

Minutes of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

20th March, 2017 at 5.00 pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Underhill (Chair);
Councillors Allen, Hickey, Taylor and White.

Apology: Councillors Ashman, EM Giles, Phillips, Preece and
Reverend P French (Co-opted member).

In Attendance: Jyoti Atri, Director - Public Health;
Angela Blair, Food and Nutrition Project Officer,
Public Health;
Maxine Dixon, Adult and Children's Weight
Management Project Manager, Public Health;
Sarah Farmer, 0-19 Programme Manager, Public
Health;
Jim Leivers, Interim Director- Children's Services;
Dr Joshna Mavji, Acting Consultant in Public Health
(Children & Young People, Adult Health and
Wellbeing, Adult Health Improvement);
Nathan Moore, Physical Activity Project Manager;
Robyn Smallbone, Fit for Sport;
Dr Helen Tyson, Senior Educational Psychologist,
Inclusion Support Sandwell.

5/17

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th
February, 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

6/17

Childhood Obesity in Sandwell

The Board received a presentation from officers which provided background and statistics in relation to childhood obesity in Sandwell, as follows:

- prevalence to obesity in children was rising;
- more children were obese now than in 2006;
- Sandwell was highly susceptible to obesity due to deprivation in the Borough;
- 23.7% of reception class children were overweight or obese in Sandwell (22.1% England average);
- 41.1% of year 6 children were overweight or obese (34.2% England average);
- childhood obesity could have a major and enduring impact on a child's life;
- there was a need to keep people well for longer and a number of local factors to understand the problem.

The Board considered factors that influenced obesity; nutrition and physical activity, and considered what drove those elements such as emotional health and wellbeing; education and understanding of healthy choices and biology.

The Board noted the work of the School Health Improvement Group (SHIG) in Sandwell to focus on the following:

- food and Nutrition;
- physical activity;
- emotional health and wellbeing;
- training.

The Board was also advised that locally:-

- children were not eating their 'five a day';
- schools were the centre of work in Sandwell;
- the Council was working with meal providers to reduce sugar content of school meals;
- grants were awarded to schools for various projects centred on healthy eating such as cooking, growing, lunchboxes and snacks.

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The Board welcomed initiatives such as 'Change for life' posters; school food maps; food safety, allergens and nutritional awareness training; Sandwell Residential Education Service's Food Projects and using local food business to learn about food and focus on nutrition in schools e.g. National Charity Partnership's 'Farm to Fork'.

The Board noted that 44 schools were involved in food projects, Sandwell Inspired Partnership Services SIPS was engaged and that a consultation for school children, parents/carers and teachers was being developed.

The Board considered what was happening locally in relation to physical activity and were advised that initially, there was limited engagement or relationships with schools; there was no data on children's physical literacy or activity levels and there was a limited understanding of what schools were currently doing or not doing.

The Board were advised that the physical activity in schools goals were as follows:-

- to construct a commission that would engage schools, gather data and audit current provision;
- to equip schools in order to ensure all children are achieving 30-60 minutes of physical activity per day.

The Board were advised that Fit for Sport had been commissioned to run the Sandwell Active Schools project, which was progressing well. The project focuses on the need to make school as active as possible; including lessons and the way they are delivered. The project brief was as follows:

- undertaking an audit on current provision, including needs assessment and action plans;
- a database for schools to record physical literacy and activity;
- completing an activity challenge provided to measure physical literacy levels awarding children a gold, silver or bronze categorisation;
- training & development for school staff – lunch time supervisors, Physical Education Co-ordinator, teaching staff;

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- working with schools on the “environment”, “attitudes” and “perceptions”;
- action plans for schools – to achieve an “Active Day as Possible”.

The Board welcomed the physical activity success reported so far which was considered very encouraging, as 85 schools had signed up, 150 professionals had received training (including Physical Education coordinators, lunch time supervisors, teaching staff) and 60 schools had completed the activity challenge.

In response to questions about differentiating between children of different ages and abilities when providing physical activities, the Board was advised that the physical challenges were based around all different types of children and were not sports based; activities varied on physical ability and age.

The Senior Educational Psychologist informed the Board that the emotional health and wellbeing of children who were overweight or obese was a sensitive subject. Positive social, emotional and mental wellbeing was fundamental for children to choose and maintain a healthy lifestyle and to have motivation, confidence and perseverance to achieve their lifestyle goals.

The Board was advised that there were growing concerns on the wellbeing of children in Sandwell, and how resilient they were to emerging issues like Child Sexual Exploitation and online bullying. The Board was advised that 1156 referrals had been made to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services in six months and that 210 10-24 year olds were admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm.

The Senior Educational Psychologist advised the Board that the Educational Psychology Team worked in every school across Sandwell to provide emotional wellbeing as part of the classroom curriculum, to measure emotional wellbeing and to monitor the whole school approach through a good practice Charter Mark.

The Board were advised that the ‘Healthy Mind, Happy Me’ curriculum was a Sandwell based approach around six themes:

- friendships;
- resilience;
- coping;
- belonging;

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- My wider world;
- Being the best I can be.

The project had been offered to all primary schools in addition to secondary school Personal Social Health and Economic Education sessions. The Board was advised that 36 schools signed up, seven schools had been awarded the charter mark and four research psychologists employed working across Sandwell.

In response to questions from the Chair about the level of staffing to support the project, the Senior Educational Psychologist advised that it was anticipated that by the end of the school year at least 50 of 100 primary schools and three secondary schools would be engaged and that they were looking to employ two more research psychologists by September. In addition whilst there were four research psychologists specifically for this project, all school were aware of the work.

The Adult and Children's Weight Management Project Manager provided information relating to the Artemis e-learning tool, the launch for the learning tool was planned for September 2017. The training tool was the first on line childhood obesity programme in the Country and it was hoped that the training would become mandatory for some key professionals.

The new interactive tool provided insight into public health theory; presented four scenarios through cartoon-like characters of children aged 4-5 years which would challenge perception, consider healthy lifestyle changes to a child's lifestyle, consider a healthier environment for children in early years and schools settings.

The Adults and Children's Weight Project Manager highlighted the next steps and aspirations to engage with all schools; to develop school brochures and for all schools to see the benefit of the projects.

The Director - Public Health responded to members questions as follows:

- in relation to statistical data, she indicated that the aspiration was for the gaps to narrow in percentage of reception and year 6 children that were overweight or obese;
- the Council was aware that other service areas were looking at mechanisms and approaches to reducing childhood obesity,

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however were confident that the population based approach could impact on every child and would not make an issue of those overweight. The approach would use schools as the vehicle to include every child.

In response to questions about out of school activities and the lack of youth services, the Director - Public Health indicated that there would be after school clubs and sporting activities for those that wanted to participate, however, Public Health wanted every child to participate in physical activities at whatever level they could; she added that there was evidence to link academic improvement to physical activity.

The Food and Nutrition Project Officer advised that schools and the Public Health Improvement Team were learning together how best to find flexibility for physical education staff, staff involved in school food activities and Head Teachers to make best use of existing assets and budget e.g. pupil premium and Sports premium to start to look at different ways to work. She advised that in a short period of time, there had been a large amount of learning.

The Board was advised that from April 2017 schools would be measuring activity levels in Schools and OFSTED would be asking how active a school was. Schools would be exploring what physical activity could be included in the school day which would be a fun and physical activity to give an enjoyment factor for all children. This would include ensure a quality activity that made a difference; not necessarily introducing new activities but improving the quality of what they do.

In response to further questions, the Board was advised that the longer term aim would be to encourage lifestyle changes both nutritionally and physically; to continue to be active during school holidays and at weekends; and that the learning process and positive memory could transfer back into the family unit and help parents transform family activities and nutrition.

The Board was advised that there had been positive feedback from schools and that staff were active and contributing to this programme.

In response to questions about the SIPS school meal menu, the Food and Nutrition Project Officer advised that SIPS were not the only food provider but that they had engaged with Public Health to

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adjust the sugar content in school meals. The Board was advised that there could be extra training provided to school dinner ladies to ensure they did not provide additional food to children who had already eaten a lunch or food from their lunch box and that portion size would be included in training. The Board was advised that consultation was underway and would shape services in April 2017 with the parent's perception of school meal provision included.

In relation to questions about the reduction of school breaks, the Fit for Sport representative advised that it was the intensity of the activity not the number of break times that was important. He clarified that younger children alternate playground time with older children in the playground which would afford children of the same age to have more space without fear of bumping into other children during playground games.

In response to further questions about training for kitchen staff in schools, the interim consultant Children and Young People, Adult Health and Wellbeing, Adult Health Improvement confirmed that training could be made available for cooks and advice could be given if they were keen to attend but that the current 'Food Safety Allergens and Nutrition Awareness' training and 'Food Safety Level 2' training was not aimed at the schools meals caterer.

The Director - Public Health confirmed that the outcomes of the consultation would be analysed and used to shape future services, potentially in September for 2017-18 school year.

The Board was advised that 50% of schools were engaging and that this was credited to the work of the Physical Activity Project Manager, but that all schools would be required to prepare a school brochure and all schools would benefit from a statement to demonstrate physical activity as part of the OFSTED process from April 2017. The Board was advised that some schools would need direct contact and more leverage was needed to encourage engagement.

In response to questions relating to the price of fruit and budgeting skills, the Board was advised that the food projects focus was on growing food from fresh, easy to prepare, low cost foods and fun to make; this alongside the budgeting element had produced a learning tool where ideas could be developed and shared in the community like the 'Holiday Kitchen and 'Holiday Lunch Clubs' do.

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Resolved:-

- (1) that the Director – Public Health identify the primary schools not participating or engaging with the Sandwell Active Schools project and advise the Board of the reasons why they were not participating;
- (2) that the Director – Public Health present the results of the consultation/survey with parents and provide details of how these results shape the next steps to a future Scrutiny Board meeting;
- (3) that the Director – Public Health present a progress report after twelve months to detail if the measures put in place have improved levels of activity in children, improved nutrition, improved education progress and halted the rise in obesity levels;
- (4) that the Executive Director - Resources be requested to include Artemis Childhood Obesity training in the Member training programme for 2017-18.

7/17

Children's Trust Update

The Interim Director – Children's Services provided a presentation to the Board entitled 'Improving Children's Services in Sandwell.

The Interim Director – Children's Services highlighted that the transformation to the Children's Social Care Trust was a formidable agenda, the presentation highlighted the following:

- the improvement journey priorities;
- how preparations for the Children's Trust were moving forward;
- setting up the Children's Social Care Trust :-
- the Trust implementation – progress;
- key risks;
- decisions the Council would need to make.

During the presentation the Interim Director – Children's Services highlighted that there would be six social work teams with a manager heading each team. The work force would be increased to provide 30 more social workers and the Council would have to

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identify £1.5 million budget from existing resources to enable it. He advised that recruitment of social workers was a very competitive environment due to neighbouring authorities also seeking social workers for their services.

The Board was advised that Vince Clark had been appointed Interim Director - Children and Families from 1st April 2017 and that Children's Services was getting up to pace with new technology and had a clear direction of travel. He clarified that the Secretary of State had deemed the setting up of the Trust to be necessary and that staff had been commissioned to set up the Trust in Sandwell.

In response to questions about attracting social workers to Sandwell the Interim Director – Children's Services highlighted the need for Sandwell to have a unique selling point and to work with individuals to engage and establish what they wanted and the support they required. The Board identified that there was a need to raise morale and aspirations of social workers and to get the message out that Sandwell would be a good place to do something different and a good place to work.

The Interim Director – Children's Services clarified that the level of compliance for Sandwell was low with only 60% of young people being seen, or not being recorded as being seen, in the first ten days of being referred to Social Services. He emphasised the seriousness of almost 40 young people in 100 not being seen within the guidelines and indicated that this was something that managers and the service needed to focus on. He indicated that this may be something scrutiny should include in the work programme for a future meeting.

The Interim Director – Children's Services outlined the risks to setting up the Children's Trust and the proposed mitigation to each risk. He advised that a team of officers was drafting the key documents and that the appointment of key posts would progress the move into the Trust.

Resolved that the Interim Director - Children's Services be requested to provide an update on the Children's Trust to the next meeting of the Board.

Scrutiny Review of Support Services to Care Leavers

The Chair outlined the report and highlighted the sections of the report relating to areas for improvement including independent living skills; local information; pathway plans; hand-over from social workers to personal advisors and housing and isolation.

The Board welcomed the report and recommendations.

Resolved that the Cabinet be requested to consider the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Support and Services to Care Leavers as follows:-

- i. that a life-skills focussed programme for care leavers (similar to the Motiv8 or House to Home programmes) be developed, with suitably skilled volunteers to deliver the programme sought from across the Council and its partners;
- ii. that any arrangements the Council has with Supported Housing providers to accommodate care leavers be reviewed to ensure that they include the need to support care leavers to obtain independent living skills;
- iii. that in addition to the information packs for looked after young people aged 16+, care leavers should be provided with information, on a tailored neighbourhood basis, about what is in their local area when they move into a new property. This should include:-
 - (a) names and contact details of local ward councillors;
 - (b) location of local shopping areas;
 - (c) location of important facilities (medical, dental, banks, places of worship, libraries, community facilities);
 - (d) transport connection information (bus/metro/rail);
 - (e) any other information that is identified – this could be done with input from Local Councillors, neighbourhoods officers etc;

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- iv. that the outcomes of the review of Pathway Plans currently being carried out by the Leaving Care Service and young people be reported to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board;
- v. that the revised case transfer process be reviewed, in conjunction with care leavers, after twelve months of operation to ensure that it is successful;
- vi. that the Housing Scrutiny Board considers the needs of care leavers as part its wider review of the Housing Allocations Policy;
- vii. that the co-design with care leavers of peer mentoring, befriending and other initiatives to reduce isolation be welcomed and that such an approach be used wherever possible for all reviews and redesigns of services and support the Council offers to care leavers.

9/17 Updates from the Chair and Vice-Chair

Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

The Vice-Chair advised that the final report of the working group would be reported to the next Board meeting on 24th April 2017.

(Meeting ended 7:15 pm)

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