

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	1 June 2010
Title:	Updating progress against the children in care 'Pledge'.
Reference:	1686
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Introduction

1.1 Hampshire County Council has long acknowledged the importance of facilitating successful outcomes for the children in its care. The Care Matters White Paper, Time for Change (now the Children and Young People's Bill) reinforces the message that all children in care deserve excellent parenting and education, the opportunity to access a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills, emotional wellbeing and stability. The support provided by good parenting is vital in the achievement of positive outcomes for children in care and so the special relationship between these children and local authorities - which fulfil some or all of the parenting task for children in care - is extremely important. A good Corporate Parent should offer everything that a good parent would provide, and more. Indeed, in responses to the consultation on the Care Matters Green Paper, the role of the Corporate Parent was emphasized as the key to successful implementation of the Care Matters agenda. Within Care Matters is a requirement to provide our children in care with a 'Pledge'. This should cover the services and support that children in care should expect to receive and be regularly reviewed and updated. This report details how this Pledge was formed and what has happened since in terms of our delivery against the commitments.

2. Background

2.1. In November 2007, Hampshire's Corporate Parents, represented by a group of officers and Members, had a formal meeting in Council Chambers within which the Care Council, supported by Hampshire's Youth Council, discussed the issues for children in Hampshire's care. The meeting was

named as Takeover Day in which children in care and members of the Youth Council shadowed senior officers and Members in their daily duties.

- 2.2 At the above meeting, the Care Council presented their wishes and feelings about some of the things they would like addressed within a pledge for Hampshire's population of children in care.
- 2.3 At the meeting of the CYPSC and subsequent Executive Member Decision Day in January 2008, a Corporate Pledge for Children in Care was approved. The Pledge responds to requirements in the White Paper: Care Matters, and is a culmination of those requirements and the specific needs identified by Hampshire's Care Council during Takeover Day. The Pledge responds to the needs of all children in care, regardless of their placement. It therefore targets those in custody, in addition to those placed with families, in residential care and lodgings.

3. The Pledge

- 3.1. The Pledge and specifically what this meant to young people is attached at Appendix 1. It details what Hampshire County Council as Corporate Parents committed to and what we have achieved against those commitments two years on.
- 3.2. You will see that we have made good progress against those initial commitments but there is still more to do. Particularly in regard to ensuring that children and young people are matched to placements based on need and not on what is available. The new Children in Care Commissioning strategy should address this and it is hoped through greater provision and better matching we will also see the stability of placement increase.
- 3.3. Further development of the social care structures should also enhance the relationship between children and their social workers, based on a principle of consistency. We are also examining ways in which children communicate with their social workers and ensure that they are given the opportunity to influence all decision which are made about them. This is further reinforced by the new care planning and reviewing regulations which put children and their families firmly in the centre of the decision making process.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. One of the key criticisms from children and young people is that they are rarely informed about the impact of their participation in service development. Therefore we will ensure that our achievements against the Pledge commitments are appropriately disseminated to children in care. This needs to include what we have achieved but as importantly we must detail where there is more work to do and what we are doing to meet these commitments.
- 4.2. We now need to revise our Pledge and consult with a wide range of children and young people to do this. We already have received a lot of feedback about the care system from the Dreamwall residentials and we

hope to build on that this year. The annual summer school supported by the University of Winchester also provides us with an opportunity to understand what the important issues are for young people as well as the annual children in care survey. The Care Ambassadors will then take the responsibility for ensuring that it properly reflects the view of our children and young people and will liaise with Hampshire County Council to ensure that the commitments are ambitious, but achievable.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1. That the Children and Families Advisory panel note the progress made to date and support the development of a revised Pledge for our Children in Care for discussion and agreement at their meeting on 7th October 2010.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes/no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None