

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT  
ON TUESDAY 9TH FEBRUARY, 2010

Overview  
& Scrutiny



PRESENT: Councillor Hands (in the Chair)  
Councillor Gibson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Bradshaw, Byrne, Byrom, Cummins,  
Cuthbertson, Dodd, Hough, T Jones and  
Mrs. S. Cain (Parent Governor Representative)

**65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Father Seddon.

**66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was received:-

Member	Item	Reason	Action
Councillor Hands	Minute No. 71	Personal – by virtue of his Daughters employment as a Youth Worker for YMCA.	Took part in consideration of the item and voted thereon.

**67. MINUTES**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 21 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

**68. ANNUAL REPORT - DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

RESOLVED: That the report be deferred to the next Meeting of this Committee scheduled to take place on Tuesday 16 March 2010.

**69. UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN ARISING FROM LAST YEARS INSPECTION OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Strategic Director – Children Schools and Families. The presentation outlined Sefton’s readiness for inspection and drew upon the following preparation that was required for an Inspection:-

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- Fostering service to seek and take account of views of children in foster care reviews

Action:

- Consultation form developed by participation officer
- Children's views captured in main review report
- Audits of foster carer reviews and children's contribution

The presentation outlined the following recommendations advised by Ofsted and indicated if the recommendation had been addressed.

### Recommendations:

- Review systems for providing foster carer with health information **Complete**
- Review arrangements for consent to medical treatment **Complete**
- Review recruitment and selection procedures **Complete**
- Review practice for assessing home environments re avoidable hazards **Complete**
- Safe caring guidelines as specific to each family and child **Complete**
- Review procedures for payments to foster carers (allowances, expenses, prompt payments) **Incomplete**
- Regular health assessments for foster carers **Complete, delays from PCT and impact on budget**
- Foster Carers are trained to record significant life events **Partially complete**
- Foster carer's annual reviews to contain appraisal of training need. **Partially complete**
- Complaints to be clearly recorded on relevant files **Partially complete**

The presentation concluded with the following Service developments:

- Revised statement of purpose
- Kinship Care team
- Improved "Performance Planning"
- Draft Fostering Strategy 2010-2013
- Improved recruitment and retention
- New Panel proposals (Fostering, Adoption and Performance)
- Performance management

Members requested further clarification on how Officers envisaged to make the journey from an "adequate" rating to a "good" rating. It was reported that the service had already made significant improvements as referred to in recommendations above and it was also stated that the Fostering Strategy would address the recommendations agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) "Fostering Service Working Group".

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Members requested that the Draft Fostering Strategy be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) scheduled for 20 April 2010.

RESOLVED: That the draft Fostering Strategy and an update in relation to the Fostering Service be submitted to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) for 20 April 2010.

**70. NEW INSPECTION REGIME**

The Committee received a presentation from the Children's Social Care Director, which outlined the new inspection regime. It was reported that Ofsted would give ten days notice, that they would arrive with six inspectors interviewing in excess of two hundred people and that the inspection would last ten days. It was also reported that the inspections would be more intense and intrusive resulting in two judgements on the Departments overall effectiveness and its capacity to improve and the Department's Leadership and Management and quality of provision.

It was reported that the authority required a step change in culture in order to be inspection ready, emphasising that being self aware and self-assessing would enable the Department to make that culture change. It was reported that partners had already been briefed upon the new inspection regime..

Members requested that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be invited to the next Meeting of this Committee scheduled to take place on 16 March 2010 in order that a joined approach of tracking confidence of the organisation and highlighting risk, may take place. Members highlighted the importance of providing the right level of care for Looked After Children and emphasised the importance of this Committee in scrutinising the service provided by the Authority for the vulnerable group of Looked After Children.

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) the Children's Social Care Director be requested to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) at their next Meeting scheduled to take place on 16 March 2010, upon progress of the Departments readiness for inspection; and
- (2) the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be invited to attend the next Meeting of this Committee in order that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) may debate and Scrutinise the matter of the inspection regime further.

**71. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE YOUTH SERVICE  
(NORTH, MID AND SOUTH AREAS)**

The Committee received a verbal presentation in relation to strengths and weaknesses of the Youth Service from the Area Managers for the North, Mid and South of the Borough.

The Chair, Councillor Hands reported that information packs had previously been circulated to Members in relation to the Youth Service.

The following strengths and weaknesses for the North of the Borough were reported:-

**Strengths within the North:-**

- Regular meetings of partners and providers of service to young people to encourage integrated working take place.
- Highly visible International Focus to develop young peoples understanding of global issues and wider community.
- Active input by staff and young people on the appropriateness of the curriculum with each defined curriculum area having a professional youth worker lead, who produce sessions that other youth workers can adapt / modify to suit the needs of their group if & when required. Good links in all Projects & Programmes as well as Plans to Every Child Matters Outcomes.
- Strong Partnership working & relationships with a range of internal & external partners, appreciating the major cultural change, undertaken by Service to become more self – evaluative & outward looking.
- Partnership working has improved accessibility as well as publicity of opportunities and activities to young people.
- Well-structured Commissioning process that has widened & increased the number as well as range of partners. (e.g. working with Leisure Services for the 'Places to Go Things To Do' programme.
- Acquisition of 'Board Marker' for people with disabilities to communicate.
- Development and funding of media coverage to promote positive image of young people, including their contribution to their local communities, as well as the services of Sefton Youth Service.
- Adoption of 'Model for Participation' based on the 'Ladder of Participation' with representation of Voluntary & Statutory voice groups. This has opened up opportunities for a wider range of

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young people to be involved and contribute to the development & delivery of Youth Services.

- Accreditation & celebration of workforce & young peoples achievements, accredited & non-accredited, including team development.

### **Future Challenges/Developments:**

- Fully develop an area based integrated approach to youth services as some partners are unaware of the Integrated Youth Support Services.
- Better advertise the youth offer across Sefton.
- Improve 'youth voice' across all Sefton.
- Support Commissioned organizations to fully utilize the electronic monitoring system and to ensure regular returns of progress.
- Encourage a wider representation of young people on the media group to promote positive images of themselves and their peers.
- Refurbish buildings that are in a poor state of repair.

It was reported that the area had exceeded its expectations with the limited resources it has. However, in order to achieve the challenges/developments stated above and to meet the constant demands of others to work in other areas of the north then additional resources would be required.

The following strengths and challenges for the Mid Area of the Borough were reported:-

### **Strengths within the Mid Area:-**

- Enthusiastic and committed workforce.
- Skilled and knowledgeable workforce.
- Flexible work force able to generally respond to the wide variety of issues and expectations partners have of us.
- Developed effective partnership working that has enabled young people to have the opportunity to access a breadth of provision in a user - friendly environment.
- Clear line management structure.
- Strengthened service identity.

### **Future Developments/Challenges within the Mid Area**

- A need to increase the number of young people gaining accreditations within centre.
- Fully linking the work that is delivered to the youth service curriculum.
- A continued sharing of good practice across the area to enable all workers to understand what good practice is and to continue to raise quality of delivery.
- Fully imbed the inputting of EYS within area teams to develop accuracy in evidencing the work we deliver.
- While we respond to our partners expectations of us as positively as we can there is often a resource implication to this. To fully respond to area issues and new developments/trends and to fill gaps within geographical areas and respond to needs analysis an increase in staffing resource would be beneficial.
- Continued development of a closer working relationship between the youth service and the voluntary sector.

It was reported that the youth service aim is to create a world class workforce for children, young people and their families and have agreed that everyone who works with young people should, be:-

1. Ambitious for every young person;
2. Excellent in their practice;
3. Committed to partnership and integrated work; and
4. Respected and valued as individuals.

The following strengths and challenges for the South of the Borough were reported:-

### **Strengths within the South:-**

- Area based working/planning - Enabling movement of staff to support vacancies, sickness and annual leave.
- Youth Opportunities Funding (YOF) - All units submitted bids for YOF linked to targets within area/unit plan enabling Youth Voice and greater participation.
- Building Stock being address through youth voice.

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- Commissioning - Greater engagement and partnership working with the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. Wider accessibility to funding within the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. Specific pieces of work commissioned to enable the targeting and engagement of vulnerable groups linked to hard targets and outcomes.
- Development of accredited programme delivery - All units have targets for accreditation and all staff are accountable via bi monthly staff meetings. All Full Time staff participation in the development and delivery of area wide programmes.
- Quality Assurance - Clear and accountable line management chain Unit/Area communication within scheduled team meetings Supervision/Personal Development Review schedule/structure linked to training.  
Recorded visits – Peer inspections – Mystery Shopper – National Youth Agency (NYA) Quality Kite Mark.
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - Full time staff engaging with CAF and being identified by young people.

### **Future Challenges/Developments:-**

- Building Stock - Continued focus required to improve buildings and develop fit for purpose space. There aren't any Local Authority buildings in the south
- Continued focus on Recorded and Accredited engagement - South staff had sharp incline and in comparison to last years figures have done well however this focus needs to become ingrained in qualitative practice and delivery
- Staffing - Greater accountability and confidence building linked to role, responsibility and the management of staff. Staff development within a change culture.
- Capacity - Deployment of Resource linked to the delivery of universal services, targeting and engagement of the most vulnerable and responding to hot spots. Proactive – Reactive youth work/positive activities.
- Sharing/Pooling of knowledge Resources - Operational division between Local Authority and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector. Greater need for effective and ongoing transparent communication.
- Strengthen the Youth Voice in Units.

During the verbal presentation Members were given the opportunity to ask questions, share views and comment upon the content.

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Members referred to the structure chart within the information packs that had previously been circulated to them and raised concerns in relation to the staff vacancies for the post of "Worker In Charge" at the Birkdale and Formby Youth Centres.

Members asked "What Youth Services were provided for Looked After Children"?

It was reported that a Youth Worker had been seconded to the Social Care team and during the Christmas period 318 young people between the ages of 11 and 19 had taken part in activities and of those 318 young people, 174 were Looked After Children. It was also reported that the Youth Worker works on a one to one basis with Looked After Children and assists with their Personal Education Plans.

Members requested reassurances on how the services were safeguarded, the following safeguarding measures were reported:-

- Educational visits procedure was in place;
- System recording the location of each youth worker;
- Robust Health and Safety protocols;
- Acceptable behaviour contract; and
- Anti-bullying contract.

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) the three area Managers be thanked for their presentations; and
- (2) the Cabinet Member for Children's Services be requested to examine the staffing arrangements across the Youth Service specifically looking at "Worker In Charge" staff vacancies for the Borough with a view to the closure of Youth Centres being avoided.

**72. BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME -  
UPDATE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Further to Minute No. 59 of 21 January 2010, the Committee considered the joint report of the Strategic Director Children, Schools and Families and the Strategic Director Communities, which updated Members upon the financial implications of the Building Schools for the future programme.

RESOLVED: That the update detailing the project, financial implications and draft Communications and Engagement Strategy be supported.



**73. WORK PROGRAMME - KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN - 1  
FEBRUARY TO 31 MAY 2010**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which detailed the Committee's programme of work including the Key Decision Forward Plan containing all the Key Decisions which the Executive would take during the period 1 February to 31 May 2010. The Committee was advised of its right to pre-scrutinise any Key Decision which fell under its remit.

Councillor Cummins reported that the Corporate Parenting Working Group were drafting its Final Report and envisaged that it would be submitted to the next Meeting of this Committee scheduled to take place on Tuesday 16 March 2010.

The Chair, Councillor Hands reported that further dates would be scheduled into the diary for Youth Centre visits and he urged Members of the Committee to make every attempt to attend.

The Chair, Councillor Hands requested that the Committee receive a report from the Strategic Director, Children Schools and Families updating Members on the Action Plan arising from the inspection of the Youth Offending Team (YOT).

Members were informed that the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board had recently established a cross-cutting Working Group, to scrutinise health inequalities within the Borough, membership comprised of the four O&S Chairs and developments would be reported back to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Key Decision Forward Plan for the period 1 February to 31 May 2010 be accepted;
- (2) progress of the Corporate Parenting Working Group be supported;
- (3) progress in relation to the Youth Centre visits be accepted;
- (4) the Strategic Director, Children's Schools and Families be requested to submit a report to the next meeting of this Committee updating Members on the Action Plan arising from the inspection of the Youth Offending Team;
- (5) the establishment of a cross-cutting Working Group, to scrutinise health inequalities within the Borough, comprised of the four Overview and Scrutiny Chairs, be supported; and
- (6) Sefton's successful bid to become a Scrutiny Development Area, to assist in addressing health inequalities within the local community, be recognised.