

# Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date: February 22nd 2012**

Agenda item: **5**

Wards:

**Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department**

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley

Lead member: Cllr Maxi Martin; Cllr Peter Walker

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt

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## **Recommendations:**

A. Members of the panel note the contents of the report.

B.

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1. The report provides members with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last update report in January 2012.

## **2 DETAILS**

### EDUCATION ISSUES

2.1. Members will be aware of the major challenge for the council in providing sufficient and suitable primary school places for the rising population of school age children. Ten additional reception classes were provided for September 2011 entry and further additional classes will be required for September 2012. Three schools – Beecholme, Poplar and Pelham - have already been approached to provide extra classes and applications are being closely monitored to determine whether or not further reception class capacity will be required.

2.2. Officers have recently provided Cabinet with initial forecasting of the anticipated additional demand for secondary school provision arising from the increase in school age population. In the period to 2021-22 early projections suggest that some 25 additional forms of entry into year 7 will be required. Existing surplus places in secondary schools should allow the additional demand to be absorbed into existing accommodation until 2015-16, but thereafter it is estimated that significant additional accommodation will need to be provided. All secondary schools, including academies, will shortly be asked to provide the council with their initial position on their willingness to expand although officers are recommending that possible sites for new provision are also explored.

- 2.3. It is anticipated that additional SEN provision will also be needed although modelling of future demand has not yet been completed. At this stage, pressures on Cricket Green have already been identified and officers are proposing a short-term expansion via temporary use of the adjacent vacant Chapel Orchard building.

#### LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

- 2.4. The Ofsted announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services took place between 9<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January. The inspection was a comprehensive examination of how effectively the council and other services in the borough are working together to safeguard children and improve outcomes for looked after children. The inspection involved case file study, practice observation, examination of documents, policies, procedures and data, and interviews with service users, staff, managers, elected members and partners.
- 2.5. Ofsted's report on the inspection and ratings of our services will be published on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2012 although draft feedback has already been provided. Inspectors found that the council and partners made a clear and accurate self-assessment of our strengths and challenges; that there is strong and shared ambition for children and young people in the borough backed up by a focus on continuous improvement, a strong performance culture and good use of resources available. Our partnerships and multi-agency working practices were seen to be effective and inspectors noted our strong shared focus on preventive services. Inspectors concluded that services are working well to keep children and young people in the borough safe and that we are working effectively to achieve positive outcomes for looked after children. As expected, inspectors also identified areas for development including improving the timeliness of implementing some plans for children and young people and improving communication with parents and carers of young people with whom we are working, but no priority areas for improvement were identified. Based on this feedback, we expect to receive positive judgements in the final report.

#### MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- 2.6. As a result of a successful bid to the Merton Partnership for PRG funding awarded for our performance in the final Local Area Agreement, the Children's Trust is currently planning a specific project to work with families with multiple problems on the Phipps Bridge estate. It is envisaged that the project will employ intensive models of intervention with families on the estate identified by partner agencies and will also undertake community development work aimed at improving residents' overall wellbeing. The project will be delivered by council and partner agencies and will help provide evidence of the effectiveness of a 'community budgets' approach.
- 2.7. The council and partners are also currently undertaking preparatory work required to engage with central government's recently announced 'Troubled Families' initiative. The programme is intended to target 'troubled families' – those with multiple problems including worklessness, poor school attendance, substance misuse, anti-social behaviour and intergenerational criminal behaviour – and through effective interventions reduce over time the considerable costs to the public purse incurred by these families. The

preparatory work noted above includes identifying families at a local level and agreeing models of intervention with our partners. Agreement across partner agencies to invest resources and capacity into working with specific families will also be needed. Although some 'up front' funding will be provided by government – largely for local programme leadership and co-ordination – a 'payment by results' model is being employed for this initiative whereby local areas will receive a proportion of the costs of services provided (up to 40%) based on families meeting a number of, as yet not defined, success criteria. This approach to funding has clear risks attached – the council and partners would need to commit funding well in advance of achieving certainty that a proportion of costs could be recovered and payment by results inherently requires interventions to be demonstrably successful.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. N/A.

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. No specific implications.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. No specific implications.

### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. No specific implications.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. No specific implications.

### **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. No specific implications.

### **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

N/A

### **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. None