.
- 4.6. Members were pleased to note that although the closure of the Widmore site resulted in the loss of some popular subjects including pottery and jewellery making, a programme of adaptations to the Kentwood and Poverest Centres facilitated the retention of some specialist arts and crafts subjects.
- 4.7. The Committee recognises that a number of pressures on the Service appeared in the Autumn Term following the relocation of key staff and functions. It has taken time for staff to adjust to the different ways of working with much of the Autumn Term taken up with adjusting to the new arrangements. However, more space has been opened up for community use within the Kentwood Centre and this has had a positive impact on the Service.
- 4.8. It is pleasing to note that information provided to the Committee indicates that the Poverest Centre is now better used. The Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education confirmed that feedback from students confirms that they are happy with the wider range of courses available in this community setting. Positive feedback has also been received in relation to the evening classes being run. Pressure still exists around staffing, but managers are becoming increasingly familiar with the increased expectations from Ofsted.
- 4.9. Table 4.1 below demonstrates average daily room usage in 2016/17. The huts on the Poverest site currently remain unusable and whilst the former nursery has been converted into teaching space there are no alternative plans for increasing the levels of accommodation in the future.

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**Table 4.1: Average daily room usage in 2016/17**

	<b>Kentwood</b> (out of total 22 rooms across 14 slots)	<b>Poverest</b> (out of total 10 rooms across 12 slots)
<b>Monday</b>	44%	67%
<b>Tuesday</b>	65%	85%
<b>Wednesday</b>	64%	64%
<b>Thursday</b>	50%	75%
<b>Friday</b>	30%	85%

- 4.10. Members noted that levels of funding have not changed for 2017/18. This suggests that the provision of courses will be at the same level as in 2016/17.
- 4.11. The Committee notes that there is a retention and achievement element to the funding. The implication of this is that if students drop out of courses any funding is adjusted accordingly. Since the Ofsted inspection, the Service has been monitoring levels of drop off more closely. The Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education has been asked to provide the Committee with data confirming the level of drop off at the end of the 2016/17 academic year.
- 4.12. The Committee further notes that Ofsted had criticised slow progress by leaders and managers in improving the achievement rates in some accredited provision, particularly ESOL courses. In response to this the Service has been investigating techniques that could be employed to prepare better students for their qualifications.
- 4.13. The Committee has asked that a further update be provided when more detail is available around the proposals for a possible move towards sharing backroom operations and a merged hub based structure under the Government's plans for the devolution of funding in the London region.

## **5. The Children's Service Landscape in Bromley**

- 5.1. The Committee's main inquiry for this meeting was 'The Children's Service Landscape in Bromley'.
- 5.2. A range of written evidence was provided to Members in advance of the meeting. This included a report providing an overview of the work of the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board, a report setting out the role of the Children's Service Improvement Governance Board, a report setting out the aims and objectives of the 'Towards Excellence for Children in Bromley' initiative, a letter setting out the outcome of the third Ofsted Monitoring Visit in relation to Children's Services in Bromley, and an overview of the Bromley Children's Service Department. A written submission had also been received from Ravenswood School and this was tabled at the meeting.
- 5.3. In addition to the written evidence contained within the agenda pack provided to the Committee, and to develop Member's knowledge and understanding of

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the partnership working arrangements for Children's Services in Bromley, the following information was also tabled at the meeting:

- A chart detailing the Children's Service Leadership and Governance Arrangements for Partnership working;
- Terms of Reference for the Safer Bromley Partnership Strategic Group
- The Constitution of the Safer Bromley Partnership
- The Safer Bromley Partnership Strategy 2016-2019
- Bromley Safeguarding Children Board Structure 2017
- Membership of the Safeguarding Children Board (June 2017)
- Youth Offending Service Governance Arrangements
- Membership of the Youth Offending Service Management Board
- Terms of Reference of the Youth Offending Service Management Board

5.4 The Committee heard evidence from five witnesses at the meeting:

- Mr Ade Adetosoye, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services
- Mrs Janet Bailey, Interim Director of Children's Social Care
- Councillor Stephen Carr, Leader of the Council
- Mrs Isobel Cattermole, Independent Chairman of Bromley's Children's Service Improvement Governance Board
- Mr Jim Gamble QPM, Independent Chairman of Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board

## 5.5 Background to the Enquiry

5.5.1 Between 11 April and 6 May 2016, the Council's services for children in need of help and protection and children looked after were inspected by Ofsted under the 'new single inspection framework'. The judgement published on Monday 27 June 2016, found Children's Services to be inadequate across all reporting categories, including children who need help and protection; children looked after and achieving permanence; adoption; experience and progress of care leavers; and leadership, management and governance. Ofsted made 18 recommendations in relation to improvements within Children's Services in Bromley.

5.5.2 In anticipation of the publication of the Ofsted report, on 16 June 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) issued a Direction to the London Borough of Bromley instructing the Local Authority to take steps following the failure of its children's social care services. The direction required the Council to co-operate with the Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley appointed by the Secretary of State, Ms Frankie Sulke CBE, for a period of six months.

5.5.3 The Council acted swiftly to put in place a Member-led Improvement Board and an officer Service Improvement Team, both with independent external support, to address the shortcomings identified by Ofsted.

5.5.4 The Children's Service Improvement Plan, developed in conjunction with partner agencies was submitted to Ofsted in September 2016. The Plan was broken down into 10 priorities with 306 actions covering the 18 Ofsted recommendations.

5.5.5 On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016, the report of the Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley was published by the DfE along with a further direction. The direction indicated that the Secretary of State wished to appoint a Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley for a further six month period. It was later confirmed that Ms Sulke would continue in the role.

5.5.6 In November 2016, Mrs Isobel Cattermole was appointed as Independent Chairman of the Bromley Children's Service Improvement Governance Board. The purpose of the Board is to ensure that vulnerable children and young people in Bromley are safe, protected, and supported so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes. Board Members advise on, drive and challenge the delivery, progress, and outcomes of the Improvement Plan and monitor work being completed to secure sustainable improvements in Bromley's Children's Services.

5.5.7 In December 2016, the Council appointed Mr Ade Adetosoye as Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education Care and Health Services to lead on the improvement agenda.

## **5.6 Towards Excellence for Children in Bromley**

5.6.1 Once in post, the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education Care and Health Services launched and communicated the *Roadmap to Excellence* to all staff and partners. This document clearly sets out the Department's direction of travel and the details of how this will be achieved.

5.6.2 The *Roadmap to Excellence* builds on the Children's Service Improvement Plan identifying eight areas where the Department can focus on improving front line practice and support good social work in order to reshape the service. The themes are:

- *Theme 1 - Improving safeguarding practice to ensure we provide better help and protection.*
- *Theme 2 - Improving practice to children looked after*
- *Theme 3 - Improving practice to care leavers*
- *Theme 4 - Improving practice through better leadership and management*
- *Theme 5 - Improving practice in adoption*
- *Theme 6 - Improving practice – tackling child sexual exploitation, children missing and gangs*

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- *Theme 7 - Improving practice – commissioning and procurement to support social work practice*
- *Theme 8 - Leadership team - enablers*

5.6.3 To compliment and embed the *Roadmap to Excellence* the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education Care and Health Services and senior managers within Children’s Social Care have introduced a number of measures to demonstrate that the Department is committed to recruiting, developing, and retaining a skilled and experienced workforce that is able to deliver excellent practice by:

- introducing a caseload promise to social workers in order to reduce caseloads and promote a culture of delivering ‘quality practice’;
- introducing and circulating the Department’s Social Work Practice Standards clearly setting out what is expected of social workers and managers employed by Bromley;
- holding regular staff consultation and engagement sessions to create a culture of transparency and trust between Senior Managers and staff;
- listening to what is being said and acting on this by
  - i) providing technology to enable more flexible working conditions,
  - ii) reviewing and introducing pay equalisation across the department,
  - iii) encouraging agency workers to become permanent and
  - iv) introducing a new and updated practice development programme from January 2017, to provide staff with training and development opportunities.
- issuing regular email communication and information updates;
- launching the ‘Line of Sight’ document detailing the mechanisms that are used by senior managers to ensure that they have comprehensive knowledge about what is happening in the front line in order to meet their responsibilities effectively;
- setting up the Social Work Practice Advisory Group, a forum for front-line social workers to be included in a range of national and local social work issues.

5.6.4 In his evidence to the Select Committee, the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education Care and Health Services explained that the *Roadmap to Excellence* and the model of simple transformation both centre around improved practice. This provides the structure needed to ensure that the right families benefit from the support of the Council at the right time. Improvement currently focuses around three key issues:

- Strong leadership – at both political and officer level;
- Permanent staff – with a focus on creating stability through recruiting the right staff to Bromley.
- Addressing the culture of the organisation.

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- 5.6.5 In a letter sent to the Council following their recent Monitoring Visit on 9 and 10 May 2017, Ofsted recognised that Bromley was now moving in the right direction and that “the local authority is making good progress in implementing actions in the improvement plan for children looked after and care leavers”.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.6.6 The Director of Children’s Social Care reported to the Committee that since December 2016, there had been a considerable shift in culture. This was delivering a marked improvement in staff morale and a tangible difference in working practices. Social Workers now feel respected and supported in their roles. Some improvements have been made to the office environment. Offices where social workers were located have been thoroughly cleaned. There are also plans for break out rooms to enable social workers to have space away from their desks. The roll out of new IT equipment and mobile phones has ensured that Social Workers are able to spend more time with their clients and less time completing paperwork and writing reports. In addition to this there are attractive opportunities for career development. Feedback that the Council has received suggests that in terms of social worker recruitment Bromley is now an attractive place to work.
- 5.6.7 In June 2016, in the immediate aftermath of the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection, the Council’s leadership recognised that additional financial resources were required and a level of additional resource was provided to support the required improvements. Capacity was being built in to the workforce and this would enable the Caseload Promise of between eleven and fifteen cases per social worker to be maintained. In addition a Court team was established, front-line and manager capacity was increased, key capability issues were addressed, and work began to try to find a suitable new Director of Children’s Services for immediate appointment. Recruitment processes were expedited and this enabled the newly appointed Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Education, Care and Health Services to work with the Council on a part-time basis prior to his agreed start date.
- 5.6.8 In September 2016, the Leader committed to reviewing the governance and scrutiny structures of the Local Authority in order to ensure that children were prioritised appropriately and that they are effective in holding children’s services to account and minimising the impact of decision making process on children’s services. In April 2017, the Portfolio structure was reviewed and realigned to enable the provision of a single Portfolio Holder for children and young people, not least to streamline Member-level support for the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services. The structure of PDS Committees was also revised to provide a single PDS Committee (the Education, Children & Families Select Committee) for children and young people and improve the scrutiny function related to children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Ofsted setting out the Outcome of the Third Monitoring Visit to Bromley’s Children’s Services (13 June 2017)

5.6.9 In his evidence to the Select Committee, the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services emphasised the importance of continued Member engagement with young people in the care of the Local Authority in line with the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. Members were asked to consider attending the Corporate Parenting Fun Day on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017, and engage with future audits of cases and Practice Weeks that were held throughout the year. Member training in relation to Children's Services was being reviewed in line with the recommendation made by the Children's Commissioner for Bromley in her first report, published in October 2016.

## **5.7 The Role of the Children's Service Improvement Governance Board**

5.7.1 After the Ofsted inspection, the Leader established a Children's Services Improvement Governance Board which he initially chaired. The Board comprised senior officers of the Council, the Chairman of the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board, Portfolio Holders and PDS Chairmen of the Education and Care Services Portfolios in addition to senior colleagues from partner organisations, including the Police, the Clinical Commissioning Group, and schools.

5.7.2 The Board was deeply involved in developing the post-inspection Service Improvement Plan, a challenging and ambitious plan which extended beyond the eighteen recommendations from Ofsted.

5.7.3 At the first meeting of the Board, recognising the central role the Board would have in driving improvement the Leader of the Council reserved the right to secure the support of an independent chairman for the Governance Board. Consequently, the Board is now independently chaired by Mrs Isobel Cattermole. Its remit is to oversee rapid improvement across children's services, including forensically examining actions being taken to implement the Service Improvement Plan submitted to Ofsted following the Inspection. Board Members challenge the delivery, progress, and outcomes of the Improvement Plan and monitor work being completed to secure sustainable improvements in Bromley's Children's Services.

5.7.4 The Board works alongside existing strategic governance and accountability frameworks including the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Corporate Parenting Board and other relevant scrutiny functions. The Board is accountable to the LBB Executive whilst non LBB members of the Board are responsible for reporting progress and key issues through their own organisations' governance structures.

5.7.5 At the meeting, the Independent Chairman of the Governance Board suggested that the inspection outcome was undoubtedly damaging for the Local Authority. It is important for any Local Authority to recognise that such a systematic failure of one of its key services is a corporate failure. It is therefore pleasing that in Bromley there has been a corporate response and since December 2016, progress was being made at a good pace. The only

way for the Council to be able to maintain the current momentum going forward was to realise that the damaging effect of the inspection outcome on the community, the Council and its partners would “come back to haunt” the Local Authority if it failed to embed the improvement that had already been made. The level of resource already put into the Service had to be sustained, and robust, challenging scrutiny processes needed to be in place to hold leaders and practitioners to account.

- 5.7.6 It was clear that there was good buy-in to the improvement process from partner organisations and it was also important to recognise that the positive relationship that had developed between the Council, its partners, and the Commissioner for Children’s Services in Bromley had been pivotal to the pace of improvement.

**Recommendation 1: That the provision of communications support within the Council be reviewed to ensure sufficient capacity to disseminate key messages and information within the Bromley partnership.**

- 5.7.7 Mrs Cattermole emphasised to the Committee that Children’s Social Care is very much a demand-led service; social workers do not go into the community and actively seek their client base but deal with situations as they arise. For children in need and children who are on the periphery of children’s social care, early intervention strategies are central to delivering tangible improvements in outcomes. A number of the issues that are being identified by social workers start with neglect and parents not knowing or understanding how to safeguard their children.
- 5.7.8 Funding is also central to ensuring that services are targeted at the right families. Mrs Cattermole has suggested that there is a clear and important role for Members in lobbying the Government to secure the provision of sustained funding for early intervention.
- 5.7.9 The Select Committee also recognises that it is important that the Local Authority’s relationship with schools is further enhanced and developed. There is a need to support schools to advance their understanding of safeguarding children and the central role they have to play in safeguarding children.
- 5.7.10 The Children’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) conducted in September 2016, clearly sets out the challenges facing the Local Authority over the next 5 to 10 years. Mrs Cattermole emphasised that Members need to be aware of these challenges and have a clear understanding of their implications in order to provide support and challenge to Officers within the Service. In addition to this, the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team has to be conscious of future pressures to be able to shape the delivery of service provision and challenge its Officers to manage and address these changing demands.

5.7.11 Mrs Cattermole suggested that a good starting point would be to review the allocation of resources on a ward by ward basis. A holistic approach to service delivery across the Borough could then be adopted. This would recognise that in a diverse Borough such as Bromley there were some less affluent wards that would benefit more from a larger proportion of the resource that was available. Targeting funding in these areas could reduce cost pressures in the future.

5.7.12 The challenges faced by Bromley as a Local Authority are undoubtedly changing, as is the case for many other local authorities. Mrs Cattermole explained that there are more vulnerable families settling in the Borough with associated social issues that must be managed. These families tended to be larger in size, often with multiple children requiring the support of Children's Social Care in one form or another. As a result of this, Bromley is becoming increasingly like an inner London Borough, although the Local Authority does not receive any increases in its funding to reflect these additional challenges. In order to address this, a detailed analysis of the data that was gathered as part of the Children's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis should be undertaken. This would provide the Local Authority with powerful information with which to advance its case for additional funding to support vulnerable children and families in Bromley. This would provide the Council with solid information with which to lobby the Government and make its case for increases in funding.

**Recommendation 2: That an in-depth analysis of the Children's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a comprehensive review of the changing demography of the Borough be undertaken to inform the provision of services over the next 5 to 10 years.**

**Recommendation 3: That the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families make further representations, once the review of the changing demographics of the Borough is completed, to the Government to ensure that adequate funding for the Local Authority and its partners to enable them to meet their increasing obligations to vulnerable children and families in the Borough.**

5.7.12 Members were advised by Mrs Cattermole that they need to foster a culture within the organisation that facilitates open and honest dialogue between Members and Officers. This enables Members to provide respectful challenge to Officers when required. This would also ensure that Officers have the confidence to provide Members with accurate information in relation to the performance of services across the Council. It is clearly evident that the culture within Bromley has begun to evolve since the visit from Ofsted in May and June 2016. There is still more work to do and there is a clear role for Members in providing respectful, critical challenge in addition to support to Officers working in an ever evolving Borough.

**Recommendation 4: That work to foster a transparent, honest corporate culture to ensure that Members are provided with accurate information to**

**enable them to provide the necessary support to Officers through respectful challenge.**

5.7.13 Mrs Cattermole concluded by saying that she was encouraged by the progress in delivering improvements within Children's Services that had already been made. The determination of the Local Authority and its partners to deliver the necessary improvement was clearly evident and the Service was certainly now heading in the right direction.

## **5.8 The Role of the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board**

5.8.1 Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) exists to support, scrutinise and challenge all the agencies in Bromley in relation to what they are doing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. BSCB is chaired by an Independent Chairman, Mr Jim Gamble QPM, to bring an objective and authoritative rigour to the work of the Board. The Board's membership is specified in legislation.

5.8.2 Local Safeguarding Children Boards were established under the Children Act 2004 and exist to:

- a) co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in an area; and
- b) ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body for these purposes.

5.8.3 In addition, there are a number of specific functions for Local Safeguarding Children Boards cited in the Statutory Regulation (2006) and Working Together (2015). These will be amended following the Children and Social Work Act 2017 with new statutory regulations for safeguarding partners expected in 2018. The current functions include responsibility for:

- developing specified safeguarding policies and procedures (for example, guidance on thresholds for interventions and investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children);
- undertaking reviews of serious cases and advising the Local Authority and their board partners on lessons to be learned;
- raising awareness about safeguarding children
- monitoring and evaluating effectiveness to safeguard (through auditing, self-assessment and analysis of performance data and intelligence).

5.8.4 The BSCB is committed to:

- ensuring children in the Borough are seen, heard and helped – testing action through evidencing impact rather than activity
- contextual Safeguarding – focusing on the context of a child's life – at home, at school, with friends, on the street, online and offline.
- early help – a relentless commitment to early intervention.

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- strong and transparent leadership – encouraging constructive challenge, actively seeking out the issues and developing a total commitment to continuous learning and improvement.
- 5.8.5 Mr Gamble described his role and the role of BSCB as one of collective challenge and strategic support. The Board was focused on supporting partners and in particular the Local Authority to positively respond to the most recent Ofsted inspection. BSCB now had responsibility for overseeing Improvement Plan Priority 8 – Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 5.8.6 BSCB has moved away from reviewing a list of harms to a model which has a focus on four key issues:
- i) the context of a child’s life in Bromley, including pathways to harm
  - ii) early help and insuring that early intervention had a positive impact
  - iii) leadership – delivering respectful challenge when it was needed.
  - iv) health and wellbeing of the workforce, including oversight and challenge to the support provided by the Council’s leadership, oversight of caseloads and supervision, and progressing improvements to the working environment.
- 5.8.7 Mr Gamble highlighted his concern to the Committee that office accommodation for Social Workers did not reflect the standards that he would expect for staff doing such difficult and stressful work. The Council had to ensure that that the working environment was conducive to a happy, healthy and productive workforce. Mr Gamble had not found this to be the case when he accepted the role of Independent Chairman of BSCB in January 2017. Some limited improvement has been made but many more improvements in this area could be made.

**Recommendation 5: That maintenance of the office environment be kept under review to ensure that the recent improvements that have been made are sustained and that the working environment is conducive to a happy, healthy and productive workforce.**

- 5.8.8 The Committee notes that BSCB had developed a challenging and full work plan for 2017/18. This has a focus on:
- vulnerable adolescents, with a particular focus on those vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (CSE), going missing, and/or from gangs.
  - enhanced working with schools
  - children with special educational needs and/or disability
  - reflecting the authentic voice of the child.
- 5.8.9 Mr Gamble explained to the Committee that a key priority for 2017/18 was to establish and inform a risk register. When Mr Gamble arrived in January 2017, BSCB did not have a risk register and this was a significant oversight requiring rectification.

- 5.8.10 In relation to seeking to develop the authentic voice of young people in the Borough, BSCB is working in collaboration with Bromley Youth Council. A Memorandum of Understanding between BSCB and Bromley Youth Council is being developed and the two groups are working together to develop a digital footprint survey to provide a better understanding of how young people in Bromley access technology and use social media.
- 5.8.11 The investment committed by the Council's leadership is being used to build a better approach to supporting vulnerable groups in the Borough. It is now important that the impact of the improvements being made is directly felt by vulnerable children and families through improved outcomes.
- 5.8.12 BSCB are seeking to increase levels of engagement with schools in the Borough. Schools are one of the key agencies involved in identifying vulnerable children and have a central role to play in managing referrals to Children's Social Care. Significant progress is being made with engagement with school although there is still more to be done.
- 5.8.13 The information being provided to all partners is being reviewed. The Committee heard that there is an improving cycle of attendance at multi-agency training events. As well as reviewing partners who make the highest number of referrals BSCB was also looking at those partners who make very few or no referrals.

**Recommendation 6: That the Local Authority and Bromley Safeguarding Children Board work with partner organisations to actively encourage attendance at and engagement with multi-agency training events.**

- 5.8.14 In terms of support and the contribution of resource from other partners, Mr Gamble confirmed that good financial support had been received from colleagues within education whilst the same could not be said for some other partners. The Police had proven to be active and engaged partners who were willing to commit resource. However, Mr Gamble advised Members that the geographic realignment of the Metropolitan Police could have implications for Bromley and the impact of any changes need to be closely monitored to ensure that improvements in Children's Services in Bromley are not destabilised.
- 5.8.15 Mr Gamble recognised that all organisations within the Partnership have had to make savings. Ultimately the allocation of resources came down to priorities. There is clear evidence that early intervention delivered savings down the line. This indicates that early intervention strategies have to be a priority in terms of the allocation of resource.

**Recommendation 7: The Committee supports the need to analyse the impact of early intervention and to develop policies which prevent children from being taken into care or requiring considerable support.**

## **5.8 Conclusions of the Education Children and Families Select Committee**

5.8.1 Following detailed consideration of the written evidence provided in the Committee's agenda pack and at the meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017, and the verbal evidence provided by the witnesses at the meeting, the Committee recognises that significant improvements to Children's Services in Bromley have been made since the Ofsted Inspection in April and May 2016.

5.8.2 There is still however more that can be done including...

5.8.3 The Committee recognises the role that elected Members have to play in continuing to drive improvement across the service including...

**Recommendation 8: That in the 2018/19 Municipal Year, the Education, Children and Families Select Committee monitor progress made against the issues and recommendations within the reports submitted by the Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley (in October 2016 and April 2017).**

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