

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 June 2010

Present:

Councillor	C Meaden (Chair)		
Councillors	W Clements	C Povall	
	T Harney	P A Smith	
	P Hayes	W Smith	
	K Hayes	P Williams	
	A McArdle		

Co-opted Members

	Mrs J Kearney	Mrs J Owens
	Mr R Neale	

Apologies

	Mr M Clarke	
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1 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.

Councillor C Meaden declared a personal general interest because of her daughter's employment within the Children and Young People's Department. She also declared a personal interest in minute 75 (Aiming High for Disabled Children) by virtue of her employer having received funding from the Aiming High Programme.

Councillor W Clements declared a personal general interest by virtue of her employment in the early years' sector.

Mr R Neale declared a personal interest in minute 75 (Aiming High for Disabled Children) by virtue of him being Vice-Chair of Governors at Elleray Park School.

2 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 March, 2010.

In connection with minute 68, 'Officers' Visits to Wirral Children and Young People's Department Children's Homes', a Member requested an update on the situation in

respect of Members' visits to children's homes and when these would recommence. Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, responded and informed the Committee that a framework was now in place and members should be receiving further information within the month.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March, 2010, be approved as a correct record.

3 **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business and take items 7 and 8 on the agenda first, 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' and 'Transition into Adulthood (Social Care)' respectively, due to the presence of parents for these two items.

4 **AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN**

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

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 was requiring the Council and Primary Care Trust to provide a stepped change to the delivery of short break 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 programme requirements set out by Together for Disabled Children, who were administering the Short Breaks programme on behalf of the Department of Education, to date and the further steps required ahead of March 2011.

Dawn Tolcher, Project Manager, gave a presentation on the programme including a variety of project initiatives and proposals for developments at Barnstondale outdoor centre, developing provision to ensure it was a fully inclusive site offering a variety of short break provision. She also introduced Chrissie Francis, a parent carer, who outlined her experiences of the programme and the benefits which it had brought to her family.

Lynn Chamberlain, Centre Manager at the Wirral Resource Centre and Toy Library, also addressed the Committee and spoke of the development of short breaks on Saturday mornings when the building had previously not been used.

Responding to comments from Members, Dawn Tolcher gave further details of the proposed development at Barnstondale and that a usage group would be looking at the returns that this proposed investment would deliver. There was still further work around awareness of the programme and what was available but it was acknowledged that word of mouth had helped in making the programme known. She also informed the Committee that the Wirral Family Consultation Forum was not solely female dominated and there were a number of males involved.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

5 **TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD (SOCIAL CARE)**

Both the Directors of Children's Services and of Adult Social Services submitted a report which highlighted developments in improving Transition arrangements for young people as they moved into adulthood. Transition formed a discrete strand in the wider Aiming High for Disabled Children programme. There was a service improvement framework led by the National Transitions Team which envisaged a more integrated strategic approach across a wider range of local agencies, and which now encompassed the needs of disabled young people between the ages of 14 and 25.

The report outlined progress in the development of a Transitions Team with staff co-located from Children's and Adult Social Care Services, to ensure an integrated approach for the most vulnerable young people.

Pauline Toohey, a parent, gave a presentation to the Committee on transition and parent participation in which she highlighted who would benefit from the improved transitions processes. She also elaborated on the participation of young people and their families and the Wirral Family Consultation Forum.

Both Pauline Toohey and Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, responded to comments from Members and spoke of the Joint Transitions Team being a first step in helping to overcome what can be an exceptionally confusing time. Training was available for parents in preparing their children from the age of 13 as to what was available in the community and how it could be accessed.

The Director spoke of the difficulties that could arise with criteria for access to care being different for adults than for children. The Transitions Team would be able to help in ensuring a smooth progress into adulthood of those particularly vulnerable set of young people who were receiving a high level of support.

Resolved - That the report, and the formation of a new Transitions Team, be noted.

6 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

The Committee was asked to consider if it wanted to appoint a Vice-Chair.

On a motion by Councillor Meaden, seconded by Councillor Harney, it was –

Resolved - That Councillor W Smith be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee.

7 **PRESENTATION ON FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE 2009/10**

Nancy Clarkson, Head of Planning and Performance, gave a presentation on the fourth quarter performance report and upon key projects which were relevant to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

She gave details of what was working well, including:

- Provisional data indicated that changes in practice in 2009/10 had lead to a significant increase in the timeliness of placements of looked after children for

adoption following an adoption decision from 61.1% in 2008/09 to 81.8% in 2009/10 which had exceeded the target set.

- Provisional data indicated a significant improvement in the percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment had improved from 64.3% in 2008/09 to 71.7% in 2009/10.
- The percentage of secondary schools judged as having good or outstanding standards of behaviour had increased compared to 2008/09 and the target had been exceeded. Wirral had been reported as having the highest standards of behaviour in secondary schools nationally.
- The percentage of schools providing access to extended services was 99%, a 33% increase on the previous year and the target of 85.3% had been exceeded.
- Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people had reduced from 135.6 in 2008/09 to 122.6 in 2009/10 and the target had been achieved.
- Obesity targets for primary school children in both reception and year 6 had been met for 2009/10.
- Post 16 participation in the physical sciences (physics, chemistry and maths) had increased compared to prior year data.

In her presentation Nancy Clarkson also referred to key performance issues and key risks and expanded on the performance of two of these issues:

- The percentage reduction in the under 18 conception rate was 22%, although this was below target, this was the best performance nationally.
- The number of 16 to 18 year olds who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) was at its lowest ever level of 7.1%, although the target was 6.9%.

In respect of the financial position, it was anticipated that there would be no budget overspend in the current year. The accounts were currently being finalised and the final position would be reported in July.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

8 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2008-2013 ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Children's Services submitted a copy of the Children and Young People's Plan Annual Report, a statutory document developed through Wirral Children's Trust arrangements by the Local Authority and partner organisations (Section 17 of the Children Act 2004). The CYPP annual review was carried out by multi-agency strategic groups linked to the five Every Child Matters Outcomes. The groups consisted of representatives from all agencies working with children and young people in Wirral. In addition, consultation was carried out with children and young people. A range of information and performance data was reviewed and through needs analysis emerging areas for focused activity were identified.

The annual report was both a review of progress in the second year of the CYPP (2009/10) and an opportunity to refresh the priorities in order to be responsive to national and local change.

The Director responded to comments from Members and explained some of the terms used in the Plan such as the rescheduling of milestones. He also outlined the current situation, which was somewhat unclear, in respect of the ContactPoint service which the new Government had indicated it would not be seeking to progress.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

9 **ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL 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 also served as the annual report for 2009/10 and updated the performance information provided in the report of September, 2009 (minute 22 refers).

The adoption service was rightly proud that 24 children had been adopted during 2009/10 and that the performance indicator was at 87.5% on 31 March, 2010. It was clear that the adoption service was on track to ensure a good number of children were adopted in 2010/11 with 9 adoptive families having already lodged applications on 31 March, 2010.

It was clear that Wirral was able to recruit sufficient prospective adoptive families to meet the needs of children with a 'Should be placed for adoption' decision.

The report also gave details of the post adoption support which was now developing into a service in its own right. It was anticipated that this service would strengthen in 2010/11 through the leadership of the new adoption support advisor.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

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

The Director of Children's services reported, in accordance with the Contracts Procedure Rules, on those instances where he had exercised his delegated authority to accept tenders and to appoint contractors. The contracts were in respect of a range of services, including:

- Building works
- Out-of-authority placements
- Residential care placements

Resolved – That the report be noted.

11 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update on its work programme and the Chair circulated a draft work programme for 2010/11 based on an overarching theme of, 'Preparing for the Future and Protecting our Priorities'. The draft included suggestions for officers to draw up a detailed report on what the new national priorities concerning academies, free schools and pupil premiums would mean for Wirral. The current Scrutiny Review on 'Narrowing the Gap' and the impact of deprivation funding should also continue.

The Director commented that it would of course be necessary to inform all Members of the effect of the Academies Bill once the position had become clearer.

After some discussion on the way forward for agreeing a work programme, it was -

Resolved – That the Chair, Spokespersons and one co-opted member meet to consider the work programme for 2010/11 and the Review Panel on ‘Narrowing the Gap’ continue.

12 **0-19 STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee, held on 23 March and 19 April, 2010, were submitted. The Sub-Committee had considered a number of issues, in particular the Ofsted reports relating to the following schools:

Special School

Satisfactory

The Observatory School

Secondary School

Good

Oldershaw School

Primary Schools

Inadequate School

Well Lane

Satisfactory Schools

Birkenhead Christ Church C of E
Cathcart Street
Church Drive
Pensby
St Paul’s Catholic

Good Schools

Bidston Avenue
Black Horse Hill Junior
Christ the King Catholic
St Joseph’s Catholic
Woodchurch C of E

Outstanding School

Great Meols

The Director informed the Committee that in respect of Well Lane Primary School an Action Plan had been prepared by the Authority and monitoring visits were continuing. He outlined a range of actions which could be taken and that a report would be taken to Cabinet on the conclusions reached.

The Committee were requested to appoint the 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee for 2010/11.

Resolved –

(1) That the minutes be noted.

(2) That the 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee for 2010/11 comprise the following members, Councillors Chris Meaden (Chair), Tom Harney and Paul Hayes, with the remaining Committee members serving as deputies, plus the diocesan and parent governor representatives.

13 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR**

With the permission of the Chair, Jane Owens raised the issue of her being the Voluntary and Community Sector representative and not having a vote on the Committee when the diocesan and parent governor representatives did.

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management's representative said that she would be happy to look into this matter and to report back to the next meeting of the Committee.