

EVERY DISABLED CHILD MATTERS

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CABINET

22ND FEBRUARY, 2007

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To note the work being undertaken in Herefordshire to ensure that disabled children and young people are not marginalised in implementing the Every Child Matters agenda.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

THAT the work in this area be noted and consideration be given to accepting the Charter as a best practice standard for the service to adopt.

Reasons

This is a very important area of development and one which is under much scrutiny nationally. It is important therefore that Cabinet Members are aware of the work being undertaken in Herefordshire to ensure that disabled children and young people have a high profile on the Every Child Matters agenda.

Considerations

1. In October 2006 a group of five charitable organisations produced a report called 'Every Disabled Child Matters - Off the Radar' (Appendix 1).
2. The first page of the report sets out a charter for every local authority which it hopes local authorities will have in place by January 2008.
3. The final page of the report (Page 8) has a list of recommendations for statutory bodies to respond to.
4. Whether the charter is adopted, or the recommendations are agreed nationally is still to be debated. However, Herefordshire can choose to adopt the Charter as an example of good practice as set out in the recommendation above. Notwithstanding this decision, Herefordshire Children and Young People's Directorate is fully committed to the principle of ensuring that the needs of its disabled children and

young people are met and that they have a voice in influencing decisions that will affect their care, education and well being.

5. The report sets out how most local authority Children and Young People's Plans do not explicitly make provision for their disabled children. The Herefordshire Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 2008 (available in the Members' Room) makes many references to provision for LDD (Learning Difficulties and Disabilities) which was the terminology in use when the plan was written. Terminology has moved on and when the plan is revised in 2007/08 LDD will be replaced or indeed widened to include all disabled children – not just those with a learning disability.
6. The needs of this vulnerable group are highlighted in the Children and Young People's Delivery Plan under each of the five outcome headings (Stay Safe, Be Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve, Making a Positive Contribution and Economic Well-Being). Additionally, on page 41 of the plan a complete section of work is devoted to vulnerable children and young people (LDD and Looked After Children - LAC).
7. The plan sets out the jointly agreed priorities for the work to be undertaken in 2006 – 2008 by the local authority and its partner agencies but it does not cover all of the extensive work that is taking place authority wide. The Children and Young People's Partnership Board will review its priorities for 2008 and the concerns raised in the report 'Off the Radar' will be taken into consideration.
8. The Children and Young People's Delivery Plan (2006 – 2008) (available in the members room) sets out how the local authority and its partners are addressing the agreed priorities for this period. This includes a number of work streams around disabled children and young people.
9. The HM Treasury and DfES report 'Policy - review of Children and Young People – a discussion paper' – January 2007 can be found on (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk under 'recent publications'). On page 57 onwards it reviews the services available to disabled children and their families. Chapter 5 'better outcomes for disabled children' states that

'disabled children are less likely to achieve as much in a range of areas compared to their non-disabled peers. Improving outcomes of disabled children and increasing their involvement and inclusion in society will reduce social inequality. Communities will benefit from the contribution that disabled children can make harnessing their latent talent and fostering intolerance and understanding of diversity.'
10. Herefordshire Council and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board has harnessed the energy and views of young people by developing school councils, the Youth Council and the Shadow Children and Young People's Partnership Board, it has been mindful of its responsibility to ensure that disabled children and young people are fully represented. There are young people with disabilities on both the Shadow Children and Young People's Partnership Board and the Youth Council and their places will be protected during re-election.
11. Every Disabled Child Matters refers to a duty placed on local authorities by the Disability Discrimination Act, (DDA) 2005, to develop and publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 2006. This scheme was formally adopted by Cabinet. A copy of Herefordshire's DES is available on the intranet and was completed within the expected timeframe. The policy was very widely consulted upon and included views from children and young people. The scheme covers disabled people of all

ages and has a comprehensive action plan attached. The opening statement of the scheme states

'Equality of opportunity for disabled people is not just about meeting a legal obligation; it is about fairness and good sense and morality to challenge discrimination. The purpose of the DES is to make a commitment to take the needs of disabled people into account in everything we do.'

12. The scheme then sets out how the council, along with its partners, should do this through its provision of services so that the equality culture is firmly embedded. Equality and diversity training is widely available in the council.
13. The Children and Young People's Directorate are currently finalising the first draft of their disability strategy for children and young people. This document is multiagency and is drawn from extensive legislation and experience in this field. Some consultation has already taken place, for example Phillipa Russell, Disability Rights Commissioner was commissioned in the Autumn to consult with parents and carers of disabled children in Herefordshire. This was undertaken to inform Herefordshire's support for families strategy but contains much information that can usefully be used in its disability strategy.
14. The draft disability strategy will be scrutinised by Government Office for the West Midlands in March and will then go to a full, multi-agency consultation in April for completion by Summer 2007. The strategy should demonstrate progress around the following areas:
 - Transition planning
 - Care pathways
 - Short breaks performance and progress on new commissioned services
 - Communication and Consultation
 - Strategy for service development for 2007/2008, which will form part of the support for families' strategy.
15. Herefordshire has a disability team based at the Kite Centre. The team comprises social workers, transition workers, family support workers and clerical staff who work predominantly with children and families with very complex needs. The team is managed by the Joint Service Manager for Children with Disabilities and Ill Children. The post is funded through the PCT management structure but is jointly managed by the Primary Care Trust and the Children and Young People's Directorate.
16. The Special Educational Needs Team based at Blackfriars comprises of a Manager, Caseworkers, Database Officer, Advisory Teachers, a Monitoring Team and Service Support. They work very closely with schools and partner agencies to identify and meet the needs of children with a wide range of disabilities from low level to severe and complex.
17. These two teams work closely together and this arrangement has been strengthened by including the disability team within Integrated Services and Inclusion.
18. Further work is being developed in the disabilities team around transition arrangements for disabled children and young people. This has been an area of

weakness in the past. Recruitment of a lead transition worker and a transition worker has increased the capacity of the team to improve an area which is highlighted, quite rightly so, in Every Disabled Child Matters as being under developed nationally.

19. Every school in Herefordshire has a disability access plan – indeed they are required to do so under the DDA and support was given by the local authority to help schools address issues around access not just in terms of building modification to ensure physical access, but also around curriculum access.
20. In addition, Herefordshire has four special schools (One for Educational and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), three Severe Learning Difficulties/Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SL/MLD) who take the inclusion of their students into mainstream activities, where appropriate, very seriously. Herefordshire has an inclusion strategy and additional funding has been made available to the special schools to facilitate inclusion.

Risk Management

The main risks to fulfilling the Council's objectives under Every Child Matters – particularly with regard to disabled children and young people are around;

- Recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff to work in the area of supporting these young people and their families. This is a particularly stressful area of work.
- Capacity to deliver the objectives when financial resources are retracting.
- The inability of partner agencies to support the priorities determined in the Children and Young People's Plan.

Alternative Options

There are no alternatives.

Consultees

Peter Lane, Lead officer working on Herefordshire's disability strategy.
Carol Trachonitus, Equality and Diversity Manager

Appendix

'Every Disabled Child Matters – Off the Radar'.

Background Papers

None identified.