



Cllr. Mark Dennett
Chairman

ANNUAL REPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2007 – MARCH 2008

“I would like to start my 2007/08 Annual Report by referring to my previous Annual Report, and the promises made in that report. In my 2006/07 Annual Report I wrote about the foundational year for this overview and scrutiny board. I talked about the partnerships formed to ensure the safeguarding of our children and young people, and also the wonderful initiatives that had been created for our young people like the Youth Bank, which last year approved schemes in excess of £300,000 put forward by young people to benefit young people and approved by young people.

I also talked about the function of overview and scrutiny and the responsibility of holding the Executive Board to account, as well as plans to engage the parents and young people of the Borough in that process.

Over the last year I followed through with those plans by engaging members of the Borough Youth Forum, as well as members of the Parent and Carers Forum, and I am pleased that one of the work topics for 2008/09 – “Access to Services by Young People” – has come directly from that policy of engagement. We also held the second of our annual question and answer sessions with a member of the Executive Board; this time it was Councillor Marie Wright, Executive Portfolio Holder for the Youth Service and Youth Matters who talked and answered questions on the future initiatives for the young people of our Borough.

One of the many highlights of last year has undoubtedly been the significant improvement in attainment that we witnessed at Key Stages 2 and 4, an almost 10% improvement in GCSE results on 2006 and significant strides in Key Stage 2. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students who did so well and also thank the parents and teachers who supported them in achieving these fantastic results. The results show Halton’s commitment to drive up standards and improve the opportunities available to all of our young people as they move into adulthood.

This year also saw the start of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. Many consultations took place both for the public and their elected representatives about the future of Halton’s Secondary Education and the potential future investment of up to £100 million into our Secondary Schools. BSF and the Primary Capital programme, which will look at our Primary Schools, are massive commitments into the future of education in Halton. Their success, as well as tackling some of the

entrenched health issues facing our children and young people are some of the main challenges facing the authority and its partners.

As I write this report the Borough has just experienced its first Joint Area Review of Children's Services in the Borough, and while the report is due for publication in July, provisional indications are that it will confirm significant progress by all partners working together for the children of the Borough. This is great news for both the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership and sets a strong foundation to build upon for further improvements in the future.

Looking back I think it has been a good second 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.

Finally, as last year 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 Alliance Board, 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 Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2007/2008 the Board comprised eleven Councillors and one representative from – Cllr Mark Dennett (Chairman), Cllr Margaret Horabin (Vice Chairman), Cllr P Drakeley, Cllr F Fraser, Cllr R Gilligan, Cllr T Higginson, Cllr D Inch, Cllr J Lowe, Cllr S Parker, Cllr M Ratcliffe, Cllr J Stockton, Mr C Chorley.

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 Children and Young People's Plan.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

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

Building Schools for the Future

In July 2007, a special meeting of the PPB was held to consider proposals for Building Schools for the Future. In particular it considered:

- The vision and aims for BSF in Halton
- The specific proposals for consultation
- Government requirements for inclusion within BSF
- Next steps

Members were able to seek clarification on the Programme and contribute their views towards the consultation.

Additional consideration was given later in the year to the proposals for school reorganisation when PPB considered options for the siting of a proposed Academy and made recommendations on the preferred option.

Educational Attainment and Narrowing the Gap

Members had a number of opportunities to examine issues relating to school performance and to consider progress in narrowing the gap in achievement for vulnerable children including those with special education needs. In particular Members noted the significant improvement in results at Key Stages 2 and 4 and explored concerns in performance at Key Stages 1 and 3. In addition it examined the progress of vulnerable groups of children and acknowledged the progress that continued to be made in meeting the needs of children with special educational needs.

Children's Trust Arrangements

Throughout the year Members considered key issues relating to the improvement in outcomes for children and young people in the Borough and in particular progress towards Children's Trust Arrangements. Specific items included progress towards targeting and integrating services on a locality basis through Children and Young People's Area Networks and the development of extended services through school settings. At the final meeting of the year the Strategic Director of Children's Services reported on progress to strengthen Children's Trust Arrangements through the alignment of a range of NHS staff within the integrated management of the Children and Young People's Directorate. The services aligned covered those for the vulnerable and well children and it was emphasised that accountability to NHS structures would remain through:

- The NHS continuing to be accountable for NHS staff professional

development

- Governance would remain with the NHS via the Director of Commissioning within the PCT

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2008/2009

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2208/2009) it will carry out Topic reviews examining the following areas:

In 2007/2008 a scrutiny topic on school admissions was completed that has assisted in informing issues relating to the BSF programme and the emerging Primary Capital Programme that will be taken forward in 208/2009.

Further topics for scrutiny were identified following the Annual Performance Assessment of children's services within the Borough. Topics identified were:

- Oral Health
- First time entrants to the criminal justice system
- Access to services by young people (in response to issues raised by the Borough Youth Forum)

These topics will be completed in 2008/2009. Publication of the report on the Joint Annual Review in July will enable the Board to identify future items for scrutiny.

SAFEGUARDING

Members regularly considered matters relating to Safeguarding, particularly in the areas of monitoring of racist incidents, anti-bullying, private fostering arrangements and the work of the Halton Safeguarding Children's Board.

Members of the Public are welcomed 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 Judith Kirk, Operational Director, Judith.kirk@halton.gov.uk, tel: 0151 471 7545.