

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **14 June 2011**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Exclusions of Children at the Early Years Foundation and Primary Stage :The Work of the Primary Behaviour and Therapeutic Intervention Service**

Purpose of report: **To update the Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Primary Behaviour and therapeutic Intervention Service in dealing with exclusions of children at the Early years Foundation and Primary Stage**

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to consider whether any further scrutiny of this issue should be undertaken

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The total budget allocation for the Primary Behaviour and Therapeutic Intervention Service is £478,000. (See Appendix for structure chart to which this refers)

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The Local Authority is charged with the responsibility of providing effective support and challenge for those schools across East Sussex which continue to exclude young children. The 2009 Ofsted report into factors determining a school's rate of exclusion identified three overarching features; the philosophy of the school, the capacity of the school to meet the challenges presented and the response the school receives from the local authority and outside agencies to requests for help.

2.2 This paper outlines the proposed range of statutory early intervention services on offer to schools across East Sussex in support of young children who are at risk of exclusion and examines how these services have been configured so as to address the recommendations of the 2009 Ofsted report.

2.3 At the pre-school stage, the Educational Psychology Service offers a specialist early intervention and assessment service to children who do not have significant developmental delay but yet present behaviour within a nursery or early years setting which is judged to be unsafe, either for the child or other children. Such children are often described as having oppositional or explosive temperaments and many have either been excluded from at least one nursery or, more usually, parents and carers have been asked by an early years provider to find an alternative placement.

2.4 Referrals to the service are received directly from pre-school providers or other multi-disciplinary professionals (health visitors, social care colleagues, paediatricians) in circumstances where the child has failed to respond to other targeted early intervention services. The service is delivered through a small team of early years (emotional and behavioural intervention EBI) support staff as an integral part of the specialist Early Years Teaching and Support Service for children with disabilities and complex special educational needs. This service addresses the gap in knowledge about the use of exclusions by nursery schools and private providers, as recommended in the 2009 Ofsted report.

2.5 Over the past year the early years (EBI) service has provided direct assessment and intervention to seventy-two children and their parents and carers. Of these children, eighteen are considered to remain at serious risk of exclusion on entry into school in September 2011 and will require ongoing support.

2.6 As studies show that the temperament of a child during the pre-school years often carries through into school, children identified with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs at the pre-school stage are recognised to be among the cohort of children at greatest risk of exclusion. Hence it is important that they receive effective school based support from appropriately trained staff throughout their primary school years.

2.7 Young children excluded from school in East Sussex display the same range of complex behaviours as evidenced in the 2009 Ofsted report, namely, biting staff and/or other children, persistent refusal to follow instructions, swearing, running away from staff, kicking or hitting staff, climbing over the school fence, throwing chairs or 'trashing classrooms'. In addition school staff sometimes perceive a sexual element to a child's behaviour which disturbs them.

2.8 Within the 2009 Ofsted report, Headteachers who had excluded pupils were asked to identify strategies they felt would help them. Responsive local authority support when children were in crisis together with a team of support assistants attached to the local authority who could work with a child temporarily were identified as key priorities.

2.9 The Therapeutic Intervention Service, a new rapid multi-disciplinary response service for Key Stage 1 children in crisis, was launched in April 2010 to address this need. As research shows that as many as 40% of children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties have undiagnosed communication problems. A speech and language therapist forms an integral part of this team.

2.10 Over the past academic year the Therapeutic Intervention Service has received thirty-nine referrals from schools. Although referred children are often described as controlling and oppositional many of the presenting behaviours are linked to underlying neurological difficulties and/or earlier trauma. Hence increasing practitioner knowledge and understanding of child development has proved helpful in allowing practitioners to move away from the view of the child being at fault.

2.11 The recent transfer of specialist teaching and support personnel from the Primary Behaviour Support Service into the Educational Psychology Service has enabled the development of a similar model of integrated practice for children at Key Stage 2. In addition to support for children at risk of permanent exclusion, this service will also focus on the development of nurture provision. This builds a seamless model of support for schools from within the Educational Psychology Service which is capable of tracking and monitoring the progress of children with the most complex behavioural needs from the early years phase up until the end of the primary phase.

3. Conclusions

3.1 Nurture provision was cited in the 2009 Ofsted report as a valuable strategy for supporting children with the most complex and entrenched behavioural needs. Currently although many schools across East Sussex run nurture groups, they do not operate nurture provision in its original context and the focus is on children with less complex social, emotional and behavioural needs. As nurture groups are teacher led and focus on social and emotional development as well as academic development, maintenance and expansion of such provision is likely to depend on the willingness of head teachers to work together in partnership in the future to fund such provision or on potential 'cost to save' benefits for the Local Authority in investment in such provision.

References

The exclusion from school of children aged 4 to 7. Ofsted June 2009.

Literature Review by Benner, Nelson & Epstein. Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (2002)

www.nurturegroup.org A small supportive group of up to 12 children run on Nurture Group Organisation principles, based on Marjorie Boxall's work.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents

None:

Structure May 2011 - Therapeutic and Behaviour Service

