

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 9 December 2010

agenda item number

7a iv.

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

Safeguarding and Looked After Children Improvement Programme

1. My report to the Council meeting on 22 July 2010 informed of the establishment of a new Safeguarding Improvement Board to oversee work of our Safeguarding Improvement Programme.
2. In October, colleagues from the DfE Intervention Unit led the first review meeting of the Improvement Notice and I am pleased to report that this review was very positive. Specifically, the DfE recognised that much progress has clearly been made in establishing the building blocks for change, with clear corporate and political commitment. There was also recognition of the hard work of staff and that there have been a number of key steps taken by the County Council to date, notably:
 - substantial investment in children's social care to boost resources and capacity;
 - a recruitment programme to replace agency staff with permanent social workers;
 - training, quality assurance and performance management initiatives to drive up the quality of front line practice;
 - improved auditing arrangements;
 - the reconfiguration of the reception and assessment service; and
 - development of the Pathways to Provision document that sets out the thresholds for access to children's social care.
3. The impact to date has been that: the backlog of cases in the reception and assessment service has been cleared; timeliness has improved across a number of areas; and there is much better understanding and use of performance management information across the service. However, the service remains under considerable demand-led pressures which mean that, whilst the overall direction of travel is positive, empirical data still show some fluctuation in performance. For example, concerns remain about continuing high levels of referrals, with too many of these not meeting social care thresholds. This is leading to high workloads for our social workers. In this regard, effective implementation of the Pathways to Provision initiative is critical and we are seeking the support of all our partners in ensuring

that the guidance in the Pathways document is followed across all agencies.

4. The Safeguarding Improvement Programme Board is committed to a continuing programme of initiatives to address these challenges, and the next steps for the Council and partners include:
 - the recruitment of a new Service Director for the Social Care Division;
 - setting out a new 'vision and mission' for the Children's Social Care to set a clear course for its future and reaffirm its role and responsibilities; and
 - increasing staff engagement in the improvement programme, in particular continuing to develop the skills of frontline social workers and team managers;
5. Underpinning this is a continuing commitment from this administration to prioritise investment in children's social care, with a total additional sum of £18.3m earmarked for 2011/12 to enable recruitment of additional permanent fieldwork staff and to meet demand for specialist external foster care placements (within the context of a long-term plan to increase the Council's internal fostering capacity).

Visit by India Links Project

6. On 3 November 2010, the Chairman, Councillor Tom Pettengell and Councillor Philip Owen, welcomed teachers from India who were visiting their partner schools in Nottinghamshire, to County Hall. Following a civic reception in the Chairman's office, children from Richard Bonington School in Arnold gave a presentation about their project and how international partnerships had helped enhance their learning experience in the classroom.
7. During their week long visit, the Indian teachers visited a number of schools across the County and were able to observe lessons and work with children to plan future joint classroom projects. The India-Nottinghamshire schools partnership was established in 2000 and is now a thriving example of local and international partnerships. Through these links, pupils in both countries are able to communicate with each another, share experiences and work on shared curriculum projects.

Children's Services celebration event

8. On Thursday, 4 November Councillor Philip Owen along with the Chairman, Councillor Tom Pettengell hosted a civic reception to celebrate the completion of the portfolio of 58 Children's Centres across Nottinghamshire.
9. Each Children's Centre sent a parent representative along with a member of the Children's Centre team. Also in attendance were

colleagues, partners and leadership staff from Children's Centres, elected Members and senior officers of Nottinghamshire County Council.

10. The event was opened by Anthony May. Anthony welcomed everyone to the event and introduced Councillor Pettengell, who spoke about the role of Children's Centres in early intervention and access to services for families with young children. Councillor Pettengell was followed by Councillor Owen who spoke about the local picture, the number of organisations working in partnership with the local authority and the nature of the targeted work taking place through Children's Centres.
11. Two parents from Bassetlaw and Newark Children's Centres then spoke about their experiences as centre users. Elaine, from Prospect Kilton Centre talked about her personal experiences and those of her family. Elaine was passionate and emotional as she recalled her journey for the audience who were clearly moved by her words. Anne from Bridge Children's Centre spoke of her contribution as part of the Children's Centre team as a parent and a volunteer, telling those present about the boost to her confidence as a part of the community and as a parent.
12. Each district group of Children's Centres has prepared a display to demonstrate their work with particular groups. During an informal buffet, guests were free to wander, meet staff and families and ask more about the services provided. The displays were supported by parents and families from the centres who spoke about their achievements. Some of these parents celebrated success in adult learning, volunteering and training, and others shared their experiences when they had more intensive support from the centre. There was evidence of work supporting health promotion, raising attainment and tackling child poverty, as well as provision specifically for young parents, dads, travellers and ethnic minority groups.
13. At the end of the event, John Thorn, Service Manager for Early Years spoke of his pride in this work and the achievements of the families and staff across Nottinghamshire. The event was closed by Anthony May thanking all those present for their contributions and adding his congratulations to the previous speakers.

Deputy Portfolio events

Show Racism the Red Card event

14. A civic reception was hosted by Councillor Allen Clarke at County Hall on Wednesday, 13 October 2010 to celebrate the achievements of more than seventy young people in this year's Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) competition. The event and supporting year-long educational programme was organised by the Ethnicity, Culture and Achievement Service (ECAS) in conjunction with the Middlesbrough based national charity, SRTRC. Parents, carers, children and young people, and their school representatives were welcomed to County Hall by Chairman, Councillor Tom Pettengell. This address was followed by

a speech from Councillor Clarke who remarked on the importance of the competition in educating young people to develop tolerance and understanding of each others' cultures and faiths. Councillor Clarke also acknowledged Nottinghamshire's continuing success both locally and nationally with the standard of entries being consistently high year after year.

15. He was then joined on stage by Frank Clarke and Nottingham born footballer, Chris Freestone, who presented the individual prizes to the entrants before an audience of around 150 guests. Each young person received a certificate, goody bag and £10 gift voucher, and was photographed receiving their prize before the main prize winners were announced. Emmie Bennet-Price of Sir Edmund Hillary Primary School in Bassetlaw was awarded third prize collecting another gift voucher and SRTRC t-shirt for herself and a cheque of £100 for her school. Second prize of £150 went to All Hallows C of E Primary School in Gedling, for their entry by Amber Newton. The first prize of £250 was awarded to Coppice Farm Primary, also in Gedling, for their entry by Daniel Layzell.
16. Both Frank Clarke and Jo Wallis of SRTRC gave a short speech applauding all those who took part for their hard efforts and the schools' commitment to the campaign. Jo also spoke on behalf of Nottingham Forest Football Club, who had been unable to send any representatives to the event. Forest however, showed their support for the young entrants and SRTRC by donating match tickets, a tour of the ground and the opportunity to meet a Forest player during the current season for each of the main prize winners.
17. Prizes were also awarded to the three young judges who formed part of this year's judging panel along with Councillor Allen Clarke, Councillor Lynn Sykes, and Derek Higton, Service Director for Engagement and Enrichment. Following further photo and networking opportunities, the event was brought to an end through closing remarks made by Derek Higton. The winning entries, through the charity, have been made into posters which will be sent to every school, youth club, library and police station across the county in order to promote the campaign and encourage more young people to get on board next year. They will also be submitted to the national competition and it is hoped that Nottinghamshire will continue to enjoy the success of the previous two years, when our entrants have picked up first and second prizes for their art work. In the interim, ECAS will once again be launching the competition locally in the new year.

Shadow Night Orienteering event 2010

18. The 36th Shadow Night Orienteering event 2010 took place in Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve on 16/17 October. The event is organised jointly by the Youth Support Service and Learning Outside the Classroom through the Adventure team based in Mansfield.

19. From an initial 87 teams who subscribed, 81 teams took part in the event on the night, approximately 400 young people. Over half of the entrants were from the Nottinghamshire Youth Service and the other teams were made up from Duke of Edinburgh, Scouts, Guides, Methodist Youth, Rangers, ATC, and other youth service providers from the county.
20. The event started with temperatures down to 5°C with an expected drop through the night of 2°C. Intermittent cloud cover and forest cover kept frost away, although there were pockets of frost in exposed places. The teams were challenged to navigate around three sectors, within 7 hours, with each sector having 5 incidents in each. These incidents ranged from team games to 'fun' sessions; each incident was scored out of 20 points. All the incidents were staffed with Youth Workers or volunteers who spent the night in the woods.
21. To make certain that the competitors were safe and well feed, the Halfway Feeding Station, headed up by Nottinghamshire County Council's Youth Service Leadership team; Chris Warren, Nigel Down, Lyndsey Woolmore and helpers, serviced the event by providing a midway refreshment point where young people could get a bite to eat and a warm drink before continuing on their way. To ensure the safety of the competitors other organisations involved providing support:-
 - British Red Cross;
 - Nottinghamshire Emergency Scout Support Team (N.E.S.S.T) – emergency radio and safety network;
 - Police – SPC Grant White was joined by SPC. Dawn Lesh;
 - Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre Restaurant – staff worked tirelessly to provide the evening meals and the breakfasts for the staff who were working throughout the night and the young people taking part;
 - W.R.V.S – invaluable as ever, providing support for the catering service;
 - Park Rangers – the rangers were on hand to deal with any problems that required assistance with.
22. Shadow 36, saw a remarkable 400 young people go away with a 'memorable experience' and that is its primary aim. Night orienteering in one of the country's most famous woodlands Sherwood Forest is a unique experience where 13/19year olds work as a team, map read in the dark, experience endurance against the elements, sleep deprivation, walk several kilometres, are asked to do challenges, meet new people, make friends and have fun.

23. The presentation for the winning team's took place at the Mill Adventure Base Friday on Friday, 26 November 2010.

COUNCILLOR PHILIP OWEN

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

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