

**REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

**KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. I am pleased to present the key issues and activities as Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People's Services, since the last report to Council.

**Closing the Gap Conference – 3 February 2012**

2. On my behalf, Councillor Allen Clarke attended this Nottinghamshire conference. The conference provided primary, secondary, special school & FE leaders with an opportunity to explore national and local leadership perspectives and current research on what makes a difference in breaking the link between deprivation and low educational attainment. The conference was attended by over 150 school colleagues, higher education and external agency partners as well as Local Authority officers from a range of key services.
3. The opening key note speaker was Sue Hackman, the Department for Education's Chief Adviser for School Standards. She provided an inspirational keynote speech focussing on the moral purpose and the leadership challenge for schools and settings. She also explored the tension between raising the achievement of vulnerable groups whilst also maintaining high standards and progress for all children and young people. Head teachers and senior leaders were especially keen to hear Sue share a range of proven practical strategies which have been particularly effective in raising the attainment of Free School Meal children. Amongst her list of the most effective, high impact strategies is the use of one to one tuition for students in receipt of Free School Meals and also for those children who are looked after.
4. The second keynote was delivered by Professor John West Burnham who is well known to Nottinghamshire Head Teachers and Senior Leaders for his work in developing sustainable models for leadership. He explored the moral and ethical challenges around leadership and the crucial necessity to "secure equity in the classroom" by providing high quality teaching and learning for vulnerable groups.
5. Optional workshops and seminars were delivered by a range of expert providers from Nottinghamshire schools, universities and national educational charities.

6. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. School leaders welcomed the opportunity to collectively engage with the particular challenges for vulnerable groups in Nottinghamshire. An Assistant Headteacher in a Nottinghamshire secondary school stated that “Sue Hackman, was an inspirational speaker who gave us some clear, basic messages that we all need to listen to in order to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups. Most importantly, we need to be able to learn from and build on latest research and evidence-based strategies that are proven to work in order to close gaps. Professor John West Burnham reminded us (as school leaders) of the key processes we must keep hold of when leading this agenda. All in all, a really good day which I thoroughly enjoyed.”
7. The conference also provided a context for County Council officers to work closely in partnership with school leaders, university colleagues and external providers.

### **Annual Governors’ Conference**

8. On Saturday 10 March 2012 I opened the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Governors Conference which was held at Mansfield Civic Centre. The aim of the conference (entitled “Mind the Gap!”) was to raise governors’ awareness of strategies for closing the education gap for vulnerable groups. This issue is a key priority for Nottinghamshire. The conference aimed to help governing bodies understand how they can work in partnership with school leaders to make a difference. Around 100 governors attended.
9. The key note speaker was Emma Knights, Chief Executive, National Governors Association (NGA). The NGA is the representative organisation for school governors and is able to influence Government ministers and policy makers on all matters relating to school governance. Anthony May, Corporate Director for Children, Families and Cultural Services also made a presentation at the event.
10. There were workshops on Nottinghamshire’s Child and Family Poverty Strategy, Extended Services, Early Years and Early Intervention and Strategies for closing the education gap.

### **Nottinghamshire Music Education Hub**

11. I have approved an application by the Arts and Sports for Children and Young People team to lead the Nottinghamshire Music Education Hub. Arts Council England is the fund holder for music education hubs which will operate in every local authority in England from September 2012. The application to lead a music education hub in Nottinghamshire is based on the following vision:

*‘We want all children and young people in Nottinghamshire to be able to access high quality learning opportunities in music which are relevant to their own musical interests. We want all children and young people to join a wide range of music groups and to progress to their own level of musical excellence.’*

12. Nottinghamshire County Council is working with a range of stakeholders including schools and specific groups of children and young people and partners including local orchestras, ensembles and other groups to develop and deliver this vision.

## **Transformation of Children's Social Care - Meetings for Staff and Managers**

13. To support the consultation process on the proposed new staffing structures in Children's Social Care, information and feedback events were held for all staff on 22 February and for managers on 28 February 2012.
14. All events were well attended, with the Service Director for Children's Social Care providing the rationale for the proposals in the context of current service demand, budget and future challenges. Staff were able to provide some immediate feedback on the proposals, and have an input into some of the other projects within the wider Children's Social Care Transformation Programme. Initial feedback from staff indicates that the principles behind the model are widely accepted.
15. The consultation closed on 15 March, and staff made formal submissions to the consultation through the intranet site, either as individuals or as part of their teams. It is intended to implement the new structures in the autumn of 2012.

## **Ryton Park Official Opening**

16. On Friday 2 March 2012, the Chairman of the County Council and I presided over the official opening of Ryton Park Primary School in Worksop. This is now one of our largest primary schools – providing places for 525 pupils from the Manton and Ryton Park areas of Worksop town. The children entertained their guests by sharing their views about the new school, demonstrating their talents at dancing, playing violins and drums, singing and playing steel pans. The Head Teacher, Richard Lilley, took us through a history of improvement the school has made since amalgamation and his appointment in 2004, and guests were given a tour of the wonderful new buildings. This school has a strong partnership with other providers of social care in the area and is impressive in the way it operates with a broad range of services providing support to children and their families. Everyone receives a warm welcome at the school and I look forward to watching it go from strength to strength in its new building.

## **Section 106 funding**

17. At the previous Cabinet meeting concerns were expressed around issues in collecting Section 106 contributions from district council's for education infrastructure. I am pleased to confirm that Nottinghamshire County Council always provides evidence and a business case for developer contributions for education where there is likely to be a shortage of places due to housing development. I have instructed officers to continue to work closely with district councils and review relationships where necessary to ensure greater awareness and understanding of education needs across the county. Such a meeting has recently taken place with officers of the county and Ashfield District Council to promote better understanding of education needs, funding mechanisms and the emerging policy context at Ashfield.

## **Disabled Children's Play Forum**

18. Councillor Lynn Sykes, Deputy Cabinet Member with responsibility for Youth Services, attended the Play for Disabled Children Team's Residential on Saturday 25 February 2012.
19. Ten disabled children and young people attended the residential break at the Robin Hood Scout Camp site in Blidworth. The group visited The Mill Activity Base and enjoyed indoor climbing and various art activities in the morning.
20. Back at the Camp site in the afternoon the group were joined by Cllr Lynn Sykes who was given a tour of the refurbished building followed by an opportunity to meet the children and young people who were making toast and jam at the fire pit in the woods. Back inside Cllr Sykes saw the sensory area, imaginary play activities, crafts and table top games. Cllr Sykes was pleased to see the children and young people's excitement about the disco arriving after tea.
21. Before leaving Cllr Sykes was informed about how the children and young people are consulted on and participate in decisions about meeting their wishes and needs, and how this gives them the opportunity to do the things that their non disabled peers engage in.
22. The Play for Disabled Children Team provides county wide short breaks play and social activities to disabled children and young people with high level and complex needs from the age of 5 to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **Episodes 2012 – County Youth Dance Platform**

23. On Saturday 28 January, Councillor Allen Clarke attended the Nottinghamshire Youth Dance Platform at the Nottingham Playhouse theatre. The event was organised and hosted by Dance4 and included performances from school and groups from the city and county. Nottinghamshire County Council's NPA Dance Company performed the premiere of their piece 'Aftermath' choreographed by Marso Riviere. The group of 14 dancers combined contemporary dance and break dance technique in their piece based on the effects of the Japanese tsunami. Councillor Clarke was delighted to learn that the NPA Dance Company has subsequently been selected to take part in the regional youth dance platform on 24 March.

## **County Youth Arts Showcase**

24. On Friday 17 February, Councillor Allen Clarke attended the County Youth Arts Showcase at the Palace Theatre, Mansfield. The performance included a wide range of dance, drama, music and film from youth groups and individual young people from around Nottinghamshire. Councillor Clarke commented: 'It is terrific to see the range of talent of young people in Nottinghamshire. I was particularly impressed with the hard work of some young people in overcoming barriers – some of them performing in front of an audience for the first time.'

## **Long Service Awards for Foster Carers**

25. Cllr Allen Clarke and I attended a civic event at County Hall, on Tuesday 6 March 2012, to honour foster carers with 25, 30, 35 and 40 years service. A total of 12 foster carers attended on the day that had, between them, 270 years of fostering!
26. Nottinghamshire County Council Chairman Councillor Keith Walker welcomed the foster carers and thanked them for their years of dedication and service to looked after children. Councillor Walker heard from all the foster carers about the hundreds of children they have fostered over the years; some of the foster children have gone on to have families of their own and now regard their foster carers as surrogate grandparents.

## **Nottinghamshire School Games**

27. In the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond, the new "School Games" programme is designed to boost participation in competitive sport for young people of all abilities and backgrounds. The overall aim is to significantly increase the year round calendar of competitive school sport. The first level of the games is competition within a school, level 2 is inter-school with level 3 being the county finals.
28. The winter finals took place on 27 February 2012 when more than 600 children from 55 schools gathered at 4 venues to compete in 7 different Sports. The summer finals will take place on 4 July 2012, shortly after the Olympic Torch passes through the county.
29. In selected sports, where pathways exist, winning schools may progress to regional finals and in some cases, will have the opportunity to move on to compete in national competitions. It is anticipated that the School Games will impact positively on young people's school sport and physical education experience and add significant value to the school as a whole.
30. The games also provide quality opportunities for young leaders to play support function roles (reporters, commentators, announcers, photographers, musicians and artists) and to test their skills in a live event environment, particularly at the opening ceremony.
31. The events are led by Sport Nottinghamshire the county sports partnership organisation and the County Council as a partner plays a number of significant development roles. In particular the County Council led the liaison with the National Governing Bodies of sport, ensuring that the games will have a lasting legacy by forging links with local clubs.
32. The Sports Development Manager (Community Sport) led on all events welfare, drafting and consulting on the welfare plan and providing content for the welfare training for all young leaders that were involved in the event.
33. Young volunteers from schools and other educational establishments were coordinated by Rob Cook from Sport Nottinghamshire and John Selby-Sly the County Council's volunteering officer.

34. Two athletes from Nottinghamshire County Council Shining Stars programme Sam Hunter (gymnastics) and Laura Blakeman (canoe slalom) supported the event on the day.
35. Feedback on the February games has been collated and plans are underway for the management of the summer games.

### **Visit by Hillside Primary School to County Hall**

36. As part of a regular programme of visits to County Hall by pupils from primary schools across Nottinghamshire fourteen children from Hillside Primary School in Hucknall attended County Hall on Tuesday 28 February 2012. The aim of the visits, which are organised by the Young People's Service Children and Young People's Participation Team, is to give children from school councils an insight into aspects of local government.
37. The children from Hillside Primary School met Councillor Keith Walker Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Lynn Sykes, and Deputy Cabinet Member with responsibility for youth services and Councillor Kevin Rostance, elected member for Hucknall.
38. After an informal lunch in the Civic Suite, Councillor Walker invited the school council to hold its meeting in the Council Chamber. The children had the opportunity to address questions to the elected members in attendance. The chair and vice-chair of the school council were allowed to wear the civic dress usually reserved for the Chairman and the Chairman's Lady when attending official functions.
39. At the close of the session Councillor Walker gave a brief tour of County Hall and presented the children with a memento of their visit.

**Councillor Philip Owen**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services**

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