

Councillor Richard Grant welcomed members of the Committee and the visitors who had attended to give presentations and take part in the select committee to consider Every Child Matters and effective partnership working.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Ian Blaikie, Councillor Katherine King (replaced by Councillor John Haynes for this meeting), Nick Lambert, Lynda LeLong, Chris Smart and Councillor John Whitehouse.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as set out below:

- (1) by virtue of them serving as District/Borough Councillors as follows:-
 - Councillor Mike Perry – Stratford on Avon District Council
 - Councillor John Ross – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
 - Councillor Dave Shilton – Warwick District Council
 - Councillor Heather Timms – Rugby Borough Council
- (2) Councillor John Wells declared a personal interest in Item 2 as his daughter worked on projects for the Enhanced Support Services.

2. Every Child Matters and Effective Partnership Working

The Chair introduced the topic for the select committee. He noted that while there had always been some partnership working, this was a crucial area of the new ways of working and the Every Child Matters agenda and it was part of the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise how effective the partnership working was.

Marion Davis, Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

Marion Davis outlined the history to partnership working, the strengths of partnership working in Warwickshire and the areas that needed to be better developed. She added the following points:

- i. The Children Act Project Team had run for two years from October 2004, overlapping with the introduction of the new Directorate in April 2006. In September 2006 the work streams of the Project Team were mainstreamed within the Directorate, each being managed by a lead manager or a senior manager

- within a partner organisation and all underpinning the principle of participation by young people.
- ii. The Strategic Partnership Board had been operational since September 2006 and their role was to monitor the Children's block of the LAA and was linked to the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP), produced in April 2006 with a revised version in print at present. The previous Board had been chaired by the former Chief Executive and did not have all interested parties represented. At the time of establishing the new Directorate a decision was made to refresh the governance arrangements and the Strategic Partnership Board was expanded to include Schools, School Governors and the private sector.
 - iii. The CYPP is the basis upon which the Government Office and Ofsted judged the Council and the first annual performance assessment in June 2006 had resulted in a "good" assessment with an "excellent capacity to improve".
 - iv. The Directorate had introduced an electronic Planning and Performance System for monitoring, which, once training had been given to all agencies, would be accessible by both partner agencies and the public to monitor progress on all 25 programmes of the CYPP.
 - v. The partnership working had gone from strength to strength with commitment from all partners who had been tasked to bring efforts together to bring out positive commitments. This had been achieved together with an improving service and within a changing national agenda and tight budgetary constraints.
 - vi. Marion Davis noted the following achievements:
 - a decrease in the number of looked after children with fewer out of county and residential placements
 - an increase in the number of adoptions
 - an improvement in assessment timescales
 - success in implementing many measures under Youth Matters, with the Division for Young People making significant and positive changes.
 - A closer working relationship with Connexions, with agreed commissioning arrangements to deliver services over the next three years.
 - A decrease in the number of teenage pregnancies.
 - A decrease in the number of exclusions.
 - A decrease in the number of schools in special measures.
 - Good progress in developing extended services, which were ahead of national targets for both primary and secondary levels.
 - Increase in the number of Children's Centres, which were examples of partners delivering services in a joined up way.
 - vii. Areas where there was still work to be done were:

- workforce development with common induction standards and a united qualifications and training framework for all workers who work with children and young people.
- the new relationship between the Local Authority and Schools, which had improved with Schools and Governors joining the Board.
- relationships with colleagues in health within the new PCT arrangements. This was improving with the new joint posts.
- Pooling of budgets to support partnership working and to cement commitment by all partners.
- Localising services.
- Closing the inequalities gap across the county.
- The need to keep the Children's Trust arrangements, required to be in place by 2008, on the agenda.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Portfolio Holder responsible for Children, Young People and Families

Councillor Izzi Seccombe spoke about her role as Chair of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (the Board), what it meant to her and the great deal of strength and enthusiasm of the members of the Board to make the partnership work. She added the following points:

- a. The Board worked as a driver for several areas of work including the Local Area Agreement and the Children and Young People's Plan. The Board had been expanded to include one representative from each District/Borough rather than a north and south representative.
- b. The Children and Young People's Partnership Forum, chaired by Steve Stewart, was a larger and wider group than the Board and considered strategic and visionary issues, looking at the ambitions of young people and sharing experiences of professionals.
- c. The Children and Young People's Plan was a work in progress which was agreed jointly and containing statutory requirements and targets and ambitions of the County Council and the joint agencies.
- d. There were clear areas of responsibility such as leisure and housing for Districts/Boroughs as well as overlapping areas such as community safety and areas of void. This all needed to be recognised and discussed by all the partners to avoid silos and gaps in services.
- e. The agenda of Every Child Matters was ambitious and it was important that all Strategic Directors recognised the five outcomes and ensured these were included in all work programmes.
- f. The Children, Young People and Families Directorate had done well to embed and move forward the new arrangements and agenda and at the same time produce good inspection results.

- g. Warwickshire's Joint Area Review (JAR) was due in 2008 and all agencies would have to work together as partners for the evaluation and report which would be on all the services within Warwickshire working together to improve the outcomes and achievements of children and young people. A wide range of services would be reviewed, including council services, health, police, probation and services provided by other public, private and voluntary and community sectors.
- h. The role of County Councillors was to recognise that the only way to tackle the pockets of deprivation around the country as well as the significant areas of deprivation such as Nuneaton and Bedworth, was through education. The County needed to provide a positive challenge to schools to ensure services delivered were effective and efficient within budgetary constraints and providing good value for money.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- 1. The Board and the Forum worked well together and regular meetings were held with the Chair of the Forum so that issues raised at the Board were communicated to the Forum.
- 2. The need for constant communication and feedback was recognised and the best ways to achieve this were being considered.
- 3. In response to a query about how far advanced the Directorate were in terms of education and the Spatial Strategy, it was noted that Warwickshire did not present a consistent picture, so while forecasting had been done, the way forward was about joining up services and supporting children and families in communities. There was also a need to consider a long-term vision for transport.
- 4. In terms of the future where it was expected secondary schools would require a minimum capacity of 1,000 children, Members agreed the importance to maintain equality across the county in terms of different schools.
- 5. Marion Davis agreed to revert to Members on whether they were able to access Board minutes.
- 6. The national evaluation of the Children's Trust pathfinders showed a diversity of approach with each meeting the needs of children in their own localities. Warwickshire would take the essence of the guidance and adapt it, together with the CYPP and the Local Area Agreement, to meet the needs of all Warwickshire children and young people.
- 7. There was a need to recognise equality as an important area and respond where needs arose. It was noted that the Intercultural Support Service were also having to change to meet changing needs. SACRE also promoted equality and acceptance of different communities through the schools' curriculum.

8. Marion Davis agreed to discuss the issue of the Primary representative on the Forum representing Infant and Junior Schools at a future Head Teachers' meeting.
9. In an attempt to address inequalities across the county, additional support was being given to schools in deprived areas in the form of learning, management and leadership to improve standards. In terms of the CYPP and the Local Area Agreement, there was a commitment to close the gap and this was an area all partners had signed up to putting resources into. Helen King added that the health inequalities were often tied in to health, education, housing etc and the health service welcomed the opportunity to plan jointly and focus on tackling inequalities.
10. In response to a query about Member representation on the Board, Mary Hawkins noted that the membership was more in line with responsibilities for Local Area Agreement blocks.

Elizabeth Featherstone, Head of Service – Family and Community Division

Elizabeth Featherstone opened her introduction with the assertion that “uncoordinated and fragmented provision can have a detrimental impact for children, young people and their families” and urged Members to look at this section of the CYPP online (<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/cypp>). She added the following points:

- I. The involvement of families by the Service had been formally established in April 2006.
- II. The focus of the Service over the past year had been on:
 - integrated processes for 0-5 year-olds
 - the establishment of effective locality teams
 - developing relationships with the wider health economy
 - palliative care
 - pioneering the key worker role.
- III. The role and function and the Service would continue to be developed over the next year, together with a target to increase the take-up of Direct Payments.

Lynne Barton, Integrated Disability Service

Lynne Barton gave a presentation on the Parents Forum, which had started in April 2005 following a consultation with parents, carers, focus groups and parent support groups. She outlined the role of the Forum and noted they were proud of how far they had come and of their achievements. The following points were added:

- i. The aim was to establish a Steering Committee to ensure that all papers and decisions included a parental perspective.
- ii. The next meeting of the Forum was scheduled for 19 June 2007 with the founder of Partners in Policy speaking on how to

develop the Forum and to have a more active voice in policy planning.

- iii. Lynne Barton introduced four parents who had come to the meeting to present the Families Speak Out Monologue, which had been put together to increase the awareness of the challenges and joys faced by parents and carers of disabled children and young people.

Howard Binns, Rashida Gelu, Lynne Grainger and Susan Mumford read out the monologues, and then made a number of comments regarding the challenges they faced, including the following:

Relationships

1. It was essential to have a good relationship with professionals, and there were parents and carers having to deal with over 20 professionals.
2. The introduction of the key worker was very helpful as previous to these roles being introduced, parents and carers had not known who to contact in a crisis, had not received responses to messages being left and had not received any information or support from the range of professional they were dealing with.
3. The key worker became a familiar contact who could help parents and carers through difficulties and establish a history with a family, without having to explain a situation over and over to a number of people.
4. Previously Social Services and the Child Development Centre had become involved when a disability was first diagnosed but once the child reached school age there was no contact.

Participation

- a. Parents, carers, children and young people needed a voice as they all had a valuable contribution to make.
- b. They had not previously been properly consulted, and should be involved in all decisions.
- c. The support of parents and carers was important and parents and carers liked to know they had someone acting on their behalf and giving them advice that was good for the parent/carer and not the professional.
- d. Having key workers attend meetings gave parents/carers a stronger position, added support and knowledge of the rights of the parents/carers.

Filling in forms

- I. The forms that needed to be filled in were difficult to understand and there were many that often had to be filled in many times through childhood and adulthood. This often made it too difficult for some parents to claim.

- II. Parents/carers were often encouraged to apply for charitable donations to pay for things such as equipment, something that normal families would not have to do.
- III. The Disability Living Allowance Form required parents/carers to list the worst-case scenarios, which added additional mental anguish.
- IV. Benefit forms had to be completed from scratch every two years and parents/carers worried about what would happen when they were no longer there to do this.

An excerpt from a letter about a family with a disabled child was read out to give Members an illustration of what it was like for parents/carers of disabled children and young people.

The Chair thanked the parents for their presentations, which had been both informative and profound.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

1. The parents/carers agreed that things had improved with the help of the key worker and having the services working together in one place. Network meetings were also being held at schools, involving the CAMHS nurse, which shaped together the information required to get help from Social Care.
2. There was still a need to start working with parents/carers earlier, to broaden thinking and give a greater knowledge of what was available.
3. The Parents' Forum was about having a voice in steering service delivery, which was distinct from the Parents' Support Groups, which involved many families supporting each other in their daily lives.
4. Members reminded the parents that their local Councillors were contactable and an avenue open to them for assistance.
5. The feedback on the Every Child Matters needed to include these messages from parents and carers and not only monitor statistics.
6. The single point of contact through the key worker service would soon be through three bases around the county, so parents would only have one initial contact to make. This would also mean fewer referrals having to be made.
7. The key issues to come out of the initial process had been the establishment of the key worker role and the steps put in place to ensure transitions at an early stage.
8. There was a need to review the system for filling out forms (including for Benefits), and whether a system could be used where information was stored and forms only had to be updated and where schools could provide information directly.
9. It was agreed that the process of getting children statemented needed to be improved, but Members agreed that while there were some children with severe problems who needed special education, the County Council's policy for integrating as many

children as possible into mainstream education was the right way forward and that the individual needs of each child had to be looked at in determining what was best for them.

Diana Sellwood, Integrated Disability Service

Diana Sellwood gave a presentation on the Transition to Adulthood – Working in Partnership on the multi-agency work carried out by the County Transition Group for young people, parents and professionals to ensure all young people with a statement of special educational needs has the support they require during the transition to adulthood. She added that last year had been the first year of the process and when reviewed there had been a positive response.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- i. There were still barriers and difficulties within the transition process. A lot of work had been done engaging with Health colleagues and acute trusts but more was still to be done with Education and Social Care colleagues. Work was also ongoing to resolve issues with funding.
- ii. The new national Strategy of the Learning and Skills Council recognised the importance of transition and the organisation was working on this area.
- iii. The changes to the NHS and the move of some services to the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust had caused difficulties, but the new Joint Commissioner was working to get a seamless process, which would take some time to get in place.

Pat Tate, Enhanced Support Networks

Pat Tate gave Members a presentation on the Enhanced Support Networks and tabled an organisational chart of how the Service was being developed. Pat Tate noted that there was an Area Steering Group embedded in Rugby and a first early adopter had been identified in Nuneaton and Bedworth. Nuneaton and Bedworth was expected to be fully covered by the end of September 2007 and preparatory work would begin in Warwick in the autumn term. She added the following points:

- a. There were a lot of overlaps with the Integrated Disability Service, but the Service was aimed at children, young people and families requiring extra support (Level 2) with a focus on meeting emerging needs from pregnancy through to 19 year-olds.
- b. The Service was looking at providing a user-led, family focussed service around the new ways of working. This would be achieved through assessment, identification of support and timely provision in a solution focussed way.

- c. There was an additional challenge faced by the Service from parents who felt they were being blamed for difficulties that arose.
- d. There was an aim to recognise and build into the process the fundamental process that children, young people and families would be involved in decision making through informed consent.
- e. Family support meetings were currently held within 15 days of referral and the aim was to reduce this to 10 days. At these meetings a lead professional was selected and actions were identified for the services and the family.
- f. The Network Project Officer within an area held all the information and was aware of established meetings and who needed to be contacted and well as providing support to the professionals involved.
- g. Issues that could not be resolved locally through an Area Steering Group would be considered by the Enhanced Support Network Integrated Board which was chaired by Marion Davis and included representatives from Health, Police, Voluntary Organisations, Police and District/Borough Councils. It was noted that while there was a great deal of timely and appropriate work being done on the ground, a lot of work had gone into the strategic level.
- h. The development of the Enhanced Support Networks had provided a good multi-agency mechanism to take local and fast responses to situations that arose within a community.
- i. Earlier intervention at Level 2 and the establishment of swift routes to specific services resulted in the prevention of higher-level risks for children, young people and families.
- j. Children, young people and families needing support were identified through a variety of routes such as Children's Centres, Early Years, Extended Services and targeted youth support services.
- k. Members agreed that the Enhanced Support Network would be a good service to tackle alcohol misuse and it was noted that discussions were already taking place to set up a multi-agency response.
- l. Relate and Home Start selected Parent Mentors and then trained and provided ongoing supervision for them.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their good presentations, which had provided Members with a lot of information and ideas, and for their attendance at the meeting.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 12:50 p.m.