

At a meeting of the Children's Trust Board held on Wednesday, 28 March 2012 at 6:30 pm at the Committee Room 3, Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow.

**Present:**

Councillor Jagdish Sharma (Chair)

Councillor Lily Bath, Carole Carr, Councillor Steve Curran, Chris Hogan, Michael Marks, Judith Pettersen, Youth Council Representative Harune Akthar accompanied by Stephen Hutchinson, Dr Mike Robinson, Dr. Nan Sharma and Alison Simmons

**36. 6.30pm-6.35pm - Introductions and Apologies for Absence**

The Chair invited introductions from those members present.

Apologies were received on behalf of Sue Jeffers, John Norton and C.I. Robert Wilson.

Apologies were also received on behalf of Marjorie Semple, who was represented by Tracey Aust, Vice Principal West Thames College; Richard Tyler, who was represented by Natalie Douglas Assistant Director and Sandy Fenwick, who was represented by her deputy, Nishi Madhok.

Harune Akthar was in attendance as the Youth Council Representative.

**37. 6.35pm-6.40pm - Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2011**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2011 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

**38. 6.40pm-7.00pm - Healthy Weight Strategy - Catherine Heffernan**

See report from the Chair of the Healthy Weight Board, Agenda Item 3.

Dr Catherine Heffernan led members through her submitted report. In response to questions on the collection of local datasets in relation to the effectiveness of healthy weight initiatives, Dr Heffernan confirmed that schools would not be asked to submit additional data, rather the dataset would be compiled using information already available from providers of services who were members of the Health Weight Board, which included representatives of the Schools Sports Partnership.

When asked about the report's reference to weight management interventions provided for overweight and obese children aged 7 years and older (See report: 8<sup>th</sup> bullet point under Progress On The Plan heading), Dr Heffernan confirmed that younger children aged between 5-7 years were catered for by MEND and that children under 5 years identified as overweight or obese were referred to a child dietician for specialist intervention. She explained that MEND offered 3 different programmes, all of which were quite expensive to commission. Due to budget constraints the decision had been taken to commission the initiative, which covered a gap in the borough's provision at that time. As further funding was available for the coming year, the borough would commission programmes for both the 5-7 years and the 7-13 years age ranges.

Judith Pettersen sought clarification on the reasons behind the red 'RAG' rating for provision of accredited training programmes to Children Centre staff and running healthy eating

sessions for parents. Dr Heffernan stated that this had not been completed to date because of shortages in staff capacity. It was noted that changes within the Local Authority and increased stability in staffing teams should enable this to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Referring to the Children's and Young People's Obesity Care Pathway 2011 (See page 35 of the agenda pack) Dr Heffernan explained that the specialist teams offered physical activity and dietary advice tailored to both the specific child and their family. Homework was set in an attempt to initiate changed behaviour and weight and eating habits were monitored over a period of time. The MEND programme was a well established one and was regarded as a fun way of changing people's dietary and exercise habits.

Councillor Curran drew attention to the government report, which identified approximately 500,000 families alleged to have been involved in the August 2011 riots, and asked how Dr Heffernan's work might fit in with that report. Ms Pettersen reminded the Board of the Council's Troubled Families programme linked to the government's figures identifying 585 such families in the borough. Under this programme families would be allocated a key worker who would work with the family to facilitate access to support programmes. Michael Marks informed the Board that the level of support offered under this initiative would be tailored to the needs of the specific family, whilst taking into account support that was already in place. It was anticipated that issues such as alcohol, drugs and mental health would be a strong feature of this initiative.

**39. 8.05pm-8.25pm - Children and Young People's Plan - Judith Pettersen**

See report from the Director of Children's Services, Agenda Item 6.

Head of Performance & Service Development in Children's Services, Jacqui McShannon, introduced the submitted draft and asked for comments from the Board. It was anticipated that the Plan would be agreed by the June meeting.

Judith Pettersen complimented officers for their work on the document and stressed the need for the Plan to be owned and used by the partnership in a move away from 'top down' to 'collective ownership'. Ms Pettersen stated that the Board brought together a number of partners and each representative sat on a number of partnership bodies. Members were asked to contact Jacqui McShannon or the Clerk, Kay Duffy, with their ideas on how partner organisations could be encouraged to take ownership of the Plan.

Ms Pettersen proposed that the section on health be presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board. Mike Robinson stated that the draft Health & Wellbeing Strategy was out for consultation and could provide an opportunity to raise some of the issues within the Children & Young People's Plan, particularly on health. He added that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) brought together people from the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and offered another consultation opportunity. Dr Robinson was of the opinion that the borough's GPs would welcome the opportunity to be part of the consultation. He also suggested getting the Plan on the agendas linked to the community cohesion and development work managed by Dugald Millar, Assistant Director Joint Commissioning.

When asked what groups had been approached during the consultation on the Plan, Julia Woodman informed the Board that officers had used a number of partners including Leisure, C-SPAN and health, all of which had worked together well. Dr Heffernan added that the Children's Health Sub-group had discussed the Plan in some detail at its last meeting and had submitted comments as a result of those discussions.

Carole Carr expressed the view that the borough's schools clearly had a lot to do with the Plan

and suggested that head teachers be given an opportunity to have a look at the document at their next partnership meeting in May.

**Resolved:**

- That the format and chapter headings for the Children & Young People's Plan 2012-15 be approved by the Children's Trust Board.
- That the themes, priorities and scope of outcomes and improvement targets for the Children & Young People's Plan 2012-15 (Appendix 1) be approved by the Children's Trust Board.

**40. 7.00pm-7.45pm - Adoptions Presentation - Chris Hogan**

Chris Hogan, Assistant Director Specialist Services, gave a presentation to the Board on the adoptions process. She was joined by Sallie Mercer, Head of Corporate Parenting, and Veronica Johannesen, Team Manager Social Services Department.

Ms Hogan informed the Board that adoption was one of a number of permanence options, including the return of the child to its home, placing the child with a relative, long-term foster care, issuing a Residence Order that conveyed parental responsibility on the child's carers in association with the child's parents and finally Special Guardianship, where the child retained contact with its birth family.

The Board heard about the 'adoption triangle' made up of the child, adopters and birth parents. Consideration had to be given to a number of factors including the reasons the child had been put up for adoption, the motivation of those wishing to adopt and the provision of grief counselling - independent of the Local Authority - to the birth parents up until the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Sallie Mercer explained that the number of children classed as 'relinquished' children - being put up for adoption by their families - had dropped to only one or two children per year in this borough, whereas most children entering the adoption process were classified as Looked After Children. Prospective adopters approached the Local Authority and were fully assessed before being deemed suitable for adoption. The Independent Adoption Panel then made a recommendation to the agency decision maker, Chris Hogan.

The Board was informed that the government's Action Plan for Adoption explained the way the process would be redesigned to make it more clear and effective with the view that the sooner a child was in a permanent placement the better. Local authorities would be compared against each other and against other adoption agencies. If they were deemed to be ineffective, they could lose the right to act as an adoption agency.

In response to a question on the percentage of children who were returned into care due to the breakdown of the adoption Sallie Mercer assured the Board that, whilst it was acknowledged that this could happen, no adoptions had failed in Hounslow to date. Post adoption support was recognised as a critical factor in securing the success of an adoption.

Michael Marks indicated that Hounslow Council rarely recruited adopters from within the borough, primarily for child protection reasons, but used a large proportion of families from the suburbs and areas such as Brighton, Reading, Wales and the north of England and made use of a national adoption register. Ms Mercer added that the government's aim was to raise awareness of adoption and of the children waiting, including the number older children and sibling groups that were more difficult to place.

When asked whether matching ethnicity and religion was still an issue, Chris Hogan assured

the Board that Hounslow would not hold up the placement of a child where it was unable to fully match all the criteria, particularly in trans-racial placements. Instead the adoptive family were asked to promote – but not necessarily to practice - certain areas of the child's birth family's background.

#### **41. 7.45pm-8.05pm - Two-year Disadvantage Offer - Chrissie Elam**

See submitted report from the Head of Early Years and Childcare, together with the presentation slides circulated at the meeting, Agenda Item 5.

Chrissie Elam, Head of Early Years and Childcare, suggested that tonight's presentation offered members an opportunity to contribute their thinking on the Council's proposed model of delivery, which would be funded through the Early Intervention Grant.

The additional places would be provided through pre-schools and day nurseries. The borough currently had provision for 1,000 2 year old children so it was acknowledged that to provide 1,800 by 2014 would pose a challenge. Added to this challenge was the expectation that a number of children would also present with additional needs, which would in turn put pressure on partner agencies when there was early identification of additional needs.

However, Ms Elam assured members of the opportunity to provide a range of benefits to the children's life chances through access to high quality early years provision and indeed the increased cost effectiveness of early intervention, as detailed in the submitted report.

In determining the number of additional places that would be needed, officers were aware that historically during a year a third more children accessed childcare than the actual number of places available, due to children turning 3 and places becoming available during the year for other 2 year old children. In addition to the current provision in Hounslow it was anticipated that an additional 900 early years provision places would need to be created. Ms Elam referred to the circulated presentation, estimating a need for 37 new early years' settings to be developed either through new buildings or through refurbishment of existing buildings. As well as the issue of capital investment, which is not currently being funded by central government, there was also the challenge of where to locate these buildings. Officers were investigating unused buildings in the borough and suitable locations in disadvantaged areas and close to those families eligible for the provision.

In response to questions, Ms Elam stated that in order to be eligible to be funded by the Local Authority to offer EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) provider childminders would have to have achieved a 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted rating in addition to being accredited to offer the 3 and 4 year old free entitlement.

Judith Pettersen stated that she was enormously proud of the borough's early year's provision and its schools. She stated that there were huge benefits to be achieved by wholeheartedly engaging with this plan and provided the following example: using the national comparative data that ranked local authorities according to outcomes at Key Stage, Hounslow children entering the schooling system had been ranked 135<sup>th</sup> out of 150 local authorities. However, by the time they reached GCSE level that cohort of children were ranked within the top 30 in the country, which in Ms Pettersen's view illustrated the power of early intervention.

#### **42. Any Other Business**

Deputising at this meeting for JobCentre Plus representative, Sandy Fenwick, Nishi Madhok informed the Board of the launch on April 2<sup>nd</sup> of the Youth Contract with JobCentre Plus. This programme would provide a wage incentive for employers and would provide support for

young people aged between 16 and 24 years, both to those classified as NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and offering more intensive support for 18 to 24 year olds. Ms Madhok confirmed that JobCentre Plus had a strong relationship with the borough's Head of Connexions, Ian O'Hara.

**43. Date and Time of next meeting - Thursday 21 June 2012**

The date of the forthcoming meeting was noted.

**The meeting finished at 8:04 pm.**

The minute taker at this meeting was Kay Duffy