

POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW 2011/12: PROGRESS REPORT

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress in relation to the policy review, and related working groups, being undertaken by the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee around Early Intervention, Teenage Pregnancy and the Corporate Parent.

2. Background

- 2.1 Initial scoping documents were presented to the Committee on 21st July 2011 which set out proposed terms of reference for the review. At its meeting on 8th September 2011, the Committee considered a scene setting report for the review.
- 2.2 The Committee also established two working groups around teenage pregnancy and the Corporate Parent respectively. While these are separate pieces of work, it is acknowledged that there are strands to this research which will feed into the main policy review and provide some useful evidence.

3. As Soon As Possible: Early Intervention and Locality Services in Sunderland – Policy Review Update

- 3.1 A visit to the Rainbow Centre in Washington took place on Friday 7 November. The main purpose of this visit was to allow Members the opportunity to see firsthand the work undertaken in a local Children's Centre and discuss some of the key themes around early intervention with centre staff. The key points from this visit were as follows:
- The centre has around 40 active volunteers with the aim being to help these volunteers learn new skills and increase their own employability;
 - All activities at the centre have comments books and this provides the centre with valuable feedback and leads to developments, improvements and the tailoring of services to meet the needs and demands of the service users;
 - The centre runs a number of services including preparing for baby, counselling skills, bosom buddies, debt advice, postnatal clinics, smoking cessation and work clubs;
 - The centre through its activities and groups has created a strong outcome for families and individuals through the creation of a social network which offers support outside of the children's centre. This also helps the centre by creating a strong sense of belonging;
 - The centre can offer early support to individuals and families through the CAF Panel and ensure that support is in place at the right time for the right families;

- The Children's Centres use a lot of analysis of data to tailor services in house with the key aim and driver being prevention;
- The Children's Centres are a vehicle for early intervention with support workers in the centres being able to get CAF referrals for individuals and families where issues have been identified;
- The building of relationships and social networks within the centre's and outside of them are a real driver for early intervention measures and multi-agency support being identified and implemented at an early stage;
- The Children's Centres highlighted the importance of making targeted work invisible. Often particular socio-economic groups are targeted, unknown to anyone else, for courses/schemes yet there is also an open invite provided to the wider community which helps to mask the targeted approach, and;
- It was noted that fathers are also a major target group for Children's Centres and successful Dads and Kids groups along with twilight sessions have proved very popular in making them more accessible to fathers.

4. Teenage Pregnancy – Working Group Update

4.1 The first focus group took place on Friday 7 November with Simone Common, Service Manager for Risk and Resilience, and Lorraine Hughes, Children's Commissioning Lead / Acting Health and Wellbeing Lead for Children. The purpose of this initial meeting was to provide background information and set the scene. The key points from this meeting were as follows:

- Education in schools is extremely important and ensuring that young people have good access to SRE (Sex and Relationship Education) in schools;
- In the annual health survey it was highlighted that young people do not feel that they have good access to SRE courses;
- Sunderland City Council has developed a new core offer for SRE in schools, which provides Universal and Targeted offers for schools;
- One of the major challenges in terms of teenage pregnancy rates is to get young people to use contraception, the majority are aware of where to get contraception but the issue is around actual usage;
- The C-Card Scheme has been recently introduced and this will provide data and intelligence around the distribution and demographic of young people accessing contraception in the city;
- There are still a higher proportion of young people who are NOT sexual active compared to those who are;
- Research around terminations indicates that a higher percentage of young women with higher aspirations will be those that terminate the pregnancy;

- The national context has the potential to be a major influence through a lack of opportunities and a fall in aspirations of young people leading to a rise in pregnancies, and;
- It should not be forgotten that some young people make very good parents, however in general terms the outcomes for teenage pregnancies are very poor.

5. The Corporate Parent – Working Group Update

- 5.1 The first working group meeting has been arranged for 17 October 2011 to begin investigations into the Council's role as a Corporate Parent. A number of key officers have been invited to attend and a further update will be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

6. Expert Jury Day Event

- 6.1 To support evidence gathering for this year's policy review it is the intention to hold an expert jury event on Thursday 22nd December 2011. The Expert Jury is designed to allow Members to question internal staff, service providers and key stakeholders in addition to the opportunities presented at Committees and through further evidence gathering processes.
- 6.2 A further report will be submitted to the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee's December meeting. This additional report will outline in detail the event and provide details around the timetable, witnesses and arrangements for the day.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 A further evidence gathering day has been arranged for Wednesday 2nd November 2011. The morning session will look at following on the initial focus group around teenage pregnancy with a site visit to the Bumps to Babies group in Hendon and a supported housing project for teenage mothers at Lewis Crescent. The afternoon will involve a visit to one of the city's locality based area teams which will contribute towards the work around early intervention. **Appendix 1** shows the timetable for the policy review.
- 7.2 In relation to the Expert Jury Day, if Members have any suggestions over witnesses or organisations they would like to be represented at this event please forward to the Scrutiny Officer as soon as possible.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the Committee notes the progress made in relation to the policy review into early intervention.
- 8.2 That the Committee notes the future evidence gathering activities arranged as part of the review process.