

VCS (Children, Young People & Families)

Strategic Lead Update 2nd February 2010

Strategic Engagement & Third Sector Strategy

As well as regular attendance at Children's Board meetings in January and February one of the most notable things for us, strategically, has been the submission of the "Children, Young People and Families - Third Sector Strategy". This strategy, aimed at helping Manchester's Voluntary and Community Sector to thrive, was received by the Children's Trust Leadership Team in December. This strategy will be uploaded onto the website soon and will be highlighted in the e-bulletin to ensure the widest possible readership but the real challenge (and our priority) will be to see successes around the action plan contained within it. The plan will be the subject of the next meeting of the Child and Family Support Forum and we encourage people to attend that. We have asked for a written response to the strategy and action plan from Children's Services and been promised one by the first week in March.

It is difficult to imagine having the opportunity to sit down with officers and working through the action points one by one (as there are so many!) and perhaps that is not the most effective way of bringing about positive and sustainable change anyway. We are going to be looking (together with our colleagues in Children's Services) at ways of ensuring the actions are included within the many other projects of business change and improvement which are ongoing and listed below.

To that end, we have agreed dates for monthly progress meetings (up to December 2010) with Andy Robertson (Children's Services, Head of Business Change and Improvement) where we will discuss progress.

Children's Services Blueprint

We were invited by the Children's Trust, along with our District Wider Leadership team representatives, to look at the high level design features of the new Children's Trust Blueprint on the 28th January. There has not been the time or the opportunity to get feedback from our representatives yet and so the most useful thing to do in this update is to give a brief outline of what is planned.

The Children's Trust Leadership Team is looking to build on and develop the things that have been effective in the district working model. They are keen to see this taken a level down to focus on delivering services at a neighbourhood level. Features and benefits of this model may include: -

- A increased focus on the individual - within the family and within the neighbouring (picking up the Think Family approach)
- The use of “universal settings” where needs will be identified and integrated services delivered
- Recognising schools as the place the vast majority of children and young people are known and regularly cared for and therefore schools as these “universal settings”
- Improved local access – everything close enough to walk with a pushchair
- Small groups of schools (5 or 6?) forming hubs or clusters along with other Council partners and a change in their governance structures to recognise their new role in health and social care
- Appropriate commissioning decisions to be made from within the cluster whilst understanding some things will be commissioned from the centre
- Greater emphasis and need for integrated working and outcome monitoring will suit better use of VCS

A big part of the afternoon was risk identification (where could the new plans cause problems to existing structures and what is simply too difficult to do) and the DWLTs are continuing this work. When we have received feedback from the VCS representatives we will submit ours.

Commissioning & Service Mapping

The report (“Return to Tender”), which looked at last year’s commissioning project for Parenting & Family Support and Youth Services, has now been circulated to all of the people who contributed now as well as senior officers at MCC. It received a mixed response, which is what was expected, as it was critical of the process. We have been encouraged that the new Commissioning Project Manager has received it enthusiastically and we are expecting a written response to this piece of work by the first week in March too. The report will be posted to MACC’s website in the next few days.

We have been told that the recommendations section will be used as an input document for the new Commissioning Board, which is meeting for the first time later this month. We have been invited to join the board for this project as well as being offered a place on the quality assurance panel, which sits alongside it. As the months go by we will work hard to make sure the process is improved next time and whilst it is early in the process we are encouraged by what we have seen and heard so far.

An early part of the commissioning process is service mapping and we have worked (through the e-bulletin and at the district briefings) to encourage VCS service to sign up as an important part of matching need and resource as well as opportunities for market development.