

MEETING:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	1 OCTOBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To provide Members with an overview of government initiatives that affect children's services.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: the Committee notes the content this briefing report and reflects on possible implications for the children and young people of Herefordshire.

Key Points Summary

- The coalition government has introduced a range of measures to address the economic situation as well as a number of policy initiatives that have an effect on the services that children and young people in Herefordshire receive. More policies and initiatives are to follow and the pace of announcements has been very rapid over the months since entering office. There have been a number of measures that have been enacted within the financial year that have affected ongoing projects and support for children and young people. A number of initiatives and capital schemes have been stopped, and this has been replicated where applicable at a local level in Herefordshire.
- The underlying policy objectives appear to be to reduce the amount of public money spent this financial year, and in future years; to develop new relationships between government and the public; and to encourage more direct involvement of private, voluntary and community organisations in areas that were previously viewed as the responsibility of national and local government. Much has been made of promoting a local agenda. This has emerged in the emphasis on local being at a school level or at a general practice level, rather than at local authority level. There is still much to be clarified on the role of local government and partnerships. The implications of the Academies Act for example have yet to be worked through in detail at a national or local level. They do however present challenges which will require Herefordshire to develop significantly new ways of working.
- The report summarises government initiatives relating directly to children and young people within Herefordshire, primarily focusing on the work of the Department for Education, which has

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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replaced the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Much of the focus is on schools, colleges and particular areas of activity. Apart from the review of social care instigated by the new government and led by Eileen Munro there has been very little to address children's issues relating to social care practice and highly vulnerable levels of need.

Alternative Options

- 1 No alternative options are presented

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 The report is presented as a summary for comment.

Introduction and Background

- 3 The coalition government established its "Programme for Government" (extracts are contained in Appendix 1) which sets out a broad vision and agenda for the next five years. Subsequent to its publication an immediate review of government spending resulted in a number of in-year cuts to programmes, some of which affected Herefordshire and are detailed below. In addition various policy initiatives took place, most notably the Academies Act and the activities set out in the Department for Education's structural reform plan. The NHS White paper, with its move to place GPs at the heart of commissioning services, will also have a significant impact on the services for children and young people. The report summarises a number of these areas and indicates the implications for Herefordshire. This is a time of significant change which will affect the work of the Herefordshire Partnership over the next three to four years. Much of the detail has yet to be established either at a national or local level and a great deal of flexibility will be required to ensure children and young people get the most out of new developments at a time when resources will be significantly reduced.

Key Considerations

Funding and Policy Decisions

- 4 A wide range of cuts were implemented swiftly following the coalition taking power. These are contained in Appendix 2. Members will note that one of the most controversial measures was the ending of the building schools for the future programme (BSF). Since Herefordshire was amongst the last of the local authorities due to benefit from the programme little money had been spent on preparation for the programme. The government has also implemented cuts to the targeted capital funding given to those authorities at the end of the BSF programme which has cut £660k from the £8.0m programme in Herefordshire.

Schools

- 5 The coalition government has introduced the Education and Children Bill which is expected to:
 - provide schools with the freedoms to deliver an excellent education in the way they see fit.
 - reform Ofsted and other accountability frameworks to ensure that head teachers are held properly accountable for the core educational goals of attainment and closing the gap between rich and poor.
 - introduce a slimmer curriculum giving more space for teachers to decide how to teach.

- introduce a reading test for 6 year olds to make sure that young children are learning and to identify problems early.
- give teachers and head teachers the powers to improve behaviour and tackle bullying.
- enable standards across the education sector to rise through the creation of more Academies and giving more freedom to head teachers and teachers. The intention is also to ensure that money follows pupils, and introduce a 'pupil premium' so that more money follows the poorest pupils.

- 6 The Academies Act is now in place, enabling all maintained schools to apply for Academy status. Initial expressions of interest were opened to schools judged as "outstanding" by Ofsted. Schools wishing to become Academies were encouraged in the initial proposals to help at least one coasting or faltering school. They are given a number of freedoms including greater delegation of funding, freedoms from inspection (unless certain triggers such as exam result indicate OfSTED should once again become involved) and from the national curriculum. Academies must follow the Code of Admissions. They also take on full responsibilities and liabilities as if they were an independent school, including property. Any surpluses are transferred to the Academy at the time of conversion. The role of the local authority is clearly lessened, with the expectation that Academies may wish to buy back services currently provided directly by the local authority, but they may decide to use the money in other ways.
- 7 The affects of Academies in Herefordshire could be significant if a number of schools become Academies and then decide not to buy back local authority services. This could destabilise services and make them unviable for the remaining schools. Services affected include corporate services such as human resources, payroll, property services, as well as children and young people services such as special educational needs support and school improvement, and strategic management. At present one school, John Kyrle High School has put themselves forward to become an academy from January 2011. The local authority held a discussion session for all schools expressing an interest in becoming an academy. Much of the detail has still to be clarified by government and understood, particularly the responsibilities of Academies and the impact of funding changes. The possible impact on the local authority budget if John Kryle High School was to become an Academy is estimated to be approximately a £300k reduction.
- 8 The concept of Free Schools has also been introduced, with organisations asked to express an interest in establishing free schools, state schools that are independent of local authorities. Groups wishing to establish free schools will need to prove that there is a viable requirement for a free school and include in their proposal a convincing 5 year business plan. In association with this the government is looking to change the requirements for school buildings. Previously there have been exacting requirements in terms of curriculum spaces and class spaces. The initiative is proposed under the umbrella of giving more parents more choice.
- 9 The Pupil Premium is proposed to tackle deep rooted disadvantage. A consultation paper has been issued and will be debated at Schools Forum in October 2010. The structural reform plan states that money will be taken from outside of the schools budget and will enable smaller class sizes, more one-to-one or small group tuition, longer school days and more extra curricular activities. Further details are expected, but Members should note that some of these activities are currently funded from other funding streams outside of the schools budget already, for example for extended schools via the area based grant. Some initiatives such as the extended schools start up grant were due to end in March 2011 under the previous government.
- 10 A white paper is expected in the autumn setting out further details of the reforms

- 11 In year cuts of 50% have taken place to the harnessing technology grant which is devolved to schools and this has had direct impact on school ICT investment. The cuts total £0.5m. Some schools have already spent their allocation before the cuts were announced.

11-19 Agenda

Post 16 Team (formerly the Learning & Skills Council)

- 12 On 19 July, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education announced that there would be changes to the way that 16-19 education and training would be funded. Firstly, the Young People's Learning Agency would make payments direct to FE colleges, sixth form colleges and other providers, rather than via local authorities. School sixth forms will continue to be paid by local authorities. Secondly, funding for schools and colleges will be based on 'lagged learner numbers': the number of students in the institution the previous academic year. He also announced that local authorities would not be required to join together in sub-regional or regional groups for 16-19; they would be able to work jointly in whatever arrangements they chose.
- 13 These changes do not affect the statutory duty on local authorities to secure education and training for 16-19 year olds and to have regard to, amongst other things, the quality and location of that education and training. All of this means that it is essential for local authorities to continue to work with local education and training providers to reach a shared view on the provision needed for their area. It also remains essential for local authorities to work together to meet the needs of learners who of course will continue to move across boundaries.
- 14 General Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and schools will be exempt from routine inspection; Sixth Form Colleges will no longer be required to undertake surveys of learners' views as a condition of grant; the previous Government's plans to introduce in-year funding adjustments will be scrapped. Nonetheless, the changes to the funding allocation system, and the withdrawal of the National Commissioning Framework, raise questions about the way that local authorities will deliver what government describes as a "their strategic commissioning and influencing roles". Further clarification is promised in September / October.
- 15 Following the establishment of the offender education reforms in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act (duty for the education of young residents in Youth Offending Institutions), Justice Ministers have taken the decision to delay implementation until 1 April 2011. The postponement will provide valuable time for the statutory guidance to be finalised and issued.
- 16 Ministers have decided to discontinue Youth Community Action (Formerly known as E2E Community Placements/Service) with immediate effect. The programme started in August 2009 and was part of the main E2E programme and effects Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and Herefordshire Primary Care Trust locally. 29 young people have been involved in the scheme since 2008 and the funding associated with this was very minimal (£130 per learner), the impact of this decision is not large and this aspect of the E2E programme can be continued as part of a young person's Foundation Learning programme through Personal and Social Development. Previously managed by the Learning and Skills Council, since April 2010 this has been managed through the Young People's Learning agency (YPLA)
- 17 Aspects of work in this area that will not change are:
- Local Authorities will continue with their statutory duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training for young people in their area aged 16-19 or up to 25 subject to learning difficulty assessment (Green Paper due in the Autumn).

- Local Authorities will maintain the strategic overview of provision and needs in their area – identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market; which links very much to the continued development of local commissioning statements. – The Post 16 team will complete the interim commissioning statement by 30 July and send to YPLA as a draft that needs to be signed off by the 14-19 partnership and Economic Well Being Group
- Local authorities will continue with their crucial role in securing provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- The YPLA will continue to provide funds to local authorities to pass on to maintained school sixth forms.
- Funding will transfer from the Department for Education (DfE) to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for funding 16-18 Apprenticeships.
- The Skills Funding Agency will fund Apprenticeships providers.

18 One of the key features of the ASCL Act is to give local authorities responsibility for securing the education and training of young people over compulsory school age: that remains a central feature of the new system.

14-19 Team

19 The Raising of Participation Age (RPA) for compulsory education from 16 to 18 years by 2015 has been ceased

20 New Diplomas in science, humanities and languages, due to be introduced from September 2011 have been stopped. The Government has lifted the restrictions that stopped state schools offering iGCSE qualifications in key subjects. It has also announced its intention to include iGCSE results in school performance tables as soon as possible. The announcement means that state funded schools will be free to teach from September a wide range of these respected and valued qualifications, putting them on a level playing field with independent schools who have offered them for some time.

21 Specific marketing programmes that have been cut include those for *Educational Maintenance Allowances* and *Care to Learn* (aimed at potential recipients). Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) provide financial support for learners in low income households; and Care to Learn provides support for child care for young parents in learning. In both cases information is available through www.direct.gov.uk

22 The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, has asked Professor Alison Wolf to carry out an independent review of vocational education. The purpose of the review is to consider how vocational education for 14- to 19-year-olds supports full and valuable participation and progression. To do this the review will consider:

- how vocational education for 14- to 19-year-olds can be improved
- what the appropriate target audience for vocational education is
- what principles should underpin the content, structure and teaching methods of the vocational education offer
- how progression from vocational education to positive destinations can be improved.

23 The review will begin in September 2010 with a public call for evidence and will conclude in

early 2011 with the submission of a review report and practical recommendations on how vocational education can be improved.

Connexions

- 24 Connexions budgets were reduced nationally for 2010/11. Amongst its other duties the service is charged with providing career education to lower age groups in schools. The service is balancing the allocation of Personal Advisor hours across schools and there have been some reductions in hours for some schools.

Youth Service

- 25 The Coalition Government have launched a pilot scheme for a National Citizenship Service (NCS) targeted at school leavers (16 years old), the key elements of this pilot scheme are:

- NCS forms part of the Governments Big Society Agenda
- Funding to be identified and announced in the autumn 2011. Expected to be £50 million earmarked for 2011 – 2013. Targeted at school leavers - 16 years. National Roll out proposed from 2013. Programme is expected to deliver 10,000 places.
- Pilots to commence June 2011. Programme duration 7/8 weeks - June - Sept (Summer Holidays). Programme to include charities, social enterprises and businesses and to include outdoor challenges and structured tasks involving visiting and helping local communities

- 26 The example of the programme structure is as follows:

- Pre Programme Prep – Weekend ; Week 1 - 7 day residential; Week 2 - 5 Community Involvement; Week 6 - Team Challenges; Ending with a Celebration and recognition event and awards.

- 27 Young people participating will get a 'Reward' - Small Allowance plus a grant. Each young person on the scheme will be expected to raise funds to assist in paying for the operation of the scheme as well as raising funds for local charity. Registration will be through schools, youth organisations, internet, shops and civic buildings and young people must register before their 17th birthday and commence programme prior to their 18th Birthday.

- 28 The 11-19 team along with key partners from the 3rd Sector in Herefordshire have submitted an expression on interest to be one of the 10 piloting organisations for 2011/12.

Early Years and Extended Services

- 29 Sure Start Children Centres – The previous government have made children centres a statutory service, however there is no indication of how much funding this service will receive from April 2011. The new coalition government have pledged ongoing support for Sure Start, but that the focus will be on services for vulnerable families who are suffering from the greatest disadvantage. Children Centres – intention to focus on core groups of children and families.

- 30 From November 2010 the Teacher Development Agency will no longer be supporting the extended services agenda and the DfE have confirmed that local authorities will no longer need to submit associated performance data. The emphasis for the local authority over the next few months will be to ensure sustainability of provision such as childcare beyond 2011 as it is unlikely that further extended services funding will be made available from DfE

Social Care: vulnerable children and young people

- 31 The new government has established a review of child protection, led by Eileen Munro, professor of social work at the London School of Economics. It is designed to look at early intervention, the interaction between social work teams and universal services and how this can be improved, how best practice can be shared, how the workforce can be improved, as well as slashing bureaucracy and improving inspections. The report is expected by the end of the calendar year.
- 32 The Contact Point IT programme is stopped and funding has been confirmed for Q1 2010/11 only. The government is considering whether a revised system focusing on groups of vulnerable children and young people should be put in place.

Playbuilder

- 33 The Department of Education have requested information on the current status and a decision over future projects for this year is expected shortly. Meanwhile we continue to help, support and advise all communities on play space development and are currently looking at self build schemes designed and built by the communities themselves. However, the revenue funding has been cancelled for 2010/11 (£18k for Herefordshire).

Children's Trust

- 34 The Department for Education has announced that it will be reforming Children's Trusts and revoking the requirement to have a Children and Young People's Plan. There has also been the stated intention to remove the duty on schools to co-operate with the local authority and other bodies to promote the well-being of children, and to remove the duty on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards. The intended changes are supposed to "support effective local partnerships" and free partnerships to "address local issues with innovative solutions" and "teachers and head teachers will be able to concentrate on teaching and learning". Instead local areas can decide what best fits local needs. The DfE News of July states "the basic duty to co-operate will continue but the list of statutory partners will be reviewed."
- 35 In Herefordshire the Children's Trust Board has agreed that both the partnership should continue and the plan should remain. We have already started work on the new plan which will be in place from April 2011 and that should continue. Partners believed that the Children's Trust has developed positively as a way to combine approaches and that we still need to focus on what we can do for children and families which working on our own will not achieve. We will consult with schools on how best to work with them effectively so that they continue to have an important voice in the development of Herefordshire's partnership approach for children, young people and their families. As we develop our new plan we will also look to ensure we have the most effective structures in place to support its delivery, within the context of Herefordshire Partnership arrangements.

Community Impact

- 36 Services delivered by schools, early years settings, colleges, and the children and young people's directorate directly or through contracts will all be affected by the new government's plans. Some decisions such as the cessation of the playbuilder scheme have already been recognised. There is a clear message that some services will end and should no longer be provided by the state. The expectation of the "Big Society" initiative is that the communities themselves will deliver services that they value, with the local authority playing a strategic role of influence and leadership.

Financial Implications

- 37 Financial implications have yet to be fully understood as more details and changes will follow. However, the in-year cuts to programmes are being felt by schools, voluntary agencies and the local authority and NHS Herefordshire. The financial impact of schools transferring to academy status will be significant if a substantial number of schools, or large schools take up this opportunity. The directorate is planning for significant cuts to services over the next three years.

Legal Implications

- 38 Legal implications of the decisions relating to each area are considered on an ongoing basis as national decisions are locally addressed.

Risk Management

- 39 There are risks to children, young people and families in that services that they may have been looking forward to or rely upon are no longer available. The directorate is working with partners through the Children's Trust and Herefordshire Partnership to focus resources on areas of greatest need and impact, looking to ensure that resources are considered across partners rather than via single agency approaches. There will be reductions in service and the policy decisions that will take place in October and November 2011 will set out the direction for Herefordshire.
- 40 There are risks to services provided by Herefordshire Council with the introduction of the Academies Act. The directorate is investigating trading opportunities with schools, alongside other services from the Council and NHS Herefordshire to see how valued services can operate and become sustainable.

Consultees

- 41 None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Extract from the Coalition Government's Programme for Government 2010

Appendix 2 – Funding and Policy Decisions by the new government

Background Papers

- None identified.