

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



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MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE, on
THURSDAY 24 JULY 2008.

PRESENT:

Mr E Clark, Mr P Coleman (Vice Chairman), Dr J English, Mrs M Groom, Mr J Hawkins, Mr T Molland, Mrs P Rugg, Mrs C Soden (Chairman), Dr M Thompson.

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs N Bryant (Cabinet Member for Education & Youth Development)
Mrs B Wayman (Cabinet Member for Children & Families).

47. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Davis, Mr Deane, Mr Fuller (who was substituted by Mr Molland), Ms MacDonald, Ms Miller, Mr Moss, Mr Oldrieve, Mr Snow, Mrs White and Mrs Williamson.

48. **Chairman's Announcements**

The chairman explained that the order of the agenda would need to be amended to accommodate officers' diary commitments, so that agenda items 10 and 11 would be considered before agenda item 9.

49. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2008.

50. **Members' Interests**

Mr Coleman declared a personal interest in item 13, in respect of "Urchfont Developments at Urchfont Manor College", as a member of the college's management committee.

51. **Public Participation**

None.

52. **Member Requests**

None.

53. **Committee Representation on other Groups – Member Feedback**

The committee asked Mr Coleman to provide brief feedback at the next meeting on the Children & Young People's Trust Board's activities.

54. **Initial Feedback from the Joint Area Review**

The Director of the Department for Children & Education (DCE) provided members with some initial feedback from the Joint Area Review (JAR). She explained that the final report from the inspectors would not be made public until the 17th November, although the department would receive a draft report to check for factual inaccuracies in September. She also highlighted that a separate inspection report would be released in November relating to the Youth Development Service.

Overall members noted that the initial feedback from the JAR included a number of positive areas, with suggestions for improvement relating to areas which the department was already aware of and working towards achieving.

Also, the consensus view was that the JAR experience had been a constructive one for all involved, including the department, partners and members.

In discussing some of the detail of the initial feedback, members queried whether they should receive a future report on the issue of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET), particularly as this was one of the priorities of the 2008 - 2011 Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP).

In conclusion, all that had taken part in the JAR process were thanked for their input, and a request was made for the committee to consider the draft JAR report in September.

Resolved:

- (1) **To note the initial verbal feedback on the JAR.**
- (2) **To await the findings of the JAR, before confirming NEETs as a future work programme item.**
- (3) **To request that the Director, DCE seek permission from the inspectors for the committee to consider the draft JAR report in September.**

55. **Wiltshire & Swindon Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

The MAPPA Co-ordinator for Wiltshire & Swindon, from the Probation Service, and the Head of Safeguarding presented a report to the committee on the work of MAPPA, and on the way in which children and families' services supported this work.

In addition, a copy of MAPPA's Annual Report 2006-2007 and leaflets explaining the work of these arrangements were issued for members' further information.

Members were informed that Wiltshire & Swindon's MAPPA followed national guidelines common to the UK, however no other country had developed this model of information sharing.

In considering this report, members discussed the:

- (a) fluctuations and projections of numbers of dangerous, violent and sexual offences occurring in Wiltshire
- (b) comparatively greater difficulties in re-settling offenders in a rural county as opposed to a more urban area like Swindon
- (c) fact that the strategy for managing sex offenders in England, compared to the "megan's law" system used in the USA, meant that for Wiltshire, the police knew where 97.5% of registered sex offenders were at any one time – in the USA it was 60%
- (d) impact of the digital age on activity relating to sexual offenders, noting that the Local Safeguarding Children's Board had agreed an "e-safety" priority as part of its ongoing work
- (e) instances where medical professionals were now no longer required to inform parents of a young person's request for contraception
- (f) Youth Offending Team was currently dealing with approximately 300 cases where young people were charged with violent or sexual offences, with a small number of these cases being the subject of attention from MAPPA, as these posed a significant risk to society and therefore required a multi agency focus.

Members enquired about activity relating to domestic violence (DV), i.e. how this impacted on children and young people, whether directly or indirectly. The committee linked this question to data released in the latest performance report to cabinet, which included a statistic that 960 additional cases of DV had been recorded between April 2007 and February 2008. This was due to specific work intended to increase the level of reporting.

In response, the Head of Safeguarding explained that there had been reports of approximately 2,000 children and young people in Wiltshire in homes where domestic violence occurred during this period.

Noting the significance of DV, the numbers of children and young people involved, and the fact that it was a particular focus of the current CYPP, the committee discussed how best to consider this matter at a future meeting, and the merits of making this the subject of a full members' seminar.

With respect to the additional information, which the MAPPA Co-ordinator had prepared since the issuing of the agenda, prompted by the issuing of some lines of enquiry, the committee requested that this be appended to the minutes of the meeting (see pages 8 – 10).

Resolved:

- (1) To note the report and verbal clarification regarding MAPPA in Wiltshire.**
- (2) To take forward key relevant issues arising from this item to the September 2008 meeting, when the committee would consider a report from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.**
- (3) To ask the chairman and vice chairman to work with the Director, DCE in assessing how to bring forward an item to the committee on Domestic Violence and its impact on children and young people in Wiltshire, with a view to this being made the subject of a future members' seminar.**

56. Teenage Pregnancy Action Plan Update

Members considered an update report on the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and Action Plan, and were reassured of the robust arrangements in place to manage and progress this strategy and plan. The committee was informed that Cllr White and Cllr Wayman served as the member representatives on the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Board.

In considering this report, the committee was particularly asked to note

- (a) the record of under 18 conception rates recorded in 2006/7 and 2007/8
- (b) the record of under 18 conception rates recorded in "hotspot wards" in the periods 2003 – 2005 and 2005 – 2007
- (c) the good progress made against the action plan
- (d) the board's wider focus concerning teenage pregnancy with the other four strands of the Public Service Agreement target for young people, i.e. 'positive activities', 'NEET', 'first time offenders' and 'substance misuse'.

Members discussed the importance of the media in conveying the right message to young people, and the proactive approach taken by partners to follow up requests for contraception – in relation to which the committee was informed of criteria now followed in law by health professionals, known as the Fraser Guidelines (1985). These guidelines state that doctors can give contraceptive advice and treatment to young people between the ages of 13 and 16 without parental consent.

The impact of good self esteem was also discussed as a factor, found through national research, to help deter teenagers from engaging too early in sexual relationships. Members noted how this factor appeared to be the case locally, with the higher rates of teenage conceptions occurring in the areas of low social aspiration in Wiltshire.

Finally, the committee asked about the challenges in delivering the objectives of the strategy across a large rural county, such as Wiltshire. In response, the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Co-ordinator explained how the model of extended school services were being used to overcome some of these challenges. She also highlighted that there was a need for more sexual health outreach workers, and that the PCT's intention to re-design these services would help overcome some of the challenges.

Resolved:

- (1) To thank the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Co-ordinator for her work.**
- (2) To await the final report from the JAR before deciding how best to monitor the teenage pregnancy strategy in the future.**

57. Annual Audit & Inspection Letter 2008

The committee considered the issues raised in this letter, and the related performance data considered by cabinet on the 15th July.

In doing so, members clarified that much of the inspection letter had rightly highlighted good practice in the department, but that issues such as the following required a continuing focus:

- (a) KS3 maths' results continued to be above the national average, but Wiltshire's rate of improvement was not as good as other authorities
- (b) performance in maths was a priority for Wiltshire across all age ranges
- (c) the educational attainment of children in care needed to be improved, and the recruitment of the virtual head teacher was one of the measures that had been taken to address this.

In conclusion, noting the historic nature of the data drawn on for the purpose of this inspection letter, members agreed that the outcome of the JAR would serve as a more meaningful source of information for its future focus.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the issues raised in the Annual Audit & Inspection Letter (2008) in respect of services provided by the DCE.
- (2) To note that performance in maths and the educational attainment of children in care remained priorities for the department.
- (3) To await the outcome of the JAR as a more up to date source of information for the committee's future focus.

58. **Transitions: The Move to Adulthood for Young People Receiving Care from their Local Authority**

At the suggestion of the committee's vice chairman, members gave initial consideration to a draft report of the County Council Network on the issue of transition processes.

The Interim Head of Special Needs provided members with advice on how the department currently managed this issue of transition, which was co-ordinated through a multi agency sub group of the Children & Young People's Trust Board. He explained that a range of activity was taking place, including the recruitment of a new three year full time transitions' officer, the drafting of a new policy, and that work on developing 'person-centred planning' continued.

The Director of the department provided reassurance that the committee had a useful role in focusing on this matter of transitions, particularly as it was a priority for the current CYPP, that there was scope for improvement, and that it was a good avenue for members to exercise their policy development role.

Resolved: To request a report from the Interim Head of Special Needs in respect of the activity ongoing to improve transition processes in Wiltshire, with a view to influencing the new policy and practices being developed.

59. **Holding the Executive to Public Account**

Resolved:

To note the items listed in the Cabinet's latest rolling forward plan for July 2008 to September 2008 relevant to this committee.

60. **Urgent Items**

None.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am – 12.45 pm)

The officer who produced these minutes is Karen Linaker, Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 713056 or email karenlinaker@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115.

MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements)

Notes in response to Suggested Lines of Enquiry

- 1. What are the statistics of violent and sex offences against children and young people in Wiltshire?** – This will depend upon the type of offence- of which there are a significant number within this category. MAPPA work, is guided by national guidance, and covers only one part of the much wider group of individuals (aged 10 years plus) who are convicted of a range of offences, it does not include those who are not convicted.

When we measure violent offences in MAPPA we include Public order offences. As shown within the formal report to Scrutiny Committee, the last annual MAPPA figures published reported 506 registered sexual, and violence offenders in Wiltshire and Swindon (the latter being approx one third the population of Wiltshire). The total number of offences relating to sex or violence will be much higher than this, and are kept separately by the Police from those cases included within the MAPPA system. The MAPPA system has held over 300 case meetings per year to monitor risk by offenders.

- 2. What are the statistics of violent and sex offences by children and young people in Wiltshire?** – It is important to be careful about precisely what is being asked and reported –some offences do not result in a conviction. On convictions BY young people, we have 10 sexual and 298 violence offences by young people recorded in 2007/08. Again, MAPPA is involved with only a limited number of crimes of violence, and most sex offences. We have only a handful of Wilts Registered Sexual Offenders under 18 years who have been convicted, but many more who have not been convicted. The Youth Offending Service manage those convicted under supervision.
- 3. With MAPPA's primary role being to assess and manage the violent and/or sex offender – what evidence exists to demonstrate success in reducing the number of offenders, through rehabilitation of the offender?** - There is evidence that community penalties are more effective than short term imprisonment. See the publication "Community sentencing - Reducing re-offending, Changing Lives" disseminated at the last MAPPA Management Board. Offenders receiving Short custodial sentences have a 60% reoffending rate, those on Community Sentences a 40% rate. MAPPA cases are usually supervised for longer and are rarely the 'short sentence' cases. The same range of interventions which are successfully applied to Community cases are applied to those on licence, as well as sanctions to ensure compliance or return to prison, protection of victims and liaison and co-working with other agencies. Within the last MAPPA Annual Report, during the year, there were no cases of MAPPA Level 2 or 3 being convicted of further serious offences.

4. **Who monitors the Police, Probation and Prison Services' effectiveness in providing MAPPA? What strengths and weaknesses of MAPPA were highlighted in the latest monitoring report?** - There is a Strategic Board which oversees and scrutinises the MAPPA work at a local level. There are sub-groups for Quality Assurance and Performance, Finance, Media and Training and Serious Case Review, all reporting to a management board. There is a local system for MAPPA management and accountability including KPIs.
5. **(ref. second paragraph of page 2)...what are "children related interests in the development of MAPPA"?** This refers to the relevant representative maintaining responsibility for identifying compatible policies, practices on work with the interests of children, the protection of children and reassurance to parents and educators in mind. This confirms that the protection of children is an intrinsic part of the MAPPA processes.
6. **What risks have been found in Wiltshire from children and young people's increased use of the internet and mobile phones?** -Risks from BEBO, Facebook and mobiles are evident in some MAPPA cases. We have an e safety sub-group of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) co-ordinating multi-agency work on e-safety and ensuring we maximize opportunities to safeguard children, including an extensive programme of training in schools- both of school staff and parents, publicity to the public (radio, safe parenting handbook and internet).
7. **Please provide an explanation of a Serious Case Review involving children in Wiltshire currently** - We have not needed to run a MAPPA Serious Case Review (MSCR) on any cases involving children to date, however we have a system and a sub-group to manage these when they occur. The Local Safeguarding Children Board undertakes SCRs by different guidance- where the focus is learning lessons about how agencies work together in child protection (these are referred to within the LSCB Annual report, being reported to Scrutiny Committee later in the year).
8. **Noting the statistics on page 3, do the Police, Probation and Prison services have sufficient resources to manage the number of registered sex offenders, violent and other sex offenders in Wiltshire?** The MAPPA Strategic Board is satisfied that sufficient resources are available to meet need and the use/provision of resources is under constant review. Over the past 12 months there has been significant new investment in our public protection capacity. In addition to the MAPPA Co-ordinator and two Administrators, the Public Protection Intelligence Unit now comprises of 5 ViSOR registrars led by a Detective Sergeant. The Public Protection Officers, dedicated to the work of managing offenders in the community, have been augmented by 2 additional detectives. A dedicated Detective Sergeant leads this team of 8 officers. The structure is overseen by a Detective Inspector who works with counter-parts in our Responsible Authorities and duty to co-operate

agencies to ensure effective provision is made to manage offenders. Administrative support is also being strengthened.

9. **Whilst it is encouraging to note the operation of new Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (7th para of page 2), the latest performance report to cabinet (15th July 2008), shows an increase in the records of domestic violence by an additional 960 cases (from Apr 07 – Feb 08). Accepting that there has been a deliberate drive to improve reporting, for obvious reasons, does 960 additional reports suggest that Wiltshire has a problem with regard to domestic violence? Of these 960 cases – how many include instances where children and young people are either directly or indirectly affected?** Domestic Violence is not governed by MAPPA, so this question must be answered by the appropriate domestic violence bodies. A few preliminary notes follow from the knowledge of the authors.

All areas of the country are struggling with the wide extent of Domestic Violence, and the government is starting to prioritise it nationally with growing policy initiatives. With massive under-reporting, 30 incidents of violence before reporting is not uncommon, early initiatives may appear to “worsen” the situation by showing increased figures, but it only reveals it. Increases in reporting are a National target. MARAC are a good and proven way to reduce re-victimisation. The increase in reporting is good as it indicates increased confidence in the police. During the period referred to within the above question (April 07 to Feb 08) WCC Children and Families services received referrals relating to over 2,000 children.

Alan Hemming, MAPPA Co-ordinator,
and Sarah Webb, Head of Safeguarding, WCC.
July 2008.