

The Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel
Council House Walsall
Tuesday 11 January 2005 6:00 pm

Present

Councillor Bird (Chairman)
Councillor Arif
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Hughes
Councillor Khan
Councillor Martin
Councillor Withnall

Non elected voting members

Mr A Butterworth
Mrs L Holford
Mr M Quinn

Non elected non voting members

Mr D J Jones
Mr R Grainger
Mrs E Collin

Changes in Membership

There were no changes in membership

Apologies

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor E. E. Pitt

Local Government Access to Information

Minutes

The notes of the last meeting of the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel held on 30th November 2004, were submitted subject to Councillor Arif being included in the attendance list.

Minutes

The notes from Special Meetings held on 25th November and 13th December 2004 to be considered in private session.

Web Minutes

That the minutes of Web 5th October 2004 be received.

Working Group Draft Programme

Members were informed that the first meetings of the working groups were being arranged and that a scoping exercise would take place at the first meeting. The work programme and feedback to be submitted to the next meeting of the panel.

School Out-turns 2003/4

David McNulty outlined the report and said the contents were brought scrutiny for noting.

Mr Quinn asked if information about schools having further deficits would be reported back to this scrutiny panel. Elaine Simpson (ES) explained that this had not been the case in the past. She said it was the intention to monitor in terms of schools and surplus and have scheduled figures to be pulled together by end of March to see if they have achieved their planned budget.

Councillor Bird said it was pleasing to see a £0.5 million reduction this year and was hopeful for further reduction next year.

Elaine Simpson said that schools were waiting to see their budget next year working with the formula and agreed to report back to the panel on: -

- Deficits
- Deficits – building issue
- Revenue budget

Councillor Bird said that if the formula was addressed the cause would be addressed. He said some schools have substantial resources and resources need to be used to the best advantage.

David McNulty said he accepted the general point and emphasised the need to support not just the size of the surplus, but the extent to which that is part of the planned programme of development to the school. He said that schools were moving towards three year budgets and would be able to look at medium term budgets, also that they should ensure that financial planning is linked to the overall plan.

In response to questions about the formula, Elaine Simpson said that there was a thorough review of the formula last year. She advised that repairs were down to individual school choices, and said that a few years ago when the schools had been allowed the choice to use money to make repairs, some schools, such as Blackwood Jnr had undergone a whole programme of rebuilding and in doing so had not sacrificed results.

Councillor Bird said it was not right for a school to have surplus resources, when another school in the same area was suffering through no funding; he called for officers to readdress the process and keep scrutiny advised of the progress.

Elaine Simpson said that a report would be brought back to the panel when the process was complete.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Preventing Teenage Pregnancy

Jan Deeming – Training Outreach Manager
Penny Barber – Chief Executive, Brook in Birmingham

Were in attendance to give a presentation to members and discuss the issue of teenage pregnancy.

Jan Deeming circulated a copy of the presentation:-

(see annexed)

During the presentation she highlighted that many young people do take responsibility but that more resources need to be targeted at areas of highest risk. She said that contraception and morning after needs should be more accessible to young people in an environment where adults are supportive and like young people. She highlighted that young people need to feel confident and to trust that they have confidentiality, she suggested that often Local Health Centres and GP's surgery's were busy and people may pass word back to parents that young people had visited. She also felt that there should be more support for teenage moms and that adults should stop stigmatising them.

Councillor M. Bird acknowledged the interesting work the Brook Agency was undertaking to prevent teenage pregnancy and that Walsall teenage pregnancy figures had raised. He said that many young mothers had seen pregnancy as a way to obtain a council house in the past and asked if this was still the case. Members were advised that 80% of young mothers actually take baby back to the family home.

In response the questions about rising numbers of teenage pregnancy in Walsall, Penny Barber advised that the figures presented were from 2002 and the 2003 figures were not yet available. She said that the figures could be a blip or a trend but at this stage it was difficult to say. She confirmed that Birmingham had a recorded drop of 15½% in recent years and that members should consider how that had been achieved.

In response to questions from Councillor Bird, Penny Barber advised that the teenage pregnancy and termination rates is quite high in ethnic minorities. She confirmed that the statistics for 'teenage pregnancy' included the number of live births and terminations.

Councillor Cassidy asked if children under 15 years figures were available for scrutiny, she was advised that they are available but that there were so few, the child

could possibly be identified by location, and generally under 16 figures were published. Councillor Cassidy asked about Looked After Children (LAC) and the mentoring available to prevent teenage pregnancy.

Penny Barber said there was no quick fix and that young people need information about how their bodies and emotions operate.

Councillor Arif asked what services Brook in Birmingham could offer Walsall.

Penny Barber said that Walsall Primary Care Trust (PCT) do currently find work from Birmingham Central Office including chlamydia testing, at Hatherton Centre, she said this service could be extended to 4 hours on Wednesday afternoons if a doctor with family planning certificate could be brought on board. She said there was a shortage of trained personnel in family planning and that the nurses do a lot.

Councillor Arif informed members that he had dedicated some time to working with young people about prostitution and he was surprised to hear that some education in schools was not working. Penny Barber said that the curriculum in schools was very busy. Bob Grainger (NUT) said that it was wrong to suggest that sex education was not working but agreed that in terms of curriculum; additions' such as sex education have been squeezed out.

Members discussed the targets set by government to reduce teenage pregnancy by 50% over 10 years. They felt this target was challenging and would require a cultural change to improve. David McNulty agreed that cultural change was essential and voiced concern that Walsall's approach may not be radical enough.

Elaine Simpson said there were local issues to consider, the local cultural norm in Walsall seems to be to have children young. She said Walsall has the youngest grandmothers in the country and many grandmothers look after the grandchildren. Members were informed that Walsall norm is five generations in 100 years and that elsewhere 4 generations was the norm.

Elaine Simpson raised the issue of local availability of services and was informed by Penny Barber that in Birmingham there are centres in the community where young people go, the centres are discreet and just for them.

Councillor Martin said as the lead member in the Children's Young Persons Partnership she would bring a report back to this panel. Members were interested in increasing the services provided by Brook in Walsall and asked whether there were issues of funding and access.

Members thanked Penny Barber and Jan Deeming for an excellent presentation and agreed to receive a report back from Councillor Martin.

Obesity

Rachel Neal – Epidemiologist and Mr John Linnane of PCT were in attendance to give a presentation and respond to members questions.

The slides of the presentation were circulated: -

(see annexed)

The presentation was well received. Members were advised that managing obesity would require a multifaceted approach and that there were a number of things to take

into consideration: she suggested a consistent and comprehensive approach would be required.

Elaine Simpson said that the focus should be a healthy lifestyle, healthy options, healthy eating and exercise; she highlighted the benefits of lunchtime activity such as dancing. Councillor Cassidy agreed and said that schools were very different now compared to the sports activities when she was at school. She said often there was no link at home and that parents need to be involved.

Councillor Arif referred to figures relating to 16.7% obesity in South East Asian children. He suggested this may be partly genetic and that they were more likely to become diabetic. It was explained that the increase is probably due to the change of diet.

Councillor Withnall said that it was very difficult to influence youngsters to take on a healthy lifestyle. Members were informed that schools were being targeted and that 60% of primaries are working on healthy lifestyles.

Elaine Simpson said that the progress of PCT and Education Walsall was showing successful partnership work in encouraging eating healthy foods and carrying out a healthy lifestyle.

David McNulty agreed that changes in healthy eating were important to gain an early win and sustain the change. He said that it would be more challenging to promote a more active lifestyle. He indicated that whilst catering services were working on healthy diet, lunchtime supervisors could work at playtime activities to build in an active lifestyle.

John Linnane agreed and indicated that vending machines containing healthy options should also be considered.

Councillor Walker said healthy eating should start earlier and there is a big gap between the breast feeding campaign and the healthy eating lifestyle in schools; she said at home, a small child has no choice, parents prepare and feed the children and it is here the initiative for healthy eating should begin. She suggested the focus could be from a health visitor, tapping into existing resources to encourage parents to provide healthier diets for young children.

Councillor Cassidy asked for clarification on how much time was spent on exercise in schools. It was confirmed that 2 hours the current time allocated with a suggestion to move up to 4 hours.

David McNulty advised the panel that Walsall schools are recognised as a great national example of linking school sport with local clubs and highlighted that there are 3 sports colleges established in Walsall.

Resolved

1. Members noted the report.
2. Members thanked John Linnane for an excellent presentation and agreed to request the appropriate officer to invite Mr Linnane to join the Joint Obesity Working Group.

Children's Bill Update

David McNulty was in attendance at the meeting and gave a presentation to brief members on the Children's Act 2005.

Copies of the following documents were circulated: -

(see annexed)

- Briefing Children's Act 2004 (slides).
- Walsall's response to : - Implementing every child matters – next steps (the children's bill).

Members discussed the key priorities of the presentation. They discussed the 'bringing together' of integrated services to create a 'one stop shop for children's services'.

David McNulty said that there would be joined up services in one location and that each Children's Centre would offer core services and services specific for the location.

Resolved

Members noted the presentation.

Forward Plan

Members received the forward plan.

Dates of Meetings

Members noted the dates of the next meetings: -

Special Children's Scrutiny – 2nd February 2005
Scheduled meeting – 22nd February 2005.

Part II Private Session

Exclusion of public

Extract from central drive.

Minutes

School Buildings – Special meeting 25th November 2004.

Citizens First – Special meeting 13th December 2004.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings copies having been circulated be approved as correct records.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.45 p.m.