

Executive Summary

Children First (Mouchel Parkman and Outcomes UK) were appointed in December 2005 to offer consultancy support to the Council's children's services directorate. This included the appointment of an interim Strategic Director to provide high quality leadership and management to the Directorate.

As part of the work, a scoping exercise was undertaken in January 2006 which focused on assessing the issues facing the Council in its preparation for the Joint Area Review and for raising the attainment of the Island's children and young people.

As a result of this work, key areas for potential external support were identified. These fall into two categories:

1. Immediate priorities which need to be tackled urgently to enable children and young people to be safe and to enjoy and achieve
2. Medium term issues which include ensuring the appropriate infrastructure is in place to support the Council and its schools in driving forward educational attainment

Immediate priorities

Given the importance of tackling educational under-performance and the immediacy of the Joint Area Review (May 2006), and with the agreement of the Chief Executive, a number of key tasks are being undertaken during February 2006.

The work during February has focused on the immediate issues which were a priority in terms of the needs of children and young people on the Island. These tasks were:

1. Ensuring that high schools have taken all possible steps to provide effective support for young people who will be sitting their GCSE exams in the summer 2006.
2. Ensuring that appropriate procedures and strategies were in place to secure the safety of vulnerable children on the child protection register.

In addition, work was undertaken to ensure that the Directorate had a robust data set which would enable it to respond appropriately and timely to the Joint Area Review and would enable effective challenge of school performance.

Key outcomes for the Immediate Work

Child Protection

An audit which will ensure that the systems and processes for child protection are sufficiently robust: that the Council knows who the most vulnerable children are, where they are and can

be confident that all appropriate steps have been taken to ensure their safety and the level of support they are receiving.

School Improvement and Support for Vulnerable Schools

In order to support the school improvement service and to build capacity, these outcomes will be delivered alongside link inspectors where appropriate.

- Each high school would receive one visit to ensure that all strategies have been put in place to support year 11 performance (eg Easter schools, revision classes). A note of visit giving details of any immediate improvements that should be made will be made available to the school improvement service.
- All schools which are vulnerable to inspection will be visited to ensure that an effective self evaluation form is in place and is appropriate in terms of the school's assessment of its performance. A note of visit will be made available to the school improvement service.
- A report will be available on each of the schools visited identifying any key issues and what steps need to be taken to resolve these
- Ensuring that the Council has a complete and robust list of schools at risk of being placed in either "special measures" or "notice to improve" categories as a result of Ofsted inspection and that these schools receive maximum support to avoid such classification.
- This work would be completed alongside the Council's link inspectors thus supporting the internal capacity of the Council

Data Management

An audit of data requirements of the Children's Services directorate will be completed. This will show any gaps in data that will need to be addressed to enable the Council to challenge its schools effectively and to ensure data is robust for the forthcoming joint area review.

Medium term issues

There are a number of medium term issues which the scoping exercise has revealed and which the Council will need to address. Central to these medium term issues is the need to secure leadership and management across the Council and to ensure that a coherent framework of accountability is in place which ensures that the Council and all its key stakeholders (including schools) are aware of their roles and responsibilities for driving forward raising attainment and for making children and young people safe, healthy, achieve economic well being, supported in making a positive contribution and enjoying and achieving.

Children's Social Care

- Ensure robust and effective safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. (Immediate)
- Ensure that any agreed actions from previous inspections of children services as a whole or discrete services have been fully implemented. (Completion before joint area review)
- Ensure that any reviews of service provision that have commenced are concluded with agreed action and implementation plans. (Completion before joint area review)
- Ensure that children's social care staff are well prepared for their contribution to the joint area review and that there is evidence of effective service delivery while managing capacity issues. (Completion before joint area review)

Raising Attainment

- The authority and schools must be clear about the authority's statutory duty to intervene in schools causing concern and how this will be implemented.
- Establish and enforce clearer lines of accountability for raising pupil standards so that all those involved in schools and in the Local Authority recognise their professional obligations to the needs (especially the learning needs) of individual children and young people
- Work with Head teachers and governors to agree the core business of the school improvement service and how this relates to the core business of schools in raising attainment
- Plan the structure of the service and the key delivery mechanisms to reflect this core business
- Work with head teachers and governors to agree the evidence that will be used to categorise school and the strategies for their involvement in this categorisation and improvement planning process
- Identify the characteristics of best link inspector practice and adopt these in the approach to every school
- Devise a process for modelling best practice in local authority school improvement work either by learning from the best within the local team or from the practice of external consultants
- Hold joint moderation meetings with head teachers and governors to ensure consistency in the work of the link inspectors

- Work with schools to agree how they will identify and disseminate best practice within and across clusters
- Survey head teachers and governors regularly to ensure that they are seeing a difference in service delivery and that greater challenge is leading to clear and improving outcomes
- Help governors to acquire the appropriate tools and confidence to interrogate pupil level data and to provide appropriate challenge in their role as internal critical friend.
- Match the local authority's provision of teachers Continuous Professional Development more closely to the priorities across the Island in raising achievement and improve communication on this.

Data Management and Infrastructural issues

- Build on the existing good practice (for example, the education data calendar, the draft SLA and the departmental ICT group) to develop a coherent service level agreement between the children's services directorate and the organisational development directorate which is based on a clarity of roles and responsibilities between client and provider and takes into account the needs of all service users including schools. Use this model as an exemplar for developing SLAs across the Council.
- Urgently ensure that a cleansed and robust data set is in place for the Joint Area Review which can be used as an exemplar for the treatment of data across the rest of the Council.
- Starting with a Project Initiation Document which is developed with representation from service directorates, establish an appropriate project management structure for the 'in-scope' project which includes a project board, timetable with key milestones, a communications plan and a risk register and which takes account of service needs.
- As a matter of urgency, for the financial year 2006/07 put in place a robust system for monitoring the use of the cluster school funding to ensure that resources are being used appropriately and are targeted to the areas of greatest need in terms of school performance.