

Report



meeting SOCIAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

date 4th April 2006

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

THE MEETING CHALLENGES SERVICES CONFERENCE 14TH DECEMBER 2005 - LONDON

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the Social Services Select Committee of a conference that took place in London on 14th December 2005 entitled 'The Meeting Challenges Services Conference'.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The conference looked at the implications of the Government's agenda of 'Every Child Matters' and the implications for local authorities and other organisations that are involved in the delivering of services to children. The conference consisted of key presentations on the issues and challenges and afternoon workshops.

3. Presentation by the Director of the Surestart Unit – Ms Naomi Eisenstadt

- 3.1 Ms Eisenstadt began by giving an overview of the reasons for the Every Child Matters agenda and said that despite investment and reforms services were still failing children, gaps had been identified in current services, the best use of investment was not being made and services tended to be built around professional interests not children or families.
- 3.2 Ms Eisenstadt explained that the vision and driving force for change in every child matters is to build services around children, young people and families, better support for parents and carers which promotes prevention and early intervention.
- 3.3 Future services will need to be universal and targeted, across the age range of 0-19 years which gave the best opportunity for narrowing the gap that had been identified in service delivery.

3.4 The role for local authorities is:

- respond to children, young people and parents
- analyse need
- integrated front line delivery
- leadership
- culture change not just changing structures.

3.5 In conclusion, Ms Eisenstadt posed the following significant challenges:

- governance model for children's centres and extended schools
- quality in Childcare and family support
- service integration
- performance management and service inspection
- reaching frequently excluded groups
- engaging parents.

4. Presentation by the Children's Commissioner Professor Al Aynsley-Gore

4.1 The children's commissioner gave an interesting and informative presentation on what it's like to be a child today growing up in the 4th richest country in the world:

- a new born baby is much a citizen as anyone else
- are we investing enough in children
- do we really care about children outside our immediate family.

4.2 The nurture of children demands:

- love and care
- physical contact and comfort
- nutrition, warmth and protection
- security and stability
- play, exploration, encouragement and risk
- education and respect
- friendships, expectation and purpose in life

4.3 The children's commissioner said that the nurture of children needs to be underpinned by accessible, appropriate and evidence based services and that children needed to be nurtured in communities so the whole community needs to be responsive.

4.4 Professor Ansley-Gore posed the question do children and young people get a good deal and cited the following:

- profound turbulence in society
- widening inequalities, poverty, wealth, health and education

- explosion of violence, crime and drug addiction
 - dramatic change in family structure.
- 4.5 The presentation also covered the impact on poverty on children, health indicators and the demonisation of young children through sections of the media.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The conference was useful to attend especially as councillors are going through the process of developing children's services in Nottinghamshire, this gave a better understanding of the issues and challenges and being able to listen to presentations by people such as Ms Eisenstadt who leads the Surestart Unit and Professor Ansley-Gore Children's Commissioner for England.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted.

Councillor Steve Carroll
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