

Lancashire County Council

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday 20 April 2010 at 10.30am at County Hall, Preston

Minutes

Present:

County Councillors

Mrs S Derwent (Chair)

K Bailey	J Hanson ¹
R Bailey	J Jackson
RN Blow	A Kay
K Brown	J Mein ²
C Evans	P Steen
P Evans	B Winlow

M Younis

¹County Councillor J Hanson attended in place of County Councillor C Crompton

²County Councillor J Mein attended in place of County Councillor C Wells

Voting Co-opted Members

Mr T Charnock	- Representative for RC Schools
Mrs J Dowson	- Representative for Free Church Schools
Canon D Durham	- Representative of CE Schools
Mrs J Hamid	- Parent Governors (Secondary Phase)
Mr J Withington	- Parent Governors (Primary Phase)

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G Askew, C Coates, C Grunshaw and A Knox.

Announcement

The Chair reported the sad death of County Councillor Bill Bennett who died on 13 March after a short illness. He was elected to the county council in June 2009 representing Burnley Central East Division, and was a member of this committee. He was also a Burnley Borough councillor. The Chair invited the committee to stand in silent tribute.

Disclosure of Personal/Prejudicial Interests

A number of members disclosed a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 4 (Lancashire Children's Trust) because they were each members of their local Children's Trust, namely County Councillors R Blow, S Derwent, C Evans, A Kay, J Mein and M Younis.

Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2010 were presented.

49. Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

Response to the recommendations of the Elective Home Education Task Group

The Elective Home Education (EHE) Task Group presented its report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 March 2009. Fifteen recommendations were made and the then Cabinet Member provided a formal response (detailed at Appendix A to the report now presented).

However, at that time, it was considered prudent not to take further action pending the final report of a national review: A Review of Elective Home Education in England, which was being carried out by Graham Badman. It was decided to delay consideration of the task group recommendations until the outcomes of the Badman Review and the government's response to the review were known.

In June 2009, Badman's report on the Review of Elective Home Education in England was published. An overview of the Badman report was included at Appendix B to the report now presented. Twenty Eight recommendations had been made and accepted by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Many of the recommendations in the task group's report were mirrored in the Badman report. The Badman recommendations were far reaching for local authorities and strengthened the right of local authority officers to have "right of access to the home" and "speak to the child alone if appropriate."

The Children, Schools and Families Bill, had been progressing through parliamentary procedures and it had been expected to become law in the 'wash-up' period (the last few days of a Parliament, after the election had been announced but before dissolution). However, it was now reported to the committee that not everything in the Bill had been enacted as expected and that the elective home education element had been dropped.

Mike Hart, Director of Children's Strategy and Resources came to the table and explained that whilst the passage of the Bill in its entirety would have provided a clear legislative basis to progress the recommendations of the EHE Task Group, it was important to now look at the issues raised by the task group within the existing framework.

In considering the report members raised a number of comments and concerns many of which had already been addressed by the task group. A copy of the EHE Task Group's report may be viewed on the county council's web site with the agenda for the meeting held on 24 March 2009 via the following link:

<http://lccweb3/council/meetings/displayAgendas.asp?meetid=5884>

It was emphasised that the county council had a legal responsibility to safeguard children and that it would do all that it could within the current framework to fulfil that responsibility. One member urged that the county council should press the next government to ensure that Badman's recommendations were enacted as soon as possible.

It was suggested that a further report be brought to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the summer to set out how the recommendations of the EHE Task Group would be addressed in light of the EHE elements of the Children, Schools and Families Bill not being passed into legislation.

50. Resolved: That a further report be brought to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the summer to set out how the recommendations of the Elective Home Education Task Group would be addressed.

Lancashire Children's Trust

The report presented by Ann Pennell, Director of Commissioning Performance and Business Support, explained that the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (ASCL) required all local authorities and their partners to put in place arrangements for ensuring the wellbeing of all children and young people. Section 10 of the Act set out how this requirement should be met through the establishment of a children's trust.

A PowerPoint presentation was used to describe the key changes brought about by the Act and set out the process for implementing those changes in Lancashire. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is appended to these minutes. An electronic version may be viewed alongside the minutes on the county council's web site via the following link:

<http://lccweb3/council/meetings/committees/overview/committee.asp?cid=1179>

Members raised a number of comments and questions the main points of which are summarised as follows:

- In response to a question whether employer organisations were represented on the Children's Trust, it was confirmed that key public sector employers had a place round the table. The guidance around membership was currently being reviewed; the point about the possible contribution from employers was acknowledged as an important one and would be considered further.
- Parents were also recognised as important contributors to the Trust's business and much work was being done with parent's organisations.

- It was noted that partner organisations had agreed to make a financial commitment to the business support structure for the Children's Trust, but it was confirmed that no financial contribution had been sought from voluntary organisations with which the Trust had strong links. Work was ongoing with the voluntary sector around a new approach to commissioning.
- In response to a question whether there was a statutory requirement to pool funds, it was explained that the guidance was not prescriptive and currently the county council's approach was to encourage voluntary contributions, however this was an issue that would require further work in consultation with partners.
- In terms of specific information about the practical impact of Children's Trusts on young people, the committee was assured that the Children and Young People's Plan had very clear outcomes against the Every Child Matters agenda. The first annual report setting out achievements was due in June. Much excellent work was ongoing and evidence and case studies to demonstrate this could be provided to the committee on request.
- It was acknowledged that accountability was a very complex issue; whilst partner organisations would come together within the Trust arrangements they remained separate organisations in their own right. Also the Children's Trust was itself part of the Local Strategic Partnership. Accountability around the various funding streams might differ. It was hoped that matters such as accountability would be clarified in the new statutory guidance.
- In response to some concerns about differing local needs, it was explained that the Children and Young People's Plan set out countywide priorities which were based on detailed analysis of a huge amount of data. There would be a detailed consultation and engagement exercise to feed into the needs assessment. The Children's Trust Board would sign off the countywide priorities providing a framework from which local Children's Trusts would set their own local priorities.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the proposals for implementing Section 10 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 in Lancashire.

51. Resolved: That the report be noted.

Local Area Agreement

The report presented by Mike Hart, Head Director of Children's Strategy and Resources, set out the latest position with the five national indicators and two local indicators which made up the Local Area Agreement (LAA), Children and Young People's Theme. Detailed information about the seven priority targets were at Appendix A to the report now presented and headline information was described in the main report. The Committee had received specific reports on some of the priorities at recent meetings.

It was explained that the purpose of the report was essentially to inform the committee about progress against relevant indicators and to allow members the opportunity to identify areas which might be of further interest to scrutiny.

In receiving the report members raised a number of comments and questions; the main points are summarised below:

- Regarding the local indicator about oral health, it was acknowledged that there had been some successes in parts of the county, but there were challenges in other areas.
- The other local target aimed to reduce the number of schools falling below the floor target threshold to nil by 2011 and it was confirmed that the five schools listed in the report would all be part of National Challenge Trust arrangements by September 2010. National Challenge was the Government's School Improvement Strategy to transform schools, raise results in English and maths, and tackle underachievement by young people. The committee was assured that there were no proposals for any further academies in Lancashire.
- It was confirmed that the county council was working with Skerton High school to help secure its future; the closure of Skerton Primary school had no direct impact on the high school.
- Obesity among children was a very serious concern, however it was considered important to be sensitive about the terminology used; 'healthy weight' was the preferred term in the Children and Young People's Plan. In response to a question about the definition of obese, it was explained that this was a government definition based on the ratio of weight to height and body mass index.
- It was acknowledged that, partly owing to the nature of the subject, the data for under 18 conceptions was always out of date and that the latest available figures (2008) showed a slight increase in Lancashire overall. However there had been some significant success stories in certain areas of the county and work was ongoing with the relevant PCTs to address issues in other areas.

52. Resolved: That the report be noted.

Recent and Forthcoming Decisions

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Forward Plan which briefly set out matters likely to be subject to Key Decisions over the next four month period. The Forward Plan was available on the County Council's Democratic Information System website at:

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/meetings/forwardPlanOfKeyDecisions.asp>

The report also provided information about decisions recently made by the cabinet and individual cabinet members in areas relevant to the remit of the Committee, in order that this could inform possible future areas of work.

53. Resolved: That members would consider whether there were any Executive Decisions listed in the Forward Plan, or decisions recently made by the cabinet and individual cabinet members in areas relevant to the remit of the committee that they wished to raise for consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Work Plan 2009/10

The Committee received a report, which provided a list of topics for possible consideration by this committee in the coming months.

54. Resolved: That the report be noted.

Items for Information

The report informed members on a series of information items to support the work of the committee.

55. Resolved: That the report be noted.

Date of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next scheduled meeting of this committee was 8 June 2010 at 2.00pm at County Hall, Preston.

In closing this meeting the Chair noted that it was the last one of the municipal year and she thanked all members for their contribution to the work of the committee over the past year.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor
County Hall
Preston

Lancashire Children's Trust

Aim of the presentation

To describe the key changes which come about as a result of Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (ASCL)

To set out the process for implementing those changes in Lancashire

Children's Trusts: Definitions



A children's trust is:

a local partnership which brings together the organisations responsible for services for children, young people and families in a shared commitment to improving children's lives.

Children's Trusts: Definitions



The aim of a children's trust is:

to work across professional and agency boundaries to tackle complex problems proactively to make a real difference to the experience and life chances of children, young people and their families.

Children's Trusts: Definitions

A children's trust will:

- listen to the views of children and young people, parents and carers about what services they need;
- promote joint working between all professionals;
- ensure effective planning and delivery of services, based upon a robust analysis of needs;
- use resources flexibly and creatively;
- overcome unnecessary barriers to sharing and using information.

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009



Main changes as a result of the new legislation:

- The Children's Trust is statutory from April 2010
- The category of "relevant partner" has been introduced (previously duty to co-operate partner)
- Ownership of the Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP) is with the Children's Trust from April 2011

Guidance

There are two sets of guidance driving this agenda

- Are we There Yet – Audit Commission 2009: national summary of progress with trusts
- Draft Statutory Guidance on Trusts: consultation completed in January; final version awaited (Spring)

Lancashire's Response

- Analysis of our current position when assessed against both sets of guidance
- Realistic assessment of what is required to meet the new requirements by:
 - The County Council (as responsible authority)
 - Relevant partners
 - Other partners
- Within what time scale are the changes to be achieved

Actions

- Cabinet report which defines LCC duties
- Creating workstreams
 - Governance
 - Children & Young People's Plan
 - Performance – monitoring
 - Engagement
- Partner agencies taking the lead for the work streams
- Reaching conclusions by September