

**Minutes of the Children's Services and Education
Scrutiny Board**

**23th July, 2018 at 5.00pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Underhill (Chair);
Councillor M Y Hussain (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Akhter, Ashman, Hevican, M Hussain,
and Shaeen.

Rev P French (co-opted member);
Mrs T Majid (co-opted member).

Apologies: Councillor Allen, S Davies, Hickey and Phillips

In attendance: Josie Barnette, Family Information Service Manager;
Andrew Timmins, Group Head, Education, Skills and
Employment.

20/18

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June, 2018
be approved as a correct record.

21/18

Childcare Sufficiency Report 2018/19

The Family Information Services Manager and the Group Head, Education, Skills and Employment provided the annual childcare sufficiency report highlighting how the Council was meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare under the Children's and Families Act 2014 and in line with the requirements of the March 2018 Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities. The 11 recommendations arising from the findings of the Child Sufficiency Report 2018/19 were detailed in the report for the Board to consider. Members were advised that comments from the Board would be taken into consideration by Cabinet when it received the annual Childcare Sufficiency report at its meeting 25 July 2018.

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From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The report highlighted that quality of childcare in Sandwell was 89% good or outstanding but there was not sufficient childcare in some areas and a need to encourage take of childcare places in others.
- There had been progress against the 2017 Childcare Sufficiency Report (CSR) recommendations. Childcare providers had received a wide range of support through visits and meetings; Additional childminders came forward and some new provision opened with nurseries and schools offering play schemes.
- There was a need to monitor provision in the community as there were changes that needed to be considered such as Jubilee Park provision, Tipton Toddlers was a community provider had ceased to provide childcare, the family information services manager indicated that this would be picked up with the local schools.
- It was highlighted that good nursery provision was essential, some of the Board felt that school based provision was better preparation for school however it was agreed that a good balance between private or voluntary sector (PVI) and schools was good for children and offered a range of provision for parents to make their choice.
- PVI and schools delivered early years provision and were paid the same rate by the Government.
- In relation to Sandwell Schools offering provision it was highlighted that it was more expensive for schools to provide places in early years.
- All early year's provision was inspected by Ofsted, including childminders, to maintain and monitor consistent levels of quality in early years provision.
- Wednesbury had a good supply of nursery places but there was a shortage of childminders. It was assumed that there might be a greater use of family members or private help from friends in this area and other areas of Sandwell.
- The Board heard that childminders offered flexible arrangements for many working parents which could be convenient during holiday periods when schools were closed. It was considered that parents received penalties from day nurseries for lateness, nonattendance and the like and could call a parent to collect a child if they were ill. It was considered that childminders had more flexibility and could vary arrangements in agreement with

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- the parents and that some working parents and families would benefit from childminders caring for their child.
- The Chair indicated that the Council had made provision for childcare places for parents who wanted to return to study, but many could not afford to take up the place.
 - The Chair voiced concern that the Council was making a decision on provision of childcare for the parents rather than the parents being invited to have a say on what provision they wanted. She requested further information about how the Council gathered information and how parents were consulted.
 - The Family Services Information Manager advised that demographic data was supplied by Research Sandwell, supply of childcare places extracted from Capita One database and a survey of childcare providers and schools and quality data was from Capita One database and the Early Years Team. She suggested that the Council could work with Children's Centres and look at talking to childminders in the same way foster carers have been consulted.
 - The Chair asked if the Council had talked to the Job Centre about career path for people who could be a childminder and how job seekers and parents who study could benefit from flexible working hours in their own home.
 - It was suggested that additional information about benefits, who to contact about childcare and childminders etc. could be shared to raise awareness.
 - The Board was advised that there were a lot of calls from parents returning to College and training in September. Officers go to the College to information share about childcare and respond to questions.
 - The Chair suggested it would be helpful to find out how many enquiries were actually reaching childcare providers and indicated that this would be where feedback from parents would be interesting.
 - In relation to marketing and information sharing about childcare the Board was advised that there were a number of channels used: List from DfE, Leaflets. Facebook page, etc to help put things in perspective.
 - It takes 4-6 months for private childminders to go through the start-up process. There is a lot of paperwork, a high level of involvement and of record keeping; the recent childminders through the recruitment process had achieved good standard. There was a range of training available for them to attend.
 - All childminders have been briefed on the website regarding GDPR - data protection guidance and were on board.

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- The Board heard that newcomers to the UK engaged with childcare and nursery provision and managed to get by using broken English speaking.

The Chair thanked officers for presenting the report and responding to questions. She advised matters raised would be brought to the Cabinets attention, in particular that historically information from parents had been gathered to inform childcare place planning and numbers of parents wanting to study or return to work and that this information was valuable to plan for future provision.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board receive the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2018-19 and endorse the 11 recommendations arising from the findings of the report;
- (2) that the comments and observations of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board be referred to Cabinet 25 July 2018 for information when considering the report.

(Meeting ended at 5.45pm)

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