

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.  
In Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Vickers (Chairman)  
Councillor Attwood (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Greenaway, Hanif, Ms Harris, J Jones, J Martin, Mrs Rogers  
and P Woodall; Reverend Wickens, Mrs Verdegem, Mrs Lees and Mrs Simms

### **OFFICERS**

The Interim Director of Adult Social Services (Lead Officer to the Committee),  
the Acting Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Directors of Children's  
Services (Children's Specialist Services), (Education Play and Learning) and  
(Quality and Partnership) and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law, Property and  
Human Resources)

### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Mrs Walker (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services)

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#### 27 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors  
Crumpton and Mrs Dunn, Mrs Roe and Mrs Ward.

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#### 28 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of  
Conduct, were made by Councillor Vickers in respect of the agenda items  
numbered below, in view of the issues indicated:

Item 6 – as a governor of a Children's Centre

Item 7 – as the parent of a child who has used the Council's Palliative Care  
and Special Educational Needs Services and as a former Chairman and  
Committee Member of the Dudley Deaf Club.

Item 8 – as the Council's Member Champion for Learning Disabilities and  
being the parent of a child with disabilities

Item 9 – as the parent of a child with special educational needs and as the Chair of the Management Committee of the Home and Hospital Cherry Tree Learning Centre

Item 9 – as Chairman of the Appeals Panel (Children’s Services Transport)

Item 11 – as Chairman of the Management Committee of the Short Stay School Service

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29      MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the inclusion of the name of Mrs Verdegem in the list of members in attendance. .

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30      UPDATE OF THE CHANGES FOLLOWING THE COALITION GOVERNMENT

A report of the Director of Children’s Services was submitted providing an update on the governmental changes taking place since the Coalition Government had taken power which would impact upon the work of the Directorate of Children’s Services and its partners.

The known information to date was appended the report now submitted and indicated a large number of areas within the Children’s Services remit that would be affected by the Government’s announcements. The Government spending review would have significant implications on services for children funded hitherto both directly and indirectly but details in most cases were currently awaited.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report be noted.

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31      EXTENDED SERVICES – JOINT WORKING WITH HEALTH

A report of the Director of Children’s Services was submitted advising the Committee of the work and initiatives currently being undertaken jointly between the Extended Services Team of the Council, through Children’s Centres, and partner health agencies including the Dudley Primary Care Trust, Dudley Community Services and the Dudley Group of Hospitals.

The Local Authority was the commissioning body for the delivery of Children's Centres in the Borough and Service Level Agreements were held between the Directorate of Children's Services and the Centres. The report now submitted indicated the services delivered through the 20 Children's Centres in the Borough in their role as the hub of universal service delivery. The activities involved were expanded upon by the Extended Services Strategy Manager.

In response to a question, the Extended Services Strategy Manager advised the Committee of the organisation and structure of the Extended Services Team and the means by which the team worked with partner agencies to provide the services referred to.

#### RESOLVED

That the joint work being undertaken between the Local Authority Extended Services Team, Dudley Primary Care Trust, Dudley Community Services and the Dudley Group of Hospitals to support service delivery through the Children's Centres in Dudley be noted and endorsed.

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#### AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the detail of the "Aiming High for Disabled Children" Programme and which indicated progress in achieving the aims of the initiative.

Dudley had been successful in becoming a pilot site for the programme and had gained funding to enable the programme to start ahead of other Local Authorities. The 10 work streams provided for in the programme were itemised in the report, with progress against the work streams being indicated in appendix 2.

In the discussion following the presentation of the report, the publicity given to promote the availability of short breaks for disabled people was stated. Reference was also made to support for children with disabilities in response to which the measures being taken between the Council and partner agencies to continue provision but to mitigate duplication was explained by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services).

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Committee note the progress made in all areas of the "Aiming High for Disabled Children" Programme.
2. That the statutory duty to provide short breaks for disabled people, which Local Authorities will need to address from April 2011, as indicated in the report submitted, be noted.

### DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2010/11 AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

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A report of the Director of Children's Services seeking consideration of the Annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2010/11 and the Equality and Diversity Annual Report for the Directorate of Children's Services for 2009/10, was submitted.

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Quality and Partnership) referred to the support work undertaken through the appointment of the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator. In response to a question asked in the discussion on the report, the Equality Officer confirmed that, currently, schools were fully compliant with Priority 1 in Appendix 2 of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2010/11, as set out on page 30 of the agenda papers. He pointed out, however, that a new Code of Practice would be effective from April, 2011.

It was noted that, while the report had been available for inclusion on the agenda for the meeting of the Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2010, in compliance with the audit requirement, the report had not been submitted to that meeting of the Committee because of the length of the agenda with other items having been given priority.

#### RESOLVED

That the report for 2009/10 and the Action Plan for 2010/11 be noted and endorsed.

### ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/10

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A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Committee about the work undertaken by the Directorate of Children's Services to monitor and support the children who were home educated by preference.

The report indicated that 182 children had been on the elective home education register at some stage during 2009/10. This represented an increase of one from the previous academic year but a substantial increase in the numbers of pupils home educated since 2002.

The report confirmed that the tracking of children had continued to be successful, with contact having been made with an information base established for each child. The means by which the effectiveness of home education was monitored was summarised in the report and it was indicated that in relation to the option of either a home visit or a written report, only four families had chosen the latter. The others had had direct contact with the Local Authority. Twenty one children had returned to school in 2009/10, with the agreement and support of families.

The report summarised the manner in which home education worked with the different disciplines within the Directorate of Children's Services and partner agencies to ensure a two way flow of information to address individual cases.

Other issues contained in the report included the following:-

- The number of home educated children with a Statement of Special Educational need.
- The protocols for assessing requests from parents of children in special schools who needed to seek the permission of the Local Authority before electing for home education and for the review of the annual statement.
- Reasons given by parents for electing for home education.
- Age profile by year and Key Stage, this being consistent with the previous year's figures.
- Gender and ethnicity profile.

On expressing concern that parents removed children at a late stage in their schooling, the report indicated that there were currently no young people in home education in the category of Not in Employment, Education or Training.

In the discussion following the presentation of the report, the sufficiency of a home visit or written report once a year was questioned, in response to which the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Play and Learning) indicated that this usually did not represent the full picture, as other agencies such as the School Welfare Service often were involved. The Council usually had good rapport with parents. Except where school welfare or safeguarding matters were at issue, however, Children's Services did not have an entitlement to entry into a home.

Reference was made to the children who remained outside the system and the Assistant Director summarised the monitoring systems applied. The Assistant Director agreed to write separately to the Member who raised the issue in respect of the manner in which pupils excluded from school were looked after.

## RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted and supported and that the work undertaken in relation to home educated children be endorsed.
- (2) That a report be submitted to a future meeting on the support provided to children who are in transit throughout the Borough, including the position with regard to travellers' children.

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### LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN RESULTS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Committee about the test results for Looked After Children.

The following information was indicated in the report:-

- The provisional results for English Key Stage 2 for 2010 were 46% at level 2 or above, an increase of 8.6% from 2009.
- The provisional results for Mathematics Key Stage 2 for 2010 were 33.3% level 2 or above, a fall of 7.3% from 2009.
- At 2010 25% of Dudley's Looked After Children had achieved 5 A\*-C GCSE passes including Mathematics and English, a rise of 18% from 2009 and a figure now 12% above the National average.
- Of the Year 11 pupils receiving private tuition through the Dudley Project, 39% had gained 5 A\*-C GCSE passes, including Mathematics and English.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the work being undertaken with this group of young people be endorsed.

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### UPDATE REPORT ON PENSNETT EDUCATION CAMPUS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Committee on the progress of the Pensnett Education Campus in terms of staffing, timetable, behaviour and other ancillary issues. The report indicated that the Short Stay School Behaviour Policy was to be discussed shortly; that lunch time and after school clubs were now running and that the student reward system was in place. A Connexions Service office had been established on site.

In addition, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education, Play and Learning) reported on the progress with pupils whom had left the former Pensnett School of Technology for other schools, indicating that, except for two pupils with special educational needs whose needs were being addressed, the vast majority had integrated well. None of the pupils relocated had been permanently excluded from any of their new schools.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director reported that proposals for the staffing of the campus from September, 2011 were currently being worked on.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be received and the progress made noted.

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The meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN