



Cllr. Mark  
Dennett  
Chairman  
Children &  
Young People  
PPB

## **ANNUAL REPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2014 – MARCH 2015**

“I always like to start by looking back over the previous twelve months. The focus of the Board was very much around the scrutiny of our social care services, ensuring that we continue to provide the support for our children in care and families who come into contact with the social care system, ensuring that the systems and support are in place to protect our young people. The critical need for these services has been highlighted by the cases in Rotherham, and we continue to make sure they are fully supported, especially in these times of savage government cuts.

We have also examined how the education reforms have affected our schools. All of our primary schools are still wrestling with how they can assess our children's progress without levels of attainment to measure against. This is even more highlighted when Her Majesty's Chief Inspector singled out Halton for it's high performance in our schools notably, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils (pupils on Free School Meals (FSM) achieving 5+ A\*- C including English and Mathematics at GCSE was the highest in the North West and in the top 10 nationally. Unfortunately, proving these kinds of successes will be even more difficult now with the educational reforms.

As I have done over the last few years, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students who did so well this year, and also thank the parents, carers and teachers who supported them in achieving these fantastic results. The results show Halton's continued commitment to drive up standards and improve the opportunities available to all of our young people as they move into adulthood.

Looking back I think it has been a good and varied ninth year for the board and I would like to thank all of the members of the board, as well as all of the officers involved for their continued support and contribution.

Going forward I intend to look further at the educational reforms and look at ways we can help our family of schools to come together and ensure that our children continue to get the best educational start in life. We will also continue to scrutinise our social care and safeguarding services, ensuring that we do everything we can to support our most vulnerable children and young people.

Finally, I would like to conclude this report by thanking all of the officers and members (of all parties) involved in all of the 'additional duties' that take place to make sure that the children and young people receive that best care and support. Duties such as being a school governor with all of the responsibilities that that entails, statutory inspections of our care homes (Regulation 33) or of our social worker teams (Climbié visits), membership of the Local Safeguarding Board, the Adoptions Panel, the Children and Young People's Trust, to name but a few of the 'extra duties' that both members and officers perform to support and improve the lives of the children and young people of our Borough.”

**Councillor Mark Dennett**

**Chairman, Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board**

## MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2013/14 the Board comprised Eleven Councillors – Councillors M. Dennett (Chairman) Cllr G. Logan (Vice Chairman), L.Cassidy, P.Hignett, M. Horabin, K Loftus, A McInerney, J.Roberts, J. Stockton, A. Wall, B.Woolfall, and Co-optee E Lawler.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the work of the Council (and its partner agencies within Children's Trust Arrangements) in seeking: to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and opportunities to fulfil their potential and succeed; and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

## REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

### **Children and Enterprise Directorate Business Plan**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise on the Directorate Business Plan.

It was noted that each Directorate of the Council was required to develop a medium-term business plan, in parallel with the budget, that was subject to annual review and refresh. The key priorities for development or improvement for the various functional areas were considered previously by the Board at a special meeting held on 19 November 2013 and the Board now endorsed the departmental activities and performance measures and targets that would provide a focus for on-going monitoring of performance throughout the 2014-15 financial year.

### **Care Leavers**

The Board explored the Leaving Care Act (2000) defining the duties of a local authority towards those young people who left its care, and the four categories under the Act. The board discussed key challenges and changes to the benefits system that was having an impact upon care leavers the charter for Care Leavers and the 'Moving on' booklet that had also been reissued to care leavers to explain some of the services available to them when they left care.

### **SEND Reforms**

The Board received a presentation and later in the year an update on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms, which set out an overview on the current requirements from Government regarding the reforms. The Board considered the Key themes of the reforms and the statutory duty to provide a local offer from 1 September 2014. The Board further noted the difficulties faced by the reforms and that Halton was on schedule to meet the deadline. The Board endorsed the continuing actions to deliver the Send reforms.

### **Missing from Home and Child Sexual Exploitation**

The Board discussed an update on the development of the Missing from Home and Care Service and Child Sexual Exploitation activity and a Pan-Cheshire Joint Protocol for Children and Young People who ran away or went missing from Home or Care. The joint protocol sought to identify and manage the risks and ensure a consistency in approach across borders and agencies and had been revised in April 2014 to take in account new definitions concerning children who went missing which now had 3 classifications, absence, missing and away from placement without authorisation. The new protocol also defined agencies roles and responsibilities including the collation and analysis of data to assist with trends around missing but to also make links to Child Sexual Exploitation and trafficking and next steps in the form of preventative measures.

Members highlighted the dangers of social media and network sites, and were informed of targeted work across primary schools. The Board queried whether there was an issue of trafficking of young people across Halton. In response it was noted that there was no evidence of this at the moment in Halton. In addition Members requested that the zcards and posters with the helpline be circulated. Members endorsed the proactive response to Child Sexual exploitation.

### **Children's Emotional Health and Well Being**

The Board received an update regarding Children's Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing review. It was noted that in England one in six adults and one in ten children would experience a mental illness at any one time. The Board considered what Halton had done, locally, including the work of Halton Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the objectives which were outlined in the national strategy that were identified in Halton's Strategy 2013-2016. The Board endorsed the five priorities which had been identified as areas for work to meet the needs of children and local people in Halton.

### **Children's Social Work Reform Restructure**

The Board received a presentation from the Operational Director Children and Families on the Children's Social Work Reform Restructure. Following a consultation exercise with staff within the Department and service users a new structure for Children's Social Work had been agreed and would be in place on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Members were advised on why change was necessary, the outcome of the consultation exercise, and the key principles agreed with staff:

### **Haltons Neglect Strategy**

The Board Endorsed Halton's Neglect Strategy for Children and Young People which outlined the pattern and nature of neglect, an analysis of the prevalence of neglect in Halton by ward and recommendations supported by an action plan for the years 2014-16

### **Raising Participation Age**

The Board considered progress in support of the Local Authority's statutory duties in relation to raising the Participation age and progress in working alongside other Greater Merseyside Local Authorities to jointly commission services for economy of scale. Members received information on the positive increases in participation and reduction in NEET and endorsed the progress to date.

Members regularly considered matters relating to Safeguarding in particular in the work of the Halton Children's Trust and Safeguarding Children's Board. Members also received reports on complaints and the compliments services had received and the learning from these. Reports were also received on Independent Living, The Sustainable Community Strategy, Proposed cuts to the Education Services Grant, Troubled Families, Use of Pupil Premium, Halton's Early Intervention Model and a summary of recent and forthcoming changes in education

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Ann McIntyre on 0151 511 7332 [ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk](mailto:ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk)