

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
held on Tuesday, 13th December 2011 at 6.00 p.m. in the Scrutiny Meeting
Room, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors G. Green (Chairman), J. Greenaway, A. Mackenzie, C. Turley.
Co-optees, M. Ward.

Also Present: Cllr P. Watling, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People; Karen Perry, Head of Safeguarding; Clive Jones, Head of Family & Community Services; Jas Bedesha, Service Delivery Manager – Cohesion; Stephanie Jones, Interim Scrutiny Group Specialist; Tracy Clarke, Scrutiny Officer.

CYPSC-26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors K. Guy, M. Ion, J. Loveridge, Co-optees, S. Ali, S. Harris, A. Atkinson.

CYPSC-27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

CYPSC-28 FORWARD PLAN

- The Chairman reminded the Committee that the next meeting on 19th January would be the meeting with the Children in Care to discuss 16+ the transition into adulthood.
- The meeting in February would be to receive the feedback from the meeting with Children in Care and the information requested on the education of Children in Care.
- The Chairman informed the Committee that the Head of Safeguarding had advised that it would be better to have the full set of performance indicators verified and then brought to the meeting in April or May. This would enable Members to decide if there are any other indicators that need to be added to the monthly report.
- The Chairman asked the Members if they were in agreement that the Street Pastors Report and the Lighthouse Group should be added to the Forward Plan. Members agreed.
- Cllr Alan Mackenzie agreed to send the report from Carlisle on the Street Pastors to the Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion.

CYPSC- 29

RESOLVED – that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 and 2 of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CYPSC-30 CO-OPERATIVE YOUTH OFFER

The Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion presented the key points of the Co-operative Youth Offer to the Members.

- The Co-operative Youth Offer is a three tiered approach to providing provision for young people to ensure that the right provision, is delivered to the right young people, at the right time.
- The Service Delivery Manager highlighted that this would be developed alongside the early intervention model and the Co-operative Learning Communities.
- The first tier of the Co-operative Youth Offer would work co-operatively with the voluntary sector to develop open access or neighbourhood provision for young people, ensuring that staff are known figures in the community who are seen to be supporting young people through positive activities that enrich their personal and social experiences.
Qualified staff will provide mentoring and training to support young people to become volunteers and offer support for volunteers setting up groups offering youth provision, such as support for obtaining CRB checks, safeguarding policies and procedures and accessing funding opportunities.
- The second tier would be delivered by the detached youth and community workers who would aim for early intervention and prevention to divert potential vulnerable youngsters away from anti social behaviour, bullying or domestic violence thereby reducing the need for more intensive support from the safeguarding team. Where appropriate support would be given to group activities within school.
- The third tier would be delivered by targeted youth workers providing mentoring for young people who are identified as needing additional support of a specialised nature. This would involve identifying problems through targeted intervention, working with youngsters who are NEETS or those youngsters who are at risk of engaging in substance misuse, offending behaviour, homelessness or at risk of teenage pregnancy.
- The Co-operative Youth Offer would continue to work with established partnerships to support young people across all three tiers.

Members asked a number of questions and made further comments.

How are the council monitoring teenage pregnancies before and after the child is born?

Telford & Wrekin Council support teenage pregnancies but the strategy is held by the Primary Care Trust. The Council would continue to support the teenage mums through the delivery of the Bump 2 Baby Project. With regards to the monitoring of the numbers of teenage pregnancies in Telford & Wrekin these figures have

dropped. However, Members should remember that the data is not live but is 18 months old.

How do the groups interact with the young Moms?

The intervention team works closely to support the young mums regarding getting back into education and training.

How does the Council deal with teenage pregnancy in cases of sexual exploitation?

Normally in the majority of teenage pregnancy cases the father is a similar aged young person, rather than a pregnancy caused by exploitation. In cases of exploitation this would involve partnership working including working with the Police. The Cabinet Member added that the Teenage Pregnancy Service is still active and offers a more integrated approach through a partnership of the family nurse and specialist health visitor who considers the risks and actions with the appropriate support. The resources that are offered are good but will not necessarily be there in the future.

The Cabinet Member reminded Members that not all teenage parents are ineffective and need support.

How can Members be assured that the Academy Schools will be co-operative?

The Co-operative areas refers to areas rather than specific schools. With regards to the Academy Schools these do not have to cooperate with the Council but this is a provision that would be of value to them.

How will the Co-operative Youth Offer be approached? Have any working parties been set?

During the engagement sessions 4,000 people were contacted.

The Cabinet Member said there were four candidates for the Youth elections and thirteen Members of the Youth forum involved.

How do you engage with the Community?

The Cabinet Member discussed the benefits of the detached youth workers who are engaging with the young people and diverting them away from anti social behaviour in Madeley. The Cabinet Member explained that this benefits individuals, families and the whole community by reducing crime.

In the future the Council would be working with the Department of Works and Pensions as well as NEETS partners looking at pathways for training and work for young people.

The Cabinet Member said some ground work had begun with SMILE in Sutton Hill, this has helped in developing some good links with the young people.

The Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion said that to date 150 volunteers have been trained and supported.

How will the Community know how to become a volunteer?

The Cabinet Member explained that the Council has a vibrant voluntary youth service and that one aim would be to make it easier to set up more voluntary groups. The Council would seek to encourage young people to participate and engage in the community. Volunteers would be mentored with support for accessing CRB's and mentors would provide signposting to appropriate other services.

The Council are currently developing possible models with the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (Volunteer Centre) with a view to encouraging young volunteers to work with the Museum. The Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion said the only problem is that at the moment the young people need to be 17 years old but the intention is to work with the museum to provide support to see if this barrier can be overcome.

Members said it is important to ensure that the link is made between what the old people can do for the young people.

The Duke of Edinburgh scheme is only available through schools and colleges, will this be delivered by the co-operative youth offer?

This would be delivered as part of the Co-operative Youth Offer.

The other problem is that lots of youngsters think this is not for them.

Consideration would be given to how this is marketed and changing the youngsters perception of who the scheme is for.

How will the public know what Family Connect is?

Family Connect, the Councils single point of referral process. Currently work is taking place with partners to develop proposals which would be brought back to Scrutiny in the future.

Is the infrastructure there at the schools?

The Head of Safeguarding said there is good support from the voluntary sector and the developed policies are ready.

Has a full audit of the voluntary and youth provision been carried out?

There would be a dedicated worker and this would be carried out.

The Chairman asked if any thought had been given to ensuring that the town and parish councils worked in partnership to ensure that their funding was combined.

The Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion said the parish forums want to link in with the youth services.

Members raised that the parish forum is good but not all of the parishes are proactive.

Members raised their concerns that there are volunteers who do not know who to contact. There needs to be a first point of contact, for advice and information.

The Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion said his team would be engaging with the Parish and Town Councils.

The Members raised that when a problem occurs residents contact Councillors which is why the information needs to infiltrate down.

The Service Delivery Manager for Cohesion reminded Members that although this is part of the consultation any ideas that are taken after the consultation finishes would be considered.

The Head of Family & Community Services and the Head of Safeguarding presented an update on the Phase 2 Service Review to the Members. Members responded with some questions.

- Family Connect would be the main number to call for residents or partners to access support. The Triage support would filter the calls from 1st April 2012.
- Family & Community Services would be broken down into Early Intervention, Cohesion and Children's Specialist Services, Integrated planning & Placements & family Connect
- There will be three early intervention (EI) hubs responsible for delivering services to children aged 0 – 19 years old. 13 children centres will continue to work within these hubs, offering outreach support and suitable EI programme activities. The aim of the service would be provide an appropriate intervention to a presenting need. The recruitment of staff to the new structure and implementation of proposals will be completed by the end of March.
- The Cabinet Member said that the children's centre may not be useful for a Youth Club but there may be other options that are more suitable.
- The Cabinet Member said it was important to retain preventative measures and services.
- The cohesion team will be working with the most vulnerable children, young people and families across the Borough. Aims include strengthening families, raising aspirations and reducing child and family poverty.
- The revised Youth Offer will involve youth workers getting more involved in the community safety programme and also having some responsibility for finding solutions for homeless young people.
- Proposals for revising the work and role of our Youth Offending Service are being developed as part of a West Mercia wide offer. This offer will be launched later this year.
- Improvements are also being made to how children's services are commissioned, by widening the remit of the commissioning team. This will enable the team to use the expertise of commissioners.
- The incremental changes to the safeguarding team are following the Munro report which identified the needs of vulnerable children, Children in Care, and protection plans. The changes to the service would strengthen the link with the Head of Family Community Services.

- Following recommendations made in the Munro Report, funding would be provided for the post of senior social worker and the Social workers who were previously in two teams would now be in three teams.
- Fostering would consist of two teams, including a private fostering kinship team and a shared care respite team.

- **Members raised that in the past there had been difficulty securing and retaining experienced social workers.**

The Head of Safeguarding said that the Micro site would be launched to market what it is like to work as a social worker in Telford & Wrekin. A LEAN review process has also addressed the recruitment of staff to reduce the lead time of each stage in the recruitment process.

The Step into Social Work enables the team to attract new staff, train them. As an authority we have a good track record in retaining newly qualified staff, some of which have been promoted to Senior Social Workers.

- **Members asked if the restructure unsettles the social workers.**

The Cabinet Member said the restructure will stabilise the staffing structure by reducing the number of agency staff and the budget required for this.

- A discussion took place on the academy schools accountability for pupil attendance. The Head of Family & Community Services highlighted that the schools are more accountable and Ofsted will hold them to account if they fall below the required attendance level.
- The Cabinet Member said that the Council needs to work differently with families with complex needs. At the moment there is only intervention when there is a problem rather than from the start. A conference will be held in the Spring regarding how the development of Co-operative education within the Borough.
- **A Member asked what happens if a parent thinks that the child has a problem but cannot get a referral from the school to see the Educational Psychologist.**

The Head of Family & Community Services said this is why Family Connect will be so important. A parent would then be able to call Family Connect who will direct the call to the right area where appropriate advice and/or support could be given. The intention is to also have a self support website available so that members of the public, agencies, partners and practitioners can find solutions for simple problems allowing time for scarce resources to be used to provide more targeted support.

The Cabinet Member said a Family Connect model had been established in York and this is something that could work in Telford & Wrekin.

- **Members asked how schools would be able to access feedback from the children they have raised issues for.**

The Head of Family and Community Services explained that this is something that we will look at during the implementation phase for Family Connect.

The Officers were thanked for their presentation and left the meeting to allow the Committee time discuss their responses and recommendations.

Following the presentation Members felt strongly that Family Connect, and the single point of contact, is fundamental to the successful implementation of the restructure. The Committee therefore recommend that:

The service and the telephone number are promoted as widely as possible through partners, including schools, Town & Parish Councils, community centres, doctors' surgeries and publicised in Council publications, to reach the public as far as possible.

That a Members' Information Seminar is held to inform Members about the service and the telephone number.

Members were concerned that Family Connect has the capacity to deal with calls, and that the referral pathways are in place, when the service is launched. It is essential that the right resources are in place on day-one.

That youth volunteering schemes, such as the Ironbridge Gorge Volunteer Centre, are identified and promoted to young people to encourage them to get involved.

That the support package that is available to help people interested in setting up youth volunteer schemes is promoted as widely as possible in order to reach people who do not use services and may not be aware that they exist. The package should include advice and support on applications for and administration of grant funding.

Members were concerned that notes for children with special educational needs or children on the edge of care are not always transferred when the child moves school. The Committee recommend that these children are tracked through the IT system so that they do not fall through the net. This applies to children moving within the borough and children moving into Telford and Wrekin from other local authority areas.

Members were concerned that there is a robust communication process with all Town & Parish Councils and that this is incorporated within the role of designated officers in the neighbourhood teams. It was noted that not all Town & Parish Councils attend the Parish Forum and therefore communication via other routes needed to be embedded. Members felt that with better communication that the Town and Parish Councils could work in partnership to maximise the small funds they have available to make a difference to the young people.

RESOLVED- That the Scrutiny officer would draft and circulate the comments for approval by the Committee for submission to the Head of Safeguarding, School Improvement and Family & Community Services as the Children & Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee's response to the consultation.

The meeting ended at 8pm.

Chairman:

Date: