



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Enabling Communities Task Group** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Melton on **Monday, 22 January 2018 at 9.30am**

**Members of the Task Group present:**

J Bidwell (Chairman), S Lawson (Vice-Chairman), C Block, C Blundell, P Coleman, P Dunnett, T-J Haworth-Culf, M Jones, G Lynch, D Savage

**Other Members present:**

A Cooper

**Officers present:**

Z Botten (East Suffolk Communities Officer), C Hankers (Family Intervention Officer), M Makin (Democratic Services Business Manager), N Rickard (Head of Communities)

**Others present:**

J Phipps (Careers and Enterprise Lead, Suffolk County Council)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

No apologies for absence were received.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4. CAREERS ADVICE IN SCHOOLS**

The Task Group received a presentation by the Careers and Enterprise Lead from Suffolk County Council's Directorate of Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services.

The Careers and Enterprise Lead explained her role around careers and IHG, and her work with schools and colleges in Suffolk, and also the University of Suffolk and training providers. She added that she worked in schools with staff members who held responsibility for careers advice provision.

Post-16 participation, young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), and tracking of young peoples' progression were outlined to the Task Group. The Careers and Enterprise Lead also discussed work to help increase apprenticeships, and how the Skills Team at Suffolk County Council was working with employers to develop skills plans. The annual Skills Show held at Trinity Park was discussed.

The Careers and Enterprise Lead covered the new careers strategy and statutory guidance from the government for schools and colleges. She explained the change in duties since 2012; previously the local authority had dual responsibility with schools for careers advice but the responsibility was now largely with schools and colleges, with the local authority retaining some strategic duties. This had led to some concerns about the quality, quantity and expertise within schools and colleges.

It was explained to the Task Group that the careers strategy was released by the Department for Education in December 2017, and set out the plan for supporting all young people to have access to good careers support. The guidance to schools and colleges was released in January 2018.

The Chairman asked how liaison with schools and colleges was undertaken. The Careers and Enterprise Lead advised that regular network meetings were held, and Enterprise Co-ordinators went into schools to work with them.

A member of the Task Group enquired if all schools were dealt with regardless of status, or if academies needed to request support. The Careers and Enterprise Lead explained that the Skills Team approached all schools with offers of support regardless of their status, and that a vast majority of schools in Suffolk engaged with the service.

The Chairman asked if independent schools engaged with support offered. It was confirmed that they did not specifically access the support, but were invited to network meetings.

In response to a query from a member of the Task Group about the new strategy integrating with existing school systems of support, the Careers and Enterprise Lead advised that the new strategy fitted with the framework schools had been encouraged to follow, and would strengthen on good practice that had already been encouraged.

The mandatory and good practice requirements from the statutory guidance to schools were outlined to the Task Group.

The duties schools must ensure are delivered from January 2018 and September 2018 were presented.

The Chairman asked what financial provision was available for careers advice, and was advised that although funding was available, there was no direct funding from the government or the local authority.

It was explained to the Task Group that the statutory guidance outlined that young people should have at least seven employer encounters, at one per year. Examples of this included talks at assemblies, classroom encounters, workshops, work experience, site visits, the skills show and mentoring. The Careers and Enterprise Lead said the focus of these encounters would be towards Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). In addition to this young would have had one experience of the workplace by age 16, and another by age 18.

The Careers and Enterprise Lead explained the provision in the statutory guidance for vulnerable young people, to ensure they received careers guidance. A member of the Task Group queried the use of the term vulnerable, and that this was a misnomer for young people who were simply not as academic. The Careers and Enterprise Lead took this point and noted the terminology was used in the guidance as those less academic young people would be vulnerable to becoming NEET post-16.

A member of the Task Group asked about arrangements to identify weaknesses within a school and for provision to be made for further targeted study and work, for instance for refugee children. The Careers and Enterprise Lead stated schools had systems in place to identify young people who would struggle to continue post-16, and acknowledged that research showed that young people from groups such as SEN, refugee and low attendance would likely struggle. The Careers and Enterprise Lead advised that the Skills Team would look to offer additional support to schools in this regard.

The Task Group was advised that where Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) were in place for a young person, the multi-agency forum supporting them would be able to support careers advice as part of their statutory duties. Where an EHCP was not in place, the Child Assessment Framework (CAF) would be able to provide similar support.

Addressing interviewing skills was raised by a member of the Task Group. The Careers and Enterprise Lead confirmed that it was important for motivation and confidence to be addressed, and that practice interviews would be encouraged to prepare young people for real interviews.

The eight Gatsby Benchmarks were outlined to the Task Group, along with how schools are audited against them.

The Chairman noted his personal experience of how inviting ex-students back to their school to do a talk on careers could be beneficial. The Careers and Enterprise Lead said this was something to be encouraged and would count as an employer encounter.

The schools within the District were identified to the Task Group, and it was explained which schools had Enterprise Advisers and good provision, and where there were areas for improvement.

A member of the Task Group, who was also Ward Member for Saxmundham, asked if the lack of a Sixth Form in his own ward had impacted the quality of provision.

The Careers and Enterprise Lead advised that the main impact on provision in the Member's ward was the relationship between the local authority and the free schools in the area, and that there was room for improvement. An additional complication was that the person responsible for careers advice had several other key responsibilities, and this

was having an impact. Staffing issues within the Skills Team had also complicated the situation.

The Careers and Enterprise Lead concluded the presentation by advising Members what they could do in their own wards to contribute towards good quality careers advice.

A member of the Task Group highlighted a recent positive careers evening at Alde Valley Academy, and noted there had been issues around getting parents to engage. The Member said it was possible more work with parents was needed to make them enthusiastic about their children's education and careers guidance. The Careers and Enterprise Lead said this was a valid point and agreed that parents were key influencers, and that parental aspiration should be encouraged.

The Chairman asked what the level of youth unemployment was in Suffolk. It was confirmed by the Careers and Enterprise Lead it was below the national average; she agreed to supply this to Members following the meeting.

A member of the Task Group asked if schools tracked where their students went to for their post-16 provision; the Careers and Enterprise Lead advised that schools were required to track where their students go from Year 11 onwards, and that the Skills Team supported schools in doing this.

Information on issues with careers advice in schools was requested by a member of the Task Group in order to be able to assist in addressing concerns. The Careers and Enterprise Lead said that the issues were variable but information could be supplied.

It was noted by a member of the Task Group that geographical factors would impact young people accessing post-16 provision.

A member of the Task Group, who was also Ward Member for Kesgrave East, advised the Careers and Enterprise Lead of a monthly business breakfast in Kesgrave, which would be happy to receive a representative from the Skills Team and offer their support.

The Vice-Chairman asked for clarification between the statutory guidance from Year 8 onwards, and the input at Year 7. The Careers and Enterprise Lead clarified that from Year 8 onwards, one-to-one guidance is offered and at Year 7 there is career input and visits. She acknowledged that this was not as clear in the guidance as it could be.

It was noted by another member of the Task Group, based on his own personal experiences, that it was difficult to get schools to respond to offers of help from industry. The Careers and Enterprise Lead acknowledged that young people were less motivated than they were five years ago. The Member was of the view that individuals responsible for careers advice in schools needed to be selected with great care and needed to have relevant industry experience. In reply, the Careers and Enterprise Lead confirmed that more was being done to increase engagement between young people and employers, and felt that the role of careers staff in schools was to facilitate young people finding information and putting them in contact with specialists.

School targets on careers advice were raised by another member of the Task Group. The Careers and Enterprise Lead confirmed that this was something Ofsted looked at when inspecting settings, but this was only a very small part of the overall inspection process.

The Chairman thanked the Careers and Enterprise Lead for her presentation.

## **5. SUFFOLK FAMILY FOCUS PROGRAMME**

The Task Group received a video and a presentation by the Head of Communities, who invited the East Suffolk Communities Officer and the Family Intervention Officer to give the presentation.

The Family Intervention Officer explained that the Suffolk Family Focus Programme was established in August 2013. To date, it had worked with 34 families and received referrals from a variety of agencies including the police, mental health, education, and social care.

The criterion for support from Suffolk Family Focus was covered:

- Crime or ASB
- Educational Issue
- In receipt of out of work benefits or NEET
- Domestic Abuse
- Physical/Mental Health or Drug/alcohol misuse
- Children who need help.

It was explained to the Task Group that a family needed to meet from two of the criteria to qualify for support, and that no family had been refused support when referred.

A high-level case study was presented to the Task Group. It was outlined that it took approximately a month to establish meaningful engagement, and that as a result several other significant issues for the family came to light.

The Family Intervention Officer advised that social care retained statutory responsibility for cases.

The East Suffolk Communities Officer noted the escalation in the case study, and highlighted to the Task Group how the team was able to spend more time with families and how this could result in further disclosures.

A member of the Task Group questioned how situations progressed to the point where such levels of intervention were needed. The East Suffolk Communities Officer said this was often due to minimal disclosures at school, where children had not felt able to talk to anyone. She added that there were not always links between different agencies working with families, and Suffolk Family Focus allowed information to be co-ordinated and a bigger picture to develop.

It was highlighted during the presentation that it was often the case that the situation for a family may deteriorate before it improves, and it was a gradual process for the team to earn a family's trust.

A member of the Task Group suggested that where home conditions were poor this would be picked up by statutory social care services. The Family Intervention Officer explained that there could sometimes be breaks in communication between teams, which resulted in concerns not always being passed on to statutory services.

It was highlighted by another member of the Task Group that there could be repeated changes in Social Workers for families, and whilst acknowledging the pressure these services were under said this could result in a lack of knowledge. The Member acknowledged the excellent work being undertaken by the Suffolk Family Focus Programme.

The Head of Communities explained that the Family Intervention Officer role was funded two thirds by Suffolk County Council and the remaining third by Suffolk Coastal District Council. She stressed the large benefit this role offered for long-term intervention with a family, giving them consistency.

It was stated by the Head of the Communities that the officers had been very modest about their work with families, and said they did an incredible job. The Council was the only District Council to have a directly placed Family Intervention Officer; Suffolk County Council was happy to continue with this arrangement and funding needed to be secured from Suffolk Coastal District Council for it to continue.

A low-level case study was presented to the Task Group, where there had been concerns about low-level anti-social behaviour and persistent poor education attendance.

The Family Intervention Officer explained how intervention work had been completed with the young person at a local youth club, and that as a result the young person had been able to access further education with appropriate support as identified. The young person had also been successfully encouraged to engage in voluntary work.

The East Suffolk Communities Officer said the intervention work shown in the case study had seen a significant improvement for the young person, and they were able to show aspirations for a future career.

The officers concluded their presentation and invited questions from the Task Group.

A member of the Task Group noted their own experience working with young offenders, and stated that early intervention could have made a difference for those young people. She asked at what point urgent guidance was sought from other agencies, when additional specialist support was required.

The Families Intervention Officer advised that referrals to other agencies were made at the earliest opportunity, and additional support was always welcomed as the programme was aware of its own limitations. She stated that although referrals were made to specialist services, these agencies did not always take the case on. It was not seen as a failure on the part of the programme if a referral to another agency was required.

The Task Group was advised by the East Suffolk Communities Officer that the role of Suffolk Family Focus was also to co-ordinate a package of support around families and individuals, in addition to direct work.

A member of the Task Group congratulated officers for the work they had been doing, and said she had not been previously aware of the level of work required. She asked how the programme was able to get families with high-level needs to engage with their support.

In reply, the Families Intervention Officer said that a variety of approaches were used; she explained that empowerment was the preferred approach but that a more authoritative approach was used when necessary.

The East Suffolk Communities Officer added that families would be aware that Suffolk Family Focus intervention is one step away from intervention by statutory services, and that it was made clear to families that their intervention was a long-term support.

Another member of the Task Group, who was also a Kesgrave Town Councillor, enquired if officers were able to engage with Town and Parish Councils, as they could be able to signpost to local support. The member explained that Kesgrave Town Council had access to a nurse and other facilities that could be made available.

The East Suffolk Communities Officer said that it would not be appropriate to share details of families with Town and Parish Councils and the Head of Communities stated that these councils could make a referral to the programme if necessary.

A member of the Task Group, who was also a Felixstowe Town Councillor, explained that she attended her local SNT meetings. She was aware that the East Suffolk Communities Officer also attended these meetings and had been able to gather relevant information as a result. The East Suffolk Communities Officer advised that this approach was used with various partnership meetings to facilitate appropriate information sharing.

It was highlighted by the East Suffolk Communities Officer that there had been a waiting list for support for over a year, and the caseload was constant.

A member of the Task Group asked how many cases were able to be held at one time, maintaining the same high level of service without the workload being excessive. The Families Intervention Officer explained that this was dependent on factors such as safeguarding risk and length of time required. She stated that the intention was to see families at least once a week, and if this was not achievable then the caseload was high.

The Task Group was informed that the highest caseload held had been 8; at one point the caseload was 5 and this was due to the intensive nature of the cases held. The East Suffolk Communities Officer noted that she and the Families Intervention Officer constantly reflected on cases to see where support levels were changing and to maximise the support they were offering to families.

Councillor Cooper, Ward Member for Leiston, gave his thanks to the officers for their work in his Ward, and noted how it had been of great help to families in the area. He informed the Task Group that he felt it was important the service continued.

The Chairman gave thanks to the officers for their time and the work they were doing.

The Meeting concluded at 11.26am