

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

10 November 2009

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director of Children's Services
(Safeguarding and Specialist Services)
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director - Planning & Service Integration
John Robinson, Senior Children's Services Officer
Rachael Smith, Strategy Manager
Nicola Dunleavy, Interventions Co-ordinator
Jill Coser, Parenting Co-ordinator
Kelly Moss, Children's Trust Manager
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

24. Adoption Service Statement of Purpose *(Assistant Director of Children's Services - Safeguarding and Specialist Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service.

Issues for Consideration by the Portfolio Holder

The National Adoption Standards require each Local Authority to have a Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service based on minimum standards which is reviewed annually. The Statement should set out the details of how the service will be operated by the Authority and would be examined as part of the regular inspections by Ofsted.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the Statement of Purpose as set out in the Appendix to the report.

25. Fostering Service Statement of Purpose *(Assistant Director of Children's Services - Safeguarding and Specialist Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service.

Issues for Consideration

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 require each Local Authority to have a Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service. The Statement would set out the details of how the service would be operated by the Authority and would be examined as part of the regular inspections by Ofsted.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the Statement of Purpose as set out in the Appendix to the report.

26. Arrangements for Gathering Information on the Educational Achievements and Opportunities Available to Disabled Pupils *(Children's Trust Manager)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Children's Services Portfolio Holder, of the Child and Adult Services' arrangements for gathering information on the effect of its policies and practices on the educational opportunities available to disabled pupils and on their achievements in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided a summary of the Authority's duty to report on arrangements for gathering of information on the effect of policies and practices on the achievements and educational opportunities of disabled pupils and examples of the types of data that could be reported and areas for development. Information would also be

included in the Annual Diversity Plan which was submitted at intervals to the Finance and Performance Portfolio Holder.

Ofsted have recently made equality and diversity a limiting judgement. All Authorities and schools were required to review their disability equality schemes.

The Portfolio Holder commented on the attainment data which showed that there were significant differences in achievement for pupils with Special Educational Needs compared to the whole pupil cohort. Actions to address this issue had been identified and included in the Learning Difficulties/Disabilities Plan for 2009-2012. It was noted that some pupil's needs were not educationally related and this would not affect their attainment levels.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the contents of the report.

27. Children's Services Departmental Plan Quarter 2 Progress Report *(Assistant Director - Planning & Service Integration)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made towards achieving Departmental Plan action performance indicators (PIs) for the period to 30 September 2009.

Issues for Consideration

The report summarised progress over the second quarter of 2008/09 on the actions and performance indicators within the Children's Services Departmental Plan 2009/10.

There were 30 Actions in the Plan and all were currently identified as being on target to be achieved. Of the 44 Performance Indicators, 10 were currently reported as 'red' and the explanations for these were outlined in the report. Risks were also identified, two as 'red'. These were 'Failure to secure Government funding for Building Schools for the Future', reflecting the concern of the possible impact of the current economic climate on funding and 'Failure to plan future needs and be able to respond to market pressures on placement in social care and Special Educational Needs'. The Chair commented on the possible high financial implications of specialist

placements which the Authority has a legal obligation to fulfil.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the performance made in completing actions and performance indicators for the Children's Services Department during 2008/09. The Portfolio Holder also noted the actions taken in relation to areas of delivery which were seen to be high risk at present.

28. Hartlepool's Parental Strategy – Parenting Support *(Senior Children's Services Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress being made in providing parental support and to understand its contribution to early intervention, prevention and targeted family support.

To highlight the achievements of the Hartlepool Parenting Programme at engaging and supporting families at risk

To give an understanding of some of the programmes and strategies used in family support.

Issues for consideration

The Hartlepool Parenting Service is made up of the Parenting Co-ordinator, Parenting Expert and Parenting Buddy. Together with a team of 38 parent-trainers from both statutory and non-statutory services, it provides comprehensive parenting support to families in Hartlepool. The Parenting Co-ordinator also works closely with the Parenting Commissioner to improve the co-ordination and targeting of existing parenting support activity. This ensures that parents of families at greatest risk of poor outcomes have the opportunity to achieve better outcomes for their children. This will help to break the cycle of disadvantage that is present in a disproportionate number of families who live in Hartlepool. The service is given direction and guidance by the Hartlepool Parenting Strategy Group that meets every six weeks. This Strategy Group is made up of managers from key family services across all sectors. Hartlepool Local Authority commissions this service and both the Parenting Expert and Parenting Co-ordinator are employed by Barnardos.

A large number of families were taking advantage of the courses

offered which included 'mellow parenting', first aid, food hygiene, health and safety and there had been positive feedback from schools and parents. The Portfolio Holder asked whether literacy and numeracy courses could be included so that parents could assist with their children's homework.

The Portfolio Holder expressed concern that the grant funding for these projects was not guaranteed after 2011.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress being made in Parent Support and Parent training.

The Portfolio Holder noted that funding for these services was provided by a grant from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) that would terminate in March 2010.

29. Space to Learn Project – St Hild's School (Strategy Manager)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the progress of the Space to Learn Project at St Hild's School and to inform the Portfolio Holder of the sponsorship commitments which had been offered by external organisations.

Issues for Consideration

The report detailed the current position in the development of the Space to Learn project. It outlined the variety of sponsorship offers from external organisations that had been received following the launch of the project on 23 April 2009. Agreements were currently being drawn up in conjunction with the Chief Solicitor with regard to this sponsorship. The construction partner had confirmed that the project could be delivered within the estimated budget and work was due to begin in the week commencing 16 November 2009.

The Portfolio Holder expressed support for this project and hoped that it would inspire young people in wishing to learn and improve education.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress on the Space to Learn

Project

The Portfolio Holder noted the sponsorship offers outlined in Section 3 of the report.

30. The Development and Achievement of the Team Around the Primary School (TAPS) Project *(Interventions Co-ordinator)*

Type of Decision

Non Key

Purpose of Report

To notify the Portfolio Holder of the development and progress of the Team Around the Primary School project and options for the future commissioning arrangements.

Issues for Consideration

The Team Around the Primary School project has been operational for nine months. The TAPS, which incorporates the Family Intervention Programme has made positive achievements and links with Primary Schools in Hartlepool. The report updated the Portfolio Holder and included some current case load examples.

The Senior Children's Services Officer highlighted to the Portfolio Holder that there had been national interest in the Authority's way of working. The team was currently made up of 14 members of staff and included interventions workers seconded from a number of partner agencies including Headland Futures, MIND, Youth Offending Service, Harbour, Belle Vue Centre and Housing Hartlepool. The service would be externally evaluated to ensure that outcomes were positive. Another Authority was currently measuring outcomes against the cost of a child in care or family member in prison.

The Portfolio Holder congratulated the team and had high expectations of what it could deliver. A report would also be given to the Finance and Performance Portfolio Holder.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the issues around commissioning of the project.

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress made by the project in its work with families

The Portfolio Holder noted that the Team Around the Primary School project was in part funded by Grants due to terminate in March 2011.

31. Local Authority – Access to Information

Under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) order 2006

Minute 32 – Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports para 1 information relating to any individual.

32 Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To present the Regulation 33/34 (formerly Regulation 22) report of visits to Children's Homes for Exmoor Grove.

Issues for Consideration

The report covered the months of October, November December 2008 and January 2009 for Exmoor Grove.

The comments were generally positive although there were issues with maintenance of the building. Disciplinary measures were in place with individual members of staff regarding breaches in the procedures for administering medicines. A Ofsted inspection had recently taken place.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder received and noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 am.

P J DEVLIN
CHIEF SOLICITOR

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