

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 24th April, 2017.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Eileen Johnson(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Di Hewitt, Cllr Gillian Corr (for Cllr Faulks)

Officers: Diane McConnell (CHS), Jane Wright (CHS), Jill Douglas (HR,L&C), Judith Trainer, Gary Woods, Annette Sotheby (DCE)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

PEO Evacuation Procedure

1/17

The evacuation procedure was noted.

PEO Declarations of Interest

2/17

There were no declarations of interest from members.

PEO Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations - Review of Disadvantage in Early Years

3/17

Members were given an update of proposed actions/progress, success measures, who was responsible for these and by when, in relation to the agreed recommendations following the review of Disadvantage in Early Years.

It was felt important to understand the meaning of 'disadvantaged' and how that was reflected in the relevant strategy, as people were defining this in different ways. Discussions had taken place with the Director of Children's Services focussing on the new Children's Strategy to look at narrowing gaps and improving outcomes for children and young people. A report would then be published.

Continued focus on ensuring children eligible for funded Early Years Education were identified, particularly 2-year olds, with our settings to be able to deliver 30 hours of free child care for 3-4 years could mean taking more of those children rather than 2 year olds, so need to ensure we remain vigilant. There had been an improvement from being worst in the region to 90% accessing free provision for their children currently.

'Golden Ticket' campaign to continue to maintain take-up of places.

Partnership work was ongoing between providers and schools.

A new portal had been launched to assist parents in making an application.

Moving Forward Transition Guarantee is underway and working well. It was felt crucial that this was fully understood, and work ongoing to ensure all partnership groups were aware and that information is shared.

A more integrated approach was looked at to sustain and improve upon the

number of 2½ year olds receiving health development reviews, a clear performance criteria for Public Health. Some parents still chose not to have this assessment for their child.

Members asked for clarification of the health check procedure. These focussed mostly around development checks on gross motor skills, speech and language, height, weight etc, and were carried out in the home, giving parents and health professionals the opportunity to identify any issues.

Members asked what procedures were in place to identify dyslexia or other problems earlier, as children faced more difficulties if this was not detected in early years. It was noted that, if not already detected, it would be identified at age 6 with a phonics test. A SATS reading test at age 7 would also identify any problem – Key Stage 1 (age 7) and Key Stage 2 (age 11) could be very difficult, and support/intervention would be given if a child did not meet the expected standard.

The Early Years' Services report due to Cabinet in April/May 2017 would now be presented in June 2017 due to the announcement of the General Election.

Head Teacher of Virtual Schools had shared her approach with schools where she audits how they spend their Pupil Premium and the impact on an individual child, challenging the school if necessary and removing or providing additional funding if appropriate. The same approach would now be adopted for Early Years Pupil Premium.

There is an online checker available where parents could complete their own details online at home, or in the school with assistance if needed.

Members expressed concern regarding some parents worrying about the stigma involved with free school meals, and the impression that they cannot afford to provide for their children. Work ongoing with governors and schools, encouraging families to apply.

AGREED – that the Action Plan in relation to the review of Disadvantage in Early Years be approved.

**PEO
4/17**

Scrutiny Review of Sickness Absence

The national context and main aims of the review were discussed and attention drawn to the new SBC Attendance Management Policy currently being drafted. List of meeting dates beginning in May 2017 with a background from HR, also involving Health & Safety with regard to statutory obligations.

Support services to be involved in the June 2017 meeting, with input from Trade Unions.

July 2017 meeting will include work around the Council's intended Focus Groups with an opportunity to feed in some questions from the Committee if appropriate. Input from the private sector to ascertain their attendance management processes would also be sought.

Currently in the process of finalising 2016/17 workforce data which includes sickness absence, suggesting an increase (anticipating a final figure of 8.9 days per FTE). The Scrutiny Review is timely in trying to identify reasons for the increase and ways to improve this. Work is still ongoing, but data may be provided in advance of the May 2017 meeting for consideration.

Members asked for earlier data to see if a pattern could be identified, and this could be provided.

Discussion took place around the recording of sickness absence which is inputted by the line manager who has responsibility for their team. Members asked if there was any infringement of medical confidentiality when looking at reasons for sickness absence. In response, it was noted that the reason was inputted by the manager on the basis of what the employee told them, and that reported sickness reasons could hide other problems/issues such as stress.

Members asked if time could be taken off if an employee's child was ill for example, and what was considered as mitigating circumstances. It was noted that unpaid parental leave, flexi-time or holiday could be taken in such a case. Paid leave could be given in an emergency or exceptional circumstances.

Discussion took place around employees working with different flexi systems across council departments and where there was less flexibility for some who had to work fixed hours, for example, Community Services, compared to some office-based workers who had more flexibility.

Members were also interested in sickness figures which did not include the terminally ill, long-term sick etc, and asked if the sickness policy was the same across all departments. This was confirmed.

The difficulty of deciding when to take sick leave was discussed - for example with coughs or colds, and the impact of spreading germs in the workplace, which can be more serious in an environment where an employee has the care of vulnerable people.

Members asked if there was a policy in place for employees to have time off for elective surgery and this was confirmed. In addition, was time off allowed for bereavement, mammograms, health screening for men and women etc - this was also confirmed.

It was also noted that some research work carried out by Scrutiny would complement the review of the current SBC Attendance Management Policy.

AGREED – that the draft scope and project plan for the Review of Sickness Absence be approved.

**PEO
5/17**

Work Programme 2017-2018

Consideration was given to the People Select Committee Work Programme for 2017-18.

AGREED – That the Work Programme be noted.

**PEO
6/17**

Chair's Update

The Chair provided no update.