

The Highland Council and NHS Highland

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Joint Committee on Children and Young People** held in the Council Chamber, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 15 January 2010 at 2.15 pm

Present:

Members:

Ms P Courcha (in the Chair))	
Mr I Gibson)	
Mrs G McCreath)	NHS Highland
Mrs J Baird)	
Mrs M C Davidson)	
Mr W Fernie)	
Mrs L MacDonald)	Highland Council
Mrs E McAllister)	

Ms J Douglas, Chairman of the Highland Drug and Alcohol Action Team
Mrs H Dempster, Chairman of Highland Child Protection Committee/Director of Social Work
Mr M Monahan – Youth Convener

Officers:

Mr T McCulloch, Quality Improvement Manager, Education, Culture & Sport Service)	
Mr I Mitchell, Children's Planning Officer, Social Work Services)	HC
Ms L MacLennan, Resource Manager (Looked after Children & Child Protection), Social Work Services)	
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office)	
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office)	
Mr J King, Head of Children's Services)	HC/NHS

In attendance:

Mrs M E Paterson, Children's Champion
Mr C Munro, Highland Children's Forum
Miss G MacKintosh, Highland Children's Forum
Mrs A Brady, Care and Learning Alliance
Ms A Darlington, Youth Action Service
Ms C MacLean, Children in the Highlands Information Point + (CHIP+)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A M Millar, Mr A S Park, Dr M E M Foxley, Mrs L Munro, Mr C Punler, Mr H Fraser and Dr R Gibbons.

2. Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Committee held on 20 November 2009

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 20 November 2009 had been circulated and were **NOTED**.

Also **NOTED**, in relation to the following:-

- i. Item 2, Minutes - the presentation by 'Who Cares? Scotland' on Children's Rights Services would now be presented to the meeting scheduled for 12 March 2010;
- ii. Item 8, Improving the Transition for Children into Adulthood - feedback was still awaited about the Future Jobs Fund and the possibility of prioritising training places for Looked After Children leaving care; and
- iii. the importance, when requesting reports back to the Joint Committee, of determining timescales.

3. Revenue Budget 2009/10 – Monitoring Report

Report No CYP/1/10 by Jonathan King, Head of Children's Services, was circulated detailing the position of the Joint Committee for Children and Young People budget as at 30 November 2009. At this stage in the financial year the budget as a whole was projected to underspend by £27,000.

In relation to the Out of Authority Placements budget, the previously projected underspend of £300,000 had been reduced significantly as a result of payment of independent sector care placements including within the authority. Members were informed that some procured placements were funded from the Council's Housing and Social Work Service while others were funded by the Joint Committee and, to clarify the position, it was intended to bring a comprehensive report to the Joint Committee's next meeting. This would set out the current position, given the significant shift in the number of placements made within Highland with external providers, together with the cost implications of all purchased placements.

In discussion, the need for more detailed information to allow effective scrutiny of budgets was emphasised. The issue of Joint Committee Member involvement in future budget planning was also raised, particularly in relation to the overall governance of expenditure. Work was underway to ensure budgets were better aligned to actual expenditure which, it was hoped, would allow future clarity but, in terms of Member involvement, it was suggested that this issue might be more fully addressed within the paper which had been discussed at the morning's workshop and under further development by Bill Alexander and Jonathan King, reviewing the Joint Committee as a whole.

NOTED:-

- i. the current budget position as at 30 November 2009;
- ii. that a report was to be brought to the Joint Committee meeting on 12 March 2010 providing more detail regarding the current position of out of authority placements and the cost implications of all purchased places;

AGREED:-

- iii. that additional information should be provided to enable better scrutiny of budgets; and
- iv. that the report being prepared on the Review of the Joint Committee should address how Members could provide greater input into the budget planning process.

4. For Highland's Children 3 – Update

Report No CYP/2/10 by Innis Mitchell, Children's Planning Officer, was circulated providing an update on the printing and distribution arrangements for the Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan For Highland's Children (FHC) 3 2009-2012, the upgrade and redesign of the Highland Integrated Children's Services FHC website, the trialling of new consultation processes to support each multi agency strategic plan and the measures being taken to ensure robust Equality Impact Assessment processes were in place across Integrated Children's Services in Highland.

In welcoming the progress that had been achieved to date, it was suggested that, in relation to the redesign of the website, contact be made with the Council's Library Service who had recently undertaken a similar exercise. That website had incorporated a number of design features which might also prove useful for inclusion in the Highland Integrated Children's Services FHC website.

AGREED:-

- i. the arrangements for printing and distribution of FHC3;
- ii. the upgrading and redesign of the website;

and NOTED:-

- iii. the progress in the schedule for consultation; and
- iv. the findings of the Equality Impact Assessments on each strategic plan.

5. Quality Assurance on All Areas of Service Relating to Young Care Leavers

Report No CYP/3/10 by Innis Mitchell, Children's Planning Officer and Sandie Young, Nurse Consultant, was circulated providing interim information on a comprehensive evaluation of services for children and young people who had been looked after in Highland. Some key findings were reassuring, in particular those that showed that young people felt that their views were taken into account and the high level of satisfaction of where they were living when in care, but Members were assured that Officers were not complacent about the challenges that were still being faced.

During discussion, the view was expressed that more valuable information could be sought if the survey questions were worded in an open manner and a more interactive approach was adopted. For improvement to take place it would be necessary to ascertain what support young people would have found helpful and a focus group was suggested as one way to obtain information to inform the future development of services. However, in so doing, the difficulties in engaging with looked after children and young people had to be taken into account, many of whom were reticent and reluctant to discuss experiences. Efforts had already been made to undertake a follow-up exercise of those who had participated in the survey but there had been limited interest and involvement. It was recognised that the survey had limitations but it had been a major exercise and it had established a benchmark. There was general support in continuing the process of working with young people currently in the system to measure improvements in integration and services. The Highland Children's Forum was willing to assist with investigating how the various suggestions made during discussion might be taken forward.

NOTED the findings of the evaluation of services for children and young people who had been Looked After in Highland and **AGREED**:-

- i. that the final report on the evaluation of services be reported back to the Joint Committee, a provisional date being set for 4 June 2010; and
- ii. that discussions take place with the Highland Children's Forum with a view to setting out options for how the exercise could continue as a live on-going monitoring process of the effectiveness of those areas of practise encountered by Looked After Children.

6. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Members were informed that it had not been possible for Report No CYP/4/10 by Sally Amor, Child Health Commissioner, to be circulated. However, the intention was that it would be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Committee to provide an update on progress made towards the implementation of the Mental Health Framework within the context of the local roll out of Getting It Right For Every Child. Assurances were given that a significant amount of work had taken place which had been evidenced by the reductions in some waiting lists etc. Attention was also drawn to the Highland Children's Forum document "What Makes A Good Life?" which had formed part of the consultation, copies of which were available at the meeting, and the proposal was that this document should be considered in conjunction with Report CYP/4/10.

- i. **NOTED** that the report detailing the progress made towards the implementation of the Mental Health Framework within the local context of the local roll out of Getting It Right for Every Child was not available but would be submitted for consideration at the Joint Committee's meeting on 12 March 2010; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Highland Children's Forum document "What Makes A Good Life?" be presented to the Joint Committee's next meeting and that the document's recommendations be also reflected in the implementation report.

7. HMIE's Résumé of Child Protection Inspections in Scotland

Report No CYP/5/10 by Jonathan King, Head of Children's Services was circulated updating Members on the outcomes of the first cycle of national child protection inspections undertaken by HMIE Services for Children. Key themes had already emerged and it was vital that these were reflected as priorities in Highland. For example, in meeting longer term needs for children entering care, it was important to ensure that clear plans were progressed, one of which might be adoption. Highland had bucked the downward national trend for adoption but there were still improvements that could be achieved. Similarly, the assessment of risks and needs in the context of Getting it Right For Every Child had demonstrated enormous benefits and it was vital to ensure that this model continued to be used across all the agencies involved. However, concern was expressed that although Scotland had substantial strengths in protecting children, leadership of change, improvement and direction required attention.

NOTED the position.

8. Highland Child Protection Inspection

Report No CYP/6/10 by Jonathan King, Head of Children's Services was circulated updating Members on the detail surrounding the forthcoming inspection of Child Protection services in Highland. In advance of the inspection, a self-evaluation exercise had been completed and placed on the Child Protection website and it intended to compare this with the findings of the inspection. In this connection, reference was also made to the considerable efforts made by staff in preparing for the Inspectors' visit.

Members were informed that HMle Services for Children would not be preparing a detailed report. They were, however, proposing to produce a much shorter, publicly accessible document with the detail of the inspection being fed back verbally. It was hoped to then prepare a presentation to appropriate Committees outlining any key findings and issues.

AGREED:-

- i. to thank the staff involved for their hard work in preparing for the inspectors' visit; and
- ii. to welcome the inspection of Child Protection services in Highland as part of the second national cycle of inspections.

9. Validated Self-Evaluation – Partnership with HMle

Report No CYP/7/10 by Hugh Fraser, Director of Education, Culture and Sport informed Members of a report considered by the Council's Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 14 January 2010 on the work to date in securing continuous improvement in the Education, Culture and Sport Service through a pilot process of self-evaluation in partnership with and validated by HMle.

The key focus of validated self-evaluation was to improve the outcomes for learners regardless of their age or stage. The process involved was explained and Members were informed that the Council was currently at the initial engagement phase where discussions were taking place with stakeholders and staff and consideration was being given to composition of theme groups to examine aspects of self-evaluation. All local authorities would be validated on three core areas, namely improvements in performance, impact on learners and capacity for improvement, but HMle had also asked that individual authorities select a number of themes to explore and Highland Council's cross cutting theme would be "Improving outcomes for those children and young people who are vulnerable and/or under achieve".

Those Members with experience of the process expressed their support and pointed out that the considerable amount of training proposed demonstrated the commitment being made towards achieving the goals. Self-evaluation in the education system had already had a significant positive impact and had proved to be a powerful tool in driving forward improvements.

- i. **AGREED** to welcome the opportunity to work jointly with HMle through the validated self-evaluation model to improve the quality of provision and outcomes offered to learners;
- ii. **NOTED** the importance of the core areas;

- iii. **NOTED** that the Council's Education, Culture and Sport theme represented a central and important focus for the validated self-evaluation; and
- iv. **AGREED** to participate in processes of self-evaluation as necessary.

10. Future Business of Joint Committee for Children and Young People

Report No CYP/8/10 by Bill Alexander, Chief Operating Officer set out a proposed list of reports to be considered at future meetings of the Joint Committee on Children and Young People.

In considering future business and the timetabling thereof, it was recognised that a degree of flexibility might be required to sufficiently accommodate the discussion of the various topics.

NOTED the proposed list of reports and **AGREED** that:-

- i. together with provisional dates, reports also be considered on:-
 - the governance arrangements of the Joint Committee - 12 March 2010;
 - a presentation by 'Who Cares? Scotland' on Children's Rights Services - 12 March 2010;
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Implementation of the Mental Health Framework – 12 March 2010;
 - Commissioned Services for Looked After Children, both in and outwith Highland, and associated budget implications - 12 March 2010;
 - Young Care Leavers Survey Final Evaluation – 4 June 2010;
 - the Looked After Children Action Plan, as appropriate;
 - a Children's Hearing Bill Briefing, as appropriate;
 - Play Strategy, as appropriate.
- ii. in light of discussions surrounding the review of the Joint Committee, the Performance Report and Parents and Carers Strategic Priority of For Highland's Children 3 be deferred meantime;
- iii. the Getting It Right For Every Child update be considered at the meeting scheduled for 12 March 2010; and
- iv. the report considering the provision of Housing Support to young people, together with an analysis of young people presenting themselves as homeless, and the report on the Review of Children's Respite Provision be considered at the meeting scheduled for 4 June 2010.

11. Date of Next Meeting

NOTED that the next meeting of the Joint Committee would be held on Friday, 12 March 2010 at 10.30 am in the Board Room, Assynt House, Beechwood Park, Inverness.

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.