

## **EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate  
Street, Rotherham.**

**Date: Monday, 18 October 2004**

**Time: 9.30 a.m.**

### **A G E N D A**

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th July, 2004 (copy attached). (Pages 1 - 5)
4. Get Real Team - Update Report by the Get Real Team Manager (copy attached). (Pages 6 - 10)
5. Date of next meeting - 13th December, 2004.

**EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN  
MONDAY, 19TH JULY, 2004**

Present:- Councillor Kirk (in the Chair) and Councillor Gosling.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Boyes and Littleboy.

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Resolved:- That Councillor Boyes be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Resolved:- That Councillor Kirk be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

(Councillor Kirk in the Chair)

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2004 be received.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

(a) Minute No. 2(a) – Restructuring of the Team

It was pointed out to the Panel that the allocation of £45,000 from Social Services was for the total Active budget and not set aside for driving lessons as minuted.

(b) Minute No. 2(c) – Pupils off School Roll

The pupil referred to currently off the school roll had now moved out of the Borough.

**5. THE GET REAL TEAM - PROGRESS REPORT**

Katy Hawkins, Manager of the Get Real Team, gave an update on progress and reported on the following:-

(a) The Team

The management restructuring of the team had been positive and plans were now moving forward.

From September each area team would have their own manager from the Get Real Team in the North, South and Central areas

providing support at team meetings.

Recruitment had been successful for three teachers and an administrative officer, which would provide a range of experience to the team and assist with the development of alternative educational packages. Due to a vacancy a Social Worker vacancy would hopefully be filled shortly.

The team were also thanked for their hard work and dedication over the last academic year and this was endorsed by officers and elected Members present.

(b) Pupils off School Roll

There were currently no pupils off school roll. The team had actively prevented nine permanent exclusions over this academic year. Work had taken place with two permanently excluded pupils, one of whom had since settled at Whiston Grange; the other subject to a multi-agency meeting in order to consider how best to meeting his needs.

(c) Personal Educational Plans

82% of the Personal Educational Plans were now complete. This should be improved upon and the quality monitored carefully. It would appear that the figures for Rotherham were much higher than compared to others across the Trent Authority and more importantly they were of good quality.

From September Personal Educational Plans would be in place for children in nursery taking up places from 3+ and would form the basis of foundation stage profiles.

(d) L.P.S.A. and Best Value Performance Indicators

The Team had worked hard to establish performance action plans for all the targets and the Trent Regional DfES Development Worker had agreed to visit Rotherham to consult on the plans to ensure they were effective.

One area of performance receiving particular attention was school attendance. A clear action plan had been developed to maintain attendance, but record keeping was always a term behind and it would be early 2005 before the new registering system was up and running. Links with the Education Welfare Service were also being built so they could provide support in this area.

(e) SATS Results

There had been an overall improvement in the results at Key Stage 1

from 44% to 46.67%.

At Key Stage 2, received last Friday, the results were not so good with a down turn to 29.8% from 32% reported last year.

Staff had worked hard at Key Stage 2 and one particular student, who was not expected to be entered, had convinced the school otherwise.

Discussion had also ensued on the numbers of children that have been dis-applied on roll at special schools. These figures were reported as part of the SATS statistics, but this was not always the case of other Local Authorities. If these children on roll were not included then the Key Stage 2 target would raise to 37.4% against a P.S.A. target of 42%. Consultation with the Audit Commission would take place on this issue.

It was also pointed out that the results reported to the Government were based on children having been looked after for a twelve month period or more.

The results for Key Stage 3 had not yet been received and may not be available until September, 2004.

(f) G.C.S.E. Feedback

The results from this year's cohort were not positive, due to some young people having disengaged from education and which may have a significant impact on the team's ability to achieve the P.S.A. target.

However, as well as the reports on pupil disengagement there were also success stories. In reality terms all pupils were provided with specific action plans even if they had disengaged from education or were experiencing other difficulties. There was a clear need for some kind of accreditation or the development of a national framework for children who were looked after or had some form of special educational needs. This view was also echoed by the other authorities in the Trent region.

Approaches had also been made by other local authorities, namely Leicestershire and Redcar, for some form of consultation on the difficulties facing their own teams.

It was also noted that Education, Culture and Leisure Services were in discussions to give a commitment to prioritising pupils with special educational needs in public care and that a report would be presented to the Cabinet in due course.

(g) Activities for Looked After Children

The team were actively involved in producing a number of sessions for young people over the summer break.

Swimming was being looked at as there were a total of fifty-seven non-swimmers being looked after and their names would be included on the appropriate waiting lists for inclusion.

In order to reduce costs all participants would be issued with a Rothercard, which would reduce costs by 50%.

Three tenders had been received on the provision of driving lessons and the specification was being worked on, with an estimated cost of £500.00 per block of lessons each person should they pass their driving test first time.

(h) Teenagers to Work

A bid had been submitted to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to fund a pilot of the Rotherham Trainee Initiative Scheme. No official response had yet been received. This issue had been raised at the Corporate Management Team on Friday and Programme Areas had given their support should the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund bid be successful. This would then be developed over the year and linked in to other agendas to fund N.V.Q.s.

It was pointed out that the report submitted indicated that during the pilot phase there would be no cost implications to Programme Areas. This was incorrect as match funding would be requested.

The Panel were informed that that the Teenagers to Work programme had been extended to sixteen and seventeen year olds as many young people were favouring higher education. It was also noted that from this year's cohort ten young people were joining the Army.

The Panel were also informed that the Teachers' Conference had been cancelled last week due to a poor response with only twelve people indicating their acceptance.

The Teachers' Conference would be rescheduled for the 3rd November, 2004 with invitations extended to Designated Governors. Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen would be informed of this Conference at their next meeting scheduled to take place in the Town Hall on the 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2004 and would also be included in the Governing Bodies' newsletter.

**6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting of the Panel would take place on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2004 at 9.30 a.m.

Resolved:- That the dates indicated below be confirmed for future meetings:-

Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2004

Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2005

Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2005

Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2005

**7. MR. ROGER HIGGINBOTTOM**

The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, paid tribute to Roger Higginbottom, who was leaving the Local Authority, for the work and support he had provided and wished him every success in the future.

**Education Of Looked After Children****Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004****Report compiled by Katy Hawkins, Get Real Team Manager****The Team**

A new Social Worker has now been appointed and will join the team on the 7<sup>th</sup> October.

The team is currently working very close to full capacity especially the teaching staff following some unexpected challenges, which have placed significant demands on our limited teaching resources; this is causing some level of concern given how early into the academic year. The management team continues to closely monitor work loads and action plans to ensure we are as effective as possible.

The new admin worker has taken up her post and the team is in the fortunate position of being fully staffed.

During the summer break we invited Tony Dewhurst and Sue Dean who are DfES regional advisors for the Trent region, to examine our performance action planning and overall team effectiveness. A copy of their comments in writing is attached to this report. Their only comment for improvement was in relation to the development of a senior management steering group that could make necessary decisions to support the work of the team.

We are awaiting locality team meeting dates in order to begin to attend meetings regularly to improve liaison and offer additional support, directly to Social Work Teams.

We will be attending a Chair of Governors meeting in November where we will be pursuing the issue of every school having a Designated Governor for Children in Public Care. Governing bodies are currently undergoing the process of elected designated members, and we hope to have the results of this by the October term break, to allow us to consider the gaps and help governing bodies overcome them.

We are currently exploring and developing a comprehensive monitoring system to enable us to closely track all Year 6 and Year 11 pupils. This approach ensures regular contact, monitoring and assessment to enable the best possible results at key stage 2 and in GCSE's.

We are developing a package of training for Foster Carers which we hope to deliver in the New Year. This training is viewed as essential and all carers will be encouraged to attend. Extra training will be developed from there once we have ascertained the level of need.

Equally we are revising the education policy for Residential units and ensuring units have a nominated education person whom we will train and support.

I have negotiated a new way of collecting attendance figures for all Looked After children, with support of the Education Welfare Service. Termly attendance print outs will be brought to the team within the first week of the new term. This allows us to examine patterns of attendance and ensure a speedy response to issues of non-attendance.

We are also establishing a new system to improve the school attendance of children who return home on Care Orders. This is the hardest group to target with regards to attendance. Contact with the DFES has confirmed that providing there is clear prior written notification parents who do not ensure their children regularly attend school, are open to prosecution. We are developing a form for parents to sign when their child is returned to their care to inform them of their duties in regard to education and the consequences of not following this up.

### **Pupils off School Roll**

We currently have four young people off school roll

- 1 young man whose placement in Sheffield has broken down, his school attendance was not good and he does not want to return to that school. We are exploring the possibility of Pope Pious and Rawmarsh Comp at present.
- Another young person was permanently excluded from Whiston Grange at the end of last term. Following discussion it has been agreed that a therapeutic placement incorporating education is in his best interests. An alternative package of education has been developed for him in the meantime, but he finds it difficult to engage with this.
- Another child is a year 4 pupil who is in a specialist placement in Shrewsbury. His current pattern of behaviour renders it impossible to consider a local school and he is accessing home tuition within the unit. We are monitoring this closely.
- Finally, we have another young man who has returned to Rotherham from an Out of Authority EBD school. Psychological assessments are currently being undertaken to inform us of the most suitable school placement for this young man.

We are currently in the position of heavily supporting the Education of two young people whose education was transferred from Whiston Grange to alternative packages at very short notice.

One pupil is in year 11 and we are undertaking teaching 4 GCSE's via the team. The other has just started year 10 and the long term future of his education is of concern. We are offering 2 teaching sessions and he has a work placement for 2 days, he is a very damaged young man and I fear we



are likely to see him disengage totally from education. These matters are being considered and overseen by Senior Management within the LEA.

Unfortunately this has had a major impact on the teams scarce resources, and will continue to do so over the next academic year. There has been acknowledgement of this and we are exploring the offer of extending teaching time by 1 day, which will go some way towards easing the pressure.

### GCSE Results

The GCSE examination results for 2004 break down as follows, with the comparison from last year.

Exam Year	Total in cohort	Number not sitting GCSE's	Number entered for GCSE's	Number achieving 1 A-G	Number achieved 5 A-G	Number achieved 5 A-C
2003	33	8	25	21 63.6%	14 42.4%	4 12.1%
2004	27	15	12	12 44.4%	7 25.9%	4 14.8%

The 5 A-C was the most surprising result as we only had 1 young person predicted with those results.

Of those 15 that didn't sit the breakdown is;

- 3 were in SLD school
- 1 refused to sit
- 1 was on part time programme at Whiston Grange
- 1 was out of authority with significant mental health issues
- 1 was an unaccompanied asylum seeker who attended vocational courses at RCAT
- 8 were long term persistent non-attenders

From the entire cohort the Get Real Team worked with 70.3%

## **Local Public Service Agreement**

Dave McGee Service Manager presented a report to Cabinet Member for Social Services on 17<sup>th</sup> September suggesting that, based on the results of 2004 and our predictions for the 2005 cohort, it is most unlikely that we will reach the target of 90% of Care leavers achieving the required grade of 1 GCSE at grade A to G, by the end of the PSA period.

However, given that a total of eight young people have achieved five GCSE passes at grade A\* - C during 2003 and 2004, it is anticipated that by the end of the LPSA period they will qualify as care leavers and thus enable the target to be met. This represents 70% of the reward grant

Looking at the key stage 2 SAT's results, our results fell short of this year's target, at 29.8%. We are seeking predicted results from school in order for us to assess if there are any young people whose grades could be improved with targeted support, to enable us to meet the LPSA target of 44%. Not having specific primary teaching experience within the team is a limiting factor in this case.

## **Personal Education Plans.**

We are undertaking a number of initiatives aimed at improving performance, for example

- Team managers are being given monthly up to date statistics which included Pep's out of date for that month
- Contacting individual Social Workers for year 11 and Year 6 pupils who have out of date plans, as this is a LPSA proxy measure
- Attending team meetings to ensure Social Workers are clear and able to undertake their responsibility in regard to Personal Education plans
- Working with the Planning and Protection section to look at a plan to improve admin support for the sending out of completed Pep's, and ensuring each statutory review checks the date of PEP and gives a short timescale for it to be completed

## **Activities for Looked After Children**

It was a disappointing summer; some of the activities we had offered had to be cancelled due to poor take up. We tended to see the same few faces at many of the activities, despite extensive advertising through carers, the fostering team and locality teams.

We are developing a Saturday club from the end of October, which will be focussing on 8 – 14 year olds. It will be held once per month and offer a

number of taster activities for young people to try out. Advertising for this has been through word of mouth and the use of posters, so far there has been a positive response.

We are currently awaiting Criminal Records Bureau checks on two Driving instructors; upon satisfactory return of these checks driving lessons will be commenced. We have a significant list of young people who want to undertake driving lessons.

There have been several meetings with Linda Wilson, swimming co-ordinator, Education Culture and Leisure Services with regard to swimming lessons for our young people who are unable to swim. Linda has made contact with parents and carers who have informed us their children are not able to swim, and is arranging lessons in their local pools. There are 50+ pupils in this group.

### **Teenagers to Work**

The Rotherham Trainee Initiative pilot project, funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has begun. We have successfully engaged five young people who have recently undertaken a residential course aimed at preparing them for the world of work.

Despite this matter being raised at the Heads of Service meetings by John Gomersall and verbal support being given to him followed by several invites to a presentation about the scheme and how the authority can support its vulnerable young people, only four Heads of Service from across the whole council attended leaving us with a serious lack of placements to offer our young people within the council which is where this project is aimed.

### **Diary dates**

The following events have been planned and we extend a warm welcome to Members in this meeting.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> November Designated Teacher conference
- 10th November Post 16 awards, 4.30pm John Smith's room
- 16<sup>TH</sup> October 4<sup>th</sup> annual book fair
- Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October consultation evening with the young people in the theme of Halloween