

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

8 September 2011



Overview of legislation and opportunities

Priorities and Challenges – Overview of legislation and opportunities

The Children and Young People's Trust is addressing a significant number of key national legislative and policy agendas, all of which will have local implications. This section provides a brief summary of some of these issues:

○ **Munro Review Final Report (May 2011)**

The final report sets out proposals for reform and signifies a shift from a system that has become over-bureaucratised and focused on compliance to one that values and develops professional expertise and is focused on the safety and welfare of children and young people. Munro makes a total of **15** recommendations, with some of the key points that will require continued cooperation between the Trust and PSCB, as follows:

A system that values professional expertise

- Inspections to be conducted on an unannounced basis to reduce the bureaucratic burden.
- Performance data to be interrogated to understand reasons why outcomes happen, and not used as a simple measure of good or poor performance.

Sharing of responsibility for the provision of early help

- Duty on LAs and their statutory partners to secure the sufficient provision of local early help services for families whose need does not meet the threshold for social care intervention.

Developing social work expertise

- Professional Capabilities Framework to explicitly inform all stages of social work training, development, performance appraisal and career structures

Supporting effective social work practice

- Experienced social workers to be kept on the frontline even when they become managers.
- Appointing a Principal Child and Family Social Worker who is still doing frontline work and would be responsible for taking views of social workers to those whose decisions affect their work.

Additional recommendations:

- Amendments to Working Together to Safeguard Children
- LSCBs to adopt and apply a 'systems approach' to Serious Case Reviews
- Consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members
- LSCBs to report direct to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, and subject to the passage of legislation to report to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the health and wellbeing board.

○ **Allen Report: Early Intervention (January 2011)**

In July 2010 the coalition government commissioned an independent review of early intervention projects for children, led by Graham Allen, a Labour MP. His first report was published on 19 January and covers the rationale, social and economic benefits, current policy and practice, and the most effective programmes. While the report makes recommendations for a new focus on early intervention, it makes no request for legislation or immediate public spending.

The report highlights the following:

- Success as human beings depends on acquiring the necessary social and emotional foundations.
- Warm, attentive, stimulating parenting strongly supports children's social, emotional and physical development; a wide range of negative factors and behaviours can have a negative impact on children's development as they mature, with the greatest damage being done to young children whose brains are still developing (including the antenatal period).
- Early experiences, including the quality of relationships (especially with the mother), determine the architecture of the brain, which affects future emotional, intellectual and physical development.
- The growth and development of the brain up to age three make this the crucial period for intervention, but later interventions, are important – especially those leading to improvements in parenting, with benefits for the next generation of 0-3s.

"Nought to three is the really explosive bit of brain growth. If you can help at that point, it's so much more effective, so much cheaper than at any other time,"

- Adverse childhood development and experiences are associated with higher crime rates, lower educational attainment and employment levels, and mental disorders later. Intervention to address childhood problems reduces their escalation.

○ **Child Poverty**

Child Poverty Bill (2010)

The Government made a commitment in 1999 to end child poverty by 2020. The Child Poverty Bill was published in June 2010 to deliver on this and establishes targets for the reduction of child poverty. Local authorities will be required to publish a local child poverty strategy that sets out what action should be taken to meet these targets. There is now a specific duty for local partners to work more closely including the Jobcentre Plus, Youth Offending Teams, the NHS and Police in delivering solutions to tackle child poverty at a local level. Local Strategic Partnerships will be responsible for implementing the local child poverty strategy.

National child poverty strategy (April 2011)

A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives sets out the Government's approach to tackling poverty up to 2020. At its heart are strengthening families, encouraging responsibility, promoting work, guaranteeing fairness and providing support to the most vulnerable. This strategy focuses on improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children, and sits alongside the Government's broader strategy to improve social mobility.

Plymouth's Child Poverty Strategy

The Plymouth Children and Young People's Trust is leading the development of a local child poverty strategy on behalf of the Plymouth 2020 partnership. There is a clear desire across all agencies to develop a local strategy that makes a real difference to families across Plymouth, and not a document that either duplicates other work or simply sits on a bookshelf. **The golden thread is that child poverty is and must be everyone's business.** This integrated approach will form the heart of our local strategy, but will take time to implement because it aims to change the way people behave, work together and think about families, as well as the impact that poverty has on the services provided across all sectors, now and in the future.

With respect to the coalition government's new approach and the four building blocks of poverty, much of what Plymouth will do to tackle child poverty will be delivered via other strategies as the vehicles for change. It is essential that these strategies explicitly demonstrate the role they have in reducing child poverty. In addition to the CYPP 2011-14, these include the Financial Inclusion Strategy, Worklessness Plan, Housing Strategy and Economic Development Strategy.

Regional child poverty network

The Children and Young People's Trust is currently working closely with LGID to develop a Regional Child Poverty Network. The aim of this network is to be updated with national policy and best practice, share information, link with other regional groups and take advantage of opportunities either collectively or individually to enhance child poverty efforts across the region. Current membership is from Plymouth, Cornwall, Devon, Torbay, Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole.

Big Lottery: Improving Futures Expression of Interest

The Plymouth based Better Together consortium submitted a Expression of Interest to the Big Lottery: Improving Futures programme. This proposal was developed jointly with partners across the Trust, and proposes a three year project targeting families with multiple and complex needs where the oldest child is between 5-10 years old. The bid was developed by a multi-agency task group and targets families on the fringes of statutory intervention with a specific focus on domestic violence, alcohol misuse and parental mental health. While we have not been successful with this bid, we have demonstrated our ability to develop high quality joint proposals.

○ **SEN Green Paper (March 2011)**

This Green Paper aims to improve outcomes for children and young people who are disabled or have special educational needs (SEN). It describes the problems perceived with the current system and aims to improve the coherence and simplicity of the system for families. Some of the key proposals include:

- A new approach to identifying SEN through a single Early Years setting-based category and school-based category of SEN;
- A new single assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan by 2014;
- Local authorities and other services to set out a local offer of all services available;
- Option of a personal budget by 2014 for all families with children with a statement of SEN or a new Education, Health and Care Plan;
- Giving parents a real choice of school, either a mainstream or special school; and
- Introducing greater independence to the assessment of children's needs.

- **Wolf Review (March 2011)**

The Government has agreed all recommendations included within this report, which includes a package of radical reforms to overhaul the current system. Changes will include; ensuring all young people study English and mathematics to age 18 until they get a good qualification in those subjects, introducing a new performance measure for both high and low achieving pupils, and considering paying businesses to take young people onto high quality apprenticeships. The Government also unveiled a £60 million package of measures designed to reduce youth unemployment.

- **The Academies Agenda**

An academy is an independent school which, as part of the arrangements made by the Secretary of State to fund it, cannot charge fees. Academies can benefit from greater freedoms to help innovate and raise standards. The effect is to place many requirements on academies similar to those placed on local authority maintained schools, such as the law on children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), teacher qualifications, pupil admissions, and Children in Care. On 27 July 2010, the Academies Bill received Royal Assent and is now an Act of parliament.

Plymouth's Academies Position

In 2008, Plymouth set in place its policy direction for all schools to develop autonomy, either through the formation of a Trust or academy status. This strategy for change, known as Investment for Children, outlines the Council's plans for maintaining the school estate. The strategy was adopted by the Full Council in December 2008 and it remains the Council's policy for all schools to develop independence through vertical networks of schools serving their localities.

Plymouth set up two academies under the "old style" academy route in September 2010; the Marine Academy Plymouth (MAP) and All Saints Academy, Plymouth (ASAP).

To date, 5% of primary schools have become Trusts and one primary school has become an academy. At secondary level 63% of schools are academies. Further schools are considering application for academy status or are waiting for funding agreements from the Secretary of State.