

minutes



Meeting DRUGS EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 19th November 2007 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Councillor Edward Llewellyn-Jones (Chair)

Councillor Joe Lonergan (Vice Chair)

A Peter Barnes

A Steve Carr

John Carter

Bruce Laughton

A Sheila Place

Lynn Sykes

Parry Tsimbiridis

CO – OPTEES

A Mrs P Burbridge

A Mr E Hayes

Mr D Richards

A Mrs L Wooding

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Andy Freeman

Leah Sareen, Children & Young Persons & Substance Misuse Officer, Notts County Council

Dave Gilbert, Chief Executive of DARE

Sarah King, Life Education Centres.

James Upton, Face it.

Denis A McCarthy, Connexions, Nottinghamshire

Suanne Lim, Notts Youth Offending Service

Nicola Crisp, WAM (What about me)

Philip Kirkland, PSHCE Consultant and Healthy Schools Co-ordinator, Notts County Council

Claire Baker, Notts County Drug and Alcohol Team

John Berridge, Chairman of Notts County Drug and Alcohol Team

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Peter Barnes

Councillor Steve Carr

Councillor Sheila Place
Mrs P Burbidge
Mrs L Wooding
Mr E Hayes

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

EVIDENCE GATHERED FROM SCHOOL VISITS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He referred the Select Committee to the report that had been circulated, which gave a summary of the key findings on a recent visit of schools. Members had undertaken a visit on 5 November to the Garibaldi Maths and Technology College and Priestsic Primary School to examine the content and delivery of the current curriculum around drugs education. This had involved talking with children, young people and parents about their experience and views on drugs and the drug education programme in their schools.

During their visit, members also experienced a sample of a drama workshop by the Personal Development of Learners (PDL) team, concerning tobacco and cannabis and the influence on family members. The workshops were available on a wide range of issues that affected young people. They found the workshops to be a positive medium for getting messages over about drugs.

Councillor Llewelyn-Jones sought the Select Committee's views on the recent visits and report before them.

Members were pleased to note the amount of drugs education going on in schools and that students seemed to be enjoying it. Students at the secondary school had commented that with the passage of time, it was difficult to recall what they had learnt and felt that more could be done to reinforce the messages throughout their school life. Members were particularly encouraged to note the amount of knowledge and understanding the children at Priestsic School had acquired.

Councillor Lonergan expressed a concern regarding the potential for students to have a criminal record for a drug offence.

Councillor Tsimbiridis expressed his wish for the Committee to pursue how drug and alcohol related problems outside of schools were dealt with, in particular, how the authority/agencies liaised to deal with such problems.

The Select Committee acknowledged that it would take into account what was happening across all key stages.

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

The Select Committee heard from a number of representatives from the various organisations involved in the provision of drugs education and support who had been invited to provide members with information about their organisation. Each representative provided information on their organisation and drew attention to some of the current issues.

It was reported that over 90% of people in Nottinghamshire choose not to take illicit substances and that alcohol consumption was above the national average. This was a major area of concern since it was seen as being socially acceptable and part of our culture. The availability of alcohol was a problem that needed to be tackled. Significantly more harm was caused in Nottinghamshire by alcohol than drugs. The difficulty in restricting legal economic activities was acknowledged.

A common issue for services was getting parents engaged, particularly around misuse of substances. Co-ordination work was done by the Children and Young Persons Department in schools and community extended services to try and engage parents.

Secondary schools presented the most challenges, with only 53% PSHE accredited. Work was ongoing with the remaining 47%. It was considered that PSHE should be made compulsory in secondary schools. In terms of the national curriculum it was noted that there was a complex support package that was growing for schools to access.

A particular concern for many was for those children outside of mainstream education and at risk of exclusion. It was imperative to try and keep children in school. The Select Committee wondered what was being done to try and stop children being led into criminality. James Upton from FACE IT explained that different strategies were used to draw children away from crime. He referred to some of the early intervention work that was in place. There was currently a pilot scheme operating in six Nottinghamshire secondary schools which were due to complete in January 2008. These offered children involved in a drug or alcohol related incident the opportunity to have six sessions with an advisor from FACE IT in an attempt to avoid being permanently excluded.

Dave Gilbert, Chief Executive of DARE recognised that there were still gaps that needed addressing. He wanted to make a product available for schools and those who work with young people outside of school. In response to a question, he explained that enforcement was difficult and typically displaces somewhere else. Prisons were already full. There has been a lack of investment on prevention because of it being hard to measure.

The view was that a reclassification of cannabis would make little difference and make the work of the Police more difficult. It was felt that there needed to be a culture change and a brave Government to do something about this.

The Chair thanked everyone for contributing to the meeting and welcomed them to attend the next meeting if they wished.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.

CHAIR

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