

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

2nd February 2007

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in Ow ton Manor Community Centre,
Wynyard Road, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Jane Shaw (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jonathan Brash, Shaun Cook, Mary Fleet, Pauline Laffey,
Frances London and Arthur Preece

Co-opted Members:

Elizabeth Barraclough and David Relton

Resident Representatives:

John Cambridge, Evelyn Leck and Michael Ward

Young People Representatives:

Leigh Bradley, Hannah Shaw and Jonathan Simpson

Also Present Deborah Gibbin, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator

Sandra Saint, Health Schools Co-ordinator

Beth Hawkrige, Barnardos

Ronnie Rowbotham, Barnardos

Officers: John Robinson, Children's Fund Manager

Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer

Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

56. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sheila Griffin.

57. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

58. Minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2007

The minutes were confirmed subject to the following amendment:

Minute no 55 – page 5 paragraph 3 refers to Year 9 (Primary) – this should read Age 9 (Primary).

59. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum

None.

60. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

None.

61. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents

None.

62. Scrutiny Investigation into the Provision of Sex and Relationship Education in Hartlepool – Setting the Scene Report (*Scrutiny Support Officer*)

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report outlining the background to the investigation. The report outlined the history of sex and relationship education from the 1950's to date. It was acknowledged that sex and relationship education was now rooted deeply in the framework for Personal, Social and Health Education and further details of current strategies formed part of the presentations later in the meeting. It was highlighted in the report that although this was the first time that a specific investigation had been undertaken into the provision of sex and relationship education, in 2002 the Education and Childcare Scrutiny Forum had undertaken an investigation into teenage pregnancy and associated issues. A copy of the Forum's report was attached by way of appendix.

At the previous meeting the importance of a subjective/qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of SRE was identified. The report outlined how this would be identified and measured during the course of the investigation.

Decision

The report was noted.

63. Scrutiny Investigation into the Provision of Sex and Relationship Education in Hartlepool – Evidence from the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) (Scrutiny Support Officer)

Members were informed that the Regional Co-ordinator and several representatives from the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) were invited to attend this meeting to provide evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the provision of sex and relationship education for young people in Hartlepool schools.

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Regional Co-ordinator and representatives were unable to attend and had submitted their apologies. However, a paper was submitted to Members from the Youth Parliament which gave an update on the Sex and Relationship Education Campaign. The paper had identified two key areas to be focussed on throughout the campaign which were:

- Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
- Health Schools Initiative

It was noted that the UKYP was hoping to publish a report by the end of March 2007 detailing the findings of the campaign and this would be fed into the final report and recommendations of this investigation.

Decision

The report was noted.

64. Scrutiny Investigation into the Provision of Sex and Relationship Education in Hartlepool – Evidence from the Children's Services Department (Scrutiny Support Officer)

Members were informed that the Healthy Schools Co-ordinator and Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator were in attendance to present evidence in relation to the ongoing investigation into the provision of sex and relationship education for young people in Hartlepool schools. The presentation was detailed and comprehensive and covered the following key areas:

- Strategic Context
- Sexual Health Issues Affecting Young People
- Primary and Secondary Sex and Relationship Education
- Long Term Goals
- External Agency Support
- Good practice guidance for Sex and Relationship Education

A discussion followed in which the following issues were raised:

- (i) **Members queried how rigorous the figures provided in the presentation were.** The Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator indicated that the figures were from the Office of National Statistics and very rigorous. They were, however, 18 months behind due to the length of time it took to collate the figures.
- (i) **Some organisations show very graphic images to get messages across, had this been considered for this issue?** The Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator responded that it was thought that the shock horror approach causes more problems than it solves. This had been proven with drug education previously.
- (ii) **Members queried if there was a problem with 'back street' abortions in Hartlepool and expressed shock at the level of sexually transmitted diseases?** Members were advised that there was no history of back street abortions in Hartlepool and it was confirmed that SRE in the town did not include abortion information. Whilst information on the abortion issue was included as part of the science lessons a view was expressed that the development of SRE curriculum to include the emotional and relationship implications of abortion should be explored.
- (iv) **Was there any advice or guidance given to teenagers when considering using the morning-after pill and could pills be prescribed and abortions arranged without the knowledge of parents?** Members were advised that the morning after pill could be prescribed and abortions arranged without the knowledge of parents. The law was clear on this with the Frazer Guidelines in place. No medical advice was given in schools and the role played by schools was to offer advice and recommend that young people see a general practitioner and talk to their parents. Members queried what involvement the schools had with parents on the issue of SRE and were advised that schools try to involve parents. The voluntary sector are in the process of developing 7 week SRE courses for parents. Members were interested to see the benefit of these courses and the way they could be developed in the future.

In terms of the morning after pill there was a protocol in place from the PCT, with a range of questions to be asked by either the GP or pharmacist and they would make a decision on whether or not to supply the pill. With regard to Head Teachers, they would have the discretion whether to tell the parents and the normal route for this would be through the Safeguarding Board.

- (v) **Should parents be advised of contraception requests?** The Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator indicated that in her opinion, if young people thought that their parents would be informed about their requests for contraception, they would not make the request. This would inevitably result in an increase in teenage pregnancies.
- (vi) **The Councils SRE philosophy.** Members were concerned that the Councils philosophy worked on the basis of an expectation that sexual behaviour starts in year 10 and were of the view that emphasis needed to be placed on educating young people that this is illegal. Emphasis was also placed upon the need to emphasise the importance of relationships to young people and not just sex as part of SRE provision.

The Chair indicated that a school nurse would be in attendance at the next meeting of this Forum to answer any additional questions Members may wish to raise.

The second part of the presentation informed Members of a primary school learning resource including various stories about 'Lucinda and Godfrey' and the physical and emotional changes they face during their primary education years. This resource was being introduced to all but one primary school across the town although it was noted that the school in question had not yet seen the resource. Expectations were that if the school was to see the resource they would become involved and it was suggested that this should be pursued. Work was currently also being undertaken to audit the extent of the use of this resource in schools and it was suggested that there could be value in undertaking a survey of those who had been involved in the original pilot of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' programme.

Members were informed that the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' resource was taught up to Year 6 (10 and 11 year olds) and included an extra section on contraception for Year 6 if the school felt it was appropriate for that year group. There was, however, a gap in provision between the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' and Added Power And Understanding in Sex Education (APAUSE) resources which does not commence until Year 9 (13 and 14 year olds). Ways of filling this gap needed to be explored.

It was highlighted to the Forum that the success of the 'Lucinda and Godfrey' resource had spread and that other local authorities were now purchasing the resource. The income generated was allowing Hartlepool to further develop its service and this included the identification of activities for children with special needs.

The Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator and Health Schools Co-ordinator were thanked for their informative presentation and answering Members questions. Emphasis was placed upon the need to not only reduce teenage pregnancy and STI figures but also to focus on the importance of raising aspirations for young people in the town.

Decision

The discussions were noted and would be used to inform the Forum's inquiry.

65. Any Other Business

At a previous meeting of this Forum, it was suggested that the young people representatives from the Forum provide some information from their peers in order to inform the inquiry. A representative of the young people indicated that they were meeting next week to discuss this further and would report back to a future meeting.

The Scrutiny Support Officer reminded Members that the responses from the police checks carried out would be returned to them and requested that the Members inform her when they were received.

A visit to North Tyneside was in the process of being organised, however, given the demands on Members time it was suggested that a small Working Group be established to undertake the visit and report back to the Forum. Members interested in attending this visit were asked to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer.

The Chair asked that Members note that Catcote Special School had recently received specialist status and that they should be congratulated.

JANE SHAW

CHAIRMAN