

**JOINT EDUCATION & YOUTH AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4 JUNE 2015**

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 4 June 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Adele Davies-Cooke, Andy Dunbobbin, Carol Ellis, David Healey, Cindy Hinds, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Vicky Perfect, Mike Reece, Ian Smith, and Carolyn Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Janine Beggan, David Hytch, Rita Price and John Thelwell

APOLOGIES: Councillors Brian Lloyd and David Wisinger. Rebecca Stark. Cabinet Member for Education

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors Amanda Bragg (for Nancy Matthews) and Jim Falshaw (for Nigel Stele-Mortimer)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Social Services, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Social Services), Head of Inclusion Services, Senior Manager Children's Lead, Early Years and Family Support Manager, Advisor for Social Inclusion and Well Being, and Ann Noden, Manager Sensory Services.

ATTENDANCE:

Education and Youth and Community & Enterprise Facilitator and Committee Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

The Education & Youth Facilitator sought nominations for a Chair for the meeting.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Ian Roberts be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Marion Bateman declared a personal interest in the following item due to being a member of the Pupil Referral Unit Committee

Agenda Item 4a – Educational Attainment for Looked After Children

Councillor David Healey declared a personal interest in the following item as he was trustee of Home-Start Flintshire:-

Agenda Item 4 – Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding and Child Protection

Councillor Ian Roberts declared a personal interest in the following item due to his position as acting Head of a school which has a hearing impaired unit:-

Agenda Item 6 – Hearing Impairment for Adults and Children

3. CORPORATE PARENTING, SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced a report to provide an overview of activity and performance in relation to both corporate parenting and safeguarding/child protection. He introduced Vicky Allen, Senior Manager Children's Lead, and invited her to provide detail.

The Senior Manager Children's Lead, provided background information and referred to the key considerations which were detailed in the report around child protection, safeguarding, and corporate parenting.

The Chairman thanked the Senior Manager Children's Lead for her overview and invited members to raise questions.

Councillor Hilary McGuill raised a concern around safeguarding and child protection in relation to home schooled children. She referred to a Serious Case Review which was held in 2011 and asked what measures had been put in place to address the shortfalls that were identified as a result of the Review. In his response the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) explained that following the Review strenuous efforts had been made to achieve a change in the legislative position if families refused to have a home visit, however, to date there had been no change in the legislation. Responding to the further questions and concerns raised by Councillor McGuill the Chief Officer advised that the Authority did not have a right of access to a child who was being home schooled. During discussion Officers referred to the processes for raising concerns around the well being, safeguarding and protection of young people and work ongoing. It was suggested that the Committee may wish to make further representations to the Welsh Government to secure a change in the legislation. Councillor McGuill proposed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Joint Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee to set out the concerns raised by members and request a change in the current legislation. The proposal was seconded and when put to the vote was unanimously carried.

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to Members key role and responsibilities as Corporate Parents and emphasised the need for contact

with Looked After Children (LAC). The Chief Officer (Social Services) responded to the concerns expressed by Councillor Mackie and acknowledged the point made in relation to the Children's Services Forum and Annual Pride of Flintshire event. Councillor Carol Ellis proposed that the details of Members of the Children's Services Forum be included in future information packs provided to LAC so that they could contact Members directly if they had any concerns they wished to raise. She also asked that the Education and Youth and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees be notified when that action had been taken. Councillor Andy Dunbobbin commented that some Members were also School Governors and suggested that this contact information also be included in the pack provided to LAC. The proposal was seconded and when put to the vote was unanimously carried.

Councillor Hilary McGuill suggested that Members be invited to the 'speak out' events. The Senior Manager Children's Lead said that she would take this back to Gwenan Roberts as a suggestion.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the developments underway in relation to the discharge of the Local Authority's safeguarding duties be supported;
- (b) That the responsibilities of Members as Corporate Parents be acknowledged, and that Members continue to promote positive outcomes for children and young people;
- (c) That the Committee make representations to the Welsh Government seeking their support in changing the legislation with regard to 'no right of access on the doorstep' for children who are home schooled; and
- (d) That contact details of Members of the Children's Services Forum be included in future information packs given to Looked After Children.

4. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Head of Inclusion Services introduced a report to update on the attainment of Looked After Children (LAC) in Flintshire for the academic year 2013-14. She provided background information and gave a presentation on Looked After Children. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Summary of activity 2014/15
- Outcomes for 2013/14
- Out of County Placements
- Out of County Outcomes 2013/14
- Attendance and Exclusions
- National Strategy
- Operational
- Regional Strategy
- Developing a whole school approach

- Training
- Developing a school-to-school approach
- Individualised approach where necessary
- Monitoring of the regional plan

The Chairman thanked the Head of Inclusion Service for her detailed presentation and invited members to raise questions.

Councillor Hilary McGuill commented on the regional review of the use of the ONE database (Education) and its links to PARIS (Social Services) and asked for an update on progress. The Head of Inclusion Service responded to the concerns raised and reported on system development. She explained that there was not universal use across the region as yet but work was in progress.

Mr David Hytch queried whether young people were achieving any less than their potential and asked if there was some form of prediction against which children's potential could be measured. In her response the Head of Inclusion Services commented on the need for the Service to be confident that young people were achieving in line with its high expectation of them. She referred to the TRAC project and reported that this was a regional initiative across North Wales, where European Social Funding will be used to identify 11-24 year olds at risk of disengagement and provide resources to support young people to maintain their placements and achieve.

Councillor Cindy Hinds referred to the mental health difficulties experienced by some young people. The Head of Inclusion Service said the importance of supporting young people as early as possible was recognised and referred to the need for early intervention to support children in the Foundation Phase and Primary school.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin referred to the underlying social, emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by some young people which affected outcomes and commented there was insufficient data in the report to support this. The Head of Inclusion Service said that the difficulties were recognised and the Service was working with schools to support young people. She referred to the training provided around relationships society and family.

In response to the comments and questions raised by members the Head of Inclusion Service explained there were 150 LAC in Flintshire and only a small number were not in mainstream education. She advised that the education of LAC was a high priority and many initiatives had been instigated to improve outcomes. She explained that a group of professionals comprising representation from Children and Mental Health Support Service (CAMHS), Behaviour Support Service, schools, Children's Services, inclusion and the LAC Co-ordinator, oversaw the education of LAC. She also commented on the value of proposing that a Governor on each school Governing Body be given responsibility for LAC.

Councillor Carol Ellis sought clarification around the data provided in relation to attendance and exclusion statistics for LAC and asked how many children the 55 incidents of fixed term exclusions related to. The Head of Inclusion Service agreed to provide further details. During discussion the issue of exclusions and use of fixed term exclusions was raised by members and concerns expressed around the effect on carers of the young person. Members asked what arrangements were in place to ensure support for carers of the young person excluded. Officers referred to the range of strategies in place and commented on the preventative work and consideration of providing alternative accommodation to enable the young person to remain within a supervised and monitored environment whilst continuing to undertake school work. The Head of Inclusion Service emphasised that the Service advocated a no exclusion policy and that the priority was to work with the young person to prevent escalation of a problem.

The Chair commented that when a LAC was excluded there was a corporate responsibility for the time the child was excluded. He asked if there was any evidence that placements could breakdown due to the young person being excluded. The Chief Officer (Social Services) referred to the family placement scheme which provided support in such situations and the range of interventions to prevent placement breakdown. He added that the Authority currently had the highest number of Foster Care placements and recognised the importance of working jointly with schools to support carers.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin expressed the view that it was important that young people understood the reason for the exclusion and the consequences.

Councillor David Healey commented on the internal strategies which were used by schools to address the issue.

Councillor Carol Ellis asked how many breakdowns in care placements had occurred as a result of exclusions. She also asked that if a continued exclusion was used was the young person referred to CAMHS as a matter of urgency. The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) agreed to provide a briefing paper to Members from the Service Manager concerning any instances of placement breakdown which occurred as a result of repeat exclusions and submit a follow-up report on the matter to the Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

In response to Councillor Hilary McGuill's concerns on the number of exclusions over the year for LAC, the majority of which were from the Pupil Referral Unit, it was agreed that Officers would provide further detail to members on how many young people the number of instances related to.

Councillor Carol Ellis expressed concerns around use of the A2A card in schools and cited the example of a young carer who had experienced difficulty when she had presented the card in a school as the school concerned did not understand its purpose. The Head of Inclusion Service agreed to take the matter forward and raise awareness at the appropriate

school-related forums. The Chief Officer said he would speak to Councillor Ellis about the matter following the meeting.

Councillor Peter Curtis raised concerns around the number of abbreviations used throughout the report. The Chief Officer acknowledged the point and said his comments would be taken on board.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the work of the Looked After Children steering group and its continued role in having a positive impact upon the achievements of Looked After Children be supported;
- (b) That the remodelling of the Pupil Referral Unit be given added impetus to Looked After Children to achieve to the best of their ability;
- (c) That Looked After Children be given named mentors in every school to ensure that they are properly advised and guided on their education pathway, in line with the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework;
- (d) That every Looked After Children as well as having their Personal Education Plan, have a personal statement written about themselves be introduced throughout Flintshire schools;
- (e) That those children who have additional learning needs continue to access specialist support to help them reach their potential;
- (f) That the Social Services and Education & Youth Services continue to work collaboratively to further enhance and embed consistent approaches with regard to Looked After Children;
- (g) That Flintshire accesses funds that will be controlled by GwE to ensure positive and worthwhile training is given to all school staff;
- (h) That work to develop a database on a regional basis to reflect the needs and support provision required for all Looked After Children continues;
- (i) That the positive collaboration across Local Authorities continue to be encouraged so that cross border working and information sharing improves; and
- (j) That a briefing note be circulated to Members of both Committees, outlining whether there had been any breakdowns in care placements as a result of school exclusions, with a fuller report to be presented to both Committees in due course, if there was any indication that there had.

5. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES PARTNERSHIP AND FLYING START PROGRAMME

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced a report to provide an update on the work to support children and families provided by the Early Years and Family Support Service in Flintshire. He introduced Gail Bennett, Early Years and Family Support Manager, and invited her to give an overview.

The Early Years and Family Support Manager provided background information and advised that evidence indicated that intensive intervention in the early years could make a real difference to outcomes for children and their families in the longer term. She reported on the Flintshire Parenting Strategy, Family Information Service, the Quest Project, Y Teulu Cyfan (The Whole Family), Flintshire Community Parents, and Flying Start.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed the view that the achievement of children at pre-school, Foundation Phase and Primary school could be improved through the early intervention work making a difference to children's life chances. He said that the position should be looked at to see if anything could be done to induce an improvement from the outset in terms of early years education. The Early Years and Family Support Manager responded to the concerns raised and referred to work in progress and future developments.

During discussion officers responded to the comments and questions raised concerning the Quest project and Families First criteria and funding, and funding for Flying Start.

Councillor David Healey expressed concerns around the areas of deprivation which existed in rural communities which were missing out on benefit provision.

RESOLVED:

That the ongoing developments of the Early Years and Family Support Service be endorsed.

6. HEARING IMPAIRMENT FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced a report to provide information on the current provision of support to children and adults with a hearing impairment in Flintshire. He gave background information and referred to the services provided by the North Wales Deaf Association (NWDA) and the Deafness Support Network.

Councillor Hilary McGuill asked how often and when was children's hearing tested in school. The Manager, Sensory Services, advised that children were tested at the age of 7 and referred to the alert mechanisms and systems in place to support children who demonstrated hearing difficulties.

Councillor Cindy Hinds expressed concern that Flintshire residents had to travel to a specialist centre in Chester if they wished to take the opportunity to try a range of hearing equipment. The Chief Officer (Social Services) explained that the Centre offered additional equipment which was not available at the North East Wales Community Equipment Store but would make further enquiries on this matter. Councillor Hinds raised further concerns regarding not being able to visit different hospitals when issues arose with hearing aids. The Chief Officer (Social Services) suggested that this be raised with BCUHB when they next attended a Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.

RESOLVED

That the development of the service be endorsed.

7. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public in attendance

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 4.17pm)

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Chairman