

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 17 September 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIR - Cllr Sheila Clarke

‘NARROWING THE GAP’ – IMPACT OF THE DEPRIVATION FUNDING REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Background

- 1.1 The 2004 Child Poverty Review discussed what would be necessary to achieve the Government's goals on eliminating child poverty by 2020. The review identified education as a key “building block” to improving the future life chances of children in low income households, and closing the gaps in attainment between different groups as critical to the promotion of a fair and inclusive society.
- 1.2 The Child Poverty Review set out a series of actions for Local Authorities to undertake. One of these actions was for the Local Authority to review its current arrangements for funding schools for the costs of deprivation and consider in conjunction with its Schools Forum whether the formula used to allocate funding between schools should be changed – known as “Deprivation Funding Review”.
- 1.3 During the 2008/09 municipal year, notice was given by the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee that a scrutiny panel review of the Deprivation Funding Review was to take place during the 2009/10 municipal year.
- 1.4 It is proposed that the review will be undertaken by a small panel of members. In due course, the panel will produce a report which will be presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At the conclusion of the review, the panel will cease to exist.

2. Scope of the Review and Developing Themes

- 2.1 The Spokespersons have produced a draft scope for the review. A copy of the scope document is attached as Appendix 1.

3. Evidence Gathering

The Spokespersons propose to use a number of methods to gather evidence:

- 3.1 Meetings with officers
Meetings will be organised for the panel members to discuss relevant issues with a number of key officers from Wirral Council.

- 3.2 School visits
A number of primary schools will be visited to discuss relevant issues with head teachers, teachers and school governors.
- 3.3 Relevant documents
Information will be gathered from SAT results, Ofsted reports, and previous committee reports.
- 3.4 Comparative information
Comparative information will be gathered from national data and from statistical neighbours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee approve the Scope for the “Narrowing the gap” – Impact of the deprivation funding, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- (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. Committee is also requested to consider whether a co-opted member of the Committee should be invited to join the panel.

Councillor Sheila Clarke

CHAIR OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT

Date: 2009

Review Title: "Narrowing the gap" – Impact of the "deprivation" funding

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1. National Context:

The Government is taking action to ensure that mainstream school funding is properly targeted at pupils from deprived backgrounds. This is a key element of the drive to close the attainment gap between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.

The 2004 Child Poverty Review (CPR) discussed what would be necessary to achieve the Government's goals on child poverty. It identified education as a key "building block" to improving the future life chances of children in low income households, and closing the gaps in attainment between different groups as critical to the promotion of a fair and inclusive society.

The CPR also found significant variations in funding between schools with similar proportions of children eligible for free school meals.

The CPR set out a series of actions for Local Authorities (LA's), one of which was for each LA to review their formula in order that they had in place, by the time of the 2008-09 Comprehensive Spending Review (CPR) period, a formula that gave sufficient priority to, and adequately reflected the consequences of deprivation.

The following national public service agreements (PSAs) are relevant:

- Halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-11, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020 (PSA 9)
- Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people (PSA 10)
- Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers (PSA 11)

2. Local Context

WMBC Strategic Aim 2009 -2014 – (PRIORITY FOR 2009/10)

- Raise overall educational attainment, particularly lower achieving young people.

Related performance indicators NI.72 – NI 109

WMBC Children and Young People's plan 2008 – 2011

- Strategy for improvement: "Enjoying and achievement" (1of 5 outcomes for the Every Child Matters Agenda)

3. What are the main issues?

- 3.1 The formulae used to distribute the "deprivation" funding were determined by an extensive consultation via Schools Forum. During the consultation there were concerns raised regarding possible negative effects upon those schools which did not receive additional funding.
- 3.2 Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be concentrated in primary schools with high FSM proportions; this is less true in secondary schools. In order to break the link between disadvantage and attainment, it will also be essential for those schools which are **not** serving particularly disadvantaged communities to secure good progress for their deprived pupils.
- 3.3 The Government has made it clear that whilst pleased with the overall improvement in standards that have followed investment in school budgets over the last decade, there is serious concern that the gaps in achievement between children from deprived backgrounds and others have not narrowed significantly and in some cases have increased.
- 3.4 Research has shown that there is little or insufficient evidence to suggest that, considered separately from other measures, assigning more resources to schools, or reducing class sizes has a substantial effect on attainment – the impact largely depends on **how** those resources are used.
- 3.5 That educational attainment and progress for all schools on Wirral is achieved, alongside the concentration on "narrowing the gaps" for the disadvantaged.

4. The Committee's overall aim/objective in doing this work is:

- 4.1 Performance gaps between children from deprived backgrounds and others in Wirral remain too great and have not been narrowing. Has the deprivation funding review carried out by WMBC as per government priorities/criteria had an **impact** on closing the attainment gap?
- 4.2 Has any school in the borough had a negative impact on their standards and or attainments as a result of the "deprivation funding" review.

Research:

- Statistics on attainment results
- A typology of the functional roles of deprived neighbourhoods
- Influences and leverages on low levels of attainment
- Narrowing the gap – evidence collection
- Breaking the Link – Everyone’s business
- The Extra Mile Project
- National Challenge/Gaining Ground initiative
- “One to one tuition”

11.2 Primary/new evidence/information

- Interviews with LEA officers
- Interviews with head teachers, governors at selected schools (schools selected)
- Ofsted inspection reports
- Contextual attainment data – key stage 2 and 3 results and GCSE results.
- Impact of other funding streams set on the basis of deprivation such as prior attainment score and personalisation

Comments/results from Education Director’s pro-forma on the use of funding - sent to schools who received more than £10k in additional funding with the new formula (sent 29 June 2009)

11.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

Council Officers to include:

School Forum Chair/Members
School Improvement Partners
Head teachers from “winning” and losing” schools
LEA Officers

11.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

LEA Officers:

- “narrowing the gap” LEA strategies
- “Where we are now” up-date
- Collection/sharing good practice

Schools:

- Attainment activities focused upon
- Partnerships used/included
- LEA support received/needed
- Targeting, review and measurement

School Improvement Partners – SIPs were involved in the process of local review, and through their overview of attainment and resource allocation they can contribute.

12. **What processes can we use to feed into the review? (Site visits / observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).**

Individual meetings with key officers

Visits to a number of primary schools (head teacher, teachers, governors)

Desk research

13. **In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (Consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).**

- Governing bodies – parent governors

There is no plan to involve public meetings or Area Forum meetings.