

**Mr Alan McCarthy
Chief Executive
Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House
Grand Avenue
Hove
East Sussex
BN3 2LS**

18th December 2007

Dear Alan,

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter to be placed on the agenda for the Children's and Young People's Trust Board meeting on 21st January 2008.

As a parent of a child in a Brighton & Hove school reception class, I recently received a letter from a Dr Ratna Sundrum, Lead Paediatrician for Immunisation at the Brighton & Hove Children and Young People's Trust, regarding changes to the BCG immunisation programme against tuberculosis (TB).

The letter states that the Department of Health has changed the BCG immunisation programme for children and teenagers in areas such as Brighton & Hove that are now considered as low risk. Immunisation will now only be offered to children in groups considered as high risk. The letter defines the categories who will now be offered immunisation, essentially children whose parents are from, or who were born, or who have visited for a period of three months, to one of the extensive number of countries listed in Dr Sundrum's letter and assessed as high risk. Previously all children were tested and immunised between the ages of 12 and 14 even if they were at very low risk of infection.

The criteria for considering Brighton & Hove as a low risk area appears to be determined by the historical reduction in the number of TB cases in the City. Such a development is, of course, to be warmly welcomed. However, I have some concerns regarding the criteria which I believe should be reconsidered given the increasing numbers of single people, children and families coming to live, learn and work in the City, who originate from the list of countries identified in Dr Sundrum's letter as high risk.

A report to the Equalities Forum in November, based on data from 2005, revealed that the population profile of Brighton & Hove is changing:

- 15% of the City's residents were born outside England (above the national average);
- 20% of all new births were to mothers born outside the UK;
- 5,000 national insurance number registrations were issued to migrant workers from overseas (which ranks the City in the top ten local authorities across England in terms of numbers of migrant workers).

As you will be aware, recent media speculation and indeed confirmation from central Government suggests that the true number of migrant workers in the UK has in fact been significantly underestimated. Anecdotal evidence from staff at my child's own school suggests that the diversity of children from overseas countries has increased significantly in recent years – a development I fully welcome.

However, given that there is evidence of increasing numbers of migrant workers coming to the City from countries identified by the Department of Health as high risk in terms of potential exposure to TB, I do not believe that it is sensible to restrict immunisation only to high risk groups. Indeed, it could be argued that restricting immunisation to children in high-risk groups could stigmatise such children. I believe that given the potential risk based on the changing demographic profile of the City, that it would be wiser to re-introduce testing and immunisation for all children in Brighton & Hove, should their parents wish to do so.

However, I am concerned that the letter from Dr Sundrum, which is based upon the Department of Health's directive, appears to exclude such an option. This was also the impression I formed from a discussion with staff from Brighton & Hove City Teaching Primary Care Trust. It would be helpful if the Trust Board could clarify the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Craig Turton
Labour Member for East Brighton Ward