

**JOINT LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 JUNE 2013**

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Lifelong Learning and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Alyn & Deeside Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 11 June 2013

PRESENT: Councillor C.A. Ellis (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Amanda Bragg, Peter Curtis, Ian Dunbar, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Phil Lightfoot, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Hilary McGuill, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, David Wisinger

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch and Stephanie Williams

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Ray Hughes for David Williams

APOLOGIES: Councillors Adele Davies-Cooke, Hilary Isherwood, Colin Legg, Ian Roberts, Carole Burgess and Rebecca Stark

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Education, Cabinet Member for Social Services, Director of Lifelong Learning, Director of Community Services, Head of Children's Services, Learning Advisor for Children Looked After, Advisor for Social Inclusion and Well Being and Service Manager, Partnership, Development and Performance

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Nominations were sought for a Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor C.A. Ellis be nominated as Chairman for the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

The Chairman advised Members of the need to declare a personal interest in school related items on the agenda if they were school or college governors. All Members present except Councillors R.C. Bithell, A. Bragg, R. B. Lloyd, and P.R. Lightfoot (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 March 2013 were submitted.

Accuracy

Councillor D.I. Mackie asked that the minutes be amended to record his attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above the minutes be received and approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced the report to update members on the attainment of Looked After Children (LAC) in Flintshire for the academic year 2011-2012. He referred to the pupil outcomes in the Foundation Phase, and Key Stages 2, 3 and 4/5 which were detailed in the report and which provided comparative data for the Authority against the Wales average.

He introduced Mrs K. Wylde, Learning Advisor for Children Looked After, and Mr. D. Messum, Advisor for Social Inclusion and Well Being, to the meeting and invited them to give an overview of the attainment of Looked After Children.

The Learning Advisor for Children Looked After provided background information and advised that there had been a notable increase in the number of LAC within the Primary sector (Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2) in 2011/12. She explained that this was due to the work of the social work team where intervention and action was taken at a much earlier stage.

Referring to future progress the Learning Advisor for Children Looked After advised that joint partnership working with teachers and social workers was ongoing and a secondary school event which took place at the end of October 2012 had been well supported. A second joint partnership day with Primary Schools had been held to develop plans for 'catch up' and basis skills recovery. It was also anticipated that there would be a continuation of support for LAC from the School Effectiveness Grant to support basic skills.

The Learning Advisor for Children Looked After referred to the Pupil Premium Grant which was additional funding given to schools to support disadvantaged pupils. She advised that at the next Welsh Government (WG) All Wales Group meeting she would be requesting that the WG considered increasing the amount of the Pupil Premium in Wales so that it matched the level of funding provided to pupils in England. Councillor H.J. McGuill spoke in support of lobbying the WG to increase the amount of pupil premium for Wales.

The Head of Children's Services advised that Children's Services had published a document based on the 'Who does What' document that had been published by local authorities in England. She suggested sending a copy to the Facilitator so that it could be circulated to Members of both Committees.

Discussion took place around LAC who wished to progress to higher education and the Advisor for Social Inclusion and Well Being, referred to the impact this had on foster care placements. The Head of Children's Services confirmed that the Authority supported students through their University education but emphasised that LAC were not given preferential treatment, that there was an expectation of reasonable parental involvement and that students would pursue the option to take up the student loans and maintenance grants available. The Learning Advisor for Children Looked After cited an example of a

young person who was being supported financially by the Authority during his university course and who had also achieved a work placement within the Authority. The Chairman made reference to the awards given to young people who progressed to university education at the Annual Pride of Flintshire Awards event.

The Head of Children's Services advised that the Authority would be undertaking additional responsibilities in future concerning the care of young people on remand. She explained that this was due to the new responsibilities under the LASPO Act which commenced on 1 April 2013. Young people in this category would be afforded LAC status and eligibility for leaving care services in some circumstances.

Councillor H.J. McGuill asked if anger management courses were offered to young people. The Advisor for Social Inclusion and Well Being confirmed that there was provision for young people in Primary and Secondary schools and referrals could be made via the schools behaviour support team for all school pupils. Reference was also made to the work of the 'Time for Change' team and members were informed that youth workers provided anger management courses funded by Families First. He said that a multi agency approach was taken to addressing the issue. The Learning Advisor for Children Looked After explained that as part of the Looked After reviews individual anger management needs would be addressed if the issue was raised in schools. She also advised that there was a process specific to LAC to manage behaviour before it became an issue.

Mr D. Hytch commented that the attainment of young people was highly commendable and said that officers, schools and pupils should be congratulated. Councillor A.I. Dunbar reiterated these sentiments and referred to the work of social workers. Mr. Hytch referred to the increase in the number of LAC in the Primary sector and said there could be implications for resources in the future. He also expressed concern around the use of percentages given for cohorts so small and suggested consideration be given to providing data on the assessment of the individual child which might be more useful. He asked the Learning Advisor for Children Looked After if, as part of the child's individual assessment, a predicted outcome was given of their educational attainment. The Learning Advisor for Children Looked After responded that the child's level of attainment was identified through the presence of Cognitive Attainment Tests (CATS), however, she highlighted that LAC did not regularly achieve comparable results with their peers because of gaps in their education due to poor school attendance.

The Cabinet Member for Education referred to the information provided in the report on pupil outcomes and said that it would be useful if the data on the educational attainment of LAC in Flintshire was compared to that provided by other local authorities across Wales. The Chairman also suggested that comparative data on the educational attainment of children before they became LAC and how they had developed since in the Authority's care would be useful. In his response the Director of Lifelong Learning acknowledged the points made and agreed that comparative data could be produced where consistent information was available.

Councillor N.M. Matthews referred to the additional tasks undertaken by teaching staff for children in the Foundation Phase and KS1 and commented on the need for parental education. Officers advised that assistance was provided and referred to the use of social work planning and parental strategies.

Councillor C. Hinds highlighted the work of foster carers and said that their role should be commended. The Head of Children's Services referred to the support given to kinship carers and stated that the Authority had achieved the position of runner-up in the national award for Kinship Care supporter of the year.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the educational progress of Looked After Children in Flintshire be noted;
- (b) That the Committees support the proposals to seek the Welsh Government to increase the Pupil Premium to £900 as had been done in England; and
- (c) That Cabinet be asked to support recommendation (b) of the Committees.

5. YOUNG CARERS

The Director of Community Services introduced a report to update members on the range of services available in Flintshire to support Young Carers. He provided background information and explained that the services which were needed and were commissioned on a local level did not enable the Authority at present to embark on a joint commissioning arrangement with other North Wales Local Authorities. However, the Authority was confident that its current arrangements were delivering on the outcomes young carers required in Flintshire.

The Director of Community Services introduced Mrs. J. Evans, Service Manager, Partnership, Development and Performance, and invited her to give an overview of the definition of and responsibilities undertaken by a Young Carer. The Service Manager gave an outline of the range of tasks carried out by Young Carers and the impact that providing a caring role at a young age may have on the person's well-being and development in social, emotional, and educational terms. She explained that for some young carers the experience could be positive but only if the appropriate support was in place. She referred to the work of the Young Carers Subgroup which had responsibility for producing and implementing a multi-agency Young Carers Action Plan and gave an outline of the actions and developments planned to deliver the outcomes wanted for Young Carers in Flintshire.

The Chairman commented on the estimated 2500 young carers in Flintshire in 2001 as detailed in the report and asked if an update could be provided to give the current figure. The Service Manager said she would provide this information to members of the Committee following the meeting. The Head of Children's Services referred to the increase in the number of 5 to 8 year olds with caring responsibilities and said there was a need to examine in detail what aspects of care young children were undertaking. Members expressed concerns

that children as young as 5 to 8 were defined as Young Carers and were carrying out caring duties.

Councillor H.J. McGuill asked if training was provided to help Young Carers who were living with “chaotic” lifestyles. She also asked if funding was provided for activities for Young Carers to provide respite from their caring role and responsibilities. In her response to the question on training the Service Manager said she would pursue how this matter could be best addressed and provide information back to the Committee. Concerning funding for activities she commented on the commissioning of services from Barnardo’s to provide emotional support and fun and leisure activities. She emphasised the need to ensure that support was equitable and also helped the child to move forward. Further information on how funding was allocated would be provided after the meeting.

Councillor C. Hinds referred to situations where families refused to accept the help offered and asked if the Authority could intervene in such cases. The Head of Children’s Services advised that if a refusal to engage placed a child at harm the matter would progress to a child protection S47 investigation.

Councillor A. Bragg asked how children of a young age were identified as Young Carers. The Service Manager explained that a referral could be received from a number of sources and cited schools and children’s services as two examples.

Councillor H.J. McGuill asked what links were available to facilitate referrals from GPs. The Service Manager referred to NEWCIS and commented on the need to ensure that GPs recognised the needs of young carers as well as adult carers. She said she would feed back the concerns raised by Councillor Mc.Guill.

In response to a question from Councillor H.J. McGuill concerning sibling groups the Service Manager said that siblings would not be precluded and the whole group would be supported. The Service Manager advised that the Young Peoples Partnership were currently exploring how best to support Young Carers.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services advised that a Carers bill was currently being considered by the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED:

That the approach taken to support Young Carers in Flintshire be endorsed.

6. CORPORATE PARENTING ACTIVITY UPDATE

A presentation was provided to the Committee on the Access to Action (A2A) card with was being rolled out to all secondary schools in Flintshire. The presentation was written and performed by Young Carers. Members were informed that the A2A card was an ID card, produced to the specific needs of the young person, which when presented in a school or social services setting signalled that the young person had personal circumstances that may require extra support or further discussion. Schools which were involved in the initial

pilot had endorsed its benefits and would continue to use it and the young people who carried the card said that it gave them reassurance and increased their confidence. The card had been developed by Barnardos Young Carers and the Children's Services Participation Groups.

Councillor H.J. McGuill commented on the need to ensure that the A2A scheme was 'rolled out' to all relevant health professionals and suggested that it was placed on the agenda for discussion at practice managers forums. The Head of Children's Services advised that Phase 1 had been launched in secondary schools and was to be introduced in primary schools. The item was also on the agenda for consideration by the Children's Services Forum. She said she would ensure that parallel activity on the rollout was taking place.

Following the presentation the Head of Children's Services introduced a report to provide an update on activity surrounding the corporate parenting responsibilities of the County Council which were first set out in "Circles of Care: Corporate Parenting in Flintshire". She provided background information and referred to the update report on corporate parenting which was appended to the report and invited members to put forward any suggestions to promote corporate parenting in the Authority

The Chairman suggested that compulsory training should take place during a meeting of the Flintshire County Council when all Members would be present.

The Cabinet Member for Education emphasised the need for Members to demonstrate their commitment to their role and responsibilities as corporate parents. Councillor H.J. McGuill reiterated the sentiments.

Councillor V. Gay commented on the training provided to school governing bodies, which was to become compulsory in the future, and suggested that it may be helpful if a training module on corporate parenting was included in the programme

The Chairman referred to the impact of the new Court Timeframes which aimed to reduce delays in cases during proceedings to 26 weeks. She suggested that the Children's Services Forum be asked to write to the judicial officials concerning the proposed reduction in court waiting times and the impact this had on children's education.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current financial support offered to corporate parenting activity in Flintshire be endorsed;
- (b) That County Council be asked to consider making Corporate Parenting Training for Member compulsory;
- (c) That Corporate Parenting training be provided during a future County Council meeting; and

- (d) That the Children's Services Forum be asked to contact Judicial Officials regarding the need to improve future Court Timeframes.

7. **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There was one member of the press in attendance.

8. **DURATION OF MEETING**

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and finished at 3.40pm

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Chairman