

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 4 January 2010 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Dennett (Chairman), Horabin (Vice-Chairman), Browne, Drakeley, Gilligan, Higginson, Loftus, J. Lowe, Parker, M. Ratcliffe and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor McInerney (in accordance with Standing Order No. 33) and C. Pollard.

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: C. Halpin, C. Johnson, A. McIntyre, G. Meehan, N. Moorhouse, A. Villiers and G. Bennett

Also in attendance: John Mackie and Christine Pluger, Halton YMCA

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

| | <i>Action</i> |
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| CYP31 COUNCILLOR SUE BLACKMORE | |
| <p>The Chairman reported on the sad passing of Councillor Mrs Sue Blackmore. As a mark of respect, all present stood for two minutes silence.</p> | |
| CYP32 MINUTES | |
| <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2009 were taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to Councillor McInerney being added to the attendance list.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.</p> | |
| CYP33 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME | |
| <p>It was noted that no public questions had been received.</p> | |
| <p><i>(NB: Councillor Stockton declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being a Governor at The Grange School).</i></p> | |

CYP34 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board received a report which contained the minutes relating to the Children and Young People Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board and the Executive Board Sub-Committee since the last meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CYP35 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Halton Children's Trust Specialist Strategic Partnership held on the 20th October 2009.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

(NB: Councillor J. Lowe declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being a Board Member of Halton YMCA

Councillor Loftus declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being employed by Riverside College).

CYP36 SERVICES FOR YOUNG HOMELESS PEOPLE

The Board considered a presentation from John Mackie and Kristine Plugger, Halton YMCA on the most appropriate factors raised by the young people on services provided for Young Homeless People.

The Board was advised that over the last year Halton YMCA Foyer and other homeless accommodation projects in Halton, had experienced a significant increase in the number of applications for housing from homeless young people. These had come from referral agencies, such as Housing Solutions, Young People's Team, the Youth Offending Team and self referrals.

Another significant impact on the increase in young homeless referrals had been due to the newly established Halton YMCA Night Stop Project, a project developed to address the prevention of homelessness among young people most at risk. With this new homeless provision, young people were placed with volunteer "hosts" for up to 3 weeks, during which time, suitable safe and appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the young people (including mediation for home returns, where possible) are identified. Halton YMCA Foyer received around 50% of these referrals.

From Halton YMCA's experience, the main reasons why young people in Halton were finding themselves becoming homeless were:

- Family relationship breakdown;
- Alcohol and drug misuse;
- Mental health issues such as, anxiety, depression, self harm etc. these are also often linked to the above issues; and
- Financial problems and stress within the family unit.

These factors have remained the most common reasons for youth homelessness for the last 20 years.

The Board was advised that Halton YMCA agreed, following a number of meetings with Council officers and Councillors, to consult with the young homeless people living at Belvedere, YMCA, Orchard House and Halton Goals, to establish what concerns they have relating to the Council services offered to them as a homeless person, living in temporary accommodation and what improvements they would like to be made.

The Board was advised that a consultation meeting was organised at the YMCA at which over 20 young people attended. At this meeting, the young people were very vocal and expressed the improvements in services they would like to see in Halton. Also at the meeting, the young people nominated two representatives to sit on the Scrutiny Group, however due to the departure of Dave Williams, the group never met or functioned. The only outcome from this exercise was that the young people organised a youth homeless conference in 2008.

From the consultation and Homeless Conference a number of issues were raised and suggestions made by those who participated, which they felt could have a positive impact on the quality of their lives if implemented. These were as follows:

- Public transport – need for free bus passes to attend college/leisure centres etc;
- Dentists – difficulty in accessing a local dentist;
- 16 hour rule – being a barrier to college/training;
- Training programmes not flexible enough to enable homeless young people with social problems to complete the statutory courses; and
- Communication problems with JSA Claims / Crisis Loans leading to delayed income.

It was noted that Halton YMCA had continued to consult with our young people to establish from above, two or three key issues that they would like the Council to look at, which they believed would make a significant difference to them if they could be implemented in the near future.

The 2 key issues identified were barriers to training courses as it was felt that mainstream courses were not suitable for homeless young people, along with aspects of public transport. The latter was due to high costs and unreliable day and evening services.

Arising from Members comments and questions the following was noted:

- that the YMCA tailor made training in relation to confidence, self esteem etc to get people interested in studying again;
- that Riverside college ran a number of pre-entry short courses that could be helpful;
- to refer the matter to the 14-19 Partnership for consideration in terms of appropriately tailored funding; and
- these young people were core to the Borough's NEET figures

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received;
- (2) a proposal for funding for costs of public transport be submitted to the 14-19 Partnership;
- (3) an update report be submitted to the June meeting of the Board;
- (4) Working Neighbourhood funding for relevant courses be explored.

Strategic Director,
Children and
Young People

CYP37 PLACEMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which sought to review the current position regarding the Halton Children in Care (CIC) population and the arrangements for placing children. It also proposed a revised strategy where all children in care had improved choice of placements to suit their needs.

The Board was advised that there had been significant difficulty in recent years in recruiting sufficient

Foster Carers to meet both the demand for placements and to provide a choice of placement. Currently, there were 69 approved carers, approximately 20 of whom were kinship carers. It was projected that at least an additional 20 carers were needed to provide for the current CIC population, which as at 9th October 2009, was 158.

It was noted that whilst the recent Ofsted inspection of the Foster Care Service in Halton judged the service to be good with some outstanding features, the Inspector did make a formal recommendation in respect of National Minimum Standard 17. This standard required fostering providers to have a sufficient number of foster carers to allow for placement choice. Halton was currently unable to fully meet this standard.

The Board was advised that in addition to foster care, the Borough had 6 residential beds for young people, with 4 at Edinburgh Road and 2 at Littlebourne. It was noted that, in Halton, the average age of children in residential care was 13.2 years. The young people who were placed presented with increasingly complex emotional, behavioural and mental health issues and an analysis of placements had highlighted some key issues for Halton, which were set out in the report.

The Board was further advised that in order to meet the variety of assessed needs of young people, Halton would need to provide a range of provision for Children in Care. This would include provision for:

- less complex needs
- more complex needs
- extensive complex needs
- preparing for independence

It was noted that, under this proposal, Halton's existing children's homes would need to change their purpose. The lack of capacity within the foster care service needed to be urgently addressed.

There were a number of barriers to the recruitment of carers, some of which were reflected nationally and some of which appeared more specific to the Halton area, and these were set out in detail in the report.

In order to address the shortfall of foster carers it was proposed that:

- allowances paid to carers were increased to reflect

not only the cost of caring for a child but to represent a payment for their professional task;

- consideration was given to building the capacity of the Foster Service Team through the introduction of Support Assistants with a specific remit to provide placement support;
- the integration of services continued so that an increasing range of partners and essential support services were available to the children and foster carers; and
- using some of these proposed changes, the marketing campaign to recruit more carers would need to be revised and intensified.

The Board was advised that a similar 'Invest to Save' approach to developing foster care provision had been undertaken by St. Helens Council in recent years and had proved extremely successful. They had seen their number of foster carers rise from 59 in March 2006 to 103 in September 2009, with a corresponding rise in the number of Kinship carers from 52 to 65. This had significantly reduced their use of expensive purchased placements and had improved their retention of existing carers.

It was noted that an 'Invest to Save' bid had been approved by the Executive Board on 5 November 2009, for £250,000 to enable the changes detailed above to be undertaken.

Arising from Members comments and questions the following was noted:

- that the proposals set out would hopefully solve issues around how appropriate placements were for the young people;
- that Independent Placement Agencies were required to complete the same checks and assessments that the Council makes when placing a child;
- that the Council had various ways of improving 'incentive' packages, i.e. reducing leisure facilities costs, that could not be provided by smaller independent agencies; and
- that staff at the Children's Centres did an excellent job and the Board's appreciation be passed on.

RESOLVED: That the approach identified in the Strategy be endorsed and further work be undertaken to

Strategic Director,

develop it further.

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CYP38 YOUNG CARERS DEVELOPMENTS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which updated Members regarding recent developments both nationally and locally for Young Carers.

The Board was advised that a new 'Locality' structure which would focus on a family centred approach to early intervention and prevention for Children in Need. Assessment for vulnerable children would be mainstreamed at a Locality level and the service would operate in a new way, without a reduction in the level of service. There would be two Localities one in Runcorn and one in Widnes.

It was noted that there was a considerable difference in the number of known carers and the anticipated actual figures and that this was a national issue. It was suggested that further work be undertaken in this area and that the developments outlined be considered as a topic for the Board's work programme for 2010/11.

RESOLVED: That the developments outlined be considered as a topic for the Board's work programme for 2010/11.

CYP39 SERVICE PLANNING

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which provided an update on service planning in the Children's Services for the period 2009/2012 and which allowed Members the opportunity to consider the suggested Directorate's priorities for this period.

The Board was advised that a Directorate Service Plan was currently being developed for the Children and Young People Directorate. Due to the proposed structural changes across the Council and the need to better integrate the Directorate's priorities a combined plan would be published rather than individual Departmental Service Plans as in previous years. The Children's Directorate from April 2010 would reduce from 4 to 3 Departments.

It was noted that the draft Service Plans would be produced during January and would go to the Council's Executive Board and Full Council during February and

March for approval.

Members suggested the following areas be considered with setting the directorate's priorities:

- continuing to monitor schools carefully to prevent schools causing concern being placed in special measures;
- the effectiveness of family education services;
- utilising outreach workers in homeless shelters;
- immunisations being behind schedule;
- having a similar initiative to 'The BIG read' for mathematics;
- making adult learning more socially inclusive by having more courses available at schools;
- having a more specific health perspective in the proposed objectives; and
- transport issues arising from the BSF programme.

In response the Board was advised that there was a robust system in place monitoring schools causing concern and a pro-active proportionate approach was being taken to support schools while challenging them to improve.

The Board was further advised that the PCT had a detailed service plan which could be made available to Members.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Members be provided with copies of the PCT's detailed service plan, in relation to health of Children and Young People; and
- (2) the views of the Board be incorporated through the service planning process.

Strategic Director,
Children and
Young People

CYP40 WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2010/11

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People regarding the work programme for 2010/11 regarding possible Topics for inclusion in the next Municipal Year.

Arising from the discussion two topics were highlighted, Young Carers and Enhancing Services for Disabled Young People within the Borough.

It was agreed that any other suggestions be forwarded to the Chairman of the Board and Lead Officer -

Operational Director, Preventative Services.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Members e-mail suggestions to the Chair and Lead Officer; and
- (2) a shortlist of topics be submitted to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

Strategic Director,
Children and
Young People

CYP41 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which provided information on the progress towards meeting Halton's Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets to September 2009.

It was noted that the revised LAA was signed off by the Secretary of State in June 2008. The LAA contained a set of measures and targets agreed between the Council, local partner agencies and the Government. There were 32 indicators within the LAA along with statutory and education and early years targets. The current agreement covered the period April 2008 to March 2011.

It was further noted that the Agreement had been refreshed in March 2009 following a review with Government Office North West. It was not expected that there would be many significant changes to the agreement, except those areas affected by the downturn in the national economy. Of this the Government had identified a list of factors for which targets would be reviewed before the end of March 2010.

The Board was advised that attached as Appendix 1 was a report on progress to the 2009 – 2010 mid year which included those indicators and targets that fell within the remit of this Board.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP42 QUARTER 2 2009-10 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which provided a performance update for the Quarter 2 period, 1st July 2009 to September 2009. This was a follow on report from the Performance Dashboard that was tabled at the meeting on 2nd November 2009. A revised version of the Performance Dashboard was attached.

The report set out performance against the four priority areas in detail.

RESOLVED: That the progress against the priorities set out in the Children and Young People Plan through the Quarter 2 Children's Trust Report Card be noted.

CYP43 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS FOR 2009/10

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/ comparisons and factors affecting the services for:

- Specialist Services;
- Universal and Learning;
- Preventative Services; and
- Business Planning and Resources.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the second Quarter Performance Management Reports be received;
- (2) an update on BSF and primary capital be submitted to the next meeting of the Board; and
- (3) an update on staff retention and management be submitted to the June meeting of the Board.

Strategic Director,
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Meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.