

## **Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

### **Corporate Parent Working Group**

**Meeting:** 17 October 2011

**Present:** Cllrs Stewart, Richardson, MacKnight and Bell.

**Also in attendance:** Sheila Lough (Assistant Locality Manager), Angela Noble (Day Centre Support Worker), Steve Fletcher (Acting Manager Looked After and Disabled Children), Phil Taylor (Residential Service Manager) and Janet Murray (Assistant Headteacher).

#### **Notes:**

##### *Looked After Children 2011 Attainment*

It was highlighted to the group that the information around LAC's attainment related to what were relatively small and diverse cohorts.

It was also reported that the longer the child was in care the greater the achievement and that those in care achieved the best results and the data from Children's Services supported this statement.

##### *Key Stage 1*

This is a small cohort of 7 children who are achieving broadly in line with other children. It should be noted that 1 child represented 14% of the cohort so although the maths result is significantly lower than the Sunderland performance, had 1 more child achieved level 2 then 86% would have achieved level 2 – higher than the Sunderland performance.

##### *Key Stage 2*

Again a very small cohort of 12 children with each child representing 8% of the cohort. 2 of the cohort (16%) had statements, 4 (25%) were at school action plus. Of the 7 children who didn't achieve level 4+ in English, 4 made 2 levels of progress. Similarly of the 9 pupils who didn't achieve level 4+ in maths, 5 made 2 levels of progress.

##### *Key Stage 4*

The cohort size was 29 pupils. It was reported that of the cohort 9 (32%) were statemented and 7 (25%) attended special schools compared to 3% statemented in Year 11 Sunderland cohort and 2% in special schools. A further 8 (29%) had special needs assessed at School Action Plus compared to 8% in year 11 Sunderland cohort.

On the whole it was noted that LAC were performing well in relation to their ability and circumstances. The key issue is that young people moving into the care system do very well, the earlier the intervention the better the support and outcomes. The care and adoptive system provides stability for a young person.

## *Looked After Children – Corporate Parent*

LAC tend to be in foster placements longer than in a Children's Home.

It was noted that young people entering the looked after system do very well, largely due to the higher levels of stability, and it would be a cause for concern if their performance deteriorated. It was also noted that the earlier the intervention the better the outcome for the young person.

Members enquired about how we prepare young people for leaving the care system and it was reported that this was facilitated by the Council's Leaving Care Team. Members of the Committee agreed to invite the Leaving Care Team to attend a future meeting of this working group.

It was noted that there were tensions between leaving the care system and independent living. Many young people become accustomed to the 'hurly burly' of living in a home and find it difficult to adjust to the stark contrast of living on their own, the isolation and loneliness.

There are transition arrangements in place and a significant amount of work is done between Children's Services and HHAS to ensure young people can settle into this new part of their life.

It was also highlighted that all young people within the looked after care system were actively encouraged to achieve their own potential. The care service offers the support and means to change young peoples expectations or disadvantages of being in the system.

An example of this is that LAC have the opportunity to meet similar LAC who have gone on to university. Such meetings allow young people to talk with other young people who have had similar experiences to themselves and often can inspire them to achieve.

Within the care system there is endeavour to create a culture of good behaviour and positive school attendance. For young people entering the care system this begins immediately and care/foster workers are very proactive in encouraging positive behaviour and attendance at school with often very challenging young people. This is achieved by responding immediately to any issues through a persistent and consistent approach.

In relation to study environments in homes it was noted that there was a degree of flexibility working with young people and the environment and tools required were available. It was also noted that schools are a good source of resources for students too.

Members of the Committee thanked the various officers for their time and cooperation and felt the session had been very useful in gaining a further understanding of the role the local authority plays as a corporate parent.