

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 13 November 2023 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Baker, Begg, Goodall, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, McDermott, Rowe, Ryan and Skinner

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: J. Farrell, A. Jones, B. Holmes, G. Vaughan-Hodkinson and J. Gallagher

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
CYP16 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions were received.	
CYP18 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE	
The Board received a report of the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.	
The Big Conversation was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communications Plan was developed in order to generate	

and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that to date, a total of 1012 responses had been received; a breakdown of these by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out in the community so far. The themes emerging from the consultation were also presented and any gaps in responses were highlighted, as well as the actions required to fill these.

It was noted that the consultation ends on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see final consultation with stakeholders via drop-in sessions and community engagement, prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

The following details were provided following Members questions:

- In order to address the low number of respondents from the 16-24 age group staff had attended Riverside College and the Family Hubs in Windmill Hill and Kingsway to encourage people to complete the survey; suggestions on places to visit were still welcomed, as it was agreed that more responses were needed from this age group;
- The Operational Director for Education, Provision and Inclusion offered to share the survey again with education stakeholders;
- It was suggested to visit other colleges such as Priestly in Warrington and Sir John Deane in Northwich, as some students attended these from the Borough – this had been done;
- Following concerns regarding Windmill Hill residents being lost in the figures for Norton North, staff had been out to the local shops to approach people to complete the survey;
- One Member suggested a bespoke survey for Councillors – this was considered impractical as the survey covered a range of priorities for all people to respond to as residents of the Borough;
- Councillors were invited to complete the survey in the same way as HBC staff and other groups, through the various methods discussed;
- Ditton Ward did have a low number of responses so an 'i-walker' was sent in the community on 4 November;

- The purpose of the survey was clarified as being able to prioritise and spend money where the residents of Halton had identified and prioritised;
- It was important not to raise expectations and this was clear from the onset of the project;
- The determining of priorities would be decided following the analysis of data after the survey was closed. The information would then be presented to Executive Board for agreement and inclusion in the Corporate Plan; and
- A suggestion was made to contact 'Power in Partnership' with the survey.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

CYP19 SUFFICIENCY DUTY REPORT 2023-2024 (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT REVIEW (CSA))

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, which provided a summary of the revised Sufficiency Duty Report (SDR) – this document was appended to the report *Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report 2023-24 Review*.

It was reported that the SDR detailed information on Halton's childcare sector and outlined the projected supply and estimated demand for childcare places over the next 12 months. It also highlighted any gaps in provision and how these were being addressed.

The report also gave information on the expansion of the early years entitlements, due to launch in April 2024, and the initial estimates on how the demand for new places would impact upon the childcare market in Halton. Information was also shared on other factors affecting childcare and sustainability, at both local and national level, such as the impact of Covid 19, cost of living, and challenges with the recruitment and retention of staff. It was noted however, that despite the challenges faced by the Early Years sector, the childcare market in Halton continued to be secure and sustainable.

The following responses were provided to questions raised by Members:

- The data around 5-10 year old holiday provision did not include figures from groups, such as short breaks and activities funded through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. Future mapping and supply of demand, regarding the Wraparound Programme in Halton, would consider the needs of children with SEND and how best to facilitate this;
- A range of Early Years provision is required in order to give residents greater flexibility and choice so they can return to work and childminders formed part of this – there were 59 in Halton;
- The impacts that childminder settings can have on neighbourhoods (such as noise, parking problems, garden noise) was recognised, but complaints were few as most childminders had small numbers of children. Any complaints were dealt with according to legislation;
- The difference between a childminder and a nursery was that a childminder has a domestic premises ie, their home, and a nursery was in a non-domestic setting. A childminder also had a cap on the number of children they could take, whereas a nursery could take bigger numbers;
- A comment was made by one Member regarding funding – nurseries relied on Government funding and a childminder is a private business and exempt from paying business rates;
- Despite data showing a deficit of 51 places in Windmill Hill there were vacancies in settings in the area – this was explained as an anomaly with the data recording. Members were reassured that there were no issues with the availability of places at any of the nurseries in Windmill Hill;
- Three new Speech and Language programmes were about to launch in Halton – *Tots Talking* (for children aged between 0-3), *Early Talk Boost* (3-4 year olds) and *Talk Boost* (5-7 year olds), adding to the existing Speech and Language services currently available; and
- Recruitment and retention of staff in Early Years was raising concerns. It was noted that the requirement for certain qualifications had been introduced in recent years which may be affecting recruitment along with poor pay. Also, staff were leaving and the reasons for this were varied, eg. retirement, poor pay, legacy of Covid-19. Different routes into the profession were being explored, as was on the job training.

RESOLVED: That the revised Sufficiency Duty

Report (previously known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) be noted.

CYP20 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which presented *Halton’s Virtual School Annual Report for 2022-23*, this was appended to the report.

The Report, compiled by the Headteacher of the Virtual School, included information on the educational outcomes and achievements for Halton’s Children in Care, and the School’s wider work across children’s services.

The work of the Virtual School had continued throughout the academic year and the full annual report provided detailed analysis of how Halton’s Children in Care had performed against each of the individual key performance indicators. It also included a summary of the School’s progress towards its identified key priorities for the academic year 2022-23, and outlined the priorities for the Virtual School in 2023-24.

The following additional information was provided following Members’ questions:

- In relation to school moves, the 4 young people who had periods of time not on a school roll was due to the personal circumstances of the individuals and the involvement of Social Services;
- The DfE has provided a grant to support the work of the Virtual School in its work with the Post 16 cohort. It is hoped that this would continue to support the improvement of Post 16 PEPs, including for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children;
- The drop in the results for Key Stage 4 was discussed – Officers advised there were specifics to the backgrounds of each of the 20 people concerned;
- Children in Care (CIC) were given priority when allocating schools to them – the children were listened to in respect of their school preferences;
- The Virtual School continues to track the onward journey of its cohort, including those who go to university. The Team has grown in recent years, which has enabled them to work more closely with this age range;
- No CIC has ever been permanently excluded in Halton, but when a child was at risk of this then officers would work with the school to avoid it;

- The Local Authority worked in collaboration with secondary schools to prevent exclusions; and
- The Head of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was currently working on an alternative provision model for students who were permanently excluded.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the information provided; and
- 2) accept the Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report as an accurate account of the performance on the education outcomes and achievements of Halton's Children in Care.

Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.