

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL AND NHS HIGHLAND

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Joint Committee on Children and Young People** held in the Training and Conference Room, the Pines, Drummond Road, Inverness on Friday, 5 June 2009 at 2.20 p.m.

Present

Members

Ms P Courcha (in the Chair))
Mrs A Bethune)
Mrs G McCreath) NHS Highland
Mrs J Baird)

Mrs M C Davidson)
Mr W Fernie) Highland Council
Mrs L MacDonald)
Ms E McAllister)

Ms J Douglas, Chairman of the Highland Drug and Alcohol Action Team

Officers:

Mr I Mitchell, Children's Planning Officer, Social Work Services) HC
Ms M Campbell, Development Officer (Disability), Social Work Services)
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office)

Mr B Alexander, Head of Children Services) HC/NHS

In attendance:

Mrs L Munro, Children's Champion
Mr C Munro, Highland Children's Forum
Ms C MacLean, Children in the Highlands Information Point + (CHIP+)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A S Park, Dr M E M Foxley, Mr M Millar, Mrs M E Paterson, Miss C Burns, Mr I Gibson, Mr C Punler, Mr G MacLeod, Mrs A Brady, Ms A Darlington, Mr H Fraser, Mrs H Dempster, Mr A McMahon, Ms S Amor, Ms J Veasey and Ms R Sime.

2. Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Committee held on 27 March 2009

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 27 March 2009 were circulated and **NOTED**.

Although it had not been possible to provide the 2008/09 year-end monitoring statement, it would be available for consideration at the next meeting. Additional budget codes had now been introduced to more accurately assess the position throughout the financial year. Notification had also been received regarding Child Protection inspection dates and preparation had already commenced for Highland's inspection scheduled for early 2010.

Developments which had taken place in relation to the early education consultation process were reported. A survey of providers had been undertaken, the outcomes of which were still awaited, and there were staffing issues which still required to be resolved. Additional information was also sought as to the continued use of homeless hostels for young people and the transition arrangements available to provide them with the necessary life skills to live independently. It was recognised that this involved Adult Services and Housing support and assurances were given that the Highland Council recognised its importance and was taking concerns forward.

Arising from the Minutes, also **NOTED**:-

- i. Item 3, Revenue Budget 2008/09 - it had not been possible to submit the year-end Monitoring Report to this meeting but it would be submitted to the next meeting on 14 August 2009;
- ii. Item 4, Implementing Sweet 16 - a report would be brought to a future meeting on the challenges of providing suitable accommodation for young adults. In addition, information would be provided on the partnership working arrangements being developed to support the transition process for these young adults;
- iii. Item 5, Developments in Early Education - the progress made in introducing 15 Hour early education by 2010; and
- iv. Item 7, Child Protection Inspections - the new round of Child Inspections in Scotland was due to start in July 2009 with Highland Council being inspected in January 2010.

3. The Pines Centre

Members were welcomed to The Pines, a multi-agency centre for children on the autistic spectrum, and were given an opportunity to tour the premises prior to the start of the meeting. The Pines had been established in response to a review of autism services and would provide a model for spearheading integration for all children with additional support needs. The Pines had been jointly funded by Highland Council and NHS Highland and was a Private Finance Initiative. Planned in consultation with families and voluntary organisations, it was a one-stop shop which supported local diagnosis and provision, provided quality assurance and specialist advice and would accommodate health, education and social work staff as well as the National Autistic Society.

The importance of promoting The Pines, particularly by Children's Champions, as a Highland-wide resource was emphasised. It was to become fully operational after the summer and would free up capacity at the Birnie Centre. In recognising the enormous benefits it could provide, it was suggested that the facility's opening be widely and actively publicised.

NOTED the position and **AGREED** that maximum publicity be given to the Centre's opening.

4. For Highland's Children 3 - Update

Report No CYP19/09 by Innis Mitchell, Children's Planning Officer, was circulated providing an update on the preparation of the new Integrated Children's Services Plan. A copy of the consultation timetable for each of the strategic themes and a draft of the For Highland's Children 3 (FHC3) were also tabled.

Members were informed that FHC3 was an evolving document and some detail remained under review. The aim was to provide a high level overview of the planning for Integrated Children's Services for 2009-2012 and the document had been designed in such a way as to be able to respond to change in a range of services which often worked to different pressures and timeframes. Nevertheless, the need to balance the revision of plans with proper governance and approval was recognised and over the next 2-3 years each strategy would be presented to the Joint Committee. The consultation timetable had been drawn up to match key Youth Voice events so that they, along with the Highland Children's Forum, could schedule their involvement within this framework. However, the dates previously agreed for consideration of the Disability Strategy had been changed to allow more time for preparation and to enable consultation with young people on the Curriculum for Excellence. The content and purpose of the various sections of the FHC3 document were also explained and particular points of interest highlighted.

Among the points raised during discussion were the following:-

- a clearer explanation should be provided as to the Red Amber Green indicators included in the draft document;
- transitions required to be highlighted under every theme or as a cross-cutting priority;
- the document was more user friendly and comprehensive than previous plans;
- to facilitate the monitoring process, exception reports should be produced throughout the life of the plan;
- a presentation of the FHC3 webpage to Members would be beneficial;
- in addition to referring to the Single Outcome Agreement, the Council's Programme "Strengthening the Highlands" should also be incorporated;
- those areas in FHC2 where performance had been disappointing needed to be addressed in its review in FHC3;
- although concern was expressed that some key outcomes might seem unobtainable in the current economic climate, over time it was hoped that they would eventually be achieved; and
- whilst recognising the input which Highland Youth Voice and Highland Children Forum had in the process, consultation needed to be embedded in all departmental and Strategy Group activity and to become an integral part of service design.

AGREED:-

- i. that the comments made in discussion as to content, including issues such as transition etc, should be incorporated into the document;
- ii. to allow effective performance monitoring, exception reports should be made available to Members;
- iii. a demonstration of the For Highland's Children 3 webpage should be made to a future meeting of the Joint Committee;
- iv. reference should be made in the document to the Single Outcome Agreement and the Council's Programme "Strengthening the Highlands";
- v. consideration should be given as to how those areas in For Highland's Children 2 where key outcome targets had not been achieved were to be addressed;
- vi. the format and structure of the draft For Highland's Children 3; and
- vii. the timescale for consultation on the strategic themes of the plan.

5. Surestart Funding and Future Developments

Report No CYP2/09 by Bill Alexander, Head of Children's Services, was circulated updating Members on developments in Surestart services for vulnerable young children and making proposals for the additional investment of £100,000 agreed by the Highland Council.

Area Children's Services Managers had examined provision and had identified gaps and a number of posts had been proposed to address this. In addition, the Children's Services Managers had suggested that the use of existing funding be changed to support initiatives and to enhance local services and it was hoped that the deployment of resources in this way would enable more families across the authority to access SureStart services. To sustain this funding in future it was important to identify outcomes to demonstrate the benefits SureStart could make and discussion took place as to how best this could be achieved, both locally and nationally. However, in the meantime, it was suggested that the positive message of this additional monies should be promoted in the press.

AGREED:-

- i. the proposals for additional posts and services as detailed in the report, subject to the agreement of the Highland Council's Resources Committee; and
- ii. that a press release should be issued highlighting the benefits that the additional resources would achieve.

7. Recruitment of Social Work Staff - Update

Report No CYP21/09 by Bill Alexander, Head of Children's Services, was circulated providing an update on the level of vacancies for qualified Social Workers in the Children and Family Teams across the authority.

Job evaluation had now been implemented and salary levels had increased in line with other authorities. At the start of the year there had been 19.8 full time equivalent vacancies but this had now dropped to 14.7. However, vacancies were not equally

distributed and some teams were carrying more than one vacancy. The measures being adopted to address this were detailed, including redeployment, the use of trainees, mature social workers leaving the system being invited back on a part time or supply basis, the use of the voluntary sector and unqualified staff undertaking enhanced activities otherwise having to be undertaken by Social Workers. The risk and impact on other services was being managed, the challenge generally being over the range of provision with, in practise, more difficulties arising when posts such as Integrated Service Officer vacancies remained unfilled. However, Members would be kept informed of progress in reducing the number of Social Work vacancies.

NOTED the report and **AGREED** that an update should be provided at a future meeting on progress on filling the remaining vacancies.

8. Youth Justice Services

Report No CYP22/09 by Bill Alexander, Head of Children's Services, was circulated providing an update on Youth Justice Services and making proposals for closer working between Youth Action Teams and Northern Constabulary, including new services to ensure a continuum of responses to offending behaviour. This included redirecting funding which had been previously allocated to SACRO.

A presentation was made on the issues surrounding Youth Justice Services and the considerable developments which had taken place over the previous 9½ years. However, despite significant improvements, there was a gap in services for those young people requiring a more significant level of intervention than solely the involvement of local community police officers and the use of Police Restorative Warnings. SACRO had been invited to provide a new service model to address the gap in provision. However, insufficient assurances had been received that this could be achieved in Highland. Alternatively, an arrangement had evolved in one of the Youth Action Team areas where a Police Officer with knowledge of the individuals concerned, the partner agencies and the community was able to put effective measures in place. Northern Constabulary were willing to introduce similar posts in each of its Command Areas to work with Youth Action Teams to stop children persistently offending. While recognising the need to allow time for the new arrangement to embed, the new model would be in place for an initial 2½ years but would be reviewed after one year.

AGREED:-

- i.** the proposal for the introduction, for a 2½ year period, from October 2009, of a Youth Co-ordinator in each of the Police Command Areas linking with the Youth Action Teams providing continuum of service provision, the additional resources involved being identified from efficiencies that would result across the Youth Action Services; and
- ii.** that a review of the new arrangement should take place after one year, taking into account quantitative data such as referral rates.

9. Getting It Right For Every Child – Update

Report No CYP23/09 by Bill Alexander, Head of Children's Services, was circulated updating Members on the implementation of "Getting It Right For Every Child" (GIRFEC) across Highland, including the event held on 5 May 2009 with the Minister for Children and Early Years. Early indications were that GIRFEC was making a positive impact and an overview of the change process and developments which had and were due to take place was provided.

Implementing and sustaining GIRFEC would be as challenging as the development phase had been. Consequently, it was important to maintain an overview to ensure progress continued and that the benefits arising from GIRFEC were promoted, both locally and Scotland-wide. Similarly, the Joint Committee had a role to play in measuring GIRFEC's performance and the difference it was making to the lives of young people. In assessing its success and ensuring its incorporation into mainstream work, it was vital that there was feedback from service users and practitioners and qualitative and quantitative data gathered. It was also inextricably linked to For Highland Children's 3 and this too would demonstrate how effectively it was embedding into practise.

NOTED the issues raised and **AGREED** that Officers should consider how best the roll-out and delivery of Getting It Right For Every Child could be reported back to Members.

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

Report No CYP24/09 by Bill Alexander, Head of Children's Services, was circulated setting out a proposed list of reports to be considered at future meetings of the Joint Committee on Children and Young People.

Reference was made to three documents, namely, "We Can and Must Do Better", "These Are Our Bairns" and a letter sent to NHS Highland regarding Health Needs Assessments for Looked After Accommodated Children. Given the issues highlighted in these documents, it was suggested that the Looked After Children Strategy Group's role, remit and leadership could be expanded with a view to drawing up an Action Plan. However, many of the topics would also be considered at the Highland Council's Corporate Parenting Seminar scheduled for 25 June 2009 and it was felt, in the first instance, that a résumé of discussion might address the issues.

NOTED the proposed list of reports, subject to the following amendments:-

- i. the inclusion of a future report on the Review of Nursing in the Community;
- ii. the removal of the item relating to Surestart Funding and Future Developments;

and **AGREED**

- iii. as referred to in Item 2, a report also be considered on Transition management;

- iv. a report be submitted to a future meeting, reflecting the outcomes and issues arising from the Highland Council's Seminar on Corporate Parenting scheduled for 25 June 2009, taking into account a work plan for the Looked After Children Group.

11. Date of Next Meeting

NOTED that the next meeting would be held in the Boardroom, Assynt House, Beechwood Park, Inverness on Friday, 14 August 2009 at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting ended at 4.50 p.m.