

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 21 January 2010

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Clarke (Chair)	
	Councillors	F Doyle J George T Harney K Hayes P Hayes	C Povall P A Smith W Smith A Taylor
<u>Co-opted</u>		Mrs M Liddy	
<u>Cabinet Member:</u>	Councillor	P Davies	
<u>Apologies</u>		Mr M Clarke	Mrs J Owens

## 47 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members 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.

Councillors Clarke and Harney declared personal interests in minute 51 (Fostering Service Progress Report) by virtue of their membership of the Fostering Panel.

## 48 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November, 2009.

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November, 2009, be approved as a correct record.**

## 49 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business and take item 3 (Complaints Monitoring) later in the meeting, when the officer was present to introduce the report.

## 50 PRIVATE FOSTERING

The Director of Children's Services provided an update on Private Fostering activity within the Local Authority since the Ofsted Inspection in July 2008. He outlined the

actions which had been implemented in response to the findings and recommendations of the Ofsted inspection.

Amanda Jones, District Manager, Children's Social Care Branch, introduced the report and responded to Members' comments. She informed the Committee that assessments, to be carried out in a 35 day timescale, were of a standard similar to that of the Authority's foster carers. There were currently 4 children in a Private Fostering arrangement. During the summer 2009, the Department had also assessed and approved 30 Private Fostering arrangements in relation to children visiting from Belarus. Assessments would have to be completed again for further visits from Belarusian children this year.

**Resolved – That Committee notes the findings of the Ofsted inspection and the work undertaken to meet the requirements identified. Committee also notes the governance arrangements now in place through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the strengthening of policy and procedural requirements, and the ongoing dissemination and public awareness raising activity across the Children's Trust.**

## 51 **FOSTERING SERVICE PROGRESS REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services updated the Committee on the business of the Fostering Service during 2009/10. The report gave details of the numbers of registered Foster Carers, which at 31 December 2009 was 268, an overall increase of 5 foster carers so far this financial year.

Simon Garner, Strategic Service Manager - Children's Resources (Children's Social Care) highlighted a number of aspects in the report which focussed on further progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny report into the Fostering Service; it followed an interim report received by the Committee in November 2008.

He responded to a number of comments made by Members and remarked upon the Authority needing to challenge itself as to whether it was doing enough of the right things and what more could be done for looked after children because the aspirations should be as high as for anyone else. There was also a need to continue development of joint training. He reported upon the improvements in respect of how children could contact their social workers and details were given of provision of laptops including the national scheme of vouchers.

**Resolved - That the report be noted.**

## 52 **TEENAGE PREGNANCY PRIORITY ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS AGAINST NATIONAL SUPPORT TEAM FOR TEENAGE PREGNANCY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Directors of Public Health and of Children's Services reported upon further progress made against the recommendations and priority actions to be implemented following the visit in July 2008 of the Department of Health's National Support Team for Teenage Pregnancy.

Ann Tattersall, Head of Health and Well Being, Children and Young People / NHS Wirral reported that the data relating to teenage conceptions was produced annually and released by the Department of Health two years behind, so that annual data for 2008 was expected to be released in February 2010. Data for 2007 had shown a slight decrease in overall conceptions for the year (i.e. a reduction overall of 9 conceptions). However, early indications for the most recent data relating to 2008 (i.e. up to quarter three of 2008) were indicating a greater decrease in teenage conceptions.

The recent reduction for teenage conceptions in Wirral was against the national and regional trend and Wirral had been recognised recently as an area of good practice by Government Office North West.

Ann Tattersall remarked upon the need for a community approach, and an action plan for a community pilot was taking place in Tranmere. It was hoped that a peer mentoring programme of young mothers who could go into schools would be developed.

**Resolved – That Committee note the continued progress made in implementing the recommendations of the National Support Team, and the continued challenging agenda if Wirral is to meet the 2010 target of a 50% reduction.**

#### 53 **COMPLAINT MONITORING**

The Director of Children's Services presented an analysis of complaints registered under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 during the period 1 July 2009 to 11 December 2009.

During this six month reporting period the following number of complaints had been registered:

- 33 Stage 1 complaints [compared to 20 in the previous quarter]
- 3 Stage 2 complaints [compared to 4 in the previous quarter]
- 1 Stage 3 complaint [compared to 0 in the previous quarter]

The Director outlined the time taken to investigate complaints and the current position.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

#### 54 **LITERACY LEVELS SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Chair introduced the final report on the review of literacy levels at the time of children leaving primary schools (end of key stage 2). The panel, consisting of Councillors Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle and Tony Smith had focused on nine main issues for the review and had been supported by the Scrutiny Support Officer, Alan Veitch. Details were given of the variety of methods which the Panel had employed to gather evidence and thanks were expressed to all those who had assisted the review by so readily giving their time, experience and suggestions.

The report contained 24 recommendations and assuming that the Committee agreed with these it was recommended that the report be presented to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.

Members of the review panel expressed their thanks to Alan Veitch for his extensive work and research in supporting the review.

The Director of Children's Services thanked the Chair and panel for the review which would be given very careful thought and to which he would respond by bringing an action plan back to the Committee, with a focus on groups with particular vulnerabilities.

With the permission of the Chair, the Cabinet Member addressed the Committee and expressed his congratulations to all involved in producing the review. He would be happy to take the report to Cabinet after having had some time to go through the recommendations with the Director, some of which might have resource implications.

**Resolved –**

**(1) That the contents and recommendations of the Literacy Level Scrutiny Review be supported.**

**(2) That the Literacy Level Scrutiny Report be presented to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.**

**(3) That further reports be presented to this Committee to update members regarding the outcomes of the recommendations.**

**55a COMMITTEE REFERRAL - COUNCIL EXCELLENCE O&S COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered minute 25, 'Financial Monitoring Statement', of the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 16 September, 2009, which had requested that the Committee consider their serious concerns with regard to the projected overspend in the Children and Young People's Department.

The Director responded to the concerns and stated that all his officers were aware of the need to keep within the budget set by the Council at the beginning of March, 2009. The schools budget had increased by twice the level of inflation but the non-schools budget expenditure had been constrained. The non-schools budget amounted to approximately £70m revenue budget, half of which was social care related and the other half of which was non-school educational needs.

The Director explained the expenditure that was involved in placing children in specialist care at an average cost for each child of £150,000 per annum. This was a budget that had to respond to need and could not be predicted with any certainty, although every measure was taken to try and reduce the number, currently at 45, by placing children with families, wherever possible.

Rigorous measures were in place in the Department to constrain expenditure, including vacancy savings of about £1m a year. The Director reported that the Director of Finance was about to report to Cabinet a predicted £975,000 overspend

for the end of quarter 3 and he was confident that this position would be further improved by the end of quarter 4.

**Resolved – That the comments of the Director be noted and these be referred to the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

55b **COMMITTEE REFERRAL - SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD**

The Committee received a referral from the Scrutiny Programme Board of 4 November, 2009, minute 25, 'Work Programme of Overview and Scrutiny Committees', which had expressed concern in relation to the funding of the Wirral Music Service.

It was agreed that this be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee when a report on the Wirral Music Service would be brought to the meeting.

56 **WORK PROGRAMME**

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 "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of deprivation funding' scrutiny review.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

57 **SCHOOL STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the School Standards Sub-Committee, held on 25 November, 2009, were submitted. The Sub-Committee had considered a number of issues, in particular the Ofsted reports relating to the following schools:

**Primary Schools**

Special Measures Schools

Manor Primary School

Good Schools

St Peters Catholic Primary School

Outstanding Schools

Orrets Meadow School

**Secondary Schools**

Satisfactory Schools

Pensby High School for Boys

Foxfield School

## Good Schools

South Wirral High School

The Mosslands School

The Committee's attention was also drawn to minute 29 and the proposed change of name from School Standards Sub-Committee to 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee to reflect the range of schools discussed including Sure Start Centres.

### **Resolved –**

**(1) That the minutes be noted.**

**(2) That the School Standards Sub-Committee's name be changed to 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee.**