

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

POLICY REVIEW UPDATE

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

23 FEBRUARY 2012

1. Purpose of the Report

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

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 potentially provide some evidence.

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

- 3.1 At the last meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January 2012 Members received a report that provided an overview on the proposed Early Intervention Core Offer and the next steps in developing and promoting this Core Offer.
- 3.2 Members will be aware from much of the evidenced already gathered that there are 5 Locality Based Integrated Teams that form the Early Intervention and Locality Services group, which came into being in autumn 2011. The teams currently include practitioners from Attendance, Children's Centres, Connexions, Educational Psychology, Risk and Resilience (Teenage Pregnancy, Substance Misuse and Crime Prevention) and Youth Development.
- 3.3 The Core Offer for Early Intervention is delivered through the CAF/TAC/TAF system which is led by Early Intervention and Locality Services but facilitates the active involvement of, and swift and easy

access to, a range of services at the universal, targeted and specialist levels and across the age ranges.

- 3.4 The importance of the communication of the Early Intervention Core Offer and the locality based working model was recognised as well as the need for a comprehensive re-launch of Early Intervention and CAF before Easter 2012. This was primarily to work with a range of partners, particularly those within Health and the voluntary and community sector, to bring more services into the “CAF family” and thus continue to extend the scope of the Early Intervention Offer.
- 3.5 The recent peer challenge exercise had also highlighted the need to gain more active involvement of partners in the use of CAF as an assessment tool and in the TAC/TAF process.
- 3.6 Members also requested further expansion on the outcome star measuring tool in an anonymised real life example which could further illustrate how this tool measures outcomes.
- 3.7 Councillor Philip Tye has also been invited to attend this meeting, at the request of the committee, to discuss his own experiences in relation to the use of the CAF process.

4. Teenage Pregnancy Working Group

- 4.1 The working group was established by the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee to look at teenage pregnancy within Sunderland, although not the committee’s major piece of work for the year Members still felt it was important to look at the issue. Members have met on a number of occasions to explore this issue and look at some of the work being done in Sunderland around teenage pregnancies.
- 4.2 Members will recall that evidence gathering sessions were held with key officers including the Children’s Services Risk and Resilience Officer and the Children’s Commissioning Lead Officer to discuss issues around teenage pregnancy and the work and strategies that were currently being used. Members also visited the Hendon Bumps to Babies Project to talk with some young mums about their experiences. Some of the main findings from these sessions were as follows:
 - During the past 10 years through research conducted Central Government has gained an understanding of the issue and shared their findings of good practice. The Sure Start scheme is one such example and this has made an impact on the rates of secondary pregnancies.
 - The annually conducted health survey highlighted that young people did not feel that they had good access to SRE courses. In

responding to this Sunderland have developed a new core offer for SRE in schools, which provides a number of packages suitable for schools.

- SRE worked very well in schools where PHSE was well established as a second curriculum.
- The working group noted that schools often see this as a post-school issue.
- One of the major challenges was getting young people to use contraception. It was highlighted that the majority of young people knew where to get condoms etc, but the issue was more one of usage.
- The recently introduced C-Card Scheme, an electronic scheme for the distribution of condoms to young people across the city, provides the tool to extract data and intelligence around the distribution and demographic of young people accessing contraception on the scheme.
- Rolling out this scheme to Gateshead and South Tyneside would have huge benefits in increasing the data available as well as identifying young people crossing boundaries and accessing services in another locality.
- It was recognised that there was still a higher proportion of young people who were NOT sexually active compared to those who were.
- There was also a high correlation between children coming from teenage pregnancies and becoming teenage parents themselves.
- Research around terminations indicated that a higher percentage of young women with higher aspirations would be those most likely to terminate their pregnancy. There was also a trend among some young women of having a termination procedure and then falling pregnant again and repeating the cycle.
- In Sunderland there were no particular standout schools that had a major issue with teenage pregnancy.
- Hotspots within the city were identified as Hendon, Redhill and Millfield, similarities were also evident in the 20% most deprived wards in the city. There was also a high percentage of young mums who were categorised as NEET.
- The majority of teenage pregnancies were unplanned.
- Early intervention work was now being piloted in primary schools.

- The national context was a real concern with factors including a lack of opportunities and a fall in aspirations for many young people could potentially lead to a rise in teenage pregnancies.
- Some young people make very good parents and this should not be ignored. However, in general terms the outcomes for teenage pregnancies were very poor.
- Bumps to Babies works closely with young parents (upto 20 years of age) offering advice and support on a range of issues that they are faced with, including parenting, benefits, health issues around themselves and their children, isolation, financial entitlements dependant on the individual circumstances, childcare, low self-esteem/confidence, housing and access to further education or training opportunities.
- Young mums liked attending B2B due to factors including a sense of continuity that allowed them to build up relationships with staff. The young mums also stated that they were able to share/talk about issues that they wouldn't necessarily do at home or at a Children's Centre.
- One young mum, who had an 8 month old baby spoke of her own experiences and explained that she had decided to attend B2B after the birth of her child following a word of mouth recommendation from a friend. She also knew 2 other young mums who would be attending so would prefer to come along with them. She was enjoying doing 2 full days on the Connect Course, and half a day on hairdressing and half a day on the cookery course.

4.3 Members also noted that there were no real patterns or trends in teenage pregnancy data. It was difficult to predict what really worked and why, analysis of local authority performance shed little light on this with councils performing well one year and then under-performing the next year.

4.4. Members acknowledged that there was some good work being undertaken within Sunderland and the Bumps to Babies Project in Hendon was an example of support available to young mums in the area. Initiatives like the C-Card and the SRE offer to schools are very positive can ensure that young people have all the information at hand to ensure that they make informed choices particularly in their decisions in regards to sexual relationships.

5. Corporate Parent Working Group

5.1 The Committee also established a working group to look at a number of issues related to looked after children and the corporate parent role.

Again this was not the committee's main piece of work for the year but Members felt it was an important issue for the committee to look at. Members of the working group have met on a number of occasions to look at a variety of issues associated with the corporate parent role in Sunderland.

5.2 The working group investigated a number of aspects surrounding the corporate parent role including looked after children's (LAC) attainment, the care system and the leaving care service. Some of the key points arising from this piece of work were as follows:

- LAC's attainment related to relatively small and diverse cohorts.
- The longer a child was in care the greater the achievement and that those in care achieved better results and this was corroborated by Children's Services data.
- LAC were performing well in relation to their ability and circumstances, with the key issue being 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 that stability for a young person.
- 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 people's expectations or disadvantages of being in the system.
- LAC have the opportunity to meet similar LAC who have gone on to university or employment, these 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 an 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.
- For some young people and carers there is an awful lot of anxiety surrounding their transfer from care to independent living, this is mainly due to what the name 'transfer' implies and as a response many feel that they will be forced to leave care before they are ready.
- Every young person leaving care has a Pathway Plan which they have full ownership of in consultation with other significant people in that young person's life, the plan is reviewed on a 6 monthly basis.

- Income maintenance is available to 16/17 year olds living independently and NEET or where a training allowance is not paid. A leaving care grant of £1400 is available to set up home and buy essential items to live independently e.g. TV licence, electrical goods, bedding and kitchen utensils etc.
- The LA has 7 supported lodgings across the city with 9 available places. These supported lodgings are £124 a week bed and board with limited support, for the right young people.
- There is also a 6 bed supported accommodation unit at Burlington Close which has 24 hour support and is used for the more vulnerable or at risk young people leaving care.
- The LA also has 14 trainer flats which are made available by Gentoo and help young people to adjust to independent living and are supported by staff from the Burlington Close unit.
- There are also regional supported accommodation providers which are funded by Supporting People and means that there is a variety of accommodation provision to meet the needs of all young people leaving the LA's care.
- The Leaving Care Team also works with a number of other agencies including Connexions Service, YDAP (Youth, Drug and Alcohol Project), Accommodation Project Links with Child and Family Psychiatry and Young Parents Project.
- It was very rare for a young person to be accommodated in a B&B because there is no alternative. This only really happens in an unplanned way, if everyone follows the pathway plan there should be no real or unforeseen issues.

5.3 Members have conducted another light touch review around the corporate parent role and have gathered reassurances in terms of the areas looked at.

5.4 The committee wherever possible looks to gather the views of appropriate young people to add to the evidence base of any review undertaken. This can be highlighted by the visit to Hendon Bumps to Babies this year and previous visits to Sunderland Itec and Springboard to talk with young apprentices and learners as well as Connexions where Members talked with young people who were not in employment, training or education. However in looking to strengthen the committee's links with young people we are in conversation with the Change Council (Children in Care Council) to see how both the scrutiny committee and the Change Council can benefit from greater links and interaction. Their views would be particularly relevant to the work undertaken around the Corporate Parent.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 A visit to the XL Youth Village Project is to take place on Friday 17 February 2012 and will visit a number of youth projects taking place across the city. This will provide the committee with the opportunity to see how this plays into the early intervention agenda through speaking with youth workers and young people at the various locations.
- 6.2 A visit to Durham County Council has been arranged for Thursday 1st March 2012 at 1pm to discuss their approach to early intervention and look at how a neighbouring authority measures outcomes.
- 6.3 It is suggested that the committee holds an additional meeting in March to reflect on the evidence collected and look at initial recommendations for the policy review.
- 6.4 That at this additional meeting of the committee members also discuss progress and conclusions arising from the two working groups around teenage pregnancy and the corporate parent respectively.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Committee notes the progress made in relation to the policy review into early intervention including future evidence gathering activities as part of the review process.
- 7.2 That the Committee gives consideration to an additional meeting in March to discuss and reflect on the evidence gathered as part of the policy review into early intervention.

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