

Subject:	Hidden Children		
Date of Meeting:	17 September 2018		
Report of:	Pinaki Ghoshal - Executive Director of Families, Children & Learning		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 To seek approval from committee on the Hidden Children strategy and provide an update on new work processes.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That committee approve the Hidden Children strategy attached as Appendix 1
- 2.2 That the committee note the activities being undertaken to develop this approach.
- 2.3 That the committee receive a report in June 2019 on the progress made as detailed in the Hidden Children strategy action plan.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is understood that full time education acts as a protective factor for children and young people to help ensure that they are kept safe.
- 3.2 This has been reflected in the focus which Ofsted now places upon this matter, as detailed in the framework for the inspection of local authority children's services. The Council's approach is to look more widely than the requirements of the Ofsted framework and the development of the Hidden Children strategy has been an opportunity to draw together this broader approach.
- 3.3 This approach is not simply about identifying how many children and young people are on part time timetables. It relates instead to how we identify and support children and young people who are at a higher risk of harm, and how we address the violence, vulnerability and exploitation agenda, the work of the adolescent services and the whole family approach to providing supportive relationships.
- 3.4 It is expected that this work will grow and develop. In the last few weeks the situation regarding "forgotten children" (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-44941691>) has been heavily publicised on the back of an Education Select

Committee report (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/342/34202.htm>) and other high profile comments from Ofsted (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielman-on-the-launch-of-ofsted-annual-report-201617>) and the Department for Education. These also link to work started in the city with the Brighton & Hove Education Partnership and school leaders regarding gang interventions, knife and drug crime.

- 3.5 The strategy document (Appendix 1) was co-produced with teams from across the Families, Children & Learning directorate and then shared with schools for comment. It was discussed at the Adolescent Board and the Children and Young People Mental Health Partnership Group with the intention to inform and identify future areas of focus.
- 3.6 The strategy is expected to be refined as the work develops but initially captures the areas of work to develop: better understanding, better assessment and tracking, and better communication provision so that when this information has been gathered it can inform the commissioning of relevant services using the resources available.
- 3.7 This approach has led to a change in working practices. The Council's new requirement that schools notify them of all children who are not in receipt of full time education will mean that this information will be collated, analysed and tracked to a conclusion. This will be in much the same way as the council fulfils its Children Missing Education function. There will be more sharing of information across services and more joint discussions to ensure that the individual's needs are met. This work already happens now for individual cases but the approach outlined in the strategy will ensure a coordinated approach to identifying and supporting hidden children. By being in receipt of their full entitlement children and young people will be less vulnerable, at reduced risk from harm and have improved outcomes.
- 3.8 As a result the Access to Education team will be remodelled to bring together all the work to ensure there is an overview of children who may not be in receipt of full time education: such as those with medical needs, at risk of exclusion, awaiting a special school place and in other circumstances that could lead to them being in full sight to services but their lack of educational opportunity may not be noticeable or regularly reviewed.
- 3.9 At this time we cannot accurately describe the extent of the issue. However as a result of a request to schools in the last few weeks of the summer term to provide a summary of the children attending their schools less than full time we are now aware of at least 6 primary aged pupils matching that description. In addition there are three children who currently do not have an identified school but have an Education, Health and Care Plan and 16% of two year olds and 4% of three and four year olds who are not taking up their early years free entitlement.
- 3.10 At the start of the autumn term 2018 schools were again asked to provide detailed information relating to these pupils and a better understanding of the scale of the issue will be known in the new year.

- 3.11 An analysis of this data together with a review of other work in this area will be able to inform future developments of the Social Emotional Mental Health hub, alternative provision available to schools and other services for adolescents.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council's current arrangements meet the statutory requirements of identifying Children Missing Education, the functions in relation to the exclusion of pupils from schools including provision of education to excluded pupils, school attendance and the employment of children.
- 4.2 This strategy has been explained to Ofsted in the Council's recent inspection and whilst it goes beyond the statutory requirements the risks being identified have led to the council undertaking additional work as a strategic priority.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The strategy was co-produced by services within the Families, Children & learning directorate and was shared with school leaders in draft form.
- 5.2 It has been discussed in a variety of forums and due to the timing of publication more work will be undertaken with other stakeholders including AMAZE, PaCC and MASCOT who have been made aware of these developments and are keen to contribute to what is a developing strategy.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Members are asked to approve the attached strategy that seeks to identify and support children who are at a higher risk of harm due to not being in receipt of full-time education.
- 6.2 Going beyond the groups inspected by Ofsted the council want all children and young people to receive their full entitlement to education and for that learning to be delivered in a way that is suited to their needs. By being in receipt of their full entitlement children and young people will be less vulnerable, at reduced risk from harm and have improved outcomes.
- 6.3 Schools act as a protective factor in children's lives and children who do not attend school can become hidden, which means that we are less able to help and protect them.
- 6.4 This strategy seeks to ensure that the Council has an overview of all pupils that are at potential risk to harm who are not in receipt of full-time education, thereby providing challenge and support for arrangements that reduce the child's vulnerability.
- 6.5 It demonstrates the Council's commitment to working with the whole family through the formulation of a relationship based approach and to the creation of a city for all.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The costs of implementing the strategy will be met from existing resources within the Families, Children & Learning directorate and within schools.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 27/07/18

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Council has a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. The Hidden Children strategy goes beyond this statutory duty in seeking to identify and support any child/young person who might be at risk of harm due to not being in receipt of full-time education for the reasons identified in the Strategy document.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 06/08/2018

Equalities Implications:

- 7.2 The Families, Children & Learning directorate is committed to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable and excluded children, young people and adults with learning disabilities in the city.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.3 N/A

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.4 N/A

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Brighton & Hove's Hidden Children Strategy: Full time education as a protective factor to reducing risk for children & young people