

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Friday 1st September 2006

at 10.30am

in the Council Chamber

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors Brash, S Cook, Fleet, Griffin, Laffey, London, Preece, Rogan, 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 17 July 2006 (*attached*)
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No items.

*** ADDITIONAL MEETING***

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

Involving Young People

7.1 Involving Young People – Progress Report (*Director of Children's Services*)

7.2 Involving Young People in the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum:-

(a) Covering Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*)

(b) Presentation by the Children's Fund Manager – Setting the Context

(c) Presentation by Beth Hawkrige, Barnardo's – Getting to Know You

(d) Presentation by Hartlepool Young Carers – What We Have Done So Far.

7.3 Outline of Proposal to Involve Young People in the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum (*Children's Fund Manager*)

(a) Group Discussions - An opportunity to discuss all 3 options in small groups with an independent chair of each discussion group. (*Beth Hawkrige, Brian Robinson and Ronnie Rowbotham - Barnardo's*)

(b) Feedback From Groups (*Children's Fund Manager*)

8. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Date of Next Meeting: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum – Monday 2nd October 2006 commencing at 2.00 pm in committee room B at the Civic Centre.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

17th July 2006

Present:

Councillor: Jane Shaw (In the Chair)

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

Co-opted Members:
Elizabeth Barraclough and David Relton

Resident Representatives:
Ian Campbell and Joan Smith

Officers: Paul Wilkinson, Senior Advisor
Ruth Chalkley, Secondary AFL and Literacy Co-ordinator
Geraldine Chapman, KS3 Strategy Co-ordinator
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present
Tracy Foster, Community Network Officer, HVDA

7. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Rev Jesse Smith

8. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

9. Minutes of the meetings held on 12th June 2006

Confirmed.

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

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented a scoping report for the Forums investigation into 'Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap'.

The aim of the investigation

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

The terms of reference for the investigation

- (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.

Timetable Of The Scrutiny Investigation

- **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** – Formal meeting to consider:-
 - Feedback from the site visits;
 - Evidence from voluntary sector organisation(s) that provide services to boys; and
 - Evidence from, local residents, parents, children/young people, teachers, school governors and adults other than teachers working in schools.
- **w/c 16 October 2006** – Informal meeting to consider the content of the Draft Final Report.
- **6 November 2006** – Formal meeting to consider Draft Final Report.
- **24 November 2006** – Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- **4 December 2006** – Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet.
- **11 December 2006** – Feedback from Cabinet

Decision

That the proposed Terms of Reference, together with the suggested timetable for the undertaking of this investigation be agreed.

11. Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap – Setting the Scene *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report outlining the background to the investigation. Members were advised that boys' achievement and the gender-gap had been a high profile issue since the early 1990s and the Government had introduced strategies through the DfES to address it. Locally the issue was one of the key priorities within the Council's Children and Young Persons Plan. Details were also provided of the Local and National Issues which could be given consideration as part of the enquiry.

Concerns were raised that the investigation was too wide ranging for the Forum to consider effectively. This was a national issue and major educational concept and a lot of time could be spent with little to show for it. In addition the fact that the gender gap was smaller than the national average suggested scrutiny could be unnecessary in this case. The Chair acknowledged that Hartlepool was doing very well on this issue but felt that anything which could assist young people in Hartlepool ought to be pursued and encouraged. While the gender achievement gap was lower in Hartlepool than the national average, there was still a gap that needed to be closed.

Decision

That the report be noted

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

The Senior Advisor, Secondary AFL and Literacy Co-ordinator and KS3 Strategy Co-ordinator gave two presentations on the issue of Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap. The first – 'The Hartlepool Challenge' – analysed the performance of the two genders from the foundation stage to GCSEs. The analysis showed that girls always outperformed boys in literacy-based subjects whereas the gender gap was less wide in Maths and Science-based subjects and in some cases boys outperformed girls. The analysis also revealed that there was very little difference between the gender gap in Hartlepool and the national average. Details were given of the action taken so far to remedy the problem and proposals for the future.

Concerns were raised that the scrutiny investigation may be a pointless exercise given the evidence that the gender gap at GCSE was smaller than the national average. However it was felt that improvements could be made and so long as girls were outdoing boys improvements should be made.

The second presentation addressed the theme of bridging the gap in boys achievement. This included dealing with different learning styles, self esteem, the barriers to learning for boys and strategies which were amongst the most successful in changing attitudes of boys

As part of the presentation members took part in a number of practical activities, designed to highlight differing forms of learning and roles within teams.

During the debate on the report and the issues raised through the presentations, the following issues were raised by members and responded to by the officers present.

As a general rule are boys better than girls at solving practical problems? The issue was not as "black and white" as that. It depended on the task in hand and the experience of the participants.

Are there statistics available to compare gender achievement in single sex schools? Was it that current teaching styles are more orientated towards females? There were no statistical comparisons available for single sex schools. However this was a complex issue with a whole series of affecting factors to be taken into account.

Did schools which excelled at sports excel in other areas? Officers were unable to confirm this but felt it was probably the case.

With reference to the analysis figures for Key Stage 2 did boys learning drop significantly below Level 4? What was the achievement gap in the lower levels? Officers did not have this information at hand. The Chair requested that it be brought to a future meeting if available.

How relevant were the listed barriers to learning for boys? Officers reported that they had originally come from auditing and analysis of the issues by an acknowledged expert in the field. Officers accepted, however, that this was only one person's opinion and experts were not always right. There would be issues that were not addressed in the list.

What was the function of the parent skills register? This was designed to give fathers more involvement in their sons' education by using their skills with their child. Single parent families would be able to utilise fathers from other families.

Members felt it was clear that the achievement gender gap lay in English rather than education as a whole. This was the area which needed special focus. Members also pointed out that not all children were academically minded; some were more practical.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation and for answering members' questions. The Scrutiny Support Officer suggested an invitation be extended to a representative from the DfES for a future meeting, in order to gain a more national perspective on the matter.

Decision

That the presentation be received and taken into consideration as part of the Forum's investigation.

13. Any other items which the Chair considers are urgent

The Chair advised that she had received a letter from Iain Wright, MP for Hartlepool, regarding the proposed closure of First Steps nursery and requesting the possible involvement of the Forum in this matter. A resolution on this was due before Council on the 27th July 2006 and the Chair expected this to lead to a resolution from the Council to the Forum. The Chair requested that members adopt a holding response on this issue.

Decision

That a holding response be adopted.

JANE SHAW

CHAIRMAN

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

1 September 2006



Report of: Children's Fund Manager

Subject: SIXMONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT – SCRUTINY
INVESTIGATION INTO INVOLVING YOUNG
PEOPLE: ACTION PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Forum with an update on the progress that has been made in relation to the Involving Young People investigation six months after the Forum made its recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 During the 2005/6 Municipal Year Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum conducted an investigation into Involving Young People.
- 2.2 On 16 February 2006 the Final Report of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum was submitted to Council for approval.
- 2.3 This report has been produced six months after the Committee's recommendations were considered by the appropriate decision-making body and as such provides an outline of the progress made to date in relation to the recommendations made by the Forum.
- 2.4 An updated Action Plan is attached at **Appendix A** with the progress made to date outlined in bold text under the proposed action.

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 Members will recall that the overall aim of the Scrutiny Investigation was, "the co-ordination of the development of a strategy to involve young people and the development of mechanisms – identified by the young people themselves – to engage in district affairs."

4. DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE TO THE PROGRESS MADE TO DATE UPON THE DELIVERY OF THE ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 *The attached action plan shows that clear progress has been made in the past six months. Each of the 18 recommendations have been moved forward ensuring a firm base from which to further enhance the participation of children and young people. We are still to develop a brief questionnaire that is to go to schools as identified in action 1b. This action has been delayed in the short term due to a range of factors including the pressures on schools during the summer term. We will now undertake this work during the autumn term. The Children's Services Department has ensured that actions agreed by scrutiny are timed appropriately to fit into all of the plans for which we have responsibility. The Participation Strategy that is currently being developed will provide further opportunities for the involvement of children and young people in service development and democratic process.*

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That Members note the progress to date in relation to the delivery of the Action Plan, and where felt appropriate seek clarification upon the achievement / none achievement of the delivery timescales / recommendations.

Contact Officer:- John Robinson
 Insert Department and Section Senior Children's Services
 Officer
 Hartlepool Borough Council

 Insert Telephone Number 01429 405592
 Insert email address john.robinson@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) Involving Young People – Final Report – Children's Services Scrutiny Forum 16th February 2006

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Involving Young People

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: Council on 16 February 2006

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(1)	<p>a) Despatched to all schools in the town in April 2006. Positive verbal feedback received from High Tunstall School only.</p> <p>b) Brief 'child friendly' questionnaire to be compiled and dispatched. Due to pressures on schools during the summer term this exercise will take place during the autumn.</p> <p>c) That arrangements be made for a handful of children involved in the scrutiny process to meet the Chair of the Council accompanied by the Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum</p> <p>d) Jesmond Rd Primary School (North) visited in April 2006. Arrangement to be finalised to visit High Tunstall Secondary School (Central) and a further school to be identified in the 'South area of the town.</p>	<p>Jonathan Wistow – Chief Executive's Dept</p> <p>Andrew Hagon – Children Services</p> <p>John Robinson - Children Services</p> <p>John Robinson – Children's Services / Joan Wilkins – Chief Executive's Dept</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>December 2006 (Achieved until October 06)</p> <p>September 2006</p> <p>December 2006</p>

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	<p>e) That the Forum should actively pursue the possibility of co-opting young people onto the Forum.</p>	<p>e) Exploratory meetings held on 5 July 2006 with the Chief Solicitor, Scrutiny Support Officer, Principal Democratic Services Officer and Children's Services representative.</p> <p>Children's Services Scrutiny Forum meeting on 1st September 2006 to work through the proposal. Consultation where appropriate with Scrutiny Forum prior to consideration by the Constitution Committee.</p> <p>Following the exploratory meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on the 1st September 2006 it is to be the responsibility of the service area to pursue the delivery of any possible constitutional changes to facilitate the involvement of young people.</p>	<p>John Robinson - Children Services</p>	<p>May / June 2007</p>

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RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(2)	That the nature of local funding needs to be explained to young people so that they are aware of why something is built in one part of town but not in another. This could be achieved through the citizenship and PHSE strands of the schools' curriculum.	As part of the participation strategy a question time process has been started finance will be asked to participate in this. The youth opportunity fund will provide practical experience to young people in setting up financial systems and allocating resources.– youth ops cards future Caypp – user survey.	John Robinson and Peter Davies	Feb 2007 Sept – April 08
(3)	That the Council develops a leaflet outlining all the activities for young people for the north, south and central areas, and consults with young people involved in producing the HYPE magazine about how this should be developed. It is important that the Council works in partnership to produce this.	Government guidance has recently placed a requirement on local authorities to develop internet based directories for young people. The Children's Services Directory is due to become 'live' in August 2006 and will allow events to be updated on a 24 hour basis. The electronic directory will form a key part of a 'joined-up' approach to information	Francesca Magog – Children's Services	August 2006

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		sharing through which the service will be signposted through leaflets, articles in the Hartlepool Mail and Hartbeat, and through links to the Children's Information Service, all schools and in the longer term children's centres and extended schools.	
(4)	<p>Given the evidence gathered by the Forum from its schools visits, young people should be considered as much of a priority as the elderly when accessing public/community transport.</p> <p>The Forum suggested that this recommendation is extended to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum, which is currently undertaking an investigation into 'Hartlepool's Bus Service Provision'.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum investigation was at such a stage that it could not be extended. The issue of provision of transportation for young people was considered as part the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum Work Programme discussions. The Forum did not select the issue as a 2006/07 Work Programme item.</p>	Jonathan Wistow
N/A			

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RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(5)	<p>a) That all the town's libraries (including the mobile library) make out of issue books available to children without library cards.</p> <p>a) It is not library policy to pursue parents for repayment of the value of lost books. There may be a need to more proactively dispel the idea that borrowing library books involves financial risk on the part of parents and to promote a more positive image. At the same time, the operation of a library service does require children to learn the social habit of respecting items borrowed. We would not wish to encourage the idea that returning books is optional.</p> <p>It is perhaps worth considering that if a book is 'out of issue' or 'withdrawn', there should normally be a reason for this. Either the book is in poor condition, or it contains out-of-date information, or it is no longer being read. We fully agree that this category of material can be either sold cheaply or given away or shared some other way. But this should not be an alternative to the right of all children to have</p>	Graham Jarritt – Adult & Community Services	TBC

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	<p>b) It is recommended that the Forum should liaise in future with schools and libraries, and explore best practice, to develop a strategy for issuing library cards to all young people.</p>	<p>access to the best and most up-to-date material.</p> <p>Brougham Annex Library is referred to in this section. Members of the Forum may be interested to know that discussions have recently taken place between the Borough Library and Wharton Trust to look at ways of developing increased partnership working, and that this proposal is included in the draft Dyke House/Stranton/Grange NAP</p> <p>b) The Library Service would be very happy to take part in this. A very high percentage of young children are enrolled as library members as part of the BookStart scheme, which contacts children and parents at 9 months, 18 months and 36 months. It also provides them with books and other reading related gifts and invites them to visit the library for story times. Many schools also have close links to their local library.</p>	

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RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE	
(6)	That the Council needs a <i>Citizenship Policy</i> for all age groups, and the work carried out by the Community Network could usefully link into this. Furthermore, representatives of each of the Council's departments should be involved in the development of a council-wide strategy, and the involvement of the LSP should be sought in relation to adopting this policy. Through a strategy of promoting citizenship young people will be encouraged to become more involved in the running of their local communities.	Preliminary work has been undertaken in terms of developing a draft citizenship policy. Further cross-departmental work to be carried out and links to the LSP to be established in accordance with the recommendation. Additional links to be established in relation to school's curricular activities.	John Collings – Children's Services	July 2007
(7)	That the Forum supports the recommendations of the Community Network (outlined in section 8.16) and commends them to the Council as a whole.	Unanimously supported by Council on 16 February 2006. Department to explore further where appropriate.	John Robinson	February 2006

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RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE	
(8)	That the Forum supports the development of a Youth Forum/Council, and requests that this is included in the development of the Council's Participation Strategy. The Forum would like the opportunity to comment on this aspect of the Participation Strategy when it is complete.	To be incorporated into the Participation Strategy and when appropriate the Scrutiny Forum to comment upon its content.	John Robinson/Peter Davies - Children's Services	April 2007
(9)	a) That the Council transfers its advertising in youth papers to HYPE magazine so that it is supportive of the principle of involving young people in decisions that affect their lives. b) That the Council should support positive publicity about children and young people across the town, including in the Council's own Hartbeat	To explore relative costings and reach of HYPE magazine in relation to other publications, which young people are likely to read. The editorial team of Hartbeat supports the recommendation made by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum. Furthermore, the Council is generally supportive of reflecting	John Robinson and Tracy Foster Alastair Rae – Chief Executive's Dept	December 2006 As and when appropriate / ongoing

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	magazine.	the interests of all groups (including children and young people) when seeking to generate positive publicity. The editorial team of Hartbeat will continue to seek out positive achievements of children and young people and to publicise them wherever possible.	
(10)	That the Forum was supportive of the continued development of the Participation Network, and would like further links to be explored between this network, the participation strategy and the Children's Services Forum. It is also recommended that a Member of the Children's Service Scrutiny Forum be appointed as Chair of this body.	To be incorporated into the Participation Strategy and where appropriate to consult with the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum Youth opportunities fund and other initiatives around the Participation Strategy will provide ongoing focus for this group.	John Robinson / Peter Davies - Children's Services
			April 07

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RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(11)	That the ‘Choices, Chances and Changes for Young People’ Framework should be developed, where possible, as a basis for involving young people in the democratic process. Furthermore, links should be made between this framework and the Council’s Participation Strategy where possible.	To be incorporated into the Participation Strategy	Peter Davies / John Robinson - Children’s Services	April 07
(12)	That the Council should seek to make links between the School Councils and the Neighbourhood Forums and that funding streams developed by, and, for young people should be explored through this route.	Joint Events to be held between the three Neighbourhood Consultative Forums and School Councils.	Dave Stubbs – Neighbourhood Services	Initial meeting September 2006
(13)	That the Forum supports the development	To be incorporated into the Participation	Peter Davies /	April 07

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	RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
	of a Participation Strategy and would like to see linkages developed between this and the Forum's recommendations, and that this strategy should be developed across the town.	Strategy	John Robinson - Children's Services	
(14)	That the Forum would like to see the findings of this report submitted as a response to the consultation process for the 'Every Hartlepool Child Matters' report.	Final Report submitted to the Authority's Children's Services Department as part of the consultative process for the Children and Young People's Plan	Paul Briggs	April 2006
(15)	That the Council should approach outside bodies, for example the PCT, Police and Fire Service in relation to making links to the Council's participation work. Furthermore, given the responsibilities of the Police and PCT for involving young people the Council should seek to approach them for additional funding for developing a participation strategy.	To be incorporated into the Participation Strategy Clear linkage with Health Development Team Hartlepool Interventions Project will provide linkage with a range of organisations as first step.	Peter Davies / John Robinson - Children's Services	April 07 April 06 April 06

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	RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(16)	That the Council should organise an 'Annual Youth Conference' through which information can be shared by young people and youth practitioners, and that connections should be made with the Participation Network here.	The Participation Strategy will deliver at least 3 events year. Delivery will be through the Participation Network and the Hartlepool Young Voices Forum	John Robinson/Peter Davies – Children's Services	April 07
(17)	That the Council and Hartlepool NDC explore the possibility of entering into future projects geared towards training 'young advisers'.	<p>Council and NDC supportive of the recommendation and keen to enter into any future opportunities of this nature if and when they arise.</p> <p>In addition, NDC recently conducted a consultation exercise around young people's well-being at Dyke House School. Young people identified peer mentors as a key mechanism to offer support, particularly to vulnerable children. Consequently, NDC has funded 25 peer mentors at Dyke House School for the 2006/7 school year.</p>	Julian Penton at NDC	July 2006

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(18) The Forum supports the notion of making all Councillors and Resident Representatives 'Children's Champions'. However, the Forum would like to receive further information about the practicalities of developing this role at the same stage as further information is provided to the Forum about the development of a Youth Council/Forum in conjunction with the Participation Strategy.	To be incorporated into the Participation Strategy. Workshop on YP involvement in Scrutiny Process will give direction	Peter Davies / John Robinson - Children's Services	April 07 Sept 06

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

1 September 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SCRUTINY PROCESS: PRESENTATIONS BY THE CHILDREN'S FUND MANAGER, BARNARDO'S AND HARTLEPOOL YOUNG CARERS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum that the Children's Fund Manager and representatives from Barnardo's and Hartlepool Young Carers will be in attendance at this meeting to set the scene in preparation for consideration of the three possible options for involvement of young people in the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members will recall that during 2005/06 the Forum completed a very comprehensive 'Involving Young People' investigation.
- 2.2 A detailed Action Plan was produced for completion of the reports recommendations and a six-month update on progress against this Plan presented to this Forum earlier in the meeting.
- 2.2 In looking at the Action Plan specific consideration is now needed regarding recommendation 1(e) which requires that 'the Forum actively pursue the possibility of co-opting young people onto the Forum'.
- 2.3 Suggested options for the way forward in involving young people in the work or the Forum are to be considered later in the agenda. In preparation for consideration of these options the Children's Fund Manager and representatives from Barnardo's and Hartlepool Young Carers are to be in attendance at this meeting to give short presentations to set the context and detail what has been done so far.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum consider the content of the presentations.

Contact Officers: - Joan Wilkins – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council

Tel: 01429 523339
Email: joan.wilkins@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Manager entitled 'Scrutiny Referral: Second and Third Tier Officers Salary and Grading Review – Scoping Report' presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 20 December 2005.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

1 September 2006



Report of: Children's Fund Manager

Subject: Proposals for Involving Children and Young People in the Scrutiny Process

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide options for consideration by Children's Scrutiny Forum members on the practicalities of co-opting children and young people onto the local authority's Children's Scrutiny Forum.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Hartlepool Borough Council's Children's Scrutiny Forum has been debating the issue of co-opting young people on to the Forum for some months now and agreed to receive these proposals and options at a meeting held on 7 March 2006. These proposals will build on the ideas discussed by the Scrutiny Forum as part of the investigation into the participation of children and young people into the political process.

3. PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- 3.1 If children and young people are to be involved in the Scrutiny process, it is proposed that the following action points are implemented:
- a) The timing of future meetings are arranged to maximise the possibility of children and young people attending whatever forum is agreed.
 - b) There is a reduction in the formality of the meetings. Forum members would be able to refer to other group members by their forenames and minutes of the meeting would be produced in a manner that was easy for children and young people to understand. All Forum members would adhere to the current guidelines on confidentiality and would be particularly sensitive when discussing items that directly relate to children and young people. Due to the wide ranging scope of responsibility the forum has, the chairperson may have to make a decision about suitability of agenda items and the running order in which they are taken. The aim should be not to exclude children and young

people from the process. A process of applying pink sheet or confidential status can be applied to items coming to scrutiny. These items could then be discussed in a closed session that children and young people do not attend. The use of such a process would need to be monitored to ensure that it was being evoked appropriately; and that this procedural necessity was explained by the Chair to the children and young people.

- c) That the children and young people involved in the Forum are given media awareness training by Press Relation Officers within the Council.
- d) That the Terms of Reference (including the formal membership) for the Scrutiny Forum are re-written to reflect the involvement of children and young people and any of the above points that are agreed.
- e) That an annual seminar is held that facilitates wider engagement with other elected members and children / young people who are not core members of the Forum. This annual event could be twinned with other similar events or initiatives. ("Big Day" event)

4. OPTIONS FOR CO-OPTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON TO THE SCRUTINY FORUM:

- 4.1 In putting these proposals together Tony Brown the Chief Solicitor was consulted and provided the following information:

"In current circumstances, the right to vote on issues before the Scrutiny Forum extends only to the elected members. The exclusion from voting of co-opted members would apply to children and young persons co-opted to the Scrutiny Forum.

- 4.2 However, it is open to the Council, if and when it sees fit, to adopt a scheme for voting rights for co-opted members on overview and scrutiny committees under provisions introduced by the Local Government Act 2003. Such a scheme may include provisions setting minimum and maximum numbers of co-opted members entitled to vote. At the present time, the power of the Council to make a scheme is unregulated as the Secretary of State has not yet exercised his power to make regulations in this respect. Under the Council's Constitution a voting scheme for co-opted members would first have to be considered by the Constitution Working Party and Committee, before being referred to the Council for adoption."

- 4.3 The following options for involving children and young people are being presented for consideration. It is suggested that the points made in the previous section are implemented to cover all options, with the obvious exception of option one. The strengths and weaknesses of each option have been evaluated.

- Option One – No Change

4.4 The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum continues to function in its current format with the existing membership and maintains the status quo.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Current members function well as a unit	The views of children and young people do not feed directly into the current system
Attendance is good	Maintaining the status quo may represent a missed opportunity. There is a real desire amongst current members to involve children and young people in the Scrutiny process.
	Children and young people are not gaining directly from the scrutiny process.

- Option Two – A Shadow Scrutiny process is set up.

4.5 This is a process adopted by some organisations as a way of involving children and young people in part of the process. In essence, a group of children and young people would meet with the chair, vice-chair and other nominated members of the forum to discuss issues with them and inform them of those particular issues they want Scrutiny to discuss. The views of this shadow board would then be reflected at the usual scrutiny forum without children and young people being present.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Children and young people are able to influence the decision making process without being exposed to formal meetings that they may find daunting.	There is a danger that the children and young people's involvement in Scrutiny could become tokenistic.
There are successful models of this working in other local authorities This allows the "adult business" to continue without changing the format.	Children and young people would be excluded from the main meeting and as such, could feel isolated from the main discussions. Children and young people would not be present at the main meeting to ensure that the discussions are reflective of their views. Children and young people would only engage with selected members of Scrutiny as opposed to the wider Forum in general.
Children and young people are more involved than currently.	This model only partially involves children and young people and only seeks to involve them by adhering to the stipulations laid down by adults.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Elected Members will receive training and support that will enhance their role with children and young people.	There are examples of this model being implemented unsuccessfully in other local authorities.

- Option Three – Children and young people are given pre-meeting briefings

- 4.6 It is suggested that children and young people are invited to join the Scrutiny Forum and that all the proposed action points made in section 3 of this paper are implemented. It is further suggested that the Children and young people who become members of the group are invited to a briefing, immediately prior to the main meeting, to be held jointly by the Chair of the Scrutiny Forum and the Scrutiny Support Officer. This briefing will act as a mechanism to brief the children and young people involved, analyse the agenda and allow the children and young people to ask questions and seek any points of clarification.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Children and young people can feed their views directly into the Forum.	There is a danger that a “kitchen cabinet” mentality may emerge and the real work of the Scrutiny Forum would be completed covertly in a pre-meeting leaving the actual meeting itself a façade.
The pre-meetings will allow children and young people the opportunity to ask questions they may not be comfortable asking in the wider group	This model implies that children and young people require a pre-meeting.
Children and young people are involved more than currently.	Pre meetings will be long and drawn out and may not engage the young people.
Elected Members will receive training and support that will enhance their role with children and young people.	

- Option Four – Elected members act as mentors

- 4.7 It is suggested that children and young people are invited to join the Scrutiny Forum and that all the proposed action points made in section 3 of this paper are implemented. It is further suggested that each child or young person invited to become a member of the Scrutiny Forum is affiliated to an elected member who will be responsible for ensuring that the child or young person receives the support they need to become members of the group. It is envisaged that elected members may use other areas of expertise within the Council to help them discharge this proposed mentoring function. It is also proposed that should this option be implemented consideration should be given to including details of this scheme in the Induction Pack and subsequent training for new and returning elected members.

- 4.8 The young people will receive practical support to aid their involvement within the Scrutiny process. For some young people this may mean the enhancement of existing support mechanisms (For example, the young person may already have an allocated personal adviser from Connexions). Practical support will be provided via existing means whenever this is possible as a positive professional relationship between the young person and the support worker should have already been established.
- 4.9 For those young people who do not have a support worker already, practical support and guidance will be provided by staff that have experience of working with children and young people. This may include information, advice, guidance or assistance with transport to attend Scrutiny meetings or pre-arranged meetings with their mentor. The support worker may also play a co-ordinating role in ensuring that the young person has contact with their elected mentor.
- 4.10 It is envisaged that elected member mentors, young people and support worker will become a close-knit team developing a positive working relationship around the scrutiny process.
All support provided to children and young people as part of this trial process will be provided in kind or as part of an organisations daily operational role.
- 4.11 This option would ensure that there was a direct and demonstrable link between the elected members and the children / young people. In addition, children and young people will receive the benefit of experience and may go on to enhance other democratic processes.

Strengths	Weaknesses
This model ensures a direct link between children, young people and elected members and clearly outlines the efforts being made by the local authority to ensure children and young people make a positive contribution. This would be clearly demonstrable to the JAR inspectorate later this year.	Children and young people may be unduly influenced by the political views of their elected mentor.
Mentors can provide individual support that best meets the needs of the children and young people	The existing commitments of elected members may not permit them to undertake this mentoring role.
Mentors can use corporate areas of expertise to support a child or young person, thus demonstrating wider engagement with the Council as a whole.	
Elected Members will receive training and support that will enhance their role with children and young people.	
Children and young people would learn more about local politics and the functions of the local authority.	
See Section 7 below	

5. Number and Selection of Children / Young People to be involved:

- 5.1 It is proposed that this will be an area of transition and development and that interim measures will be put in place as the component parts of the Participation Strategy (to be produced in 2006) are gradually implemented. It is proposed that as an interim measure that six children and young people will be selected from the Hartlepool Young Voices group. This group is made up of children and young people from a variety of backgrounds and concerted efforts have been made to involve children and young people who have been hard to engage in the past. This group is now well established and acts as a hub for other forums. The six children or young people selected will represent a range of agencies and backgrounds and will be able to channel these wider views into Scrutiny. As well as ensuring there is a gender balance, this representation will also ensure that some of the Town's most vulnerable children and young people are engaged. This initial arrangement will gradually give way to a more democratic process, and the future intention is that children and young people in the Town will be able to vote for their chosen representative. The detail in making this happen will be contained in the Participation Strategy. It is also proposed that children and young people with individual expertise in a given area be invited to join Scrutiny if the discussion on a particular agenda item would benefit from their expert input.

6. CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 6.1 Consultation with children and young people on the proposals contained within this document is currently taking place and will be reflected in the final outcome.

7. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 This paper has presented a number of proposals that can assist in co-opting children and young people on to the Council's Scrutiny Forum. It is suggested that these proposals be implemented regardless of what model of involvement is decided upon.
- 7.2 This paper recognises that maintaining the status quo is an option, however given the obvious desire of Scrutiny members to involve children and young people it is hoped that any further debate will focus on how best to involve children and young people as opposed to whether or not this should occur. Three further options are presented for consideration; these relate to the differing mechanisms required to support the involvement of children and young people. They all have benefits as they ensure there is support and guidance provided directly to the children and young people.
- 7.3 This paper has also made interim suggestions as to the number and selection of the children and young people to be involved; it is suggested that six young people are selected from, and by, the Hartlepool Young Voices group. This is very much an interim measure and will ultimately be replaced by a democratic process that will be introduced via the implementation of the town-wide Participation Strategy.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

(i) Involving Young People – Final Report – Children's Services Scrutiny Forum 16th
February 2006
