

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING
INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL
ON
15 NOVEMBER 2010**

Present: Councillors P Thacker, J Wilkinson (Vice-Chairman), S Day, Y Lowndes,
B Saltmarsh and M Jamil

Also present Alastair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative

Nathalia Silva Young Persons
Kerriane Wilson
Michael Billings

Officers in Attendance: Louise Ravenscroft Chair of Family Voice
Wendy Hackton Secretary of Family Voice
John Richards Executive Director - Children's Services
Denise Radley Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Helen Edwards Solicitor to the Council
Andrew Brunt Assistant Director of Safeguarding, Families and
Communities
Darren Williams Strategic Participation Officer
Paulina Ford Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Councillor Thacker declared a personal interest in Item 7, Peterborough Carers Strategy and Action Plan Update as she was a member of the following groups: Transitions Group, NHS Forum Group and Learning Disability Partnership Board.

3. Minutes of meeting held on 20 September 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2010 were approved as a correct record subject to Alistair Kingsley being added as present.

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

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

5. Children's Trust – Make a Positive Contribution Partnership

The report informed the Committee on how the Children's Trust set out to meet its outcome of Making a Positive Contribution. The Director of Children's Services introduced three young people who had been employed through the Future Jobs Fund and had been working on a project which had looked at the impact of poverty in Peterborough. The Director

informed the committee that he would take questions on the whole report and then spoke in further detail on the child and family poverty aspect of the outcome including giving a short presentation. The Child Poverty Act had gained Royal Assent on 25 March 2010 and had placed a number of duties on Local Authorities to reduce child poverty. In Peterborough 25.3% of children lived in poverty compared to 16.4% in the East of England and 21.6% nationally. 22% of these children lived in families who were not working but 29% of these children lived in families where either one or both parents were working but on a low income. In determining and tackling child poverty there were several themes that needed to be taken into consideration:

- **Vulnerable Groups** – newly arrived families, ex-offenders, young people 16+, black and minority ethnics (BME), families with a disability (child or parent), lone parents, lone parents, mental health issues, teenage parents, elderly, young couples, HIV
- **Vulnerable Lifestyles** – substance misuse, at risk of homelessness, rough sleepers, anti-social behaviour and offending, worklessness or broken employment, domestic violence and abuse, not in education, employment or training (NEETs), gangs
- **Vulnerable Settings** – houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), deprived areas, children in care (CiC), private rented accommodation, temporary accommodation, rural locations, hidden populations, households with limited aspirations / work modelling
- **Vulnerable Moments** – redundancy, birth, change of tenure, job loss, eviction, moving home, re-possession, release from prison, moving into work, take up of new accommodation, family breakdown, bereavement, change in income levels, point of diagnosis, exams (i.e. GCSEs)

A draft Child Poverty Strategy would be presented to the Committee for scrutiny in March 2011.

The young people attending gave a presentation on Poverty in Peterborough which was a snapshot of their views through a series of photographs. The photographs depicted areas of Peterborough through a young person's eyes that represented poverty in Peterborough. Alongside the pictures they had written the following captions:

- Poverty is not having the means to have a basic standard of living
- Not having enough – the lack of basic things for people, could cause them various types of health issues
- Poverty to me means not being able to provide basic resources for you, your family or area
- Not having the money to make educated choices beyond daily survival
- Poverty is the inability to afford necessities and fully integrate with society

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Did you think that people did not know about the coping strategies and support services available to them? *Child poverty was not just about the children but was as much about the environment in which they grew up and was about breaking the cycle and getting the education and information to them.*
- What were we doing to make sure the money we had was being used more wisely than in the past? *One of the things that we were trying to do was attract more businesses to the city. Children's services were helping by making sure educational attainment was improved. It was also about retaining young people in the city so they could contribute to the local economy. There was also a need to ensure that the right benefits were being received. Benefit realisation and worklessness were key to the strategy.*
- The statistics showed that people who were working were still living in poverty which indicated a low skilled workforce. If we did not attract the right type of jobs Peterborough

would be known as a place for low skilled, low paid jobs. What was being done to address this? *The change would take time but Cabinet through the growth agenda were working hard to change the situation. Children's Services were fully engaged with the growth agenda.*

- How had you consulted with people on the subject of poverty? *A variety of groups were consulted through workshops. Children, young people and people who provided services across the city including Health, social workers, police and probation officers were involved. The strategy would come from a combination of views from all of these groups who worked with families who were deemed to be in relative poverty. Over 100 different adults have been consulted so far. Once the strategy was drafted it would be consulted on again and then be brought to the Committee for scrutiny.*
- There were a number of different strategies mentioned in the report which would be ready for consultation in March 2011. Were there any measures in place to ensure that they would be ready by then? *Practices were changing all the time and would need to be reflected in the strategies. Processes were being put in place while the strategies were being formed.*

ACTION AGREED

The Committee agreed that the draft Child Poverty Strategy was to be presented to the Committee at the meeting in March 2011 to allow scrutiny and make any recommendations prior to it going to Cabinet.

6. Translation and Interpretation Policy

Helen Edwards, Solicitor to the Council introduced the report which was presented to the Committee for consultation. Members were advised that the Policy was not recommending a new policy but was confirming the practice that was already established and in place. It was clarified that the report had incorrectly stated that the Cabinet meeting would be held on 8 December but should have stated 13 December. Members were asked for their views and comments on the policy prior to being presented for adoption at Cabinet.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Had any software packages been considered for use across the Council for translation into different languages? *Some work had been done in Children's Services on this but it would not help with face to face interpretation. The biggest single area of spend was in the Children's social care area and much of that was in relation to court processes and documents. Translation by software packages would not be of an acceptable standard for use in court processes. All directorates were looking at reducing the costs where possible by using web based packages where appropriate.*
- The report mentioned 'without being in breach of its statutory duties' but it also said that we were not legally obliged to have a policy and this seemed a contradiction in terms. *There was no legal obligation to have a policy in place however it was not possible to seize the provision of translation and interpretation costs without being in breach of statutory duties. All directorates were aware of the statutory duties they were under and it differed in every case. It would be very difficult to list all of the statutory duties as there were so many. It would not be possible for us not provide translation and interpretation services at all otherwise we would not be able to fulfill a number of statutory duties across the council services.*
- It would be useful to have a breakdown of what had been spent in past years and what it had been spent on. This would provide clarity as to how the figure of £154,000 was arrived at. *That could be provided. It did vary from year to year and no Director had a specific budget for translation and interpretation therefore the spend was kept to a minimum.*
- What would happen if we refused to supply an interpreter? What action could someone take against the Council? *It would depend on the circumstances but in the worse case*

scenario if we refused to provide an interpreter for a case in the court we would be found in breach of duties to assist the court with enquiries. There were a lot of cases where we provided translation and interpretations services for our own purposes and not for the benefit of the customer. For example helping people understand how to use the three bin system, making sure people got all the benefits they were entitled to, children's services cases. As a council we had committed to ensuring that all our citizens could access all of our services.

- *How did we as a council compare to other councils with regard to the £154,000 in spend? How did other countries compare with the UK in the translation and interpretation services we provided? We did not have the statistical information for either but had checked the websites of other councils but could not find any who charged. The majority of them made the point that if translation was needed it was provided free of charge. In terms of the amount they spend it would depend on the demographics. Translation and interpretation tended to be needed with new arrivals as they tended not to be able to communicate. The longer they stayed the less they needed these services. We did not know about other countries but we were working to English Law.*
- *Councillor Jamil felt that the policy was required and quoted examples of use in his ward.*
- *The Chair wanted to know if the policy was not accepted was there an alternative. At the moment the policy stated what was currently being done and was recognized as good practice. If the policy was not accepted departments would continue to carry on what they were already doing on a day to day basis. If the Committee wanted to make alternative recommendations or suggest that Cabinet looked at something differently you were entitled to do that. You could accept it as a policy and let it go through Cabinet and then do some work on monitoring how much was spent at a later date.*
- *Could we make a small charge for the service? In certain circumstances we probably could as the council had the power to charge for discretionary services but the problem would be separating the discretionary services from the essential core statutory services. Often this was not clear until the translation had been completed. The majority of the spend was in children's social care and we could not charge for that. It was something we could look at further.*
- *This was a budget without a cap so potentially the budget could be larger and may grow as it was based on need. What was the definition of essential services and could this be encompassed in the policy? Was there a threshold we had before using translation services? We did not translate everything as a matter of course and it was case specific and then the absolute minimum. We could attempt to put some guidelines together for officers so that they understood what might be an essential service or not.*
- *The policy did not mention anything about schools and were we making use of our current staff with interpreting? It did not mention schools as it was an internal council policy which did not cover schools. We did not pay supplements to members of staff who had an additional language but we did make full use of them wherever we could. There were circumstances where you could not use your own staff as they had to be independent for example the translation of a court report.*
- *Why could you not use computer based systems? They were less accurate than individual interpreters.*
- *As we were not legally obliged to have a policy could we perhaps call the document guidance?*
- *John Richards advised Members that if he could not have access to translation and interpretation services he would not be meeting his statutory responsibilities on behalf of the council and there could be serious consequences for that. The bulk of the money spent in children's services was on languages but that also included British sign language, Braille and other types of translation. The policy provided checks and balances to ensure that only those things that were critical to council services were translated.*
- *Helen Edwards proposed that in the report to Cabinet she noted the Committee's concerns about the level of spend and that it was uncapped and would include more detailed information about the spread of spend across the departments.*

- Helen Edwards wished the committee to note that the report asked the committee to approve the basic approach to providing translation and interpretation services not the amount of spend.
- Who decided when the policy was used? *Members were referred to the section of the policy which stated how to identifying the issue / need for an interpreter.*
- Could you identify when you brought the report back in March how many times people did not show up for an appointment when an interpreter had been provided. *If the information was recorded then it would be included.*

Councillor Jamil proposed that the policy be recommended to cabinet for adoption. Councillor Wilkinson seconded the proposal with the proviso that there was some mechanism for monitoring the costs so that they did not escalate out of control. Helen Edwards proposed that a full detailed report be brought back to the Committee at a later date detailing costs to March 2011 and how it had been spent. The Committee agreed with the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee:

- I. Endorsed the proposed Translation and Interpretation Policy; and
- II. Recommended the adoption of the Translation and Interpretation Policy to Cabinet with the proviso that;
 - a. In the report to Cabinet it is noted that the Committee had concerns with regard to the level of spend on translation and interpretation services and that it was uncapped. The Cabinet report to include more detailed information about the spread of spend across the departments.
 - b. The policy to include guidelines for officers on what were essential services.
 - c. That a report be brought back to the Committee at a later date to monitor the ongoing costs of the translation and interpretation services. The report to detail cost by department and how it was spent.

7. Peterborough Carers' Strategy and Action Plan Update

The Executive Director of Adult Services presented the report and explained that the report was in response to a request made by the Committee a year ago to return with an update on the progress made with the implementation of the 2009-2011 Peterborough Carers' Strategy.

Members were advised that the performance indicator to which all Local Authorities were measured against was NI 135 which measured the proportion of carers receiving a service as a percentage of clients receiving community based services. Peterborough exceeded its target for 2009-2010 with a figure of 34.3% against a target of 32%. That percentage represented 1829 carers who had an assessment with a follow up service. The target for 2010-2011 was set at 36% and the performance as of September 2010 was 32.14% with the expectation that the target would be achieved by the end of the year. Members were advised that progress on the action plan had been driven by key work streams, involving partners to deliver the overarching objectives of the strategy which were:

- Staff training to help them understand, respect and work with carers as expert partners
- Engaging carers in the planning, commissioning and managing of services
- Engaging with hard to reach carer groups
- Developing a greater range, diversity and volume of services
- Supporting carers to get back into employment
- Young carers

- Developing appropriate support services for carers
- Meeting carers needs for emergency respite care
- Provision of emotional support to carers to support them in their caring role
- Providing information, support and advice
- Using information on un-met needs of carers to improve outcomes
- Carers and the adult social care personalisation agenda

The Carers' Awareness Programme was ongoing and there had been a growing number of carers identified. The Carers' Partnership Board had been running for over a year and was thriving with some very good work achieved. More choice into social care had been introduced and more work was still needed to support carers to get back into employment. Work with black and minority groups had started and would continue to develop. Considerable work had been done on the Young Carers' Strategy and there was a new provider in place for delivering the Young Carers Service. Numbers registered with the respite service had continued to increase. The carers leaflet had been re done. It was estimated that there was approximately 15,000 carers in Peterborough with about 3,000 giving a substantial amount of time caring for someone. The hospital discharge pack was currently being piloted at the hospital. The National Carers' Survey had indicated some favourable results for Peterborough. An area that the Carers' Partnership Board identified for further work was the availability of breaks to support carers; development of which had been impacted by the Primary Care Trust's financial situation.

The Carers' National Strategy was currently being refreshed by the new Government and there had been some high profile changes including the cessation of funding for the Caring with Confidence Course. A watching brief would be kept on the proposed changes to the benefits system which may have a significant effect on carers.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Was the emergency respite care targeted at a specific subset of carers? *It tended to be carers who were providing the higher level of support but it was available to every carer.*
- Two carers were invited by the Chair to approach the committee. Louise Ravenscroft, a parent carer of two children with disabilities and Chair of Family Voice and Wendy Hackton parent of four children, two of which had disabilities and Secretary of Family Voice. They informed the Committee that the emergency respite scheme was in place for people who cared for someone over the age of 18 but wanted to know what was in place to support families with children. *John Richards informed them that the respite services for children and families were being reviewed and this had led to a rethink as to how the services would be provided in the future with regard to overnight residential care, link carers and community based respite services that were not overnight. Part of the review was to look at how a rapid response service to carers and young people could be developed so that it was part of the portfolio of services offered. There would be consultation with parents and young people about this and if found to be required would be part of the service from next year.*
- Louise Ravenscroft informed Members that it was sometimes difficult to identify carers as so many do not see themselves as carers but as a parent.
- Denise Radley advised that the term carer was much better known and used in this country but was not often easily translatable in some languages as the role of the carer was not recognised in some countries. It was a complex issue when trying to raise awareness.

ACTION AGREED

That the Committee:

1. Receive a progress report at a future meeting on the availability of breaks of more than 24 hours to support carers.
2. Receive a further progress report on the Carers' Strategy in one year's time.

8. Progress Report on Children's Service Development Plan

The Executive Director of Children's Services presented the report which detailed the progress made in addressing the recommendations made by Ofsted following their inspection of Safeguarding and Children in Care services. He advised that the full action plan requested at the last meeting would not be available until January 2011 as it was being presented to Government in December and therefore could not be presented to the Committee before then.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members felt that it was a positive report with significant progress. It was noted that the social worker vacancy rate was still improving and Members wanted to know if the target would still be achieved by March. *The Assistant Director of Safeguarding, Families and Communities responded that they were still on target and there had been a lot of recruitment activity.*
- When recruiting from other countries were the checks made equivalent to the Criminal Records Bureau Check in this country? *Checks were made but related to UK jurisdiction. Their employment history, carer or academic history would also be checked to ensure there were no gaps and a check made to ensure that they were the person they said they were.*
- Could a progress report on the escalated issues from the last report be brought to the next meeting? *Yes.*

ACTION AGREED

1. To note the progress made in addressing the recommendations made by Ofsted following their inspection of Safeguarding and Children in Care services; and
2. That the next report includes progress made on the escalated issues reported in August 2010, which were:
 - % Children subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time
 - % Children with Disability allocated to a worker; and
3. That the report includes the Full Action Plan.

9. Scrutiny Big Debate – Response to Issues Report

The report provided the Committee with a response to the issues raised at the Scrutiny Big Debate held on 4 February 2010 at Peterborough College of Adult Education which looked at how vulnerable adults and children were being supported. Members were satisfied with the responses but requested that when publishing the document on the internet that a link to the 'Living my Life' webpage on the NHS Peterborough website is provided within the document. Members concluded that officers had provided a comprehensive response to the issues raised and that no further action was required unless further issues were raised in response to the publication of the document on the website.

ACTION AGREED

That officers provide a link to the 'Living my Life' webpage so that it may be incorporated into the response to issues document prior to being published on the Peterborough City Council website.

10. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would be making over the next four months, was received.

Members noted that there was a key decision for the termination of the transitions service contract with the YMCA and wanted to know if the service was going out to tender for another provider. *Members were advised that this related to a service provided through a specific transitions grant from the Government. This grant had now ceased and therefore the contract had to cease. Transitions work continued even though the grant had stopped.* Members wanted to know if a transitions officer was still in place. *There was an 8 – 19 service where people continued to work on transitions in conjunction with parenting coordinators. There was also a transitions panel that meet regularly.*

ACTION AGREED

To note the latest version of the Forward Plan.

11. Work Programme

The Work Programme was considered for 2010/11.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11.

12. Date of Next Meeting

24 January 2011

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 9.00 pm