

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

16 JUNE 2015

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Ged Hall, John Lauderdale, and Trisha Lawton.

Co-opted member: Julie Cordiner.

Young people's representatives:

Ben Marshall, Josh Scott, Rebekah Kadhim, Lewis Gledhill, Hannah Wood, Lauren Howells and Shay Miah.

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services  
Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills (0-19)  
Mark Smith, Head of Integrated Youth Support Services  
Danielle Swainston, Head of Service, North Locality  
Jane Young, Head of Service, South Locality  
Helen White, Participation Manager  
Helen Hadfield, Participation Worker  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Officer

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Loynes, Co-opted member Michael Lee and Committee Observer Councillor Richardson.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Simmons, Hall and Griffin declared personal interests in Minute No. 9 "Commissioning of Activities Service and Mentoring Service for Children and Young People".

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March, 2015**

Confirmed.

#### **4. Youth Justice Strategic Plan** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

##### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

##### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to present the Committee with the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2015-2016 and to seek final comments from the Committee prior to the Plan being submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee and Full Council.

##### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services gave a presentation to the committee outlining the performance against the Hartlepool Youth Justice Plan targets for 2014/15 and outlining the priorities for the plan for 2015/16.

The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services highlighted that the number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System reduced from 52 in 2013 -2014 to 38 in 2014 - 2015 which represented significant progress. The way the re-offending performance indicator was measured had been changed nationally which had made direct comparisons with historical performance difficult. The number of remand episodes had decreased from 10 in 2013-2014 to 5 in 2014-2015. The number of custodial sentences had increased from 1 in 2013-2014 to 4 in 2014-2015. The number of breaches of bail conditions and community based orders had decreased from 70 in 2013-2014 to 45 in 2014-2015. Data suggested that the number of young people going on to re-offend was reducing quarter by quarter but that the rate of re-offending in terms of the number of offences per re-offender had increased.

Alongside the performance for 2014/15 and the priorities for 2015/16 the Head of Integrated Youth Support Services reported that funding from the national Youth Justice Board for 2015-2016 Good Practice Grant had reduced by 7.6%, Restorative Development by over 81% and Unpaid Work Order Grant funding by 6%. Alongside this funding from partner organisations had now ceased and the Police and Crime Commissioners contribution had reduced by 22.5%. As a consequence the overall budget for the Youth Offending Service would be 5.7% less than 2014-2015 which would be managed in year through the use of reserves whilst options to bring service delivery in line with the reduced overall budget were considered in preparation for 2016-2017.

The draft plan was submitted for final comments by the Committee before being referred to the Finance and Policy Committee and then Council for adoption.

The following questions / comments were raised by Members and young people's representatives: -

- Restorative Justice - 63% of contactable victims in 2014-2015 chose to engage in a restorative process in comparison to 76% in 2013-2014; what steps had been put in place to engage with young people who were the victims of crime. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services indicated that the restorative justice element of the service was provided by a partner agency. This was to ensure that the rights of victims were independently promoted though it was clear that improvements did need to be made and this was being addressed.
- The Chair requested that an update report be brought to the Committee around Christmas time to update Members on restorative justice. The Chair also commented on the appointment of a young person on the local Youth Offending Service Strategic Management Board and the potential for a meeting of the Board to be held at a young person's custodial centre.
- The effects of the reducing budget on the service were questioned. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services indicated that there had been a minor restructuring of staff, though no posts had been lost, which had freed some additional monies. The service had also over the past few years built a reserve in anticipation of the budget cuts and this would be utilised to maintain the service at the current level in 2015/16.
- The Chair commented that the levels of reoffending were now back at 2011/12 levels; was this reflective of the system not working with those young offenders. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services stated that the numbers of young people coming through the system had reduced significantly. There was, however, a higher level of reoffending within the small group of offenders in the system. The service was having a significant impact on diverting young people away from crime but it was finding that those who are entering the system are contending with multiple difficulties, often as result of their domestic arrangements and broader lifestyle choices.
- It was questioned whether there should be a trigger point in reoffending when a greater level of intervention was introduced and a what point did these young offenders end up in a custodial institution. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services referred to the action plan and statistics on reoffending and indicated that an offender having some 26 reoffending offences would not have had 26 separate crime incidents; crimes were often grouped and one incident could involve 6 or more individual crimes. Offenders could be given community supervision orders initially when they appeared at the Magistrates Court through which they would receive supervision, work to address any substance misuse issues, monitoring by neighbourhood policing including increased stop and search and in some cases 25 hours a week of supervision which was aimed at diverting them from criminal activity. These community orders were successful in the majority of cases, though there was some where a custodial sentences was the only

option left to the Magistrates Court and in the last year this had increased to four individuals from only one in the previous year.

- The proportion of offences that related to hate crime were questioned and what specific actions were done on hate crime issues. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services indicated that he did not have those statistics to hand and at the request of the Chair undertook to provide those statistics to the Youth Council.
- The wider effects of youth crime and the operation of the Youth offending service on young people in the town was questioned. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services commented that the image of elderly residents being terrorised by young people was incorrect; more often than not, the victims of youth crime were other young people and often crime was related to the night-time economy. Offenders were encouraged to become involved in restorative activities to help them understand the impact their offending had had.
- The embedding of the Think Family approach within the Youth Justice Service was questioned. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services indicated that the Think Family approach was being embedded in all services across the department. The service did work with families as often a young offender's family background may be a significant issue. For example young people whose parents had been or were still involved in offending could be an issue. Looking to younger siblings to ensure they were also not drawn into offending was also a key activity. The whole family situation was one that may need to be tackled to ensure improved outcomes. Issues such as the suitability of the housing and children attending school were among a wide range of factors that were addressed through a more holistic approach and while this could bring forward some big issues, making positive inroads to the whole family's situation was the way forward. The Director of Child and Adult Services commented that the model of interventions was developing and evolving as the approach became embedded through the department.
- It was noted that many of these offenders lived in the most deprived areas of the town and it was questioned whether moving them out of these situations was considered as one way of improving the whole family's situation. The Head of Integrated Youth Support Services commented that in some circumstances accommodation could be looked at but the aim was to get the whole family on-board with the programme.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chair thanked all present for their contribution to an interesting debate on the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2015-2016.

## **Decision**

1. That the progress made against the local Youth Justice Plan (2014-2015) be noted the 2015-2016 plan be endorsed for submission to the Finance and Policy and Committee and Full Council.
2. That an update report be brought to the Committee in six months

time to update Members on restorative justice.

## **5. Annual Review of the Children Looked After Strategy 2014/17** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to update Children Services Committee on the progress of the implementation of the Children Looked After Strategy 2014/17.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Head of Service, South Locality reported that the strategy for 2014 – 2017 built upon the delivery and achievements of the 2010 – 2013 Strategy. The strategy provided a framework for the continuous development and improvement of services for children looked after provision. The authority's performance in relation to outcomes for children looked after is good and the strategy aimed to embed and improve on this performance.

The Head of Service, South Locality indicated that the strategy was set out under the seven themes; Children in Need and Family Support, Corporate Parenting, Sufficiency, Care Planning for Children and Young People in Care, A First Class Education, Promoting Health and Wellbeing and Care Leavers. The Head of Service, South Locality outlined the priorities under each of the themes for 2015/16.

In terms of increasing the number of adopters it was questioned if this included same sex couples and was the process of approval being sped up. The Head of Service, South Locality stated that the authority had approved same sex couples as both adopters and foster carers; the question was only about whether they would make good parents, nothing else. In the last three years timescales for approving adopters had shortened though Hartlepool had always been a relatively good performer on approval timescales in any event. The authority did meet the current national guidelines and it was acknowledged that these processes shouldn't be too long but these were important decisions so they did need to be right which inevitably meant some time had to be taken.

The issue of foster children staying with foster carers after the age of 18 was discussed. The Head of Service, South Locality stated that the authority did encourage foster children to remain with their foster families after the age of 18, particularly if they were in full time education as was required under regulations. Foster parents also continued to receive payment if they did remain. For example, there had been one young

person who had gone onto university at Newcastle and a 'Hartlepool' home had been maintained for them with their foster carers.

It was commented that children gained better results when they had stability in their placement and it was questioned as to how the authority raised expectations and aspirations for young people in the care system. The Head of Service, South Locality stated that Hartlepool had very good placement stability with an exceptionally low disruption rate when compared with other areas. A lot of work was undertaken with those in the care system on their education and raising their own expectations. Some work had also been undertaken with children in the care system in helping raise awareness of their situation with teachers and understanding that the barriers they faced were not always of their own making.

One of the Young People's representatives indicated that the Sutton Trust had a scheme in conjunction with the Russell Group of Universities that aimed to lift the aspirations of young people that could be helpful in assisting young people in the care system.

The Chair welcomed the report and indicated that Hartlepool had considered looked after children as a priority for a number of years.

### **Decision**

That the First Annual Review of the Children Looked After Strategy 2014 – 2017 be noted and the priorities for 2015/16 contained within the report be approved.

## **6. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2014-2015** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities to publish a childcare sufficiency assessment on a three yearly cycle. The Childcare Act 2006 also set out a requirement for local authorities to publish an update of the childcare sufficiency assessment annually.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Head of Service, North Locality reported that the Children and Families Act 2014 recently repealed Section 11 of the Childcare Act which meant that there was no longer a requirement on the local authority to publish a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. However, it was felt that it would be useful to present to members an updated assessment for members to then decide if they wish information to be presented to them in

the future.

Hartlepool's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provided an overall picture of the supply and need of childcare in the town which informed the council of any gaps in provision. It was key to note that there was, however, no definition of 'sufficiency'.

Overall, the total number of registered/approved childcare places in the town had reduced by 167. Staff within the First Contact and Support Hub noted that this was not presently causing any significant issues, though there was a growing number of parents that used the online directory rather than contacting FCSH direct.

In relation to performance, it was indicated that 76% of all eligible two year olds which made Hartlepool one of the top performing areas in the North East. Government had recently announced their aim to provide all three and four year olds with 30 hours free childcare against the current provision of 15 hours. This was a significant rise and while it was anticipated that most private providers would be able to meet this target, it could be a major issue for many schools. There would be a further report to Members once more details on the government announcement were known.

In relation to the continuation of the preparation of the annual sufficiency report, the Chair suggested that unless it placed an additional burden on officers, it should be continued as a valuable monitoring report.

### **Decision**

1. That the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2014 -2015 be approved.
2. That childcare sufficiency reports continue to be presented to Members annually.

## **7. Hartlepool Engineering Masterclasses** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide elected members with information about the inaugural series of Engineering Masterclasses being hosted in Hartlepool in June 2015.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills (0-19) reported that the Royal Institution (Ri) had been organising Masterclasses in the areas

of applied engineering and mathematics for some years. These happen all over the country, the nearest to Hartlepool being Newcastle. The purpose of Ri Masterclasses was to enthuse high-performing Year 9 students (13-14 year-olds) by providing opportunities for them to engage in hands-on problem-solving activities led by trained, enthusiastic professionals from the relevant fields. The activities were carefully chosen to stimulate and engage young people, and to provide an insight into the kinds of job opportunities available in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), and thus to improve recruitment in STEM related subject areas at GCSE, post-16 and post-18. Masterclasses are held on Saturday mornings so as not to disrupt students' school routines.

All Hartlepool secondary schools have been contacted to nominate suitable Year 9 students for the programme. There were 30 places available and 27 of those places had been taken up. The first Hartlepool Engineering Masterclass was held on Saturday 6 June 2015 at the EDF Power Station in Hartlepool. The final Masterclass is a regional celebration event, hosted at Northumbria University on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2015, where Hartlepool students will share their experiences with other Year 9 students from across the north-east who had attended other Masterclass series.

One of the Young People's representatives commented that while these masterclasses were an excellent opportunity, young people were not always being advised appropriately about the subjects they needed to study in order to gain jobs in the engineering sector. The Chair commented that this supported some of the feedback Members had received on careers advice. The Assistant Director indicated that the presenters involved in the masterclasses did talk about their pathways into engineering and it was hoped to share this information with teachers and parents. It was indicated by Mrs Cordiner that Middlesbrough College had a free website tool that showed the qualifications and courses required to access particular careers and the number of jobs in those sectors in the Tees Valley.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and that an evaluation of the masterclass series be reported early in the next academic year.

## **8. Reconstitution of School Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key Decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek the Committee's approval to the reconstitution of the Governing



Bodies and the Instruments of Government of Maintained Schools in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended by the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills (0-19) submitted revised constitutions for the following schools which had been received following approval by their respective Governing Bodies and, where appropriate, Diocese and Parish Councils. Copies of the respective Instruments of Government were submitted as appendices to the report.

- Barnard Grove Primary School
- Clavering Primary School
- Golden Flatts Primary School
- Grange Primary School
- Greatham CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School
- Holy Trinity CE Voluntary Aided Primary School
- Jesmond Gardens Primary School
- Kingsley Primary School
- Lynnfield Primary School
- Rift House Primary School
- Sacred Heart RC Primary School
- Springwell Primary School
- St Aidan's CE Voluntary Aided Memorial Primary School
- St Bega's RC Primary School
- St Cuthbert's RC Primary School
- St Helen's Primary School
- St John Vianney RC Primary School
- St Joseph's RC Primary School
- St Teresa's RC Primary School
- Ward Jackson CE Voluntary Aided Primary School

### **Decision**

That the reconstitution of the Governing Bodies of the above Primary Schools under the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations and the revised Instruments of Government as reported be approved.

## **9. Commissioning of Activities Service and Mentoring Service for Children and Young People** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

To update members on the commissioning process for children and young people services.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Head of Service, North Locality reported that in September 2014 members approved a procurement exercise through tender submissions for the Activities Service for Children and Young People aged 5-19 years old and the Mentoring Service for Children and Young People. The tender process commenced in December 2014 and was led by the Council's Corporate Procurement Team. Officers from Children's Services were part of the evaluation team alongside Children's Commissioning team. The successful providers were:

Activities Service - West View Project with a consortium of local providers;  
Mentoring Service – Changing Future North East.

The total cost for the provision of the activities service was £750,000 which was for two years (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017). The total cost for the provision of the mentoring service was £124,000 which was for 2 years (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).

### **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **10. Grant Givers Annual Report** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

To give an overview of the scope and reach of the Youth Opportunity Fund grants given to children and young people's groups in Hartlepool in 2014/15.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The overarching purpose of the Youth Opportunity Fund, when it began as a national Government initiative in 2006, was to involve young people, especially those who are hard to reach, in identifying positive activities and things to do, and to support their role as decision makers, grant givers and project leaders.

The Youth Opportunity Fund was still going strong in Hartlepool. Funding was now provided solely by the Local Authority but the project remained

true to its original ethos and values to support those under-represented groups and individuals. The fund had supported hundreds of community organisations since its inception and thousands of children and young people had benefited in activities and materials and resources over the last nine years, some of which are still in existence today; such as The Wharton Annex re-build.

The fund itself has reduced substantially and in 2014/15 the grant allocation was £19,577. Grants totalling just over £19,000 were distributed with the remaining amount supporting the grant giving programme itself; i.e. marketing, training and accreditation of young people, room hire, transport for young people, subsistence and incentives. The application process now took into account the reduction, and the amount groups and individuals could apply for had been reduced accordingly; up to £500 in any one application.

The young people's representatives gave a presentation to the committee outlining the process undertaken this year and setting out details of the grants awarded. The Chair welcomed the report and commented that as an observer at the 'Dragon's Den' element of the process, he had been very impressed by the rigour and detailed consideration put into the awarding process by all involved. The Chair assured Members that this was Council funding that was very well spent and he congratulated all the young people involved.

The young people were questioned on how many, if any, applications to the fund did not receive funding and why some had been preferred for greater funding over others. The young people commented that there were only a few applications that had not been supported and greater amounts were awarded to those schemes that had the widest community impact. The application from Red Dreams, for example, involved them visiting 29 local schools with 140 primary and 16 special needs school children already being involved with an aim to eventually involve over 300 children.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and that the young people involved in the process be congratulated on their approach and dedication to the Youth Opportunity Fund and that the Committee supports the continuation of this grant to meet the needs of those small community organisations and individuals seeking to make a difference for children and young people in the communities in which they live.

## **11. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972

in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

Petition – Primary School Places in Hartlepool

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills (0-19) reported that a petition had been received signed by 367 people seeking a review of the policy on the allocation of primary school places. This was following some difficulties experienced with a small number of schools that had been oversubscribed for primary admissions in September 2015. The petition stated:-

“Petition for local schools for local children in Hartlepool

Many children have been turned down for school places within their local neighbourhood and have been sent out of their catchment area, we the undersigned request that the school admissions policy is reviewed and amended to give children in the catchment area more of an equally opportunity to attend the school where they have attended the Nursery and gained confidence, trust, made new friends and most of all settled into the school setting.”

The Chair commented that the admissions policy was reviewed on an annual basis, though it had a very long lead in period. The policy for admissions in September 2016 had already been reviewed and adopted by the authority and schools. The Chair suggested that the terms of the petition be shared with schools so that they may take account of it for their future admission considerations. Officers in discussion with schools had been able to resolve some of the pressure this year, though there were likely to be a few disappointed parents. Parents also needed to be reminded, as they were when they took up nursery places at school nurseries, that a place in a school nursery did not guarantee a school place.

**Decision**

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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