

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17 September 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	K Hayes (Vice-Chair)	
	Councillors	F Doyle J George T Harney P Hayes	Cherry Povall T Smith W Smith A Taylor
<u>Deputy:</u>	Councillor	J Keeley (for S Clarke)	
<u>Co-opted Members:</u>		Mrs M Liddy	Mrs J Kearney
<u>Apologies</u>		Mrs M Cain Mr M Clarke	Mrs J Owens

14 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Karen Hayes welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that as Councillor Sheila Clarke was unwell, she, as Vice-Chair, would be chairing the meeting.

15 COUNCILLOR SUZANNE MOSELEY

The Chair announced the sad and untimely death of Councillor Suzanne Moseley and the Committee stood for a minute's silence in tribute to her memory.

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Committee were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and to state the nature of such interest. Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with the item to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor Doyle declared a personal interest in minute 29 by virtue of him being Chair of Governors at Woodchurch Road Primary School.

17 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 June, 2009.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June, be approved as a correct record.

18 **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business and consider item 8 (Annual Complaints Report) next.

19 **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented an annual analysis of complaints registered under the Children Act 1989 and the Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 during the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.

Caroline McKenna, Principal Manager (Safeguarding), and Dawn Stanley Smith, Complaints Investigations Officer, introduced the report and stated that over the twelve month reporting period 2008/09, the following complaints had been registered:

Stage 1 - 90 complaints (compared with 109 complaints in 2007/08)

Stage 2 - 10 complaints (compared with 9 complaints in 2007/08)

Stage 3 - no complaints (compared with 1 in 2007/08)

The report also gave statistics on compliments received and 'access to records' and 'freedom of information' requests.

Members congratulated the Department on their efforts and on the positive comments received. It was suggested that as much effort should be put into finding what good practice there was as well as into areas where things might have gone wrong. There was a need to encourage young people to voice any concerns.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

20 **SCHOOL STANDARDS - HEADLINE RESULTS**

Mark Parkinson, Head of Learning & Achievement, together with Marie Lawrence, Strategic Service Manager (Primary & Early Years), and Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager - Secondary and Lifelong Learning (Learning & Achievement) gave a presentation on the headline figures for the 2009 test results at Key stages 1, 2, 3, 4 (GCSE) and 5 (A-level), and they elaborated on the information in response to members' questions.

Resolved – That the officers be thanked for their presentation and also for the support given to all the schools and children.

21 **AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided an update on progress on the Wirral Local Area Implementation programme for Aiming High for Disabled Children in relation to Short Breaks provision.

Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, introduced the report along with Clive Groves, Service Manager, and reported that the approach sought to transform services across sectors to provide support to achieve the best outcomes for children

and young people with disabilities and enable children and their families to live ordinary lives.

The Government were requiring the Council and Primary Care Trust to provide a stepped change to short breaks services and to deliver on what was termed the Full Service Offer designed to meet the needs of all groups of disabled children. The report advised on action taken in meeting the reporting and performance requirements set out by Together for Disabled Children, who were administering the programme on behalf of the DCSF, prior to April 2009 and the further steps required over the next two years to March 2011.

The report also included details of the consultation strategy which had been developed with parents, and the commissioning brief.

Dawn Tolcher, Project Manager, gave a presentation on some of the projects which had been held so far, including a family fun day at Barnstondale Outdoor Centre, summer school programmes at special schools and 'messy play' at the Bromborough Children's Centre.

Members paid tribute to everybody involved in providing the service and expressed the view that although it was only grant funded until March 2011, support should be found to continue with this initiative.

The officers responded to the comments of members and agreed that a report be brought back to a meeting of the Committee in March/April 2010 and some of the parents to have benefited from the scheme be invited to address the Committee.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted and a further report be brought back to the Committee in March/April, 2010.

(2) That the Consultation Strategy for Parent Carers be noted.

(3) That the Commissioning Brief be noted.

22 **ADOPTION SERVICE SIX MONTHLY REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which updated the Committee on the work of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the National Adoption Standards as set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The report set out the relevant performance information since the last report in March 2009.

The timelines of placing children with adoptive families was expected to improve on last year's figures. Although it was unlikely to ever achieve 100% on this performance indicator, the adoption service were working hard to make improvements.

The report also highlighted that more Wirral children were being placed with Wirral's own adopters, which was of benefit to children generally and illustrated that the adoption service recruitment strategy was meeting the needs of children and adopters. Post Adoption Support Services were in place to enable adoptive parents

to redress some of the damage and help children recover. To achieve this, the service had highly skilled and trained staff, who needed to continue to be supported and resourced in working preventatively.

The Director informed the Committee that the next report would be provided at the beginning of April so that a full year's adoption performance figures could be provided. The six monthly reporting thereafter would then ensure Committee had as full and accurate information on adoption performance in future. The April 2010 report would also include the Annual Report of the Adoption Panel.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

23 VISIT TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN ESSEX - EDISON LEARNING

Councillor Harney submitted a report on the visit in March by the three party spokespersons to special schools in Essex organised by EdisonLearning. EdisonLearning were a consultancy company working in many parts of the country giving support to Local Authorities on the Building Schools for the Future programme.

They were currently working with special schools in Essex and the visit involved the group being shown two of these schools. The report highlighted the involvement of EdisonLearning and in each case the successful amalgamation of two schools into new buildings.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

24 ELECTED MEMBERS' VISITS TO WIRRAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report on proposals for revised arrangements for elected member visits to children's homes.

Russ Tattersall, Service Manager, introduced the report which gave details of 2 options, including the pros and cons of both. These were for either monthly unannounced visits or scheduled meetings and he suggested that option 2 would best meet the corporate parenting role requirement of elected members.

Both options would include a commitment to providing up to date training and briefings to both members and relevant staff on their respective roles in this corporate parenting task.

Members suggested that a training programme could be offered to all members on fostering and all members should be offered a chance to visit the authority's three children's homes. When scheduled meetings with young people were arranged it should be ensured that they were not in the minority and that they also had a direct role in setting the agenda.

Russ Tattersall responding to further comments stated that reports on the members' visits would be incorporated in the Regulation 33 officer visit report. Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, in response to a member's comment stated that there was also the possibility of running unannounced visits, possibly one a year to each home, in addition to the scheduled visits.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted with Option 2 as the preferred option for Elected Members' visits to Wirral Children & Young People's Department Children's Homes.

(2) That unannounced visits, one a year to each home, be arranged in addition to the scheduled visits.

(3) That a training programme be offered to all members on fostering and all members be offered a chance to visit the authority's three children's homes.

(4) That when scheduled meetings with young people are arranged it should be ensured that they are not in the minority and that they also have a direct role in setting the agenda.

(5) That reports on members' visits be submitted to this Committee for information.

25 FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT 2009/2010

David Armstrong, Head of Planning and Resources, gave a presentation and submitted an overview of progress made against the indicators for 2009/2010 and key projects which were relevant to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Overall performance against the 2009/10 projects relevant to the Committee was good. Out of 28 indicators, 13 (46.43%) were rated as green or exceeding their targets, 5 (17.86%) were amber and 5 (17.86%) were red. The remaining 5 had no targets set. The report expanded upon those indicators which were under performing and the corrective action being taken in each case.

He also reported upon the financial position which had deteriorated significantly since the last monitoring report. Updating the figures in the report he stated that there was currently a predicted deficit of £3m for Children's Services in 2009-10. The forecast expenditure on residential care had increased by £1m. This reflected the number of children placed which had increased from 52 at the end of May to 61 in July. All budgets under pressure were being examined with managers and as part of this process, proposals to reduce costs were required and he would bring reports back to future Committees on how this would be achieved.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

26 WORK PROGRAMME - REPORTS 1 TO 5

The Committee received an update on its work programme, which included the proposed outline meeting schedule for the current municipal year, and progress on the two in-depth panel reviews.

Councillor Doyle suggested that there was a lot of activity within Children's Centres and their effectiveness could be another topic for scrutiny. It was suggested that the 3 party spokespersons could be delegated to start work on a panel review.

Resolved – That the report be noted with the addition of the effectiveness of Children’s Centres as a topic for scrutiny.

27 **NARROWING THE GAP - IMPACT OF THE DEPRIVATION FUNDING REVIEW - DRAFT SCOPE DOCUMENT**

The Chair submitted a report and draft scoping document in respect of the review of the local authority’s current arrangements for funding schools for the costs of deprivation and to consider in conjunction with its Schools Forum whether the formula used to allocate funding between schools should be changed – known as “Deprivation Funding Review”.

The document outlined the main issues which the Review Panel would consider, together with aims and objectives and the methods of evidence gathering to be used.

Resolved –

(1) That the scope for the “Narrowing the gap” – Impact of the deprivation funding scrutiny review, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

(2) That the Panel members for the ‘Narrowing the gap’ – Impact of the deprivation funding scrutiny review be confirmed as the three party Spokespersons, with deputies where required and a co-opted member of the Committee be invited to join the panel.

28 **SCHOOL STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meetings of the School Standards Sub-Committee, held on 8 and 17 July 2009, were submitted. The Sub-Committee had considered a number of issues, in particular the Ofsted reports relating to the following schools:

Primary

Satisfactory schools

Riverside Primary School

Good schools

Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre
Overchurch Junior School
Mount Primary School

Secondary

Outstanding Schools

Wirral Grammar School for Boys
Pensby High School for Girls

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

29 **APPROVED SCHEME OF DELEGATION - CONTRACTS EXCEEDING £50,000**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which updated the Committee, in accordance with the Constitution of the Council, of those instances where delegated authority had been used by the Director of Children's Services with respect to the acceptance of tenders and to the appointment of contractors.

Peter Edmondson, Head of Participation and Inclusion, responded to comments from members and explained the extension of the Connexions contract and its timescale.

Resolved – That the report be noted.