

# **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9 July 2009

## **POLICY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE: SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE, 2007**

### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Strategic Priority: Learning City**

**Corporate Improvement Priority: Delivering Customer Focused Services,  
Efficient and Effective Council**

#### **1. Why has this report come to the Committee?**

- 1.1 This report is presented to Children's Services Review Committee to update them on progress in implementing the recommendations contained within the 2007 Policy Review on Services for Children in Care.
- 1.2 This report also requests Children's Services Review Committee to agree to receive regular updates on policy review recommendations.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 In June 2002, the then Education Review Committee listed areas of the Local Education Authority that they felt could be improved through scrutiny and review.
- 2.2 In subsequent years the Education Review Committee, later to be the Children's Services Review Committee carried out a yearly policy review. The area for review for 2007 was Services for Children in Care.

#### **3. Current position**

- 3.1 In 2007, as part of a policy review, the then Children's Services Review Committee gave consideration to the delivery of services for children in care including the Council's role as corporate parent. The review also considered the 2002-03 review by the Social Service and Health Review Committee.
- 3.2 Members also took account of the significant programme of change that was set out in 'Every Child Matters', and the subsequent 2004 Children Act.

3.3 The review considered three key questions:

- How do Children's Services within the Council support the achievement by looked after children of the five outcomes?
- What partnership arrangements are in place to support the achievement by looked after children of the five outcomes?
- What specific priorities, objectives and targets does the Council have in its role as corporate parent?

3.4 Following completion of the review, 12 recommendations were offered for consideration by Children's Services. These recommendations, together with progress, are set out in Appendix 1.

#### **4. Recommendation**

4.1 Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the progress made on the recommendations from the Policy Review: Services for Children in Care.

4.2 Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee are also asked to agree to receive further progress updates on their policy review recommendations.

#### **5. Background Papers**

5.1 Children's Services Review Committee, Services for Children in Care (June 2007)

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## APPENDIX 1

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

### POLICY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

### POLICY REVIEW: SERVICE FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

YEAR: 2007

Recommendations  The Council should:		Has this recommendation been implemented? (give examples) What has been the positive impact of implementing the recommendation? If not implemented, give reasons why.
1.	Put in place a process whereby each Area Committee is required annually to seek an appropriate nomination from its members to sit on the Corporate Parenting Board	<p>The recommendation has been carried out and all six Area Committees have a nominated representative on the Corporate Parenting Board, in accordance with the decision by Cabinet in 2005.</p> <p>The Board first met in September 2008 and confirmed its terms of reference, and continues to meet quarterly.</p> <p>A separate report has already been submitted to CSRC in March 2009, providing a progress update.</p>
2.	Provide mandatory training to all new Councillors to introduce them to their corporate parenting role	Two half day training sessions for Elected members have been delivered in 2008. Further consideration is being given to including Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding training into the Member induction programme.
3.	Provide an annual report to the Children's Services Review Committee on performance and achievement outcomes for children in care	The Virtual Headteacher post has been operational since September 2008. The first annual report will be provided in October 2009, to include the current cohort's results

Recommendations  The Council should:		Has this recommendation been implemented? (give examples) What has been the positive impact of implementing the recommendation? If not implemented, give reasons why.
4.	Give the highest priority to the recruitment and retention of social workers	<p>There is now a recruitment and retention policy in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunderland were part of a national recruitment campaign in London, when a senior manager and social work staff attended to promote social work in Sunderland.</li> <li>• Sunderland are financially supporting final year students through their placements.</li> <li>• Career progression in place to assist transition from Social Worker to Principal Social Worker.</li> <li>• Open day for final year social work students.</li> <li>• Advert to recruit newly qualified social workers, offering them employment as Assistant Childcare Workers until they have GSCC registration and CRB check.</li> </ul>
5.	Make further efforts to remove barriers to the active involvement by children and young people in hobbies, activities and trips	<p>EYPP (Letsgocard) provided the resources for young people to access activities of their choice.</p> <p>MALAP has initiated a sub-group for leisure which is identifying barriers and opportunities.</p> <p>Several LAC achieved Duke of Edinburgh Bronze awards with Blue Watch Youth Centre</p> <p>Activity co-ordinators within the homes and Foster Care offer regular programmes of activities.</p>
6.	<p>Take further steps to ensure children in care are not missing education by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to secure the agreement of schools to accommodate children in care, and;</li> </ul>	<p>Designated teachers and Headteachers have been consulted about the Virtual Headteacher role and action plan. There is strong agreement to support and accommodate children in care.</p>

Recommendations  The Council should:		Has this recommendation been implemented? (give examples) What has been the positive impact of implementing the recommendation? If not implemented, give reasons why.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alerting senior management when attendance drops to less than 80%.</li> </ul>	Attendance procedures are in place for all looked after children.
7.	Clearly define the role of the designated teacher and provide this role descriptor to children and young people	The Virtual Headteacher has provided role descriptions and an action plan to the Young People's Change Council.
8.	Further improve Personal Education Plan by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researching with other authorities on the structuring of PEPs including the extend of independent review of the Plans; and</li> <li>PEPs continuing into further education, eg up to 19</li> </ul>	The Virtual Headteacher is investigating the concept of an on-line PEP which will be available to all necessary parties to the PEP. The Virtual Headteacher and the Leaving Care team are working together to address PEP progression, post 16.
9.	Anticipate greater numbers of young people aspiring to remain in education post 18 and consider the comprehensive package of financial support needed	Residential events have taken place to work with young people around their aspirations. Seven young people are attending university and three have already graduated. Individual financial and emotional support packages negotiated with young person. Financial support provided is good – the highest in the region.
10.	Provide an advocacy service for children and young people in care	Independent Advocacy Service established with Action for Children from 2007, for all children and young people receiving services, eg Looked After, Care Leavers, Children in Need. This is also supported by YPO.  Take up of advocacy service increasing through 2007-09. Feedback re issues identified are used to inform service development.
11.	Minimise wherever possible the disruption at all transition points, particularly those of significant change, by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transitions Team "Futures" established from April 2009 across Children's and Adult Services, focussing on delivering person</li> </ul>

<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The Council should:</p>	<p>Has this recommendation been implemented? (give examples) What has been the positive impact of implementing the recommendation? If not implemented, give reasons why.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early planning with the young person prior to leaving care and living independently; and</li> <li>• Interagency planning prior to moving from children's to adult services</li> </ul>	<p>centred planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions Board established from April 2009 across Children's and Adult Services to oversee delivery of plans for individual young people.</li> <li>• Young people now transfer to leaving care service at the start of Year 11 to ensure a smoother process. Allows greater time to plan for move to independence. Pathway plan complete within three months of transfer.</li> </ul>
<p>12. Further explore measures to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation altogether</p>	<p>Support to independence team has been running for two years. It provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six units of housing with 24 hour support for care leavers at Burlington Close.</li> <li>• Fourteen trainer flats across the city with floating support.</li> <li>• Centrepont hostel has opened providing an additional 15 bed spaces for vulnerable young people including care leavers.</li> </ul>