

Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 16th September, 2009.

Present: Cllr David Harrington (Chairman), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Alan Lewis

Officers: Jane Humphreys, Jayne Palmer, Jackie Ward (CESC); Graham Birtle, Fiona Shayler (LD)

Also in attendance: No other person's were present

Apologies: Cllr Maurice Frankland, Mr R Cash, Mr G Davies and Shaun McLurg

CYP 33/09 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harrington declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to the Efficiency Improvement and Transformation Review of Child Placements and Residential Care item due to working for Middlesbrough Council.

CYP 34/09 Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2009 were agreed to be included on the agenda for the meeting of 30th September for consideration at the meeting.

CYP 35/09 Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Child Placements and Residential Care

Jackie Ward – Team Manager, Child Placements highlighted the report regarding placements with family and friends and invited questions from Members.

Allowances varied across the region and were set by the local authority. The Fostering network had set a recommended allowance rate, however it was for each Local authority to decide if they wanted to apply these recommended rates. Stockton Council had adopted these rates.

Members raised concerns about the inability of formally approved foster carers to claim child benefit for a fostered child within the household although acknowledged that they were in receipt of foster care payments. It was suggested that Stockton could need to develop a policy framework in respect of payments to family and friends who were not approved foster carers as part of an overall package of kinship care. Officers highlighted the problems for family and friends when applying for benefits in respect of the children as the process meant that they had a delay in receiving the financial support and that Section 17 payments were used to support families until benefits began to be paid.

Members queried the location of child placements and were informed that normal practice would be for children to be placed within the Borough whenever it was appropriate and possible; however children were sometimes placed out of the Borough due to the location of relatives. Contact was maintained with the family and the child in placement. Links were also made with the relevant local authority.

Questions were raised regarding the cultural/religious differences that might exist. The Committee was reassured that this was always taken into account although it was difficult to recruit BME foster carers and adopters who constituted a small percentage of the local population.

The Committee wondered whether opportunities for leisure activities or support packages were available. Due to different needs a range of support would be needed.

Members wondered whether schools could give further support and were informed that schools were very aware of what was happening in their area and helped wherever possible. Parental Support Advisors were a new initiative within schools that would give greater support.

A pressure on the service was highlighted to the Committee as family members identified as a possible foster carers had to undergo a full suitability assessment. If a number of family members came forward all were required to be assessed which could be time consuming for social care staff as well as delaying the placement.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted

**CYP
36/09**

Work Programme

Jane Humphreys outlined the content of the next Select Committee meeting. The Committee would receive a presentation of information that had been commissioned within the region. Members would hear options to work collectively within the region to share best practice and identify cost savings.

The Committee considered an updated project plan. Members agreed that stage 4 of the review would be extended to three meetings:

- 11 November 2009
- 18 November 2009
- 2 December 2009

Members also agreed that the meeting to agree the final report would change from 6 January 2010 to 27 January 2010 and presentation of the report to Cabinet on 11 March 2010.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Stage 4 of the review will be extended to three meetings:

- 11 November 2009
- 18 November 2009
- 2 December 2009

2. The meeting to agree the final report will change from 6 January 2010 to 27 January 2010 and presentation of the report to Cabinet on 11 March 2010.

**CYP
37/09**

Chairs Update

The Chair informed the Committee that an overview meeting would be held on 28 October 2009. The meeting would cover the following items:

- What had been achieved during the last 6-12 months
- What had not been achieved
- What were the emerging issues for the service
- What was the financial position of the service
- What were the financial and risk issues for the service
- Any concluding remarks

An invitation will be extended to all councillors.

The Chair also informed the Committee that the meeting on 22 September will deal with the Youth Service Review

CONCLUDED that all Members will be invited to the next meeting which will deal with the Youth Service Review.