

Brighton & Hove City Council

For general release

Meeting: Children Families and Schools Sub-Committee

Date: Monday 6 September 2004

Report of: Director of Children, Families & Schools

Subject: DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 To brief members concerning the Government's recently published "Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners" (July 2004)

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the strategy be noted.

2.2 That the issues raised by the strategy, as highlighted in the briefing prepared by the Education Network, be considered.

2.3 That a steer be provided to officers in developing the local authority's response to the strategy, in conjunction with schools and other partners.

3. Information/background

3.1 The Government's "Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners" is one of a number of "Five Year Strategy" documents on different areas of public policy produced in summer 2004. It brings together a number of exciting strands of work, and gives an extra emphasis to some of them as a way of signaling the Government's strategic direction over the next five years. There is a strong assumption that most if not all of the strategy will become part of the next general election manifesto.

3.2 Little in the strategy is actually new, and there is little that requires primary legislation to implement. However, the two chapters dealing with secondary schools (4 and 5) contain a number of proposals which take exciting policies further than before, and create some very real tensions with children's services agenda to which the government is also committed.

3.3 The executive office summary of the strategy is attached at Annex A. The Education Network (TEN) have prepared a briefing for local authorities' which is also attached at Annex B. The TEN briefing highlights a number of issues which will be of concern to local authorities. Many of these are relevant to Brighton & Hove. Of particular concern is the potential for the proposals for "independent" specialist schools to undermine our efforts to build a fully inclusive and properly coordinated service for children, young people and families in the city.

4. Developing a response to the strategy

4.1 The Government has invited comments in response to its proposals, and a number of discussions have already taken place between officers of Brighton & Hove and DfES officials on a number of aspects.

The Director has submitted an article to the national press setting out some key issues, and this is attached at Annex C. It is important to recognise that the strategy is broadly positive about the role of local authorities, and much of the policy set out in it is in line with our own views. Nevertheless the weakness in Chapter 4 in particular are serious ones, and it is suggested that the council should join together with others, at both member and officer level, in engaging the government in dialogue on those issues.

4.2 We shall also need to discuss in some detail with headteachers and governing bodies how we shall take forward the local school service within the context of the wider CFS service, in the light of the strategy. We shall of course seek to ensure continued teamwork and collaboration between schools, and other partners within the overall service, so that we can coordinate to improve outcomes for children.

5. Consultation

5.1 No formal consultation has yet taken place locally about the DfES strategy. As indicated in paragraph 4.2 where, it will be important to hold detailed discussions with headteachers, governing bodies and other partners in response to the strategy.

6. Contact Officer

6.1 David Hawker, Director of Children, Families & Schools.
Telephone 01273-293434.

COMMITTEE REPORT APPENDIX

Meeting/Date	CFS Sub-Committee 6 th September 2004
Report of	Director of Children, Families & Schools
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Wards affected	All

Financial implications

There are no financial implications of the initial five year strategy document, however once the detailed policy documentation comes from the DfES for each area we will be able to assess the financial implications.

The plan talks about the new system which will impact on schools and the LEA, and may involve additional funding requirements and/or more collaborative and partnership working arrangements. It also talks about greater freedom, choice and opening up services to new and different providers and ways of delivering services, and a major commitment to staff development, all of which will need to be funded by the government in order to achieve the plan.

Andy Moore - Principal Accountant (CFS) Tel: 293440 Date 25/8/04

Legal implications

The report has no direct legal implications save that this is an opportunity for the Council to influence future national strategy, and so potentially the future legal framework for its delivery.

Natasha Watson -Senior Lawyer Tel: 291549 Date 25/9/04

<p>Corporate/Citywide implications The proposal to give secondary schools greater autonomy will require very effective partnership working and a willingness on the part of heads and governing bodies, if it is not to result in a serious undermining of efforts to build social cohesion.</p>	<p>Risk assessment Risk assessments will be carried out as appropriate as programmes in response to the 5 year strategy are developed.</p>
<p>Sustainability implications The sustainability of the children's services agenda will depend on there being adequate funding in the system and good collaboration between partner organisations.</p>	<p>Equalities implications There are positive implications for vulnerable children and children in need from the reform of children's services and the boosting of early years support and child care together with the anticipated reform of youth services. But there are</p>

	potentially longer term negative implications, in the proposals for secondary education, for the local authority's ability to secure a good school place for every child.
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Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder

None directly arising out of this report; a number of youth justice issues will be pursued in the forthcoming Youth Green Paper

Background papers

Contact Officer

David Hawker, Director of Children, Families & Schools.
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