

At a meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Bell, P. Dixon, Gofton, Kelly, Paul Maddison, Morrissey, Oliver, Snowdon and L. Walton, together with Mrs. P. Burn, Mrs. D. Butler, Professor G. Holmes, Mrs. C. Hutchinson, Mr. S. Laverick and Mr. D. Snowdon

Also Present:-

Councillor Tate – Chairman of Policy and Co-ordination

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor D. Wilson together with those from Mr. M. Frank and Mr. A. Pearce.

Minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Committee held on 4th December, 2008 and the extraordinary meeting held on 12th December, 2008

1. RESOLVED that:
 - i) the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 4th December, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
 - ii) the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 12th December, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of an apology from Mrs. P. Burn.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Pupil Referral Unit

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced Angela Noble, Head Teacher of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) who was present to provide Members with a progress report in relation to the PRU action plan and the re-visioning of the Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 provision.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Noble, together with Lynda Brown, Head of Standards, provided Members with a detailed presentation which highlighted:-

- i) The current position of the Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 PRUs at Carley Hill, Tudor Grove and the Cheadle Centre respectively.
- ii) The 'Back on Track' Vision, i.e.
 - 1. early and effectively intervention to address issues before they reach crisis point supported by local authorities.
 - 2. Schools to use the Common Assessment Framework to identify pupils' individual needs and support the planning of services to meet them.
 - 3. an expectation that schools develop more in-school alternatives to exclusion, ranging from a more engaging curriculum to Learning Support Units, which could be on-site or at a neighbouring school.
 - 4. partnerships to enable "swift and easy access" to any specialist support services that may be needed to meet a child's particular needs including any support that the family may require.
 - 5. this would include access to the core offer of extended services and support from other services, in particular health, social care, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and youth justice and wider youth services.
 - 6. schools to work closely with parents to identify problems and tackle them before they lead to a child becoming at risk of exclusion.
 - 7. Schools to be able to turn to local Pupil Referral Units or to special schools for specialist help in tackling pupils' personal, behavioural and learning needs. This early and appropriate intervention may mean that more children come into contact with alternative provision, but for less time and without the need for exclusion.
- iii) The proposed three tier support to schools:

- tier one – out reach (in Student's host school);
 - tier two – in reach support (dual registration);
 - tier three – crisis support (permanent exclusion or verge of permanent exclusion).
- iv) the issue of 'Progression Passports' to all the young people who entered the PRU at tiers one, two or three which would provide:-
- baseline information such as attendance etc;
 - targets that were realistic and personalised to the individual;
 - how the targets would be achieved;
 - reviews of the progress made;
 - long term plans.
- v) The development of a Behaviour Partnership.

Ms. Noble and Ms. Brown then addressed questions and comments from the Committee.

Councillor Gofton welcomed the plan as fantastic and very comprehensive but asked how far had progress been made towards achieving some or all of its aspirations.

Ms. Noble advised that she was working in depth with regard to Key Stage One and Two with plans to re-launch in April/May accompanied by a road show. Benchmarking was due to take place in September. With regard to Key Stage Four she was trying to establish a position where it was viewed as a 'not there PRU'. To this end she was working with the locality teams on the provision of diplomas for pupils rather than them coming into the PRU. Ms. Brown added that Ms. Noble had inherited a provision at Key Stage Four that was not adequate. Lombard Street had now been closed and provision was focussed at the Cheadle Centre. The situation was being addressed as if the PRU was in special measures and an action plan developed accordingly. All pupils had individual programme plans and were supported to learn through high standards of care. The PRU was to be viewed as a revolving door to get pupils back into mainstream as soon as possible. Schools would be able to access the level of support they needed.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Gofton regarding the relationship with the Academy, the Committee was informed that a meeting had been arranged with the Academy Head Teacher regarding the Behaviour Partnership.

Councillor Kelly stated that he was impressed by what was planned for the PRU but emphasised the need to constantly involve the service user (i.e. the pupils) in the proposals.

Mrs. Hutchinson referred to a visit to the PRU undertaken by the Committee a number of years previously where a reluctance by schools to accept pupils

back had been highlighted. She asked if Ms. Noble and Ms. Brown were confident that this was no longer the case and that there had been a culture shift. The Committee was advised that a revolving door approach was required at Key Stage Two in that the pupils attended the PRU for 12 weeks and then moved on. Sunderland was fortunate in that Head Teachers had a strong commitment to inclusion but in the past had lacked a mechanism to enable them to work together.

Councillor Gofton welcomed that the Partnership arrangements and wrapped around support should ensure that pupils no longer had to rely on a GP referral to find their way back into the CAMHS system.

With regard to the pupil's personalised programmes, the Chairman highlighted the importance of proactively monitoring progress, especially once a child had returned to the mainstream, to ensure it was not forgotten.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman regarding budgetary implications, Ms. Brown advised that there would be, however, there would be a shared responsibility, it would not just be the PRU that was paying. It was important that in developing a plan to firstly identify your vision not identify a cost.

With regard to an enquiry from the Chairman regarding internal performance management, Ms. Noble advised that she produced a report to the Management Committee on a half termly basis about which she was challenged and questioned. Ms. Brown added that Ms. Noble was line managed by Brian Egdell who reported directly to herself.

There being no further questions for Ms. Noble or Ms. Brown, the Chairman thanked them for their presentation and looked forward to the vision working in reality.

2. RESOLVED that the progress report on the revision of the Pupil Referral Unit be received and noted.

Performance Report – April to September 2008 (Progress in Implementing the Local Area Agreement and New National indicator Set)

The Chief Executive (Designate) and Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with a position statement in relation to the first six months of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and implementation of the new National indicator set during 2008/09 for Children's Services.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Keith Moore, Deputy Director of Children's Services, presented the report assisted by Andrew Baker, Performance and Information Team Leader,

highlighting the background to the new national performance framework and the following indicators which were being reported by exception:-

- i) NI 117, 16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) (as detailed in paragraph 4.1.1 of the report).
- ii) NI 112, Under 18 conception rate (as detailed in paragraph 4.3.2 of the report).

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Mr. Baker explained that by definition if the 'not knowns' were known then they wouldn't be recorded as such. The Directorate was working hard to identify the not knowns through the provision of a contact point system.

In response to an enquiry from Mr. Snowdon, Mr. Moore explained that the New Directions Scheme was an attempt to engage the long term unemployed in training and to work within custodial settings to ensure employment and training programmes were in place.

Councillor Oliver suggested that it would have been useful to have access to the Regional NEET figures to enable comparisons to be made. He also referred to the current economic downturn and the potential for it to impact on the NEET figures. With regard to an enquiry as to whether the Authority would look to renegotiate targets given the impact of the economic downturn, Mr. Moore replied that the 'jury was still out'. There was an argument for leaving targets as they were because of the discipline on services that setting high targets had. Councillor Kelly concurred that he would rather see stretching targets. Councillor Oliver requested that the Committee receive Year 11 NEET figures from other local authorities so comparisons could be made with the situation in Sunderland.

Councillor Gofton referred to NI 163 (working age population qualified to at least level 2 or higher) and asked for confirmation of the definition of working age. Mr. Baker replied that it comprised 19 yrs to 59 yrs for women and 19 to 64 for men. Councillor Gofton expressed concerns about the accuracy of the data collection and enquired as to the source of the figures referred to. Mr. Baker advised that the figures had been provided by the Government Office North East.

Councillor Kelly referred to NI 112 (under 18 conception rate) and questioned why data in respect of 2010 would not become available until 2012. Mr. Baker replied that this reflected the timescales to which the Health Service worked with regard to the publication of data.

In conclusion the Chairman referred to NI 65 (Children becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time) and requested that a report on Safeguarding be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Moore and Mr. Baker for their report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted;
- ii) the Committee be provided with comparative data in respect of the Year 11 NEET situation in Sunderland and other local authorities; and
- iii) a report in respect of Safeguarding be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

At this juncture the Chairman vacated the Chair having been required to attend another meeting. The Chair was taken by the Committee's Vice Chairman Councillor Cecilia Gofton.

School Place Planning for the Future – Progress Update

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced a verbal report from the Committee's Working Group established in December 2008 to ensure Members' involvement in the process of formulating proposals with regard to school place planning for the future.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Lynda Brown, Head of Standards, advised that the Working Group comprising Councillors Stewart, Bell, Kelly and Mrs. Butler had met on Friday, 4th December, 2008. The Group had given consideration to action sheets containing every option and guiding principles against which were set out all the questions and issues that had arisen from the various consultation exercises.

Councillor Kelly advised that the Working Group had tried to ensure that the guiding principles were clear and above board and that the decision making process could clearly be seen to be evidence based. The Group had also tried to ensure that plain English was used at all times.

Ms. Brown informed Members that the final proposals would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 11th February, 2009 and that the action sheets would be submitted as appendices to the Cabinet report.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Children's Services – Inspection Letter

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the outcome of the 2008 APA Inspection of Children's Services as detailed in the Inspection Letter appended to the report.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Dr. Helen Paterson provided Members with a commentary on the report and addressed questions and comments thereon. Councillor Oliver stated that he was interested in the measuring of the impact of initiatives and asked how do we best measure and identify whether things were changing?

Dr. Paterson replied that you would start by asking why you had a strategy in the first place then follow a process that could be described in short as analyse, plan, do, review. It was important that any review process was planned incorporating milestones for both process and outcomes and a recognition that data was both quantitative and qualitative.

Professor Holmes referred to the earlier discussion regarding the setting of seriously challenging targets which it was possible that the Service may not hit. He regretted that the structure of most of the external public sector performance regimes did not encourage discussion about the substance of the challenges faced without local authorities being deemed to be failing.

Dr. Paterson advised that data alone could not show you where you were as it was open to interpretation. What the APA process did do was recognise where progress had been made especially in relation to safeguarding.

The Chairman having thanked Dr. Paterson for her presentation, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Consultations and Publications

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a summary of current Government consultations and publications as follows:-

- 2020 Children's and Young People's Workforce Strategy;
- 21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child/
A School Report Card.

(For copy report – see original Minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the consultations and publications be received and noted.

Ofsted Inspections

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) inviting Members to consider the following recently published Ofsted Inspection reports for educational establishments in Sunderland:-

- Eppleton Primary School;
- Thorney Close Primary School;
- Gillas Lane Primary School;
- Ryhope Junior School;
- Usworth Colliery Primary School;
- Farrington Community Sports College;
- Thornhill School;
- Hylton Red House Primary;
- Valley Road Primary;
- Hudson Road Primary.

Members highlighted the inspection report for Hylton Red House Primary School and expressed the following concerns about the establishment:-

- worries that an expected improvement following the previous report had not as yet occurred;
- concern that pupils were being badly let down;
- basic teaching errors needed to be addressed;
- were Governors adequately trained to undertake classroom visits and make judgements on what they found?
- could additional resources or interventions be made during lunch times or after school to assist pupils who had been disadvantaged;
- concern that the rapid turnover in Head Teachers had been disruptive for pupils.

Ms. Sue Morgan, Senior School Improvement Officer having addressed questions and comments from Members, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the Ofsted Inspection Reports be received and noted;
- ii) regular update reports be submitted to the Committee on progress made in respect of Hylton Red House Primary School and action taken to maintain improvements;
- iii) such update reports to provide an indication of the level of attainment expected from pupils under ideal circumstances and measures taken in

respect of Hylton Red House Primary School pupils to ensure these levels of attainment were achieved; and

- iv) the Committee's congratulations be recorded in respect of those schools in Sunderland which were performing well.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and officers for their attendance.

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.

C. GOFTON,
Chairman.