

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

**16 MARCH 2010**

**Present:** Councillors Thacker MBE (Chairman), Wilkinson, Allen, Saltmarsh and Khan

**Also present** Maggie Kirkbride Parent Governor Representative  
Cllr John Fox Representing the Leader of the Peterborough  
Independent Forum  
Cllr Holdich Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University  
Cllr Scott Cabinet Member for Children's Services

**Officers in Attendance:** John Richards Executive Director, Children's Services  
Denise Radley Executive Director of Adult Social Services  
Brian Roberts Head of Learning & Opportunities for Children in Care  
Jansy Kelly Interim Service Manager for Children with Disabilities  
Katy Blessett Personal Adviser – Additional Needs  
Neil Maxwell Complaints Manager Children's Social Care  
Paulina Ford Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer  
Elaine Lewis Lawyer

**1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Lowndes.

**2. Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January and 19 January 2010**

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 January and 19 January 2010 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.

**Introduction from John Richards, Executive Director of Children's Services**

John Richards advised the Committee that Peterborough Children's Trust was undergoing an Ofsted Inspection which had started on 8 March and would be completed on 19 March the results of which would be brought to the Committee at a future meeting for scrutiny. John welcomed the lead inspector Paul D'Iverno who remained present throughout the meeting.

## **5. The Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care**

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced Brian Roberts the virtual Head for Children in Care and Chloé a young person in care who had helped to develop the Corporate Parenting Pledge for Children in Care. Chloe was one of seven children on the Children in Care Council which was a group of young people who discussed issues that affected children in care and organised events. The purpose of bringing the Pledge to Scrutiny was to ensure the Pledge was fit for purpose. Brian and Chloe spoke to the Committee about how the Pledge had been developed with young people, staff within Children's Services and Members. All seven children on the Children in Care Council had put their views forward as to what should be in the Pledge. The Pledge would be made simple so that children under the age of twelve would also be able to understand it.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members wanted to know what the promises within the Pledge meant in real terms. For example how many children above the age of 16 in care were offered work experience at Peterborough City Council?
- Officers responded that in reality not many children in care had been offered work experience at the Council. The Council had just signed up to a programme where children in care would be invited to take part in work experience and hopefully be offered apprenticeships starting in April 2010. Children in care and care leavers had special personal advisers who worked with them on their personal plans and 100% of care leavers had plans in place. The aim of the programme was to ensure that work experience places were made available to vulnerable young people.
- The Executive Director advised the Committee that future reports to Scrutiny would cover how the promises in the Pledge were being met including feedback from children and young people. The Children in Care Council would be strengthened and they would be able to engage with other children and young people about the Pledge and help them to understand what the Pledge was about. If children and young people in care did not believe that they were receiving the promises that had been made in the Pledge then they could either take up advocacy or make a complaint.
- Members wanted to know how they could be assured that the promises would be kept on a day to day basis and that the carers would sign up to the Pledge and follow the promises. The Officer advised that many of the promises were in Care Matters which was the guiding principles that were expected to be provided by the Local Authority. It would be monitored through the child care reviews and any advocacy that took place. The Executive Director advised the Committee that prior to the Ofsted inspection Ofsted had completed a survey of children in care and that this was something that should be done on an annual basis to ensure that the promises were being met.
- The Chair of the Committee requested that an update on the progress of the implementation of the Pledge be brought to the Committee in six months time.

### **ACTION AGREED**

- I. That the Executive Director for Children's Services puts in place an annual survey of young people and children in care in Peterborough to check that the promises that were made in the Pledge were being met. The results of the survey to be brought to Committee for scrutiny when completed.
- II. That the Executive Director for Children's Services brings to the Committee a progress report on the implementation of the Pledge in six months time.

## **6. Progress on the Relevant Portfolios for the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee**

The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services gave a progress report to the Committee on their respective portfolios.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services advised the Committee that a great deal of progress had been made on raising awareness of Corporate Parenting. The Pledge was almost complete and ready to be signed off and that the budget for the current fiscal year remained on target.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked which of the safeguarding targets were the most challenging. Members were advised that ones that were directly related to safeguarding issues were the most challenging.
- Members asked what had been the main challenges over the past year and achievements. Members were advised that Youth Offending and Youth services had been challenging. Children in care, which was a key responsibility, had a number of achievements, including the Pledge and progress with the Children's Trust and Safeguarding Board. The Cabinet Member also felt pride that she herself had taken part in a large number of events that involved children and young people.
- Members asked what plans were in place for the next financial year and was there anything that the Committee should be concerned about. Members were advised that due to the current financial environment all services would be looked at very carefully and if services were not being delivered it would be taken very seriously.
- The Executive Director for Children's Services advised the Committee that there had been a commitment not to reduce any spending in Children's Social Care. There would be less money spent on out of city placements and this would reduce the budget accordingly. The management structure was also being closely looked at with a view to streamlining it. Integrated services would also provide some savings. Preventative services were critical and would be the key to the future.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services assured the Committee that no decision about a child would be made on the basis of cost.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University advised the Committee that figures had improved for NEET's (16 to 18 year olds who were not in education, training or employment) and they were on target with comparative authorities. An executive panel had been set up to look at what skills were needed in Peterborough so that relevant training could be developed. The University had been officially opened. No schools were in special measures or causing concern and The Voyager School would be going into a Trust. External funding of £100K had been provided to help raise standards in schools. There would be a report on the 14 – 19 Agenda, diplomas next year.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members wanted to know what had contributed to the reduction in the NEET numbers. Members were advised that the Future Jobs Fund had helped to reduce numbers.
- Members asked what opportunities were being offered to young offenders. Members were advised that the Council was looking at offering work to young offenders. Officers from the Youth Offending team continued to directly market the young offenders to employers and 80% of them were now in education, employment or training.
- Members asked if the leaflet on raising aspirations had been completed. Members were advised that this had not been completed. The person assigned to do this work had been concentrating on taking exams but this had now finished and it would now be produced as a priority.
- In what areas is the Council going to be offering apprenticeships? Members were advised that it was anticipated that all service areas across the council would be included but with the impending cuts in government funding this might prove difficult in some services due to the possibility of job losses.

- Members asked the Cabinet member if he had achieved everything he had wanted to in his portfolio. He responded that it would be impossible to say that everything had been achieved but that incredible progress had been made over the year.

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the progress that had been made by the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services on their respective portfolios.

### **7. Development of Integrated Services including Transitions for Children with Disabilities**

The Executive Director for Children's Services introduced the report and explained that the report covered three areas which would be dealt with separately. He then introduced the officers and young people who had joined him to present the report - Katy Blesset from the Connexions Integrated Service Additional Needs Team who worked with young people with a statement of special educational needs between the ages of 13 to 25; two young people from Marshfield's School and Jansy Kelly, Interim Service Manager for Children with Disabilities.

The Executive Director advised the Committee that integration was still planned to take place later this year but had been put on hold because of the inspection. A critical path of the integration agenda was the integration of services for children with disabilities and a new Assistant Director, Nick Tzamarias, would be taking this agenda forward. Part of integration was about transitions and both the Director of Adult Social Services and Executive Director for Children's Services had agreed that there would be a transitions team within the integrated service so that children who were coming up to transition age were catered for. There had already been some really good work around transitions in Peterborough and a video was shown about a young girl with a disability who had gone through the transition from birth to adulthood and which showed how she had been supported through this transition to become a film animator. Children and young people in transition needed a personalised, person centred approach and this was what was being promoted with the integrated children with disabilities service.

#### **Services for Young People with Disabilities and English not as their first Language**

The Executive Director advised the Committee that appropriate language support to children and young people was secured through commissioned interpreting services. Professionals such as Teaching Assistants in the special and enhanced resource schools also offered expert help. There were challenges with children in residential provision who were disabled, could not speak and English would not be their first language. In these instances help came to them from elsewhere. Some families of children whose first language was not English had formed groups to support each other and other families. Whilst these groups were not exclusively for disabled children the groups provided an inclusive service. The provision of services for young people with disabilities and English not as their first Language was monitored carefully to ensure services were available to everyone.

#### **Support and Activities for Children and Young Adults with Disabilities during Holiday Periods**

The report highlighted a range of activities that were being provided to children and young people during holiday periods some of which were specifically targeted at children and young people with disabilities. The types of activities available for children and young people with disabilities were play schemes through special schools, extended day care and activities delivered through the short break and residential units and Link scheme. The disability sports programme delivered a full range of sporting opportunities and short breaks through the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme which provided holiday activities and groups.

Katy Blessett, Personal Advisor for Special Needs, advised the Committee about the 'Forever Summer' activity transition programme. The programme was designed to support young people transferring from other schools into the post 16 provision at Marshfields School and to ease their transition by gaining confidence and meeting other students also transferring to the post 16 provision. The programme was offered to everyone but there were only fifteen places available. Two post 16 students from Marshfields School spoke to the Committee about their experience on the 'Forever Summer' project. Katy asked the students questions:

- Q. What were you expecting when you attended the Forever Summer project?  
A. To be able to meet new people and make friends.  
Q. Was the week what you expected?  
A. It was much better than we expected and the activities were held in lots of different places.  
Q. What activities happened in your year?  
A. We went to a theme park, the beach, kite flying and had a barbeque on the last day. We also went swimming, bowling and did some drama. There was a visit to Wickstead Park and we did sports at Ferry meadows. The favourite activity was visiting the theme park.  
Q. Do you think it was a worthwhile project?  
A. It was a worthwhile project because we got to meet lots of new people who we were going to be in class with and that took the pressure of us when we started at the school. It was also good to do things that we had not done before.

The two students said that they would like to be young leaders on this year's project.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked the students if they would like to see any improvements at Marshfields School. Both students responded that there were no improvements required and that they were happy with the school's provision.
- Members asked officers what impact the IT issues between the PCT and the Council would have on the integration of the services. The Executive Director advised the Committee that the IT issues had not yet been resolved but it was being worked on and that it would be approximately 18 months before an IT platform would be in place. This would not affect the delivery of an integrated service.
- Members asked what would happen when the interim service manager left. The Committee were advised that this would become a permanent post and that the grade and responsibilities of the role were being reviewed through the Hay's panel. It would be a joint post between the Council and the Health Authority. The role would be advertised soon and someone recruited in June or July.
- Members asked what the implications would be as far as the management of the finances between the Council and the PCT. The Executive Director advised Members that the importance of the integration of services was about outcomes for children with disabilities. The overspend in the PCT was a concern but Children's Services already had resources in place. The Executive Director explained that he was in complex discussions with the PCT to ensure that children did not suffer because of the shortfall in finances.
- Members requested that a report be brought to the Committee on the financial implications for Children's Services of the integration of Services in particular those services for Children with Disabilities.

## **ACTION AGREED**

Members requested that a report be brought to the Committee in July 2010 on the financial implications on Children's Services of the integration of Services in particular those services for Children with Disabilities.

## 8. Children's (Social Care) Services Complaints Report

The Executive Director for Children's Services introduced the report and the Complaints Manager for Children's Social Care. The report covered complaints presented by or on behalf of children in need or children in care. In 2009 52 complaints had been received which was more than 2008 but similar to 2007. Parents and carers were the principle complainants representing 60% of the complainants and children only 4%. 16 complaints had been upheld and 4 were ongoing. Timeliness of resolving the complaints had not been impressive but would be improved significantly in 2010 and the majority of complaints had been resolved at stage one. Broken promises, missed appointments, conduct and attitude, lack of or misleading information and ineffective staff made up nearly half of the complaints and this demonstrated that children and young people were not being put at the centre of everything that was being done. A quarter of the complaints had been due to service standards or non provision of service. Learning from the complaints process was important and regular reports were provided from the Complaints Manager to other service managers to enable them to improve service delivery. Impact and outcomes were critical for the individuals concerned.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members asked how the Council's complaints process compared with other authorities. Members were advised that it was a standard process and governed by the statutory complaints process under the Children's Act 1989.
- Members asked what the difference was between the figure of 78 complaints listed in the nature of complaints table and the figure of 52 complaints which was listed as the number of total complaints. Members were advised that one complaint may be made up of a number of different elements and these were then logged separately but the initial complaint would still be logged as one complaint. The number of complaints had risen but the number of elements that people had complained about had gone down. There was no way of knowing if the correct level of complaints was being received. Numbers of children complaining without the help of adults was fairly low however the number of children accessing the advocacy service (75) had increased. 8 of these children had followed on to make a complaint. This might indicate that children's complaints were being resolved through the advocacy service.
- Ofsted had done a survey of children in care to see to what extent they knew that there was a complaints process. Some of the questions included in the survey were:
  - Do you know how to make a complaint to the Council? 64% of respondents said yes and 15% said no.
  - Have you ever made a complaint? 9% said yes and when asked if their complaint had been sorted out fairly 67% said yes.
  - Do you know how to get an advocate if you need one? 60% said yes.

This information from young people provided a platform to understand why children were or were not making complaints. The Executive Director felt that it should become an annual survey to help establish if a difference had been made in young people's understanding of how to make a complaint and if the complaints were being resolved satisfactorily.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Executive Director for Children's Services to put in place an annual survey of Children in Care to measure the impact of the complaints process for Children in Care. The outcomes of the survey to be reported to the Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee when available.

## 9. Progress Report on Delivery of the Local Area Agreement Priority

The Executive Director of Adult Social Services presented the report stating that the Local Area Agreement (LAA) priority Creating Opportunities, Tackling Inequalities for which the Committee was responsible for had the largest number of targets in the LAA which were very diverse. The overall rating at the time of the report was amber and of the four outcomes within the priority, three had been rated as amber. The indicators within the regenerating neighbourhood's outcome had been heavily affected by the economic situation and were rated as amber. The aim was to get the outcome to green by the end of the year. Improving skills was rated as amber and had a number of very challenging areas. Supporting vulnerable people was currently rated amber but there was confidence that it would be green by the end of the LAA three year programme. The outcome for improving health was rated as red and the risk areas included under 18 conceptions, alcohol related hospital admissions, sport participation, obesity and morality rates. Action plans had been put in place to address these areas but there was a high risk that the LAA targets may not be met. There was confidence that the smoking cessation target would be met this year. The reporting format for the LAA would be changing significantly to a one page format and would be much easier to read and understand.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members welcomed the new reporting format.
- Members asked why the under 18 conception rate was unachievable. Members were advised that the original target which had been determined by the Government had been minus 50% but this had been recognised as not being an achievable target. The target had now been removed and Peterborough was now allowed to set its own target. Across the statistical neighbours Peterborough was performing in the lower to middle quartile in terms of the number of teenage conceptions.
- Members asked what the SARC at Rivergate was. Members were advised that the SARC was a new Sexual Assault Referral Centre. Its services included contraception and sexual health advice. The Centre involved the police and other agencies and was the first of its kind in the region and provided a quality service for some very sensitive cases. It also offered the services of the CaSH (Contraceptive and Sexual Health) clinic.
- Members asked what involvement the Health Service had in the opening of licensed premises as they did not appear to play a part in highlighting the issues that arose from the opening of licensed premises. Members were advised that the alcohol agenda was joined up across the Council and the PCT. The agenda was led through the Safer Peterborough Partnership (SPP) and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board had a clear relationship with the SPP. There was a clear role for health in relation to licensing and this role was taken very seriously. There were models elsewhere where licensing policy was working better.
- A member of public advised that he was not happy with the level of under 18 teenage conception rates in Peterborough and asked why Cambridgeshire was performing better in this area. He was advised by the Executive Director that there was now a very clear understanding of why performance was not on track and Peterborough had also been directed to other authorities around the country to examine best practice and action plans were now in place. Cambridgeshire had not been one of the areas that they had been directed to.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Executive Director of Adult Social Services to report back to the Committee in June with the end of year performance report on the Creating Opportunities, Tackling Inequalities priority.

## **10. 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.

The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 9.05pm

CHAIRMAN