



**Cllr. Mark
Dennett
Chairman
Children &
Young People
PPB**

**ANNUAL REPORT
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2009 – MARCH 2010**

"I always like to start by looking back over the business conducted by the board during the previous twelve months. One of the first things that struck me was the large amount of time we had spent during that period looking more closely at our strategies and policies for our Children in Care.

In June 2009 members of the board were trained and encouraged to take part in inspection of our care homes (Regulation 33 visits) and also to meet with our social workers and their managers (Climbié visits) to make sure that they are fully supported in carrying out their work in protecting and helping children and young people. In September 2009 Climbié visits were a specific focus and in January 2010 a full review of our placement strategy for our Children in Care was conducted.

This increased scrutiny is only right and proper as over the last few years we have heard of Councils failing children by not providing adequate social care services. We can never be too careful when working with our most vulnerable and needy.

Once again the educational attainment of our children and young people was outstanding. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students who did so well, and also thank the parents, carers and teachers who supported them in achieving these fantastic results. The results show Halton's commitment to drive up standards and improve the opportunities available to all of our young people as they move into adulthood.

Progress continued on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. This programme will transform Halton's Secondary Education provision through the investment of up to £100 million into our Secondary Schools. BSF and the Primary Capital programme, which will look at our Primary Schools, are massive commitments into the future of education in Halton. Their success, as well as tackling some of the entrenched health issues facing our children and young people are some of the main challenges facing the authority and it's partners.

Once again as part of the function of overview and scrutiny to hold the Executive Board to account we held the fourth of our annual question and answer sessions with a member of the Executive Board; this time it was the turn of Councillor Tom McNerney, Executive Portfolio Holder for the Children and Young People, who talked and answered questions on the future initiatives for the young people of our Borough.

Looking back I think it has been a good fourth year for the board and I would like to thank all of the members of the board, as well as all of the officers involved for their continued support and contribution.

Finally, I would like to conclude this report by thanking all of the officers and members (of all parties) involved in all of the 'additional duties' that take place to make sure that the children and young people receive that best care and support. Duties such as being a school governor with all of the responsibilities that that entails, statutory inspections of our care homes (Regulation 33) or of our social worker teams (Climbié visits), membership of the Local Safeguarding Board, the Adoptions Panel, the Children and Young People's Alliance Board, to name but a few of the 'extra duties' that both members and officers perform to support and improve the lives of the children and young people of our Borough."

Councillor Mark Dennett

Chairman, Children & Young People Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2009/10 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Cllr M Dennett (Chairman), Cllr M Horabin (Vice Chairman), Cllr P Browne, Cllr P Drakeley, Cllr K Loftus, Cllr R Gilligan, Cllr T Higginson, Cllr J Lowe, Cllr S Parker, Cllr M Ratcliffe, Cllr J Stockton.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the work of the Council (and its partner agencies within Children's Trust Arrangements) in seeking: to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and opportunities to fulfil their potential and succeed; and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

Educational Attainment and Achievement 2009

School performance was discussed in relation to the successes specifically at Key Stage 2 and 4 and also in terms of progress in narrowing the gap for achievement for vulnerable pupils including those with special educational needs. Halton continues to perform well in comparison to national outcomes as a result of the gains made and maintained over the past few years.

Services for Homeless Young People

Consultation meetings with homeless young people in Halton took place to raise issues and make suggestions which could have a positive impact on the quality of life of homeless young people, if implemented. Members noted the two key issues identified from the consultation meetings. The Board considered what training provision was already available through YMCA tailored training and Riverside College short courses and requested that a proposal for funding for costs of public transport be submitted to the 14-19 Partnership.

Placement Strategy Review

A review of the current position regarding the Halton Children In Care (CIC) population and the arrangements for placing children was undertaken. Members noted that there had been significant difficulty in recent years in recruiting Foster Carers to meet demand for placements and to provide a choice of placement. Members noted that the recent Ofsted inspection of the Foster Care Service in Halton judged the service to be good with some outstanding features, however, the Inspector had made a formal recommendation in respect of National Minimum Standard 17. The Board considered the barriers to the recruitment of foster carers and how these had been addressed in the review.

Service Plans

This year the Board continued to take significant steps forward in the way it engaged with the service planning process. The PPB Members identified issues and activities they hoped could be prioritised in the service plans for 2010/11-2012/3.

Developments for Young Carers

National and Local Developments for Young Carers were set out for Members consideration including the new locality structure, family centred approaches to early intervention and prevention for Children In Need. Members felt that these developments were worthy of further work and therefore 'Young Carers' was agreed as a scrutiny topic for the Board's 2010/11 work programme.

Developments in Post 16 Provision

The transfer of statutory responsibility for 16-19 provision to local authorities was due to take place in 2013 and the Board received a progress report on the work undertaken to date. Members considered the 14-19 Education Plan, partner involvement and how commissioning and financial systems would operate. A particular concern of the Board was transportation between sites and what provision would be available.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

2009/10 saw the important, high level outcomes for children and young people in Halton coming more under the scrutiny spotlight. The PPB raised its sights to focus attention on key, strategic indicators of performance e.g. as set out in the Local Area Agreement and in the service's work with partners. Through the LAA a suite of targets was agreed for Halton with Government and local partners. It emphasises the requirement for named partners to co-operate in striving to achieve those targets. There were 34 indicators in the LAA, together with statutory education and early years targets. The LAA reflects the priorities in Halton's community strategy for improving the quality of life in Halton, including the need to tackle high teenage pregnancy rates in the Borough.

RESTRUCTURING OF THE CYPD

The Council's efficiency programme has resulted in a restructuring of the Children and Young People's Directorate to be implemented from 1st April 2010. The CYP Directorate will reduce from four Departments to three:

- Children and Families Services
- Learning and Achievement Services
- Children's Organisation and Provision

The Children's Safeguarding Unit will report directly to the Strategic Director in order to separate the delivery of Safeguarding Services from a review and auditing function.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2010/11

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2010/11) it will carry out Topic reviews examining the following area:

- Young Carers

This topic area will be completed in 2010/11.

In 2009/10 the following scrutiny topic was completed:

- Health of Young People

SAFEGUARDING

Members regularly considered matters relating to Safeguarding, particularly in the areas of monitoring of racist incidents, anti-bullying, private fostering arrangements and the work of the Halton Safeguarding Children's Board.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Gill Bennett on 0151 471 7545 or e-mail: gill.bennett@halton.gov.uk