SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board - Children and Young People
held on Tuesday, 13 December 2011 at 10.00 am at Committee Room 2, The
Courts, Carlisle, CA3 8NA

PRESENT:

Mrs T Macur (Chair)

Mrs C Feeney-Johnson  Mr I Stockdale
Mr KA Little (Vice-Chair)  Mr A Toole
Mr J Mallinson  Mrs A Burns (Cabinet Member -
Mrs M Rae  Children’s Social Care)
Mrs W Skillicorn  Mr DS Fairbairn (Cabinet Member –
Mr I Stockdale  Schools and Learning)

Also in Attendance:-

Ms S Atkins  -  Senior Manager – Information & Performance
Mrs L Graham  -  Scrutiny Officer
Mrs S Horsley  -  Democratic Services Officer
Mr J Macilwraith  -  Assistant Director - Strategy & Commissioning,
Children's Services

PART 1 – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE
PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ms L Hammond and Ms V Tarbitt – Mr G Roberts
attended as her substitute.

33. MEMBERSHIP

Members noted Mr I Stockdale had replaced Mr KR Hamilton on the Committee.
The Chair welcomed Mr Stockdale to his first meeting of the board.

34. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest in any items on the agenda today.

35. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC
RESOLVED, that the press and public be not excluded during consideration of any item on the agenda.

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2011 be agreed as an accurate record.

37. CALL-IN ITEMS

There were no call-in items to bring to the Boards attention on this occasion.

38. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no CCFAs to bring to the Board’s attention on this occasion.

39. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board considered a report from the Corporate Director of Children’s Services, which provided an overview on performance, in relation to the objectives in the Directorates Service Plan, for Quarter Two (July to September).

Members were advised the scorecard reporting tool presents a snap shot of performance, providing a consistent standardised approach across each directorate on four key areas: Customers, People, Resources and Processes. Officers explained adopting a standardised approach allows for comparisons between directorates.

Officers informed overall performance for the second quarter had been generally positive with the majority of measures indicating a positive direction of travel.

The Senior Manager – Information and Performance highlighted several areas of positive performance including:

- Achievement at level 4 or above on both English and Maths at Key Stage 2 with results remaining high and well above national average.
- Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE and equivalent.
- Youth Councils are in place and are meeting.
- Partnership working.

Three areas of focus for development were also brought to the Boards attention:

- Maximising opportunities and raising aspirations – Early Years. Officers explained they were not having the impact they desired, but there was ongoing work with improvement teams to identify how they can increase performance in this area.
- Maximising opportunities and raising aspirations – Special Education Needs statements issued within 26 weeks. Officers highlighted they were 5% below their target of 100%, they questioned whether a 100% target was realistic.
The Board were advised approx 5 or 6 children had been affected by this delay.

- Targeting resources to support the most vulnerable, and keeping children and young people safe – Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18.

Members queried whether there was any correlation between Early Years achievement and deprivation levels. Officers informed they would provide information on this relationship.

The Board noted they felt it was important to work with and where necessary push The Health Service in order to get the SEN statements out on time, as until the statement is issued the cost of support is recuperated from schools budgets.

The Chair advised, the Board have been asked to conduct a task and finish activity around ‘Children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18’ the scope for this review had not yet been identified. The Chair stated she would inform Members as soon as more information was available.

Members requested a full report from the Corporate Director – Children’s Services, on the ‘Development of School Organisation Plans’, stating this was a fundamental issue affecting the Directorate which needed to move quickly.

The Board enquired regarding the progress of the West Coast Blue Print, and whether a perspective with regards to schools had been given. The Assistant Director – Strategy and Commissioning informed the Assistant Director – Schools and Learning had contributed to the document where relevant. Members were advised the Corporate Director – Children’s Services would provide an update regarding progress of this document at the next meeting.

Members raised concerns over the amount of areas that had ‘NYA’ (not yet available) results. The Senior Manager – Information and Performance noted she would relay the concerns to key managers at a performance meeting next week.

The Chair thanked Officers for their report and noted the scorecard reporting tool seemed like a ‘step in the right direction’.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be received and noted.

**40. CORPORATE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

The Board considered a report from the Corporate Director of Children Services, which provided an update on the following issues:-

- Budget Update
- Children Leaving Care: Transition to Adults Services
- Transforming Learning
- School Improvement Processes
- Domestic Violence Integrated Service Update
• Director of Children’s Services/Lead Member Children’s Services – Roles
• Children’s Services Assessment

Budget Update
The Assistant Director – Strategy and Commissioning informed the board they were to begin a scoping exercise around the idea of conducting a ‘Better For’ review of placements; to consider how placements are commissioned and determine if the value for money of these can be improved. The Board were advised they would be kept informed on this matter.

Members queried the forecasted overspend of £1.533m for the current financial year, asking if any targeted or early intervention work had been stopped as a result of the projected overspend or had the £1.252m spend in relation to retaining staff, after restructure, been met by the modernisation fund? Officers informed they would provide more information on this.

Domestic Violence Integrated Service
The Chair noted the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Board were planning to start a task and finish group looking into the domestic violence integrated service, and questioned whether it was too early to do this. Officers explained it was hard to know whether a task and finish group would add value, at this early stage without knowing the terms of reference of the group. The Chair advised Safer and Stronger would link with Children and Young People Scrutiny Board if they were to start a task and finish activity.

The Scrutiny Officer informed Members, the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Board were receiving a presentation from Julia Carver, Business Manager, Cumbria Domestic Violence Strategic Management Board at their next Committee meeting on 20th December 2011. Members were told they were more than welcome to attend this presentation.

Children’s Services Assessment
Members were advised Children’s Services in Cumbria had again been awarded ‘performing well’ in Ofsted’s Children’s Services Assessment. Officers added although they were pleased with the results they were keen to move beyond ‘performing well’ to ‘performing excellently’.

41. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES IN CUMBRIA

This item was taken as a matter of urgent business, agreed by the Chair, as she informed “although this report had not been in the public domain for the required five clear days, to delay it to the next meeting would only hinder the budget planning process”.

Committee Members were presented with a report from the task and finish group for Adult Education. The report outlined the scrutiny review work on the future arrangements for the Adult Education Service in Cumbria. A Member of the task
and finish group informed the Committee it was an in depth piece of work, in which they had interviewed a wide range of witnesses.

The Committee were advised the Council are currently waiting to hear the Governments decision as to what form future funding, in relation to Adult Education, will take – as there is a possibility this funding may go to a third party provider.

Members expressed their concerns over the possibility of the service being removed from the Directorate, stating although the service is delivered for adults it should still remain under Education and Children’s Services remit.

The Chair thanked the Members of the task and finish group for their good piece of in depth work.

RESOLVED, that the report be received and recommendations be put before SMB in January, in order to report to Cabinet in February 2012.

42. BOARD BRIEFING

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report which informed members of new or updated items of significance to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Advisory Board, including an update on current and impending task and finish groups:

Adult Education – This review was now complete; with the report and recommendations being agreed as per minute 41.

Children’s Services Engaging with Health – Members were informed this review would commence in the summer of 2012.

Support for schools operating with a budget deficit – The Board were advised this review had been scoped and the first meeting was to be held following today’s board meeting.

Pressures on Looked after Children Budget – Members were advised this group was to be established after the Corporate Director raised concerns regarding the difficulty in managing the budget for looked after children, and specifically those whose care packages can only be met outside the county. This review would report to Cabinet in spring 2012, therefore would need to begin in January. Clare Feeney-Johnson, Tina Macur, John Mallinson and Alan Toole volunteered to sit on this group; the Scrutiny Officer informed non-executive members of the Council would also be offered the opportunity to be part of the review.

Connexions – It was noted a further review of the Connexions service was to be established in early summer 2012 to monitor the new contract.

With regards to Scrutiny Members training/meeting dates, Members were asked to note the previously scheduled training session for 18th January had been cancelled, and also to add the future dates to their diaries.
Members noted they were happy with Scrutiny’s current work programme.

**RESOLVED, that**

(1) Members noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

(2) Members noted the Scrutiny Work Schedule.

**43. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Date: 19 March 2012  
Time: 10am  
Venue: Committee Room 1, County Offices, Kendal

The meeting ended at 11.00 am