

LEARNER AND FAMILY SUPPORT 2011/12

Report for Children and Young People's Overview and
Scrutiny Panel



OVERVIEW

The work of the Learner and Family Support Branch focuses on the individual child or young person and the provision of services to them, the schools or settings that they attend and to their families. The majority of our work is with children and young people who are vulnerable because of special educational need or disability and social disadvantage, and we have a range of statutory responsibilities.

As the relationship between schools and the local authority changes as a result of the Education White Paper the role of the local authority in championing the needs of vulnerable children and their families will strengthen in order that Plymouth's vulnerable children and young people and their families can enjoy an outstanding quality of life, and that the city retains a focus on their views and needs. However we will increasingly need to develop a business model of trading services to schools. There are likely to be changes to our statutory responsibilities with new government proposals on Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Admissions due, and services will need to adapt to those changes.

Regardless of these changes we retain our commitment to transforming the way we deliver services to children, young people and families by integration and collaboration across the Department, the Council and with partner agencies and the voluntary sector. We believe that early intervention is the key to prevention of escalation into specialist services. There are still too many children with statements of special educational need in the city compared to national averages and too many children in care. Transformation of services into integrated models of delivery at a locality level will be more efficient and effective, and better for children and families. We know that families of children and young people with disabilities need an integrated approach to the complex needs of their children. We have made great strides, but there is much more to do. Parents tell us that the transition to adulthood is a major issue and we are determined to build on our early work with adult services in the Council and the health community.

Our performance in narrowing the attainment gap for pupils with SEN, in reducing absence and exclusion and in the uptake of school meals, compares well with statistical neighbours. Branch staff have a passion for improving the life chances of Plymouth's children, and staff survey analysis reflects this engagement.

The challenge we face is to adapt whilst retaining our commitment to inclusion and fair access to support the most disadvantaged families in a more commercial climate. We must retain our focus on ultimate customers, but operate more flexibly and responsively as service providers, whilst embracing the benefits that commissioning of services from other providers, particular in the voluntary and community sector can bring.

In times of economic austerity and structural changes in partner agencies, we are likely to see increasing demand for services and so we must hold fast to our commitment to collaborative advantage by working together within the department, within the Council and within the city for **all** Plymouth's children and young people.

DELIVERING COUNCIL AND CITY PRIORITIES

SEN and Disability

- Provide high quality positive opportunities/short breaks to families.
- Meet complex SEN need locally through Special Educational Need/Learning Disability and Difficulties strategic plan, Autism Spectrum Disorder plan, and timely response to SEN Green Paper.
- Improve transition to adulthood for young people with disabilities.
- Providing short break provision for parents and families with disabled children. Providing access to short break opportunities enabling people to live 'ordinary lives'.
- Improve the statutory assessment of SEN to become more streamlined, transparent and targeted to complex needs.
- Implement Disabled Children Strategy to support family focussed/customer facing access to disabled children's services.

Support for Vulnerable Children and Families

- Ensure effective learning by tackling undernourishment and improving family income, taking local children & families out of poverty.
- Train school and early year's staff to promote the development of pro social behaviour and resilience.
- Develop effective approaches to supporting the learning of vulnerable children through developing and sharing evidence based practice.
- Improve access to psychological therapies for vulnerable young people.
- Develop integrated locality based early intervention services for vulnerable children and their families.
- Develop effective prevention and early intervention approaches with families to reduce the need to escalate to specialist services.

School Meals

- Complete the build and creation of full production kitchens in the remaining primary schools and PRU to end transported meals by August 2011.
- Increase spend in the local community and Plymouth for food and ingredients.
- Increase the take up of healthy, nutrient compliant Free School Meals and paid for meals to promote and lead to improved health outcomes for children and families and reduced obesity.

School Organisation

- Expand 5 primary schools in 2011 to meet the growth in the birth rate over the next 4/5 years.
- Set up new Term Dates and school Session Times for 2012/13 and 2013/14.