

scrutiny

focus on performance

Children's and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Groups Work Programmes Update

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of each of the three Task & Finish Groups. This report will outline the subject areas that each of the Groups are scrutinising, the progress they are making with their reviews, and the work they intend to undertake in order to complete their reviews and provide recommendations.

This report also provides some opinion and direction following the first meetings of each of the Task and Finish Groups and any subsequent visits that Members have undertaken to date as part of their review.

2. Review Topics

At the last meeting of the Children's and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members were presented with priorities and risks for each Portfolio area by the Executive Members, from these priorities and risks they chose the Task and Finish Groups work programmes for the rest of the municipal year. The three Task & Finish Groups have chosen the following areas which they wish to scrutinise:

- Children's Portfolio – The increase in the number of young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), the increase in the numbers of young people involved with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the impact that changes and budget cuts have had on Connexions.
- Adult Portfolio - Prevention and Personalisation, specifically focussing on the development of the Centre for Independent Living and Personalised Budgets.
- Culture Leisure & Sport Portfolio – re:refresh, looking at the long term funding of the service and the impact that it has made on the health and well being of people as well as exploring any financial savings that health and social care services may have made as a result of people accessing the service.

3. Work programme progress update

Adult Task & Finish Group

To date this Task and Finish Group has met once on October 24th 2011 and are due to meet again on 16th November 2011.

At the first Task and Finish Group the Director of Health & Wellbeing came to answer Members questions on the following areas:

- The development of the Centre for Independent Living - Including timescales on the project, key partners and people involved, location of the Centre and the make up of the Project Board team.
- Personalised Budgets – Including the Resource Allocation System (RAS), and the Functional, Assessment of Care Environments (FACE) Assessment.
- The Your Support, Your Choice Website
- Support for Carers

Members of the Task & Finish Group have also undertaken a visit to the Centre for Independent Living in Warrington and Blackpool. The following information and observations were made from these visits.

Warrington Centre for Independent Living

This Centre was formed approximately 20 years ago and is run independently of the Council by a Board of Trustees. It is funded by a mixture of grants, fundraising and sponsorship. The centre looks to empower disabled people and is controlled by them, as well as this all volunteers and the majority of staff are also disabled. It is a user led service and has been set up as a Social Enterprise. The building is located just outside of the city centre and is situated in a refurbished former school. The Centre is a community facility and offers a wide variety of services and facilities to its users, including:

- A showroom which offers advice and demonstrations on a wide variety of aids. Small items can also be purchased from the showroom and service users can also be introduced to suppliers of larger pieces of equipment as well as to Social Services who may also be able to supply equipment and further support if needed.
- A loan service for equipment such as wheelchairs.
- Information and support in managing a package of personal care through Direct Payments and Independent Living Fund.
- Information, advice and support to disabled people wishing to enter or return to work - or wishing to retain their current employment.
- Financial support to people who have additional costs as a result of volunteering and work experience.
- A comprehensive information service provided through an information point in the retail market and also via a telephone helpline, or by e-mail from the Centre's website.
- Short-term wheelchair loan service.

- Shop mobility service.
- Offers assistance with personal development and confidence building.
- Volunteering and employment opportunities.
- Has a Young Ambassadors scheme, which helps to promote the image of young disabled people and helps to remove the stigma and prejudice attached to it.
- Café on site.
- Meeting rooms, which are open for all groups within the local community to use.

The Centre is a hub for disabled people and runs a number of initiatives, it hosts the Disability Forum which brings together a wide variety of disabled groups and service organisations. It also has a Disability Awareness Day which is a celebration of the lives of disabled people.

The Warrington Centre for Independent Living has offered to provide Blackburn with Darwen with advice as the Authority looks to set up its own Centre for Independent Living.

Blackpool Centre for Independent Living

Information was also gathered during a visit to the Blackpool Centre for Independent Living. This centre is also based near to Blackpool town centre and is in a newly refurbished building, it is funded through a variety of sources including the Local Authority, PCT grants and fund raising. The Centre provides the following services:

- Advice and support for people with disabilities through a telephone helpline and a drop-in service.
- A showroom which provides advice on a variety of aids and adaptations.
- Meeting rooms which are available to the whole community.
- Washing and changing facilities for disabled people.
- An on site café which provides training opportunities for people with learning disabilities.
- The Centre also runs a hate crime project which supports victims of hate crime and is run in conjunction with the local police.

The second Task and Finish Group meeting is due to take place following the publication of the agenda and Members will be further updated on the outcomes of this meeting at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Opinion and Direction

- 1) That the Executive Member should ensure that the Centre for Independent Living is an inclusive Centre that all people are able to

access for advice, guidance and equipment and that he prioritise finding a suitable permanent location for the Centre.

- 2) That the Executive Member and Project Board look to identify key people to be involved with leading the project from the start in order that expert advice be received in key areas of the development.
- 3) That the Executive Member involve service users in all stages of planning the Centre for Independent Living and that those identified should have relevant training to develop their skills to enable them to continue to be involved once the Centre has been established.
- 4) That the Executive Member ensure that strong relationships are built with all specialist groups (e.g. Deaf Society) and that they are consulted and involved from the start of the project and throughout the entire process ensuring that the Centre for Independent Living is a multiagency venture in which all stakeholders views and opinions considered.
- 5) That the Executive Member should involve as many partners as possible in funding the development of the Centre for Independent Living.

Leisure, Culture & Sport

The Culture Leisure and Sport Task and Finish Group have met on two occasions on the 10th October and 14th November 2011.

At the first Task and Finish Group the Head of Service for Leisure, Health and Wellbeing answered Members questions on re:refresh. Members focussed in on the following issues:

- Funding of the service.
- Numbers accessing the service and targets that re:refresh has to meet.
- The demographic make-up of those who access the service.
- Impact of re:refresh on health services and Adult Social Care.
- Marketing/publicity of the service.

At the second Task & Finish Group Members had the opportunity to look at re:refresh from a health perspective and the meeting was addressed by Care Trust Plus. At this meeting Members examined the following:

- Funding of re:refresh
- Health impact of re:refresh
- Demographic make up of those accessing the service
- Referral Paths
- Marketing

Opinion and Direction

Funding

- 1) That the Executive Member view re:refresh and the funding of the programme as a high priority in his Portfolio.
- 2) That the Executive Member commence negotiations with the GP Consortia around the future funding of re:refresh at the earliest possible date.
- 3) That the Executive Member raise the awareness of the GP Consortia as to the importance of re:refresh and the positive impact that it has on residents health.

Publicity & Marketing

- 1) That the Executive Member increase the visual presence of re:refresh in all doctor's surgeries and Medical Centres, with leaflets and literature on the service being displayed in prominent places, and materials being replenished on a regular basis.

Children's Task & Finish Group

The Children's Task & Finish Group has met once on 11th October 2011. At this meeting Members had the opportunity to question the Head of Service (Safeguarding Unit) and the Youth Service Justice Manager on the Youth Offending Team as well as the Head of Service Schools and Culture on the Connexions service. Issues covered included:

YOT

- The re-model of the service
- The service's core offer
- Referral routes
- Case loads & Numbers currently accessing YOT
- Prevention programmes
- NEET & YOT

Connexions

- Re-model of service
- The service's core offer
- Quality of Service provision
- NEET levels

Members have now also undertaken visits to Connexions, Work Clubs in the Shadsworth area of the Borough and a Referral Order Panel.

Connexions visits:

To date not all visits have yet taken place with further visits due to take place to Connexions in Darwen on 15th Novemeber.

Members undertook a visit to Connexions in Blackburn on 10th November 2011, during this visit they had the opportunity to talk with both Officers and service users. The visit provided them with an opportunity to see how the service currently operates following the restructure.

Members visited the service for about two hours; during this visit approximately 6-10 young people attended the centre to access various services. As part of the visit Members had the opportunity to sit in on an interview with a young person and it was felt that this interview was thorough. Following the interview Members had the opportunity to speak with the young person and they were informed that he was very satisfied with the advice and support given on the day as well as being generally satisfied with the service when he has accessed it in the past.

It was noted by Members that all staff were busy throughout the visit with most of them having interviews with young people. Members were also able to speak to Senior Officers within the service and they were happy with the service that they are currently providing with the resources that they have available.

Work Clubs:

A Member of the Task and Finish Group attended a work club that takes place in the Shadsworth area of the Borough. The purpose of the visit was to explore what would happen should a young NEET person attend the club and what advice would be offered. When the Member attended, the information received with regards to this was that they would not advise a young person but pass their details on to Connexions. If more than one person were to attend, then the young people would be invited to attend the following week where a Connexions advisor would then be in attendance to give relevant advice.

The Member expressed concern with this issue and felt that if a young person were to attend then they may not attend again due to the lack of initial advice given, he was also concerned about the lack of follow up by the work club once the information had been passed on to Connexions.

Opinion and Direction

Reduction in NEET numbers

- 1) That the Executive Member make it the specific responsibility of an Officer to monitor and report back to the Executive Member NEET figures of 16-18 year olds in order to help reduce the high levels of NEET that exist within this age range.
- 2) That schools demonstrate how they identify young people in danger of becoming NEET and actively how they work with these pupils throughout year 11 in trying to find them appropriate training and work opportunities.

- 3) That the Executive Member demonstrate how the outreach work previously undertaken by Connexions, targeting the hardest to reach and unknown young people who are NEET is now being delivered without detriment to those who find themselves classed as NEET.
- 4) That the Executive Member demonstrate what measures are being taken by the Council (as one of the largest employers in the Borough) to provide apprenticeships or work experience to young people who are NEET.

Work Clubs

Mindful that following only one visit to a Work Club concern was noted by Members of the Task & Finish Group as to the skills, advice, support and guidance given to people seeking employment or training from the age of 16. The Committee would ask the Executive Member

- 1) That she demonstrate the effectiveness of current working procedures in said Work Clubs.

Scoping of the Reviews

Children's Task & Finish Group

In order for the Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the increase in YOT and NEET numbers and explore the impact of the changes to the Connexions service and the impact that this has had on young people and NEET figures the Group have suggested the following areas to highlight:

Connexions

- To benchmark Connexions against our nearest neighbour comparators in order to help gauge the quality of service being delivered.
- To compare NEET figures with statistical neighbours.
- To establish how accessible Connexion services are to young people and what take up levels and successes rates they have when they run an event.
- To establish to what degree service users and partners are consulted and involved in the planning and decision making processes when the Connexions service is being changed.
- To examine the relationship that exists between Connexions and schools.
- To establish what advice and guidance is given by schools to young people in order to get them into Education, Employment or Training.
- To measure the impact and effectiveness of the Connexions service and how they go about measuring and assessing it.
- To establish the influence that Connexions and their partners have in reducing NEET.

- To review the strategic solutions that Connexions and Children's Services have in place for reducing NEET levels.

YOT

The focus of the review is to look at how preventative services can help to reduce the increase in YOT numbers.

- To review the impact and implications that the reductions to preventative services will have on young people.
- To review what other services are doing to help with prevention.
- To review what is being offered to help get people who are involved with YOT out of NEET.
- To compare Blackburn with Darwen YOT figures against national figures and against local neighbouring authorities.
- To establish the emphasis that other neighbouring authorities place on preventative work and how successful their programmes are.

However, all of the above still require scoping in order to ensure that the reviews remain focussed, achievable, realistic and within agreed timelines.

Adult Task & Finish Group

In order to undertake the review on Prevention and Personalisation the Task and Finish Group have suggested the following areas to highlight:

- To undertake visits to established Centres for Independent Living in the North West, in order to gain an understanding as to what is required from such a service.
- To gather the views of key partners on the development of the Centre for Independent Living.
- To review case studies of people who have used Personal Budgets and to talk to them or their carer about the benefits of them.
- To review the Resource Allocation System (RAS) and the decision making process when allocating Personal Budgets to service users.
- To undertake a benchmarking exercise with neighbouring authorities to compare the uptake of Personal Budgets in Blackburn with Darwen with that of other local authorities
- To review Integrated Care Pathways, their benefits and the cost of implementing them.

However, all of the above still require scoping in order to ensure that the reviews remain focussed, achievable, realistic and within agreed timelines.

Culture, Leisure and Sport Task and Finish Group

As part of the review of re:refresh the Task and Finish Group are proposing to carry out the following:

- To review the long term funding situation for re:refresh.
- To establish the benefits to health services and Adult Social Care of re:refresh.
- To establish what the targets for re:refresh are and what strategies are in place to help them to achieve them.
- To review how re:refresh promote their service.
- To review case studies of people who access re:refresh to discover what benefit the service has been to them.

However, all of the above still require scoping in order to ensure that the reviews remain focussed, achievable, realistic and within agreed timelines.