

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

21 JULY 2009

Present: Councillors Thacker MBE (Chairman), Wilkinson (Vice Chair) Allen, Lowndes, Saltmarsh and Khan

Also present: Cllr John Fox Representing the Leader of the Peterborough Independent Forum
Cllr W Trueman Representing the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Officers in Attendance: John Richards Executive Director, Children's Services
Maureen Phillips Assistant Director, Families and Communities
Denise Radley Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Paulina Ford Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer
Emma Black Head of Legal

1. Apologies

An apology had been received from Maggie Kirkbride.

2. Declarations

Cllr John Fox declared a personal interest in item 6 as he was a member of Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS) and Shop Mobility.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2009

The minutes of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 4 March 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. 16 to 18 year olds not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET)

The Assistant Director of Family and Communities presented a report on the rising numbers of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Peterborough. The report gave statistical data and an outline of the associated plans that have been put in place to reduce the number of NEET's in Peterborough. The reduction of young people who are NEET is a critical national indicator (NI117) in the Local Area Agreement.

The Young People's Service delivered connexions services within Peterborough to meet all the statutory responsibilities to young people. These included:

- A careers service
- Support and encouragement to enable participation in education or training
- Assessment of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to assist their transition into post 16 education and training opportunities
- A commitment to offer a suitable place in post 16 learning to all young people leaving compulsory education.

The report presented an accurate picture of performance against annual targets over the past three years and the current position as of June 2009 which was 10.1% against an annual target of 7.5%. This target was based on a planned reduction of 2% by 2010. The national average performance for this indicator at the end of May 2009 was 7.3% with Peterborough showing a figure of 9.7%.

Figures for NEET usually increased during August as young people left statutory education with numbers falling again through September and October as young people moved into education, training or work. Compared to the previous year NEET levels had started to rise in Peterborough from January 2009. Levels continued to rise above the expected rate for the time of the year indicating that meeting the target of 7.5% would be challenging.

It was widely recognised that young people from the following groups were at risk of becoming NEET:

- young people with learning difficulties and disabilities
- young people who are looked after/ care leavers
- young people who attended alternative provision pre 16
- young people who have been involved with the Youth Offending Service
- teenage mothers
- young people who have qualifications below level 2 (equivalent to below 5 GCSEs A-C).

The Committee were advised that the Young Peoples Service continued to focus resources on work to prevent education leavers becoming NEET and targeted resources to track and support those who were NEET to enable them to access suitable opportunities and provision. Work was being done with a range of services and organisations and there was also a wide range of new initiatives being planned.

A young person who had been a NEET attended the meeting as an expert witness to share her experiences and the services that had been offered to her. She explained that she had attended Marshfield's School and after leaving had been out of work for one year but now had a job. During the time she was out of work she had signed up to a programme call New Deal at the Job Centre and this programme gave people on benefits the help and support they needed to look for work. She had also undertaken voluntary work and became a young leader. She advised that she had been given a range of support and advice which eventually helped her to get employment.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- The Connexions Summer Group was a group of post 16 young people from Marshfield's School who had a day at the seaside, two days at Ferry Meadows and went kite flying. The activities had been funded by the Youth Bank.
- Officers were asked how they knew the ethnicity of the young people in the not known category. It was explained that generally the authority knew what the ethnicity of the not known category was because prior to them leaving school they had been in the system. However there were some that moved into the area and had not registered with any of the services.

- Officers needed to look at innovative ways of offering advice to ensure that there was a greater take up by the young people.
- For future reports, officers were asked to include actual numbers alongside percentages to aid clarity.
- How did we as an authority compare with our Family Benchmarking Group? Officers advised that this comparative data could be provided to the Committee.
- Officers were asked what could be done to improve the service provided? Plans were already being developed but some times children did not get the examination results they were expecting which meant they did not go on to do what they had originally planned. We are now engaging with Children's Services to see what more can be done for these children and we would like to see the Council creating more opportunities for training or employment for NEET's.
- It was noted that 509 children in Peterborough were NEET and that 64% of the NEET group were leaving education with qualifications below level 2. Why were we failing this number of children and what needed to be done to raise their level of attainment? Officers agreed that this level of performance was unacceptable. These young people needed a lot of support to become employable and to be able to engage with employers.
- The Council was the largest employer in Peterborough and we needed to establish a policy to give these children who are in care and most at risk direct help.
- There were 176 fewer young people in employment (both with and without training) than this time last year, reflecting the impact of the economic downturn. The Council should be taking the lead in helping these young people and engaging with other employers, including publicising those employers who are currently helping young people who are NEET.
- More resources and support in the community and with employers was needed.
- What is needed is more engagement about further education, training and employment within schools, at home with the family, with employers in Peterborough and from the Council.

ACTION AGREED

- (i) That the relevant Lead Officer keeps the Committee informed of the changing picture with regard to NI 117 - 16 to 18 year olds not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET) by regular bi monthly updates in the Scrutiny Bulletin.
- (ii) That the relevant Lead Officer provides information via the Scrutiny Bulletin on how we compare with other authorities in our benchmarking group with NI 117.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That it be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University and the Lead Officer:
 - (a) That a policy is developed which actively encourages the City Council to consider any job or training opportunities to young people who fall into the category of 16 to 18 year olds not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET). In particular the policy should look to support the groups of young people most at risk of becoming NEET:
 - Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities
 - Young people who are looked after/care leavers
 - Young people who attended alternative provision pre 16
 - Young people who have been involved with the Youth Offending Service
 - Teenage mothers

- (b) That as one of the main employers in Peterborough; Peterborough City Council should work to be recognised as leading the way in setting an example to other employers in employing young people who fall into the category of NEET.
- (ii) That an engagement strategy is developed to actively work with other employers across Peterborough to encourage them to employ or train young people who fall into the category of NEET. This strategy is to include publicising those employers who already help young people who fall in to this category.

The above recommendations are linked to the National Indicator 117 which is in the Local Area Agreement under the priority of Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities.

6. Services for Adults and Children with Disabilities

The Executive Director of Children's Services and Executive Director of Adult Social Services gave a presentation to the Committee setting out the position statement relating to adults and children's services for those with disabilities. The presentation highlighted some of the plans for those services and then proposed some scrutiny topics that the Committee may wish to look at in more detail. The areas identified for scrutiny would provide a great opportunity for members to get involved. Key areas highlighted to the Committee for possible scrutiny were:

Adults

- I. User-led organisations – "Putting People First". Peterborough had supported and funded the development of the Disability Forum which it was hoped would become the key user-led organisation for the city. The Committee could add value by examining progress to date and how the Forum could be most effective in its role.
- II. Self-directed support. It aimed to enable individuals to take control over their money or services and be creative in meeting their own needs. This had started to be implemented in January 2009 and scrutiny could evaluate the progress of the programme and provide challenge.
- III. Carers including young carers. A new local strategy for carers in Peterborough was about to be finalised. A new Carers' Partnership Board was in place and collaboration between the new Carers' Partnership Board and the Scrutiny Committee could be an exciting venture.
- IV. Disabled parents with disabled children. These families often had very complex needs. There was potential for difficulties between agencies working with the family (children's services, adult social care and health services) and potential for confusion over who provided what and how to get help. Scrutiny could undertake a focused piece of work looking at these families and service provision.

Children

- I. Parental satisfaction. Many children with moderate disabilities were not currently accessing services. The ability of children with disability and their families to access mainstream community and leisure facilities was also central to parental satisfaction. Parental engagement with elected members was therefore crucial to effective scrutiny of services.
- II. The development of the integrated service. The progress of this service was an ideal area for scrutiny.
- III. Supporting transition into adulthood. There was a considerable amount of work required to develop holistic services which supported young people into adulthood and independence. Scrutiny could play a part in ensuring that this approach worked.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- What services were provided for under 18 year old carers? Officers advised that unless a young carer was designated a child in need they did not receive any help. This was an area which did need attention through scrutiny. Peterborough Council of Voluntary Services (PCVS) was being strengthened and there was a Young Carers Strategy which was being strengthened and reviewed to ensure young carers received support.
- Young carers had some activities provided for them during school holidays but some of them did not have transport to get to these activities. This was an issue and was being looked at as part of an officer task and finish group.
- Would the public toilets which will have changing facilities for older disabled children in Cathedral Square be of the same standard as the Changing Places toilets? Officers confirmed that this was what was intended but the toilets would be located in St Peter's arcade and not Cathedral Square. As there was confusion about where the toilets would be located officers would provide clarification on their exact location.
- Services for adults seemed good however many departments were often involved with the same service user and this caused confusion and made it difficult to find out at what stage a case was.
- Why did it take so long to provide services for disabled people? Major adaptations did take longer and could be a significant number of weeks but smaller adaptations took less time.
- What support, guidance and services were provided to children with disabilities who had left school? Connexions followed these through but we needed to look at how pro-active we were at tracking transitional cases for people with disabilities.
- Officers were asked to explain what supported living was and what the direct payments processing time was for supported living. A piece of work had been commissioned to look into the process of direct payments for children and a report can be provided to the Committee at a future meeting. Information on the processing time for direct payments was not thought to be routinely collected and officers would ascertain if data could be provided outside of this meeting.
- There were a lot of group activities organised through summer schools for children but not for adults and this highlighted a gap in services for children going into adulthood. This could be looked at further by the committee if they chose to undertake a piece of work on supporting transition into adulthood.
- There were a lot of young people with disabilities with English not as their first language who did not receive any of the services offered because they had not been identified. At the invitation of the Chairman an expert witness from the newly formed Carers Partnership Board was asked to come forward and talk about the work of the Board. She advised that the Board had been looking at the Carers Strategy and had formed working groups to look at different aspects of the Strategy.

ACTION AGREED

Lead officer to provide information to the committee on supported living, direct payments and the processing time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That it be recommended that the following areas of work are to be scrutinised in depth and incorporated into the work programme of this committee:
 - (a) Carers including young carers – what services are provided and how are the council supporting them.
 - (b) Development of the integrated service – to ensure that children move seamlessly through the services.
 - (c) Supporting the transition of children with disabilities into adulthood.

That the Executive Director of Children's Services works with the Scrutiny Officer to identify how this work can be taken forward.

- (ii) That a report is commissioned to look at how many and what types of support groups are available for children and adults with disabilities. The report to also identify duplication of groups and how they could work effectively together to improve the support to children and adults with disabilities.
- (iii) That a report is commissioned to look at how young people with disabilities and also with English not as their first language are supported through the services provided for children with disabilities.

7. 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:

- (i) The lead officers provide an update and further information via the Scrutiny Bulletin on the Building Schools for the Future programme, including the milestones.
- (ii) The lead officer provides further information on the extensions to Woodston and Hampton Hargate Schools via the Scrutiny Bulletin.

8. Work Programme

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

ACTION AGREED

The Committee agreed to include the following items in the 2009/2010 work programme for the September meeting:

1. Education Standards – unvalidated exam results of all key stages
2. The results on the delivery through localities consultation
3. LAA Priority Performance report for Quarter 1

The Committee also requested that the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services attend the November meeting to give an update on their portfolios.

The meeting began at 7.05 and ended at 9.00pm

CHAIRMAN