

AT A MEETING- of the -
**SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKING
GROUP** held at the Council House,
Walsall on
27 November 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor Arif
Councillor Chambers

Mr Grainger (Secondary School)

OFFICERS PRESENT

Beth McPherson-Jones	Director for Learning – Participation (Education Walsall)
Mary Griffiths	Head of nursing - NHS
Karen Dainty	Complimentary Education Manager (Education Walsall)
David Bovell	Strategic Manager (Children's Services)
Nikki Ehlen	Scrutiny Officer

4/2006. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received on behalf of David Jones, and Councillor Cassidy.

It was agreed that Councillor Chambers would be the lead member for the duration of the meeting. Councillor Chambers stated that he would be happy to join the membership of the working group.

5/2006. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

6/2006. **DISABLED ACCESS STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENTS**

Beth McPherson-Jones explained to the group that key documents had been provided to give members a picture of the activity and work being completed.

Members were advised that Education Walsall had produced an access plan proforma, and had inputted into the Council's disability scheme. Officers stated that this supported the vision for inclusion.

The group were informed that a representative strategy group meets each 6 – 8 weeks. Councillor Chambers asked if the accessibility group was a formal monitoring group.

Beth McPherson-Jones explained that this group had an implementation plan for the year, which was monitored on a bi-annually basis and at the end of the year a summary report was produced.

The group were informed that an audit of schools had been completed, and as a result officers at Education Walsall were aware how accessible schools were.

Councillor Chambers asked how work to improve the accessibility of schools was prioritised.

Beth McPherson-Jones informed the group that funding was agreed based on 3 main areas, which were;

1. A rolling programme of bringing schools up to minimum standards
2. Individual children who had identified physical access needs
3. Supporting Mary Elliot and the build of the hydrotherapy pool, as this impacted on other schools and children within the borough

Councillor Arif informed the panel that when the Disability Discrimination Act (2003) was introduced the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel was informed that a number of schools had been visited. He asked if the Social Inclusion Working Group were able to see a list of schools along with a summary of the audit findings, and any outstanding work.

Beth McPherson-Jones stated that she would bring the rolling work programme of work on schools re minimum standards and details of schools that had been structurally updated to accommodate individual children to the working group on 20 March 2007.

It was agreed that this would evidence that a system was in place and work was carried out to make schools accessible.

Beth McPherson-Jones explained that the access money had also been used to provide equipment to schools to support children's physical access needs.

Officers informed members that agencies try to work closely together to provide a joined up approach.

Bob Grainger asked if it was possible for the working group to receive information on where children were placed within the borough within schools.

Beth McPherson-Jones explained that we do not hold information centrally of every child who would be deemed disabled under the terms of the Act. However, she would bring information regarding those children who were subject to a statement of special educational needs on account of their physical disability to the meeting on 20 March.

RESOLVED

That

- The rolling work programme of schools and details of schools that had been structurally updated to accommodate individual children to the working group on 20 March 2007.

- That a disability update and physical update, to include details of where children are and what financial contributions schools receive for these children to the working group on 20 March 2006.

7/06 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Beth McPherson-Jones informed the panel that what had been achieved was a strategy requirement. The group were informed that a successful parents forum and disability forum had been established, this had created a united approach to solving problems together.

The figures on the equality impact assessment were double checked and confirmed to the working group.

David Bovell informed the panel of the disability steering group and stated that this was evidence of multi-agency working and had strong parent participation; David stated that they were extremely pleased with the progress made.

Beth McPherson-Jones informed the panel that children who attend after school clubs, with specific transport needs, needed to be considered.

Councillor Arif asked if the Council and Education Walsall were working with disability groups. David Bovell stated that they did liaise with these groups.

Councillor Chambers asked for a flowchart highlighting how these organisations interact.

Beth McPherson-Jones stated that a flowchart could be produced explaining how the 3 main blocks interact.

Councillor Chambers stated that this would be a model of good practice.

Councillor Arif suggested that governing bodies were informed of the work that was being completed.

Beth McPherson-Jones stated that Education Walsall had written to and had slots at governors meetings.

David Bovell tabled an update on the developments in Eldon House (Chuckery) and Redruth Road (Park Hall). David explained that traditionally the Council had not had long-term residential accommodation for children with disability needs and he considered this to be a positive step forward.

Councillor Arif asked what age groups were catered for in the residential homes.

David Bovell explained that in Eldon House from ages 4 – 18, although as part of the referral process, age groups were planned in. David added that Redruth Road catered for children from upwards or downwards of 10 – 14 to allow children to grow up together.

RESOLVED

That

- The figures on the equality impact assessment were double checked and confirmed to the working group.
- David Bovell to produce a flow-chart showing how the disability groups interact to the meeting on 20 March

8/06 REVIEW OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Beth McPherson-Jones explained that information on looked after children had been reported to the group in January, and Councillor Cassidy had asked for an update to this working group. The group were informed that Karen Dainty and David Bovell had produced a report summarising activities taking place in looked after children.

Officers informed the panel of some of the activities that had taken place, such as the distribution of SATs papers at an earlier point within the year to better engage carers and to take corporate responsibility for the achievement of looked after children.

David Bovell informed the panel that an aspect of the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) would be spent on ensuring that all looked after children had access to a computer within their home, and software packages to prevent misuse. This was intended at ensuring that looked after children were given similar opportunities as the rest of the population. David stated that it is important to work with foster carers to create better outcomes for children.

Karen Dainty stated that through the NRF funding distance learning would be set up online in GCSE Maths and English, meaning that wherever looked after children were placed it would be possible for them to access GCSEs through their computers. Karen added that once the structure was set up additional subjects could be added.

Karen Dainty informed the panel that every service area had a different action plan for looked after children, but that 1 overall plan had now been created.

Karen Dainty tabled the looked after children educational plan.

The group was informed that a range of different agencies were being brought together to form a virtual school.

Councillor Arif asked how plans were monitored and followed through.

Karen Dainty stated that looked after children were monitored closely, and in the future this would be done on a termly basis. Members were informed that it was hoped that virtual heads would be given reports on how each child was doing.

Bob Grainger expressed the opinion that looked after children needed a personal approach to engage the child.

Karen Dainty explained that looked after children had personal mentors within the team. Karen stated that she felt it was important to note that in future children would now be

assessed to measure their potential; this should allow teachers to determine whether the child had educational needs or if they were under-achieving.

Councillor Arif expressed concern that he had met some young people from Sandwell House who informed him that although they had a plan, there was no one to ensure that it was followed.

Karen Dainty informed the group that within schools there were designated people who had regular contact with officers and each child to monitor PEP's and the child's academic performance.

Councillor Chambers requested more details on the NRF funding.

David Bovell stated that it ran for 18 months, and that one element of the scheme was to refurbish computers and provide software packages to families with looked after children. David added that the foster carers association would be given funding to provide training on computers to foster carers.

Karen Dainty explained that once funding ends, systems should have been embedded to allow existing members of staff to continue the work.

David Bovell stated that all bids were robust enough to ensure that the work could be embedded.

Councillor Chambers requested that the NRF grant document was provided to the working group for their consideration.

Bob Grainger asked if it would be possible for the working group to look at where looked after children were within the borough.

Karen Dainty said that this would be possible, and informed the panel that Willenhall Sports College had the highest proportion of looked after children within the borough. David Bovell stated that Willenhall had done an excellent job in supporting looked after children.

Councillor Arif asked if it was possible to inform governors that schools had looked after children in their care. Members were informed that governors would be provided with training on 25 January, and suggested that all governors were encouraged to attend.

RESOLVED

That the group receives the NRF grant document at its next meeting.

TERMINATION OF THE MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 23 January 2006. There being no other business the meeting terminated at 7.23 p.m.