

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING
INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM -
TOWN HALL ON 17 NOVEMBER 2009**

Present:	Councillors Thacker MBE (Chairman), Allen, Lowndes, Saltmarsh and Khan	
Also present	Cllr Holdich Cllr Scott Sue Lilley Diane Brown	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University Cabinet Member for Children's Services Co-Chair of Carers Partnership Board Carer and Member of Carers Partnership Board
Officers in Attendance:	John Richards Denise Radley Hedda Lilley Chris Fisher Paulina Ford Ruth Griffiths	Executive Director, Children's Services Executive Director of Adult Social Services Project Manager Carers and Falls Head of Service, Children and Families (0-13) Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer Lawyer

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Wilkinson.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2009 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

5. Supporting Carers in Peterborough

The Executive Director of Adult Social Services introduced the report and informed the Committee that the Carers Strategy and Action Plan had been put in place to provide a framework for delivering support and services that would help achieve the best outcomes for carers.

There were a large number of carers in Peterborough who did not recognise themselves as carers and part of the action plan had been to raise awareness of the support and services available and to increase the ways of identifying carers. New initiatives had already increased the number of assessments and new money had also been found to fund more breaks for carers.

The Director introduced a group of seven young carers who gave personal accounts of their lives as carers. All of the carers were either currently responsible for looking after someone or had in the past caring responsibilities which ranged from looking after parents with severe depression to looking after severely disabled siblings. In some cases the carer was looking after parents and siblings with multiple problems. All of the carers stated that they had grown up very quickly and felt that they had missed out on being children but attending the Young Carers Group had made a difference to their lives. They informed the Committee that young people who were carers often missed out on doing the normal things that other young people liked to do including attending after school clubs, school trips and going out to play with friends. They often felt different from other children and had on occasions been bullied at school because the other children had not understood their circumstances. The Young Carers Group had given them opportunities to go on trips and take part in activities away from their daily responsibilities as carers and it also gave them the opportunity to talk to other young people who were in similar situations and who understood the difficulties they faced.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members told the young carers how proud they were of them and what special people they were to be coping with such enormous responsibilities at such a young age. They also commented on how brave they were to attend the meeting and give their personal stories and thanked them for coming to the meeting. Members commented that they had been unaware of the types of responsibilities young carers had to cope with and would support them in raising awareness of this.
- When asked by Members what else could be done for them, the young carers asked for:
 - i. 24 hour access to someone who they could talk to when in difficult situations.
 - ii. Raised awareness of the Young Carers Group to help people understand more about their lives.
 - iii. Provision of transport to help them get to activities. Activities were put on for the carers but sometimes they could not go because they could not get there.
 - iv. More support at school.
 - v. The opportunity to go on trips abroad as this was something they never had the opportunity to do.
- The carers asked the Committee if they would be able to support them with transport to activities. The Executive Director for Children's Services promised that he would look into what could be done for them.
- The carers asked the Committee if there was a way that the Council could work with them to raise awareness and help identify other young carers. The Executive Director for Children's Services told them that he was committed to working with them and Councillors to ensure that this happened. It was important to identify all young carers so that they received the support that they needed as some carers had not come forward because they were afraid that their families would be split up. The support they would receive would always work towards keeping the family together and they should not be afraid to come forward.

Two adult carers attended the meeting and gave personal statements about being carers. Both were members of the Carers Partnership Board and one was Co-Chair and they reported that the Carers Partnership Board had been operating well. They had instigated a pre-meeting for the partnership board which allowed carers an opportunity to raise issues for the agenda at the main meeting and this allowed key issues to be progressed more quickly. The carers also acknowledged that the emergency respite service was a wonderful service.

The carers raised the following issues:

- i. Getting information out to carers was difficult and currently tended to be passed on by word of mouth.
- ii. Getting through to the correct people when phoning the Council's 747474 switchboard number had often proved difficult. The switchboard operator was unable to help as they had no knowledge of the individual cases and often gave

incorrect information. The call would then be transferred to another area where there would usually be an answer phone so a message had to be left and often the call was not returned. Carers would prefer to speak to someone directly rather than leave a message on a machine.

- iii. There were sometimes difficulties in getting appointments with Social Workers.
- iv. There was an out of hours service but there had been reported instances when no one could be contacted.
- v. The complaints procedure could be improved.
- vi. More out reach support was required for people who were carers for people who had dementia.

An expert witness came forward from the public gallery and spoke about her experiences as a carer to three children one of whom was severely disabled. She spoke to the Committee about problems that had occurred when her disabled child had been in hospital and had been discharged with oxygen but she had not been given any training on how to use it. She also advised that she had not met the criteria for the Direct Payments service and felt that it was a complicated process which needed to be looked at. The Executive Director for Children's Services advised the Committee that from 1st April there would be a fully integrated Children's Service which would alleviate a lot of problems. The Executive Director for Adult Services informed the Committee that the current legislation on Direct Payments prevented them being paid for health services.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked if the Peterborough Young Carers Project, which was run by the Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service (PCVS), was going to continue. Members were advised that the contract with PCVS would run until end of March 2010 and that the Young Carers Steering Group was looking at a new specification for the service to be provided by the PCVS.
- Members noted that the report mentioned the needs of carers in a diverse population and asked what were the specific needs of carers in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and how was this being tackled. Members were advised that Community Leaders had been written to and had been asked to make contact with officers to discuss the needs of BME Communities. Members felt that service providers within BME Communities should be contacted as they knew what services were needed. Councillor Khan offered to work with officers to help identify the correct people to contact to find out the needs of the carers within the BME community.

ACTION AGREED

1. The Project Manager for Carers and Falls to work with Cllr Khan to identify the correct contacts within the BME Community to ensure that carer's needs are identified.
2. That the Peterborough PCT Carers Strategy and Action Plan be brought back to the Committee in a year's time to scrutinise if it had made a difference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet Members for Health & Adult Social Care and Children's Services and the Executive Directors for Children's Services and Adult Social Services acknowledge the issues raised by the Young Carers and Adult Carers by:

1. Requesting that officers investigate the feasibility of implementing the following wishes submitted by the Young Carers and report back to the Committee at a future date.
 - a. Provide transport to enable Young Carers to get to activities.
 - b. 24 hour access to someone who they can talk to when in difficult situations.

- c. Raise awareness of the Young Carers Group.
 - d. More support at school.
 - e. The opportunity to go on trips abroad.
2. Requesting that officers investigate the improvement of services around the issues raised by the Adult Carers and report back to the Committee at a future date.
- a. Improved ways of getting information out to carers.
 - b. Improved services for carers when using the Council's 747474 switchboard number. This to include further training for switchboard operators to increase their knowledge on services available for carers.
 - c. Improved appointments system with Social Workers.
 - d. Access to out of hours services.
 - e. Reviewing the Adult Social Care complaints procedures by considering the views of carers.
 - f. Out reach support required for carers of people with dementia.

6. Portfolio Progress Report from Cabinet Members relevant to the Committee

The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University gave a presentation to the Committee about the progress that had been made on delivering the 14 – 19 Agenda in Peterborough.

The Committee were informed that four Diplomas had been successfully launched in September 2009 and three further Diplomas had been approved for implementation in September 2010 and 186 learners had taken up the diplomas so far. Under vocational learning a strategy was in place for a growing number of apprenticeships through the public sector and 18 learners were studying for Level 2 Young Apprenticeships in Construction. From September 2010 there would be a Level 1 Young Apprenticeship programme targeted at potential NEETs (Not in Education, Training or Employment). Team Peterborough had continued to drive development of structures to support city-wide curriculum collaboration through:

- Common timetabling arrangements
- Common application processes 14 -19
- Common protocols and agreements

470 learners moved to other centres across the city to experience part of their learning. 200 businesses had become involved in Diploma delivery in the City, including the Norwich and Peterborough Building Society who were working with students on the IT Diploma and the developer behind Peterborough's Garden Park project who supported the Diploma in construction and the built environment.

The performance for NI 117 - 16 to 18 year olds who were not in education, training or employment (NEET) had improved on last years figure. In October 2009 the figure was 9.5% (569 young people) compared to October 2008 when the figure was 9.7% (761 young people). The percent of young people who were in a 'not known' situation had also improved from last year, in October 2009 'not known' was 5% (315 young people) compared to a October 2008 figure of 12.2% (1086 young people). The Committee was advised that there had been 200 less jobs this year which meant more children had become NEET's. A panel had been set up to look at employer involvement and was currently working with 200 employers and there were also plans to offer 36 placements for NEETs in the Council, of which most would be in Children's Services. The Council was also looking to offer young offenders work experience.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked what was happening with the John Mansfield Skills Centre as it had a good reputation for dealing with NEETs. The Cabinet Member advised that if courses were not going to be funded at John Mansfield then they would run elsewhere.
- Members asked the Cabinet Member what was the most challenging part of his portfolio. The Cabinet member advised that Peterborough had a low skills level and the challenge was to attract a higher level of skilled employment and therefore raise attainment levels in Peterborough and raise aspirations. The Cabinet Member was working with young people to produce a leaflet on raising aspirations.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services gave a presentation to the Committee on the progress that had been made on the Corporate Parenting portfolio. The Committee were reminded that Safeguarding Children was the responsibility of all Councillors and the Corporate Parenting Group had produced a Pledge which all Councillors would be asked to sign. The Pledge would give details of what the Council would be expected to provide for children in care and an information pack would be put together to make sure all councillors knew what their Corporate Parenting responsibilities were. This Pledge would come to this Committee in March so that each member of the Committee could sign it. Many looked after children did not achieve as well as children who were not in care and in Peterborough there had been more children in care per 10,000 than anywhere in England and our Statistical Neighbours.

Members were informed of the Children in Care Council which was formed approximately 18 months ago. The Council gave children a chance to shape and influence the parenting they received and helped to shape the agenda for the overall strategy for children. Members of the Council attended the Corporate Parenting Group twice per year and were actively engaged in developing the Pledge.

Members were advised that the key national indicators linked to children in care were:

- NI 61 Stability of LAC (Looked After Children) adopted following an agency decision
- NI 62 % of children at 31 March with 3 or more placements during the year
- NI 63 % of children who have been looked after for more than 2 ½ years etc
- NI 66 Children who's cases had all been reviewed within the statutory time limits

Other important statistical information given to members with regard to children in care was:

Participation of children in their reviews	94.2%
Number of children adopted	12
Number of children placed for adoption	23
Fostering and adoption services	adequate
Allocation to Qualified Social Worker	100%
Numbers of care leavers at university	7

The Cabinet Member advised that she was very proud of all the good work that young people were doing in Peterborough but as a Council there was a need to raise awareness of young carers and the Cabinet Member was committed to talking to people about a strategy for raising awareness of young carers.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked how difficult it was to get new foster parents and the Cabinet Member advised that it was very difficult. The Executive Director for Children's Services advised that there had been 160 enquiries this year for possible foster carers but it took four to six months for assessments to take place and only one out of ten was approved. The drop out rate was very high and the stock of foster parents had not increased because some of them were now retiring. Advertisements were put into Your Peterborough and there were continuous campaigns to attract new foster parents.

- Members asked who sat on the Corporate Parenting Group. Officers advised that all Councillors could be part of the Corporate Parenting Group.
- Members asked how the number of children in care could be reduced. The Cabinet Member advised that if a child needed to be cared for then it would be but there were alternative ways that a child could be cared for other than going into care. The Executive Director for Children's Services advised that there had been too many children in care when he first joined but every child's case had been rigorously reviewed and some children had gone back to their families. There had been a 10% rise of children in need over the past year due to children not going into care. Members felt that in some cases if the child stayed within the extended family they could still be at risk and wanted to know what kind of mechanisms were put in place to ensure they were safe. The Executive Director for Children's Services advised that a Child Protection Plan would be put in place to ensure the child's safety.

ACTION AGREED

1. That the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University and Cabinet Member for Children's Services return to the Committee on 16 March 2010 to give a further update on the progress of their portfolios.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services bring to the Committee on 16 March 2010 the Pledge from the Corporate Parenting Group for all members of the Committee to sign.

7. Update on Action Plan to Address Ofsted Unannounced Inspection Outcomes

Further to the last meeting where the inspection letter and action plan from the recent Ofsted unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment services were considered, the Executive Director for Children's Services was now reporting on the progress of the delivery of the action plan. The Executive Director advised that Members should feel assured that all the issues raised in the Ofsted letter had now been addressed and were being fully implemented.

ACTION AGREED

Members noted the report and felt assured that if Ofsted were to arrive unannounced the action plan would have addressed all the issues raised at their previous inspection.

8. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items to bring to the Committee.

9. Work Programme

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2009/2010 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme 2009/10.

10. Date of Next Meeting

19 January 2010

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 9.30 pm