

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Monday 17 July 2006

at 2.00pm

in Committee Room B

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors Brash, S Cook, Coward, Fleet, Griffin, London, Preece, Shaw, M Waller and Young

Co-opted Members:

Elizabeth Barraclough, David Relton and Jesse Smith

Resident Representatives:

John Lynch, Ian Campbell and Joan Smith

Education Advisor: Rob Lowe

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**
 - 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2006.
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No items.

5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

No items.

6. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

No items.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap – Scoping Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*).

7.2 Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap.

(a) Setting the Scene (*Scrutiny Support Officer*).

(b) Presentation by Children's Services Department (*Assistant Director of Children's Services*).

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

(i) Date of Next Meeting 21 August 2006, commencing at 2.00pm in Committee Room B at the Civic Centre.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

12th June 2006

Present:

Councillor: Jane Shaw (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jonathan Brash, Shaun Cook, Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Frances London, Arthur Preece and Maureen Waller

Co-opted Members:

Elizabeth Barraclough, David Relton and Rob Lowe

Resident Representatives:

John Lynch, Ian Campbell and Joan Smith

Officers: John Collings, Assistant Director (Performance and Achievement)

Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager

Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer

Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Coward.

2. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 7th and 31st March 2006

Confirmed.

4. Children's Centres and Extended Schools Strategy - Comments *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

Further to minute number 48 of the meeting held on 31st March 2006, the Scrutiny Support Officer circulated details of the Forum's views on the Children's Centres and Extended Schools Strategy as discussed at the recent inquorate meeting.

During consideration of the report some members of the Forum reiterated their concerns about the relatively low number of young people consulted and were assured that the relevant officer had taken on board all of the issues raised by the Forum. A request was also made for additional information to be provided to all members of the Forum regarding the funding allocation for the Children's Services and Extended Schools' Strategy.

The Scrutiny Support Officer confirmed that the requested information would be circulated and highlighted that the Strategy would be reported back to the Forum for further consultation at a later stage.

Decision

- i) Members noted the content of the report.
- ii) The Scrutiny Support Officer would arrange for additional information to be forwarded to members of the Forum regarding the funding allocation.

5. The Role of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum (*Scrutiny Support Officer*)

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a brief report outlining the background to the approach to overview and scrutiny in the Council. The role of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee was discussed and a more detailed description was given a role and functions of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.

The key roles of Scrutiny were detailed as:

- Policy development and review
- Holding the Executive to account
- Investigating issues of local concern

The report highlighted that the strategic direction of the Scrutiny Forums was to assess, monitor and advise on the Council's progress towards the seven priority aims. Members requested further information on the seven priority aims and expressed their support for the selection of two good quality reviews for the 2996/07 Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Manager indicated that future reports to Cabinet would include action plans with details of lead officers and delivery timescales. A progress report would also be brought back to the Forum from Cabinet in conjunction with the delivery timescale.

The Chair indicated that she had received positive feedback from the new Head Teacher at High Tunstall College of Science regarding the Forum's inquiry into Involving Young People. Mrs Buhler-Willey was also keen to be involved in further inquiries as appropriate.

Decision

Members noted the report.

6. Determining the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Work Programme for 2006/07 (*Scrutiny Support Officer*)

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented a report which contained information to enable the Forum to compile its Work Programme for 2006/07. The report included some suggested topics from the Portfolio Holder and Director of Children's Services and provided details of the relevant sections from the Corporate Performance Plan and Viewpoint survey for consideration during discussions.

The Scrutiny Support Officer added that Forum members should be proud of what they had achieved over the 2005/06 work programme, with all inquiries included in the work programme completed. Attention was drawn to the positive contribution the selection of only two topics for last year's Work Programme had made on this and Members were asked to bear this in mind for 2006/07. The Assistant Director indicated that the Children and Young Persons' Plan detailed a breakdown of what the Department were trying to achieve as well as monitoring this achievement against key judgements.

Various issues were discussed however the discussion became focussed on the suggestion "Boys Achievement – Closing the Gap". Members felt that this would be a very worthwhile inquiry that would cut across several areas of concern including the standard of teaching and movement of teachers across schools.

It was acknowledged that this was such a big area that the terms of reference of the inquiry would need to be focussed and this would be discussed at the scoping of the inquiry at the next meeting.

Another topic suggested for an inquiry was the sexual health and education of young people. Although it was discussed that this inquiry could cross-over into the Adults, Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum, Members felt that keeping the inquiry within the remit of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum would focus it more on young people which was the area of particular concern.

Decision

Members agreed to include the following issues on the 2006/07 Work Programme:

- i) Boys Achievement – Closing the Gap

Overall aim: Examination of achievement levels, including national and

regional practices, with a view to identifying ways of improving performance levels.

- ii) Sexual Health and Education for Young People.

Overall aim: To review and suggest ways of improving current practice.

JANE SHAW

CHAIRMAN

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SCRUTINY FORUM**

17 July 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO 'BOYS ACHIEVEMENT – BRIDGING THE GAP' – SCOPING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To make proposals to Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum for the undertaking of their forthcoming investigation into 'Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap'.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 At its meeting on the 12 June 2006 the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum selected 'Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap' and 'Sex and Health Education' as the two topics for its 2006/7 Work Programme. The Forum's 2006/7 Work Programme was approved by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 30 June 2006 and the intention of this report is to scope the Forum's first investigation into 'Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap'.

2.2 Members of the Forum, on the 12 June 2006, expressed concern regarding boys' achievement levels in Hartlepool and approved a basic overall aim for the investigation. Members are asked today to 'scope' the investigation, formalising the overall aim, terms of reference and timetable for the investigation. Suggestions for each of these and other areas of the investigation are outlined below.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

3.1 To examine the achievement levels of boys in Hartlepool with a view to identifying possible ways of improving performance to bridge the gender gap.

4. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

4.1 The following Terms of Reference for the review are proposed:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of national policy issues relating to boys achievement levels and the bridging of the gender gap;
- (b) To gain an understanding of the national and regional picture relating to the gender gap in education achievement levels;
- (c) To gain an understanding of work undertaken nationally and regionally to identify factors affecting boys achievement and the strategies/models identified to address the gender gap;
- (d) To consider examples of good practice in other Local Authorities;
- (e) To examine boys achievement levels in Hartlepool and explore:
 - (i) The reasons for/factors linked to underachievement by boys and the gender gap;
 - (ii) The strategies in place to improve boys achievement levels and close the gender gap; and
 - (iii) The effectiveness of the strategies in place.
- (f) To compare strategies/practices implemented in other Local Authorities, and strategies/models identified nationally, with those in place in Hartlepool with a view to identifying possible areas for improvement; and
- (g) To seek the views of local residents, parents, children/young people, teachers, school governors and adults other than teachers working in schools on the issue.

5. POTENTIAL AREAS OF INVESTIGATION / SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

5.1 Members of the Forum can request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny investigation.

5.2 The Forum can invite a variety of people to attend to assist in the forming of a balanced and focused range of recommendations. Members may wish to include the following in their investigation:-

- (a) Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Children's Services;
- (b) Officers from the Children's Services Department;

- (c) Local residents, parents, children/young people, teachers, school governors and adults other than teachers working in schools;
- (d) Representatives from national and regional bodies;
- (e) Representatives from other Local Authorities with examples of good practice;
- (f) Representatives from voluntary agencies providing services to boys; and
- (g) Ward Councillors.

5.3 The Forum may also wish to refer to a variety of documentary / internet sources, key suggestions are as highlighted below:-

- (a) DfES – Research Report No 636 – Raising Boys' Achievement (Raising Boys' Achievement Project);
- (b) Department of Health Report – Using the National Healthy Schools Standard to Raise Boys' Achievements; and
- (c) CYPP.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the Scrutiny process and paragraph 5.2, details who the Forum could involve. However, thought will need to be given to the structure in the way that the Forum wishes to encourage those views.

7. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

7.1 Detailed below is the proposed timetable for the review to be undertaken, which may be changed at any stage:-

17 July 2006 – 'Setting the Scene' – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive a presentation from the Children's Services Department, including a practical exercise to demonstrate preferred learning styles.

21 August 2006 – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive evidence from national and regional bodies on factors affecting boys' achievement and the strategies/models identified to address the gender gap.

w/c 4 September 2006 – Site Visit(s) - To a selection of schools in Hartlepool to discuss factors affecting boys' achievement and the strategies/models identified to address the gender gap.

w/c 11 or 18 September 2006 – Site Visit(s) - To another Local Authority to observe/discuss factors affecting boys achievement and examples of best practice in addressing the gender gap and possibly a voluntary organisation offering services to boys.

2 October 2006 – Fomal meeting to consider:-

- (i) Feedback from the site visits;
- (ii) Evidence from voluntary sector organisation(s) that provide services to boys; and
- (iii) Evidence from, local residents, parents, children/young people, teachers, school governors and adults other than teachers working in schools.

w/c 16 October 2006 – Infomal meeting to consider the content of the Draft Final Report.

6 November 2006 – Fomal meeting to consider Draft Final Report.

24 November 2006 – Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

4 December 2006 – Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet.

11 December 2006 – Feedback from Cabinet

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Members are recommended to agree the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's proposed Terms of Reference, together with the suggested timetable, for the undertaking of this investigation as outlined in paragraphs 4 and 7 within this report.

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Hartlepool Borough Council
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Raising Boys' Achievement - DfES – Research Report by the Raising Boys' Achievement Project - No 636;
- (ii) Raising Attainment at Key Stage Two – Medway Council – Education and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Feb 2005);
- (iii) Department of Health Report – Using the National Healthy School Standard to Raise Boys' Achievement

In addition, the following websites have been used for background information in the preparation of this report:-

- (iv) Raising Boys' Achievement Project: www-rba.edu.cam.ac.uk
- (v) The DfES Standards Site: www.standards.defs.gov.uk
- (vi) The Basic Skills Agency: www.basic-skills.co.uk
- (vii) Case studies: www.teachernet.gov.uk
- (viii) Ofsted: www.ofsted.gov.uk

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SCRUTINY FORUM**

17 July 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO 'BOYS ACHIEVEMENT – BRIDGING THE GAP' – SETTING THE SCENE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members that a representative from the Children's Services Department has been invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence and respond to questions in relation to the Forum's 'Boys' Achievement – Bridging the Gap' investigation.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 As Members will be aware the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, at its meeting on the 12 June 2006, selected 'Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap' as its first inquiry for 2006/7. Earlier in the agenda the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence for the inquiry were approved.
- 2.2 Boys' achievement, and the gender-gap, has been a high profile issue since the early 1990's with legitimate national concern over the achievement of some boys throughout their schooling. The government is committed to raising the performance of all underachieving pupils and has through the DfES introduced strategies to address the gender gap. Details of these strategies will be discussed during the course of the investigation.
- 2.3 Locally the issue of raising boys achievements is one of the key priorities within the Council's Children and Young Persons Plan and as part of the first stage of the investigation arrangements have been made for a representative from the Children's Services Department to be in attendance at this meeting to set the scene and explore issues in relation to the Hartlepool local situation, including:-

- i) The gender gap in Hartlepool and strategies in place to address it;
- ii) The effectiveness of the strategies in place in Hartlepool;
- iii) Reasons for/factors linked to underachievement by boys and the gender gap; and
- iv) Examples of strategies and good practice implemented by other Local Authorities.

(During the course of the presentation a practical exercise is also to be undertaken to demonstrate preferred learning styles).

2.4 Please note that in accordance with usual practice an invitation was extended to the Children's Services Portfolio Holder to attend this meeting to outline her views on the issue. The Portfolio Holder has indicated that she will unfortunately be unable to attend this meeting and has asked that her apologies be submitted to the Forum. Should, however, the Forum feel that the Portfolio Holder's attendance would be beneficial to the investigation alternative arrangement can be made later in the process.

2.5 During this evidence gathering session with the Assistant Director of Children's Services, it is suggested that responses should be sought to the following questions:-

Local Issues

- (a) In Hartlepool by how many points do boys achieve less than girls? How does this compare to national figures?
- (b) What do you feel are the main factors effecting boys' achievement levels in Hartlepool? Do these differ from national factors?
- (c) What effect do regular changes in teachers, the use of supply teachers and the quality of teaching have on boys' achievement levels?
- (d) How is boys' achievement levels monitored?

National Issues

- (e) What is the Government doing to address boys' underachievement?
- (f) Is the Government promoting any particular approaches that schools should adopt?
- (g) What research is being carried out into gender achievement?
- (h) Is the level of male teachers an issue in relation to boys' achievement?

- (i) Which, if any, particular strategies have proven to be effective?
- (j) Do boys have different preferred learning styles to girls?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members receive the presentation from a representative of the Children's Services Department and take into consideration as part of the Forum's investigation the views expressed in relation to the questions outlined in section 2.4.

Contact Officers:- Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
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- (viii) Ofsted: www.ofsted.gov.uk