

EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham

Date: Monday, 18 April 2005

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 28th February, 2005 (copy attached). (Pages 1 - 5)
4. Duty of Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children (report attached). (Pages 6 - 8)
- Ann Clegg, Acting Head of Inclusion Support Services to report.
5. Get Real Team - Update Report (copy attached). (Pages 9 - 11)
- Katy Hawkins, Get Real Team Manger to report.
6. Date of next meeting - Monday, 20th June, 2005 - 9.30 am

EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
28th February, 2005

Present:- Councillor Boyes (in the Chair); Councillors Gosling, Kirk and Littleboy.

Also in attendance:- Councillor G. A. Russell (Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Review Group)

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20TH DECEMBER, 2004

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd December, 2004 be received.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Reference was made to Minute No. 12 - Teenagers to Work and the Chairman asked about progress on the number of work experience placements.

Katy, the Get Real Team Manager, reported that there had been some delay with the property and that Social Services were monitoring this. However, 5 posts had come up and 2 young people would be going into employment.

This Panel expressed concern that the Teenagers to Work Project was moving slowly and expected the Council to take seriously its role as "corporate parent" and asked that the Corporate Management Team take a lead role on this and consider options across the range of possibilities to progress the Project.

Resolved:- (1) That the Corporate Management Team be informed of this Panel's concerns that the Teenagers To Work Project was progressing very slowly and that it be re-iterated that the Project needed positive promotion within the Council to enable the provision of training placements in-house for looked after young people and care leavers. Supporting the theme of corporate parents ensured the best possible outcomes of our young people.

(2) That the Corporate Management Team be asked to consider options to progress the project.

3. EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2005 - CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE

Ann Clegg, Acting Head of Inclusion Support Service, referred to the Education Development Plan and submitted the draft section relating to the Educational Attainment of Children in Public Care.

Ann explained that the aim was to try and get the real educational focus into the team and work with schools, as many of the resources were in schools. Every child would be known, tracked and monitored and if there

was a need for intervention this could be done early.

The Chairman referred to extra support for looked after young people via additional part-time hours and suggested that this matter be referred to the Executive Directors of both Education, Culture and Leisure Services and Social Services.

Resolved:- (1) That the draft section relating to the Educational Attainment of Children in Public Care be noted.

(2) That the issue about extra support for looked after young people via additional part-time hours be referred to the Executive Directors of both Education, Culture and Leisure Services and Social Services.

4. GET REAL TEAM - UPDATE REPORT

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

(a) The Team

The Team was currently fully staffed and currently working at full capacity. Due to the high demand of support needs in the secondary sector the limited Learning Mentor capacity within the team means that they were not able to improve outcomes for as many young people as demand requires.

There had been thirteen referrals within the past two months, ten of which have been allocated in the team.

There are a significant number of year 8 and year 9 girls who are beginning to exhibit challenging behaviour in school and the team are working on developing a girls group to address some of the presenting issues. This should be up and running after Easter.

Rehearsals for the version of Grease in collaboration with RCAT were starting at the end of February and there had been a positive response from children and young people wanting to take part.

The weekend club was going strong with numbers up to fifteen attending the activities. The Team are planning to start a young journalist group, where young people are trained in writing articles and photography and encouraged to interview people who have an impact in their life. This work will be displayed on the Get Real website.

On 4th March, 2005 there will be a Conference for Social Services staff, foster carers and other relevant people involved in looked after children; this is to compliment the conference held in October, 2004 for Designated Teachers and Governors. A Joint Conference is planned for later in the year to encourage joint working.

The Teenagers to Work Project was progressing with the RTI scheme with six young people signed up and attending the course. Due to the withdrawal of match funding from Phoenix enterprises, only eight young people can go through the scheme. A property has been identified for renovation and negotiations on signing the lease are underway.

A day's training was successfully delivered to 12 Social Workers in January, 2005.

There are named Education link workers in all the Children's Residential Units and they hold half termly meetings where each unit is encouraged to identify specific training needs around education. Training around residential staff being able to deliver units of an Asdan Award in collaboration with the team has been identified as a way forward for those young people who are not attending school. However there is a cost implication of £820 which is proving difficult to find.

(b) Public Service Agreement - Performance

As the Team were entering the final year of our LPSA agreement they were, in some cases, working with results already achieved and monitoring closely those results which will impact. The breakdown was as follows:-

GCSE grades A* - G, target 90%. In 2004 examinations, 56.5% achieved grades A* - G although the care leaver statistic for 2004/5 has not yet been calculated. The only impact that this can have on this target is by carefully considering the care plans for these young people and looking to see if Care Orders can be discharged early without leaving the young person at risk. However, although not meeting the target, the expected outcome will still be considerably higher than the 2001 base line of 34.3%.

5 A* - C, the target here is seven young people leaving care between April, 2004 and March, 2006. At present there are six young people who qualify for this target and again careful examination of care plans will allow the team to consider if they can reach the target. This will need to take place after the results of this year's cohort as it may be some of these young people will fit the criteria.

Key stage 2 SATs results, Target 42%. The team are currently on line for this target. One young person has entered the system early February and his predicted results are awaited. If he meets level 4 the predicted outcome will be 55.5%, if he does not, the expected outcome will be 50%. The risk factors in the category are high as previous years have shown this is one of the most transitory groups. Up until the point of sitting the tests the team are open to young people entering or leaving the system which affects results.

(c) Improvement Plan – Attendance

For the school year 2003/2004 the absence figure for Children in Care over 12 months, and missing 25 days or more education, was 18%. This was higher than the predicted figure of 14%. Activities to improve this figure included:-

- A new system for monitoring attendance allows the team to have access to registers for young people. This makes the data more timely and accurate. It also allows the team to pick up early warning signs and investigate absences which were beginning to build up.
- The team have developed a system where every young person who achieves 100% attendance gets a certificate and voucher for an activity of their choice, this has been the first term this has run and 101 certificates were sent out. There had been positive feedback from Carers on this.
- A letter from the Head of Service had been sent to all parents who have Children subject to Care Orders living with them. This letter outlines their responsibilities in getting their children to school and failure to do so may result in a prosecution under Section 44 of the Education Act 1996.

The team were currently addressing the small number of Looked After Children, both in Foster Care and in family placements, who are having holidays during term time which impacts on the figures.

Ann Clegg, Acting Head of Inclusion Support Services, advised that all schools were operating first day absence which could be challenged and followed up and that the monitoring of absenteeism for looked after children was no different to that of all other children.

Resolved:- That the attendance be kept under review.

(d) GCSE Attainment – 2005 Onwards

This year's cohort stands at forty young people which is the largest Year 11 cohort since the beginning of the team. The team are the only source of education for five young people who are all working towards a minimum of three GCSE's. This is on top of a further three younger years that have alternative packages where the teaching is delivered by the Get Real Team.

The teaching staff are actively supporting a further sixteen young people to help improve their outcomes. This high level of support limits the team in picking up young people whose grades are beginning to drop in school.

The Art tuition is proving to be very successful with some very challenging young people engaging well. This is an area where development may offer a GCSE to the most hard to reach young people.

The Team have also given consideration to developing the delivery of the

Expressive Arts GCSE. The syllabus for this could enable some of the most dis-engaged young people to work towards a GCSE. Unfortunately staff capacity is not allowing the team to follow this up. The mentoring staff are prioritising Year 11 pupils at risk of dis-engaging. This is a scarce resource in the team and there is a delicate balance between supporting other young people.

The homework club has been a positive resource and the team are trying to link young people into this who are at risk of falling behind in their coursework or studies.

All Year 11 pupils are regularly monitored and Action plans put in place.

The breakdown of the cohorts predicted grades are as follows;

- Total cohort 40 pupils
- 9 children in special school 22.5%
- 1 long term dis-engaged 2.5%
- 5 A- G 30%
- 5 A* - C 7.5%
- 1 A* -G 70%

(e) Pupils off School Roll

Details of three pupils currently off school roll and action being taken to meet the pupils educational needs were explained.

(f) Forthcoming Events

- Between 21st February, 2005 and end of March, 2005 – A number of mandatory training sessions being arranged for Foster Carers.
- A number of young people are meeting with Elected Members to discuss the corporate parenting agenda and policy.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Panel will take place on Monday, 18th April, 2005 at 9.30 am.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Education of Looked After Children
2.	Date:	18th April, 2005
3.	Title:	Education of Looked After Children
4.	Programme Area:	ECALS / SS

5. Summary

The DfES has produced new statutory guidance relating to the Education of Children in Public Care. It describes the essential actions which local authorities are expected to take in order to comply with this new duty and brings the responsibility for the education of children in public care directly under the Director of Childrens Services and the Lead Member.

6. Recommendations

This report is received. It should be reported to the Children and Young Peoples Executive Group and Board.

There is a need to identify all CiPC placed outside of the borough and to ensure that each is accessing good quality and appropriate education.

A further programme of awareness raising with headteachers should be run to ensure that the Council and schools are working together.

Existing information protocols and systems including PEPs need to be looked at in the light of the guidance and tightened as necessary.

7. Proposals and Details

The report emphasises the joined up approach now needed and possible through the requirement on Childrens Services Authorities to prepare and publish a Children and Young Peoples Plan. This plan needs to include:

- Outcome measures contributing to the national target to improve the educational achievement of LAC
- Outcome measures to narrow the gaps between LAC achievement and their peers
- Actions to be taken by the Local Authority or Children's Trust to support the educational achievement of LAC
- Resource allocation to meet actions

The Director (DCS) and Lead Member (LM) for Children's Services will be respectively, professionally and politically responsible for ensuring that their local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of LAC is properly discharged.

The report emphasises that this is a commitment across the Council and brings the education of looked after children firmly under the newly emerging Children's Services. The new Joint Area Reviews will look at how Childrens Services are working to raise the educational attainment of CiPC. In addition school inspections will also look at the levels of support for vulnerable children, which will include those in public care. The Government expects schools to take a proactive approach to co-operating and supporting local authorities in discharging this duty.

In particular there is mention of pre-school education plans (PEPs), that there are clear written expectations about homework in childrens homes and foster placements, LAC have top priority in school admissions and where there are difficulties that Social Workers work with the School Admissions Forum, all children should have a clear, up to date and suitable PEP. For those leaving care a Pathway Plan must be in place.

Schools have a powerful role to play and the guidance advocates designated teacher training, that designated governors are fully involved and there are appropriate policies in place to support this agenda.

Finally the guidance looks at children in out of authority placements and reminds the home authority of their responsibility to monitor the standard and quality of education each child is receiving. This is especially pertinent where children are placed in independent schools or homes with education attached. Research shows that these children tend to achieve poorer educational and other outcomes. The report recommends that local authorities should take steps to reduce their dependence on external placements where they are not in the best interests of the child.

8. Finance

Initially no additional costs are identified, it maybe that once the details are considered that additional resources are required.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The education of children in public care is a national priority and if the Council fails to consider and implement actions from this guidance then external inspection will be unsatisfactory, performance measures will be unacceptable and the needs and life chances of some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people in the borough will be unmet.

The Inclusion Services Risk Register identifies that capacity of services within Inclusion to deliver the full agenda is a major risk to acceptable service delivery.

In managing the above risk Inclusion Services is working to equip, empower and enable schools to take greater ownership of their responsibilities.

The last two points are directly related to delivering the requirements of the new guidance.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This policy addresses the Council's priority to invest in people, to:

“ Provide an excellent environment for people to fulfil their potential by enhancing people's skills, confidence, and aspirations to fully participate in and benefit from the regeneration”

This policy focuses on ensuring that Rotherham pupils at risk of social exclusion for a variety of reasons are identified and systems in place to ensure that each is able to access and receive a suitable education. This will enhance the life chances of some of the vulnerable children and young people in the borough.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

DfES (2005) Statutory Guidance: Duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.

DfES 0031/2003 School Admissions Code of Practice

SEU (2003) A Better Education for Children in Care

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Education of Looked After Children, Meeting 18th April 2005

Report Compiled by Katy Hawkins

The Team

The team is now fully staffed and the learning mentor capacity has been increased by one further full time post funded from Social Services. We are in the process of getting this post established and plan to fill it as soon as possible. It is envisaged that this post will undertake the support needs of all year 11 and Year 10 pupils from Christmas in an attempt to prevent the drop in grades we regularly see between end of year 10 and actual results gained.

Rehearsals for GREASE are going well. Despite our early concerns the situation is very much resolved with the RCAT students mentoring the young people and taking on support roles. We have 17 young people aged between 6 and 17 years involved in the project to date.

We are still struggling to engage well with Designated Teachers in school. We offered three consultation sessions in the South North and Central locality and unfortunately no-one attended. These were publicised in a recent LAC matters newsletter especially for Designated Teachers and Head Teachers. Developing this role in schools is pivotal to the success of our young people.

From Easter we are piloting a termly meeting with the Designated Teacher and Head teacher from schools which have a higher population of Looked After Children or are involved in significant difficulties. This is being Piloted for the rest of this academic Year with Clifton Comprehensive school and if proves fruitful will be rolled out to all relevant schools from September. This is an attempt to support schools to recognize their responsibilities towards our young people particularly in Year 10 and Year 11.

Placements within the Council are now up to 11 for our young people. I am attending Social Services Senior Management Team Meeting on April 12th to explain the scheme and have been promised 6 placements across Social Services. The information will be presented at The Chief Executives CSMT for further placements ON Monday 11th April. We currently have a young man on placement in the Kitchens of the Town Hall for two half days per week.

LPSA Performance

GCSE grades A* - G, as reported at last meeting actual achievement for this target is 56.5% and unlikely to change.

5 A-C, the target here is 7 young people. We currently have 6 young people with the grades who qualify for this target. We have a possible 6 young people who could get 5 A* -C this summer and each young person's Care plan will be investigated to allow us to consider if we can reach this target. We are having an internal management meeting on Friday 15th April to look at the resources deployed within the team and if we can re-deploy them to ensure these young people reach their expected grades.

Key Stage 2 SATs results. It has been a busy 2 months for this year group and a number of children have left Care and entered Care, at the present time we have 17 young people. Unfortunately quite a different group, we are still investigating predicated results but the worse case scenario is we meet 41.1% and our target is 42%. Again the internal management team will discuss support needs for these young people and see if we can raise expected levels.

Improvement Plan

Attendance

The new monitoring system is allowing us to be more vigilant around attendance. The last half term saw an increase of 100% attendance from 101 children to 104 children. The certificates and activity vouchers have been very positively received.

I recently attended a presentation from an independent organization that provided daily monitoring for Authorities for each young person in the Looked After system. They contact each school daily morning and afternoon if required to check on the child's attendance. If the child is absent contact is made with the career and Social Worker to determine the reason for absence. This information is then presented to authorities in which ever format they need and at the frequency they require. The cost is £1 per child per day, for Rotherham this would be just over £10,000 per year. The team does not have the resources to undertake this task and in areas where the company has worked there has been a significant reeducation in absences. This combined with the resources in our team would mean we could significantly improve our attendance figures.

Off school roll

We currently have one young man in Year 9 off a school role. He has been off school role since June 2004 following permanent exclusion from the Authorities EBD provision. A number of placements have been assessed and further are undertaking assessment to ensure the correct placement is made to meet this young mans highly complex needs.

A year 4 pupil in specialist provision receiving home tuition.

GCSE Attainment

Again the last quarter has seen a significant change round. We currently have 40 pupils in this cohort.

The breakdown of the cohort is as follows

- 7 young people in Special Schools, 17.5%
- 5 in Whiston Grange school, (one of whom is being taught by our team so will be sitting 3 GCSE's) but the other have not been entered 10%
- 2 young people who have not been entered due to poor attendance 5%
- 6 with possible 5 A*-C 15%
- 5 who are taught exclusively by the Team max 3 GCSE per child 10%
- 27 predicted at least 1 A* -G 67.5%