

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

### **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

In my report last year, I said that for the next year we would look further into the Borough's early year's provision and during this year a review of early years provision was conducted and the results presented to the Board. The review showed that while the majority of early year's provision was either good or outstanding the Borough still lacked behind the national average in a number of areas. These findings have formed an action plan that is being implemented across the Borough and the Board will continue to focus on this area in the forthcoming year.

The Board also looked at the work being done across the Borough in the area of children's health. It was shown that work carried out surrounding infant mortality was having some success, as the rates of infant mortality had reduced below land and North West average. It also showed the number of low birth weight babies in Halton had reduced significantly below the England average.

As I have done over the last few years, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students and also thank the parents, carers and teachers who supported them.

Looking back I think it has been a good and varied eleventh 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.

Going forward I intend to look further at improving our early years settings, as well as helping schools with the new curriculum and new assessment criteria, to ensure that Halton is providing the best level of education for all of our children.

We will also continue to scrutinise our social care and safeguarding services, ensuring that we do everything we can to support our most vulnerable children and young people.

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 the 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 44) or of our social worker teams (Climbié visits), membership of the Local Safeguarding Board, the Adoptions Panel, the Children and Young People's Trust, 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  
Chair,  
Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board



## **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2016/17 the Board comprised eleven Councillors: Councillor M. Dennett (Chair), Cllr G. Logan (Vice-Chair), Cllr L. Cassidy, Cllr S. Edge, Cllr C. Gerrard, Cllr P. Hignett, Cllr M. Horabin, Cllr P. Lloyd-Jones, Cllr S. Parker, Cllr C. Rowe and Cllr J Stockton.

The primary function of the Board is to focus on the work of the Council (and its Partners specifically within Children's Trust arrangements) in seeking to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Children and Young People Priority.

## **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met four times during the period June 2016 to March 2017, and detailed below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

### **The Education and Adoption Act 2016 and the "Changing Role of the Regional School Commissioner.**

The Board received a report which set out the implications of the proposed changes to the role of Regional School Commissioner (RSC) and it was recognised by the Board that the Local Authority must work in partnership with the RSC in addressing the issue of "Schools Causing Concern". The Board reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the RSC and understood how they have greater powers of interventions regarding schools causing concern.

### **Regulation 44 Visits – Children's Homes**

Board members received a report on the statutory basis for Regulation 44 visits, and the role of members in undertaking those visits, together with the training and support that was available for members in place for that role. The focus of a Section 44 visit is to ensure that all children within the placement are being appropriately cared for and their individual needs are met. This is achieved through a combination of examining appropriate written records within the home, viewing any complaints, and interviewing children, parents, and staff as they feel necessary to establish the standard of care being provided. Members confirmed their commitment to the training and support available and confirmed their commitment to undertake Regulation visits via a determined rota.

### **Independent Living Skills for Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Halton**

The Board has undertaken regular scrutiny on Independent Living Skills since 2013, and a report was received which updated members on the scrutiny undertaken during the period 2013-2016. Scrutiny visits by members had

been undertaken to each of the Special Schools, two Primary School Resource bases and Riverside College. At each setting the teaching and resources for helping children and young people to acquire independence were scrutinised. All of the settings that members had visited were found to be providing opportunities and experiences to help shape the essential independent living skills required to support young people towards independent living skills. Members agreed to continue with their monitoring and scrutiny of this particular area.

### **Early Years Review**

A report was received by the Board on a review on Early Years as previously the Board had noted that poor outcomes impact upon both the health and the achievement of children in the borough and that by improving Early Years provision the Council can look to improve not just children's physical wellbeing but also their socio-economic outcomes in later life. The Board considered a presentation in their September 2016 meeting and will be asking for further reports. Recommendations from the Early Years Review are now being implemented across Halton and Members will continue to monitor the impact. At the time of writing, Ofsted have graded 94.5% of Halton's 110 early years providers who have received an inspection as Good or Better.

### **Child Health**

The Board considered a report which provided a summary of Health needs of children, young people and their families in Halton. Some of the issues identified within Halton related to infant mortality, where it was reported that rates of infant mortality were steadily declining and are now below the England average. The Board were made aware that considerable work has been undertaken in this regard to prevent infant mortality including improving maternity services, accident prevention work through the Healthy Child Programme and awareness raising activities, and promoting greater awareness of ensuring safe sleeping arrangements and parents not smoking near the baby. Other areas scrutinised by the Board included Low weight birth, breastfeeding, immunisations, dental health, child development, obesity, teenage conception, and admissions to hospital due to alcohol. The Board are keen to continue to receive updates as improving the Health of Children and Young People in Halton is a key priority.

### **Comments, Compliments and Complaints relating to Children's Social Care**

The Board receives two annual reports, the first is on statutory complaints processed under the Children Act 1989 (Representation Procedure) during the previous 12 months, the second relates to compliments received. The Board noted that there were 36 statutory complaints received under the procedure, which was a 36% reduction on the previous year. Each year a review of those complaints received is undertaken, and this helps to inform learning and develop service improvement. An Action Plan was identified and staff training was implemented. With regard to compliments, 112 compliments

were received from clients relating to Children's Services in the People Directorate. The Board has sight of a wide range of comments and compliments which come in the form of emails, letters, texts, telephone calls, cards, and even through comments made by solicitors and a judge. The Board will continue to review the types of complaints received and support officers through its monitoring and scrutiny processes.

### **Annual Head Teacher Report on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Care 2015/16**

In October the Board received a report which outlined outcomes for children in care across the Early Years Foundation stage and Key Stages 2 and 4. The report explained what a "good outcome" was for each area, and members scrutinised the information presented. The Board noted that, generally, there was still work to be done across all the key stages in achieving good outcomes for children in care in diminishing the difference to their peers. The report also highlighted a number of strategies that were being used to improve attendance and exclusion rates. To support this work, members of the Board agreed that they would take this issue back to schools and a set of questions were drawn up for Board members, as governors, to raise at their next full Governing Board meeting to support and challenge head teachers at those schools with children in care on roll. The Board also asked for further reports to be submitted so that this issue can continue to be monitored, and the Board considered another report on this matter at its January 2017 meeting.

### **Proposal to close Westfield Primary School Resource Provision Base for Pupils with Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties.**

A report was submitted which updated the Board on the responses received to the first phase of consultation regarding the proposal to close the resource base provision at Westfield Primary School for pupils with a hearing impairment. The Local Authority was proposing to close the provision and then reinvest the funding into increasing specialist support for pupils in local schools as it was recognised that children make greater progress by being part of a mainstream peer group with language support. The Board discussed at length the issues and noted that none of the pupils at the resource base would be affected by the proposals. The Board supported the proposals.

### **Scrutiny Topic**

It was agreed that a scrutiny topic group be established and Chaired by Councillor Geoff Logan, supported by the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property and the 14-19 Lead from Education, Inclusion and Provision, to investigate the potential for further developing the links between Halton's Businesses and Schools. The Board noted the importance of maximising the potential of businesses and residents of the Liverpool City Region, and to significantly reduce the gap between the Liverpool City Region and the national average in terms of skills levels and welfare dependency.

## **Other Matters**

Board Members also considered a range of reports on matters relating to the White Paper and the Education Bill; the Effectiveness in Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities; Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing; Children in Care and Care Leavers; the Use of Pupil Premium Plus and its Expenditure, and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) Activity by Schools.

As part of its overview, the Policy and Performance Board also considers the Council's Executive Board minutes, Special Strategic Partnership Board minutes, Halton Children's Trust minutes, and the Quarterly Performance Monitoring reports.

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 see Halton Borough Council's website via the following link: [Children Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board](#).