

Scrutiny and Performance Panel

**Agenda
Item No.**

DATE: 24th July 2008

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Every Disabled Child Matters

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Z Ali - Children's Services Portfolio Holder

Summary of report:

This report seeks to provide members with the background to the Every Disabled Child Matters Charter, a high profile campaign aimed at all levels of policy making with the objective of ensuring that children who have a disability and their families receive by right the services and support they need to live ordinary lives.

Background papers: None

Reason for scrutiny:

Walsall Council has so far not signed up to this Charter and Members will wish to consider the reasons for this in light of the shared vision for the borough.

Resource and legal considerations:

There is no legal imperative to sign the Charter which lays out best practice for all Local Authorities. There are currently no additional resource implications associated with signing up to the Charter.

Citizen impact:

Adoption of this charter will impact on the learning, health and social care of children and young people with a disability and their families in Walsall.

Environmental impact:

The adoption of this charter will support current progress on the development and delivery of services for children and young people with a disability and lead to developments which will impact directly on the learning, health and social care of children, young people and families in Walsall.

Performance management:

Signing up to the Every Disabled Child Matter's Charter will provide a further demonstration that the priorities identified in the vision for Walsall, and specifically that growing up is as good as it can be and young people fulfil their potential, is a

fully inclusive vision.

Equality Implications:

Signing up to the Charter will signal Walsall's commitment to promoting inclusion and ensure that disabled children, young people and their families are supported within their communities in Walsall, including promoting a more local service for local families.

Consultation:

Consultation across partners within Children's Services, the third sector, children, young people and their families has been ongoing for some time.

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1. Context

1.1 Since September 2006 the Council for Disabled Children, in partnership with Mencap, **contact** a family and the Special Educational Consortium, has been running a campaign to get every Local Authority signed up to the Every Disabled Child Matters Charter.

1.2 Authorities are asked to sign the charter to indicate that by December 2009 they will have ensured they have knowledge, skilled staff, an inclusive approach to planning, commissioning & delivering services, the needs of children with a disability at the heart of their planning and reflected both within their Children & Young People's plans and their LAA agreements.

1.3 As of June 2008 a total of 65 local authorities had signed the charter.

1.4 The charter identifies 9 areas related to practice and provision of services for children with a disability and their families and represents good practice; it is difficult to imagine an authority which would not want to sign up. The issue for Walsall, as for others, is how far we have travelled along the road to meeting the requirements of the Charter.

1.5 Walsall has established an EDCM Project group to take forward a range of activities related to developing knowledge, understanding and services for disabled children and their families.

1.6 The Council for Disabled Children have also developed a charter specifically for Primary Care Trusts and earlier this year Walsall tPCT joined 42 other Primary Care Trusts in signing the PCT version of the Every Disabled Child Matters Charter.

2. Requirements

2.1 Of the 9 requirements within the Charter, the Project Group considers the following to be met or partially met:

- We know how many disabled children live in our area and that all agencies in our area are planning services on the basis of this knowledge
- There is a key worker service in our authority providing support to families who are accessing more than one specialist service
- Our parent partnership service is sufficiently resourced to provide advice, information and support to parents of disabled children and young people who have been excluded from school
- Parents and carers in our area are getting accurate and timely information and advice on the full range of services available to them and their families
- All staff have received both disability equality training and training to ensure that they have core competencies to work with disabled children; relevant staff have received specialist training and other staff know how to contact them for information.
- Our Children and Young People's Plan explains how we will provide specialist services and also make all universal services including extended schools and children's centres accessible to disabled children.
- Disabled children and families are involved in the planning, commissioning and monitoring of services in our area, including both specialist and universal services.

2.2 Of those requirements currently only partially met, the Project Group are confident that the new contractual arrangements and the revised multi agency Children's Services Disability strategy will enable us to progress swiftly towards full compliance with the requirements.

2.3 There are two requirements of the charter that remain unmet:

- Disabled children are involved in drawing up our Disability Equality Scheme and also in monitoring its effectiveness in eliminating discrimination.
- Our Local Area Agreement includes targets for the level of service to be delivered to families with a disabled child.

2.4 In respect of the first of these requirements, the Project Group are confident that as with the existing partially met requirements the new contractual arrangements and the revised Children's Services Disability Strategy will enable this element will be fully met by the end of this financial year.

2.5 In respect of the second criteria however, ensuring the inclusion of a target or targets regarding the level of services to be delivered to families with a disabled child remains challenging and we continue to negotiate with the Strategic Borough Partnership to ensure the inclusion of a specific target during the refresh of the LAA targets.

2.6 Signing up to the Every Disabled Child Matter's Charter will provide a further demonstration that the priorities identified in the vision for Walsall, and specifically that growing up is as good as it can be and young people fulfil their potential, is a fully inclusive vision.