



(Cllr. Mark
Dennett
Chairman

ANNUAL REPORT

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

“The Victoria Climbié case, one of many high profile cases, provided a stark reminder that all children’s services – educational and social care needed to work together. It also raised the profile of the responsibilities of elected members, local authorities officers, and other agency workers like the Police and doctors, had to the children and young people within their area.

The Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters agenda set out to address these failings by requiring all local authorities to integrate all children’s services under one Director and also to have a lead Member with sole responsibility for children.

A new overview and scrutiny board focussing solely on the needs and welfare of the children and young people of the borough was created as a direct response to this agenda.

Bringing all of these issues together has created a board with a wide remit, and the topics examined by the board during its first year have highlighted this. Presented below are some of the highlights from the year and thoughts about the boards future.

The start of the new Council year also brought the formal creation of the Halton Children and Young People’s Alliance Board and the Local Safeguarding Board. Both of these boards are multi-agency boards whose membership comes from all of the different agencies involved with children and young people, for example the Police, the Fire Service, the Primary Care Trusts, and Health Trust, as well as the Halton Borough Council.

Together they commissioned a comprehensive needs analysis across the borough taking into account everything that has an effect on children’s lives. This then formed the basis for the Children and Young People’s Plan that outlined the main outcomes for the children of the borough and how the different agencies were going to tackle them together. This document would form the basis of how the services provided to our children by all agencies would be judged and was adopted at full Council.

During the course of the year a one-off joint overview and scrutiny meeting was held with the members of the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board to feed into the consultation on Alder Hey Children's Hospital's bid to be Foundation Hospital. This proved to be a lively debate in which we expressed our concerns about the nature of the new Trust and also the need of the residents of Halton.

Reviews and inspections of services were carried out throughout the year, including:

- Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision
- Independent Review of the Youth Service
- Adoption Inspection
- Fostering Inspection

These highlighted areas for improvement, as well as strengths to be built upon. It is heartening to note that the review of the Youth Service showed that since its inspection in 2004 the Youth Service provided by Connexions for Halton Borough Council had moved from a poor service to a good service.

Members of the Borough's Youth Bank (Amy Baldwin, Daniel Belfield, Nicola Howe, Johanna Pickering and Jack Slater) provided an excellent presentation on the workings of the Youth Bank. This is a project where young people can apply for funding of a community project for young people. The scheme itself is managed and administered by young people and has funding of £328,000 from Halton Council to distribute to worthy projects.

During the year the board piloted two initiatives. The first was to create a small members group specifically to look at performance monitoring outside of the PPB cycle to make it more responsive to performance issues as they arose. The second initiative was to invite the board to hold a question and answer with the Children and Young People Portfolio Holder, Councillor Tom McInerney. This proved very successful and I aim to make this an annual event.

Looking forward into next year, I plan to engage the users of our services more by going out to members of the Parent and Carers forum and the Youth forum and bringing them into dialogue with the board, so that they understand the role of overview and scrutiny in the provision of the services they use and need, and also can feed into and enhance the performance of the board.

Looking back I think it has been a good foundational 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 the work on behalf of the children and young people of the borough."

Councillor Mark Dennett
Chairman, Children & Young People Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors and two representatives from school governing bodies – Cllr Mark Dennett (Chairman), Cllr Margaret Horabin (Vice-Chairman), Mr Andy Brothers, Mr Colin Chorley, Cllr Frank Fraser, Cllr Robert Gilligan, Cllr Trevor Higginson, Cllr David Lewis, Cllr Kelly Marlow, Cllr Stan Parker, Cllr Ged Philbin, Cllr Margaret Ratcliffe and Cllr John Stockton.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the work of the Council (and its Partners) in seeking to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to fulfill their potential and succeed, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan and Children and Young Peoples Plan in relation to the Children and Young People Priority.

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.

It was agreed that outborough school admissions be selected as the main topic for detailed scrutiny in 2006/2007. A wide range of quantitative data was compiled and analysed to help inform the group on the numbers of pupils who choose outborough provision and their destinations. Questionnaires were issued to parents seeking information on the factors influencing their choice of provision.

The topic group will continue in 2007/2008 and concentrate on the financial impact of outborough admissions along with the impact on the authority's performance data. Consideration will also be given to identification of strategies to reduce outborough admissions.

A wide range of issues were covered by the Children and Young People PPB in 2006/2007 these included:

- Schools Balances –
- Children and Young People's Plan
- APA/JAR Process
- An update on Barriers to Learning
- The transition from Sure Start to Local Children's Centres
- Alder Hey Foundation Status
- Gifted and Talented Education
- Local Area Agreements
- Secondary School Attendance
- SEN Review
- Every Child Matters in School – The secondary School Perspective
- Education Business Partnership
- Youth Matters
- Halton Preventative Services
- Educational Attainment
- Youth Service Inspection and Action Plan
- Complaints
- Climbie Visits
- Adoption, Fostering and Private Fostering
- Health of Looked After Children

School Balances

School Balances through the introduction of a policy to clawback excess surplus balances and as a consequence of the level of reporting and scrutiny of school balances, both the level of balances and the number of schools with excess balances was seen to reduce significantly. Balances reduced from £6.1 million to £4.3 million. The number of schools with excess balances also reduced from 47 to 15.

Attendance

Following the identification of Attendance as a key priority for Children and Young People and the additional investment agreed in 2006/2007 budget, attendance in the secondary sector has significantly improved. There have also been improvements in primary attendance.

Special Education Needs

Following the identification of Special Needs as a key priority for Children and Young People reports identified the major progress in this area with the re-

designation of all four special schools completed in 2006 and major capital investment in two of the special schools approved. Members were informed that the restructure of the Learning Support Service had been finalised with the new SEN service coming into effect in January 2007. Levels of pupils placed in outborough special provision has been seen to reduce along with the number of statements across the Borough.

Health of Looked After Children

The excellent performance in relation to the level of health assessments completed in Halton in comparison to the national average was reported and commended with the Halton percentage at 91.2% compared to the 77.3% National Average.

Halton Preventative Services

The success of the establishment of the Preventative Services mini trust was reported to the Board and the approach by GONW to use the Halton model as a case study for national publication. It was acknowledged that although the trust covered both complex and challenging agendas combining Young Persons Substance Misuse, Children's Fund and Teenage Pregnancy would be a more effective delivery vehicle for these services.

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 *Ann McIntyre – Operational Director – Business Planning and Resources – ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk telephone 0151 471 7543)*