

E : REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Area Child Protection Committee

- 1 In July this year, I reported that the Area Child Protection Committee was in the process of developing local policies and procedures for inter-agency working. This has now been completed. I attended the launch, together with other County Councillors, of the Multi-agency Code of Practice on 1 October. The event was well attended. Over 45 people from various agencies such as the Police, Probation Service, Health, Education, District Councils and a number representing voluntary organisations were reminded that multi-agency working was imperative to the safeguarding of young people.
- 2 Members of the Committee gave presentations on how the Code of Practice would be taken forward within their own organisations and highlighted some of the key issues, within Child Protection, that were currently being addressed.
- 3 The Chairman of the Committee, Mr Donald McPhail, provided an overview of the work programme. This included the development of a communication strategy, the production of a quarterly newsletter and a monitoring and evaluation strategy.
- 4 This work is part of the Council's flagship project to increase the protection of children at risk.

Social Services Performance Indicators

Be Heard

- 5 Be Heard, is an independent service provided by the NSPCC to young people in Buckinghamshire who are looked after by social services, are care leavers or who are disabled and receive respite care. The service offers confidential information, advice and advocacy including the opportunity to talk to an independent person.

- 6 The type of support given varies from giving young people clear information above their rights, to supporting them with reviews or helping them to make a complaint, but above all ensuring that they are heard.
- 7 Over 40 people gathered at the Coach House, Aylesbury to launch the initiative. People attending included the young people's advisory group, social and health professionals, young people from residential units and others who had left care. The advisory group is responsible for producing a newsletter and will assist in the development of the project.

CD Rom Launch

- 8 "Being Looked After in Buckinghamshire" is a CD Rom that has been produced by seven young people currently in the authority's care, in conjunction with the NSPCC and Powerhouse. The CD, the first in the Country, provides information and signposting for young people entering the authority's care, such as what it is like to live in a children's home, what can be expected at a review and who to go to for help.
- 9 The launch of the CD was held at Green Park on 30 October and was attended by County Councillors, social workers, carers and celebrity Pauline Quirke. The young people gave presentations on how the CD was developed, which included the storyboards, the visit to Powerhouse's London studio for editing and the many other activities they had taken part in.

OfSTED Conference

- 10 A joint conference, hosted by the Office for Standards in Education, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health, was held on 8th October. The conference was on "Raising the Achievement of Children in Public Care". Key speakers included Baroness Ashton, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Early Years and School Standards and Denise Platt CBE, the Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate and Director for Children.

- 11 The key message was the need to bring the educational attainment of young people in local authority care closer into line with that of their peers. Achievement will be by corporate parents applying principles of good parenting including listening to the young people, early intervention, providing continuity and stability, promoting inclusion and prioritising educational needs.

Best Value Review

- 12 Due to the increasing demands being placed on Children's Services, I have commissioned a Best Value Review; this will commence within the next couple of weeks.

**MARGARET ASTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**