

**ANNUAL REPORT  
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES  
POLICY & PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019**

“Like last year, I would like to start by thanking all of the people involved in providing Children’s Services, whether in Education or Social Care. To continue to provide a good service while resources are continuously cut by the current government is a credit to the determination and professionalism of all involved.

It is not only Council, School, and Health resources that are being cut, our residents’ are also facing cuts in their benefits and allowances, which in turn, is creating increased demand for our services. But, against this backdrop, our staff, social workers, teachers and health workers are continuing to provide good support — albeit in diminishing amounts — to the children of the Borough.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate our students, and also thank the parents, carers and teachers who supported them. National changes to the curriculum and assessments have made this challenge even harder. To see how our students have performed against this changing landscape is inspiring, and I know that it will only continue to get better.

You will see from the “Review of the Year”, that for the thirteenth year of the board we have focussed on Children in Care and our responsibilities as Corporate Parents for those children. We have also looked at a more joined up ‘Early Help’ strategy with a real focus on providing the right early help at the right time and in the right place. In all, I think it was a focussed and productive year.

Going forward we will continue to monitor the early years and educational settings, to ensure that Halton is providing the best level of education for all of our children. 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 44) 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  
Chair – Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board**

## **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2018/19 the Board comprised Eleven Councillors – Councillors M. Dennett (Chair) Cllr G. Logan (Vice Chair), C. Carlin, L. Cassidy, P. Hignett, M. Horabin, R. Leck, P. Lloyd Jones, C. Rowe, J. Stockton and L. Whitley.

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 four times during the period June 2017 to March 2018, and detailed below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

### **Applying Corporate Parenting Principles for Children in Care and Care Leaver**

The Board received a report on the changes to the statutory duties for children and care and care leavers and the introduction of seven corporate parenting principles under the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

It explained that the principles should shape the mind set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

The statutory guidance gave a number of examples of questions that members and officers should ask in evaluating how effectively we demonstrate we have high ambitions and support for children in care and care leavers which are part of “our family” as corporate parents.

### **Children in Care Placements**

This report shared with members the Children in Care Scorecard for the end 31 March 2018. There was a particular focus on children’s placements.

Members were advised that the majority of children in care are in foster placements either in-house or through external providers. Collaborative work was being undertaken with Warrington, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester to improve the marketing, recruitment and assessment of foster carers. Training for foster carers had been revised along with the support offered.

The report also set out details of the number of children in residential placement, the majority of whom are teenagers and are placed within a 20 mile radius of the borough.

Information was also provided on the number of children in welfare secure, those placed with adopters before an adoption order, children with a placement order waiting

for suitable family, the number of children placed with parents on an interim care order and those placed with family and friends as foster carers.

There was also information and discuss about the improved Placement Stability in Halton.

### **Everyone Early Help Strategy 2018-2021**

Members received a report on the new Everyone Early Help Strategy 2018-2021. It was advised that this strategy combined the children, adults and public health approach to Early Help.

Members discussed the five key aims of the strategy and agreed that it was important that all agencies work toward help to further embed the following early help principles:

- The right early help, in the right place at the right time.
- Ensuring a whole system approach to early help with strong partnership working.
- Empowering local people and communities to build capacity and resilience, to enable people and communities to do more for themselves.

Through this new combined approach it was said that we should expect to see that more individuals and families are empowered and enabled to take control of their lives, and they are supported in their local communities avoiding the need for services intervention. When there is service intervention we will expect to see the positive impact in a timely way with families reporting sustained improvement in their circumstances.

### **OFSTED Focused Visit**

The Board received a report on the OFSTED Focused Visit to the Integrated Contact and Referral Team (iCART). Members were advised that OfSTED do not make a judgement from a focused inspection rather a narrative letter sets out their findings, outlines the impact the improvement in the service has had for children and families, strengths and areas specifies areas improvement, highlighting specifically any areas for immediate action or priority actions.

Overall, the letter outlines a strong service that serves families well and safeguards children appropriately. Significantly, there were no areas for immediate action and only three recommendations. Inspectors commented on the strong and integrated partnership working, good level of management oversight and the valued support and supervision given to social workers.

After a discussion about the key findings of the report members asked that their thanks be passed to all involved in delivering iCART in Halton.

## **Scrutiny Topic**

### **Further developing links between Halton's Businesses and Schools**

Following the conclusion of the topic group members received a report outlining its work, its findings and its recommendations.

Four meetings of the Scrutiny topic group took place, each of the first three meetings reviewed a different line of enquiry; employer engagement, careers education information and business needs.

The final recommendations developed by the scrutiny topic group and agreed are detailed below.

- Request every secondary school to have a **named** Governor responsible for overseeing how the school engages with businesses and develops pupils' employability skills.
- Halton Borough Council officer to check from September 2018 that schools and the College do identify a Careers Leader and that schools publish how outside providers can talk to pupils in schools. This will be reported to PPB annually.
- That all schools implement the requirement to offer every young person at least seven encounters with employers during their education, with at least one encounter taking place each year from years 7-13, ahead of the Government proposed timeline of 2020.
- That the College implements the requirement to offer every young person at least two meaningful encounters with employers per year ahead of the Government proposed timeline of 2020.
- That PPB receives a copy of the published careers programme for each school and the College from September 2018. This will be reported to PPB annually.
- That the Director's report to Governors contains information about Careers Guidance and developing employability skills termly.
- That the Careers and Enterprise Company is requested to update Halton Borough Council termly on the activity of Enterprise Advisers in Halton, and asked to encourage schools to engage directly with the Local Authority to provide feedback about the impact of Enterprise Advisers.

## **Exclusions**

Members received a report on exclusions. The report set out the level of exclusions nationally and provided a summary of exclusions in Halton over the last four years. It summarised the House of Commons Education Committee report "Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of over increasing exclusions" and sets out the approach in Halton to try and reduce exclusions and promote a more inclusive approach within the Borough.

## **Other Matters**

The Board also considered a range of reports on; attainment outcomes for children and young people and their performance in comparison to national data and north west regional data; the annual Headteacher report on the educational outcomes of children in care; an update report on the progress towards transforming children and young people's mental health and the annual report on comments, complaints and compliments relation to children's social care services.

As part of its overview, the Policy and Performance Board also considers the Council's Executive Board minutes and Children's Trust minutes as well as the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports.

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