



Cllr. Mark
Dennett
Chairman
Children &
Young People
PPB

ANNUAL REPORT
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2008 – MARCH 2009

"I would like to start as always by looking back over the previous twelve months. In July 2008 the Halton received the results of its first Joint Area Review (JAR) of Children's Services in the Borough. It confirmed significant progress by all partners working together for the children of the Borough. This is great news for both the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership and sets a strong foundation to build upon for further improvements in the future.

One of the most pleasing results of the report is that Halton was found to be outstanding in its provision of safeguarding in the Borough. Notwithstanding this result the shocking case of Baby Peter in Haringey and other similar cases highlighted the need to be ever prepared, that is why a thorough review of safeguarding was conducted separately to the JAR and also why a report on how we can improve the inspection of care homes (Regulation 33 visits) and Climbié inspections with our staff was presented to the board in February.

Once again the attainment of our children at Key Stages 2 and 4 was outstanding. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students who did so well, and also thank the parents 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 over £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 its partners.

Previously, I have talked about the function of overview and scrutiny and the responsibility of holding the Executive Board to account. To this end we held the third of our annual question and answer sessions with a member of the Executive Board; this time it was the turn of Councillor Tom McInerney, 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 third 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.

One of the main challenges for our young people that was highlighted in this year and will form a foundation for the work over the next twelve months is health. Halton is one of the lowest Local Authorities in the North West with regard to Health indicators. Clearly this is unacceptable and that is why I have made a public commitment to look at how we can improve the health of our young people and thereby improve their quality of lives. We started this process by looking at ways in conjunction with Halton and St Helens PCT we can improve oral health of our young people. The recommendations from this examination was approved by the Executive Board in April.

Finally, as last year 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 2008/9 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Cllr Mark Dennett (Chairman), Cllr Margaret Horabin (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Browne, Cllr P Drakeley, Cllr F Fraser, 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 six 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 2008

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. Members noted the significant improvement in results and explored ways in which services work in partnership with schools to support the raising of standards. Members discussed the Foundation Stage Profile results and what was expected from a child in relation to their parents understanding the whole process better.

Child Health in Halton

Members were advised on the causes of poor health and actions being taken to improve health outcomes. Members had the opportunity to discuss the developing Children's Trust arrangements and the relation to Health staff from the Primary Care Trust, supporting well and vulnerable children, now being supported through the Partnership arrangements with the Local Authority as part of the Children's Trust.

Regulation 33 visits and Climbié Audits

Members discussed thoroughly the need to carry out Regulation 33 visits and it was resolved that training would be provided to all PPB Members on Regulation 33 Visits and Climbié Audits. Following training and CRB checks a new extended list of Members available to carry out visits and audits would be put together and a rota agreed. The Board will receive regular monitoring reports on the progress of visits and audits.

Service Plans

This year the Board took a significant step forward in the way it engaged with the service planning process. Following an informative briefing from the C&YP Directorate's Senior Management Team and Members' discussion at a special autumn meeting, the PPB Members identified issues and activities they hoped could be prioritised in the service plans for 2009/10 - 2011/12. In February, draft plans were drawn up and presented to the PPB for comment and endorsement, and feedback was provided on how far it had been possible to reflect the Members' earlier proposals in the new plans. Engaging the PPB more actively in this way strengthened the link between their role in monitoring performance and implementation of the plan in one year, and the PPB's contribution towards shaping the plan for the next.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

2008/9 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. This process highlighted continuing success in the improving academic achievement of the Borough's children, but also underlined how many health outcomes remained poor. This evidence underpinned the PPB's decision to focus their 2009/10 Topic review work on the health of children and young people.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2008/09

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2009/10) it will carry out Topic reviews examining the following area:

Improving health outcomes for children and young people in Halton to support the raising of achievement and attainment

This topic area will be completed in 2009 / 2010.

In 2008/2009 the following scrutiny topic was completed:

- Oral health

The scrutiny topic below is on-going from 2008/2009:

- Access to services by 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 Judith Kirk, Operational Director, Judith.kirk@halton.gov.uk, tel: 0151 471 7545