

Select Committee on Children's Services- 26 March 2008

Report of the Director of Children's Services

11 Million – Takeover Day 2007

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report to inform the Committee about the success of the first national 11 Million Takeover Day held in November 2007.

Background

2. The first national 11 Million 'Takeover Day' took place on Friday 23rd November 2007. The purpose of the day was to '*celebrate the importance of children and young people in society*' by allowing children and young people to take part in activities that affect their day-to-day lives at a national, regional and local level.
3. The day was widely promoted with activities organised by the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and many national, regional and local organisations. More than 500 organisations and 5000 children and young people took part in the day across the country.

Children's Commissioner for England

4. The day was organised by 11 MILLION, the national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England. The Children's Commissioner is a position created by the Children Act 2004 to be the independent voice for all children and young people in England. Professor Sir Albert Aynsley-Green is the first ever Children's Commissioner for England and leads 11 MILLION.
5. The Commissioner's long term goal is to ensure that children and young people see significant improvements in their wellbeing and can freely enjoy their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Sir Al was appointed in July 2005 to be the independent voice for all children and young people and represent their views, opinions, interests and rights to the people who make decisions that affect them. He does this in partnership with others, by bringing children and young people into the heart

of the decision-making process to increase understanding of their best interests.

Takeover Day in Dudley.

6. Many children and young people across Dudley took the opportunity to takeover for the day in Dudley, including 17 year old Gemma Roadley from Old Swinford Hospital School in Stourbridge. Gemma spent the day with John Freeman, Dudley's Director of Children's Services and travelled to London to chair a meeting of the national Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). The issues discussed at the meeting included the national ten year Children's Plan and the legislation announced in the Queen's Speech for raising the school leaving age and for improving outcomes for children in care. Gemma said, *"I did work experience with Dudley Council in July and I was asked to take part in Takeover Day. It was a great opportunity to represent young people's views nationally."*

Dudley Children's Fund

7. Other young people attended meetings and conferences concerned with matters that affect all children and young people across the borough. These included activities organised by Dudley Children's Fund who supported young people attending a conference at the Copthorne Hotel in Merry Hill around targeted youth support. Later in the day the young people discussed the results of the Ofsted 2007 Tellus2 survey at Westox House with Chris Wrigley the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

Dudley Business Partnership

8. The Dudley Business Partnership arranged for some young people to take over running local business for the day including the Merry Hill Centre in Brierley Hill. Adele Reynolds, a 15 year old student from The Kingswinford School, stepped into the shoes of Westfield's centre manager Emma Hindes for the day. Adele spent the time finding out what is involved in running a large shopping centre which has over 20 million visitors each year. Emma Hindes said, *"Adele was whisked straight off into the world of shopping centre management where she experienced everything from risk management to marketing, and from finance to auditing. Her busy schedule included sitting in on meetings with the main project team who look after the running of the whole centre. This was a great opportunity to give young people a voice and*

we are pleased to be able to offer a unique insight into what goes on behind the scenes at Merry Hill.”

9. Lynda Waltho, Member of Parliament for Stourbridge and member of the Government’s Select Committee for Children, Schools and Families, hosted Lucy Hill, a sixth form student from King Edwards VI College in Stourbridge for the day. Lucy has now been invited to London and has made contact with MEPs to do some work with the European Parliament.
10. Another sixth form student from King Edward VI College spent the day with the Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust at the new Corbett Outpatient Centre in Stourbridge. Sixth form student Mark Jinks is hoping to study medicine at University and found his time with the Trust very rewarding.
11. Two students from The Crestwood School spent an exciting day with Managing Director Valerie Graham's from the Industry Development Services Ltd (IDSL). Students Abi Arliss and Rhys Gater experienced how the organisation was managed and gained valuable knowledge about local industry and training issues.

Sport and Arts

12. Elsewhere in Dudley, young people took over in sports and arts activities including with Dudley Performing Arts and several secondary schools that encouraged their students to take leadership roles in sport and PE lessons. Coseley, Ellowes Hall and Windsor Sports Colleges all promoted activities together with Pensnett, Crestwood, Thorns, Kingswinford and High Arcal. Dudley council’s sport and recreation department held a disability in sport meeting on the day at the Crystal Leisure Centre in Stourbridge. The meeting discussed a variety of sports programmes to help children build their self esteem and improve their physical health.
13. Student Linden Walcott-Burton, who shot to fame in the Channel Four Ballet Hoo! programmes last year, took part in Takeover day in Dudley by working with the Leaps and Bounds team on their three-year business plan. Linden, now a sixth form student at King Edward VI College said: *“I gained so much from the Leaps and Bounds project through Ballet Hoo! and I just wanted to give something back. National Takeover Day was an ideal way for me to help shape new projects for a fresh group of young people and pass on my experience.”*

Congratulations from the Children’s Commissioner.

14. On the success of the first national Take Over Day Sir Al said, *“At a time when there is so much demonisation of children and young people today, this was an excellent opportunity for 11 Million to celebrate the importance of children and young people in society.”*

15. Speaking about the success of the first national take over day Sir Al said,

“We are delighted that so many children and young people and organisations took part in 11 MILLION Takeover Day. This shows a real commitment to children and young people and I hope this will be a kick-start to involving more of them in a positive and meaningful way in the future. Children and young people need to be actively involved in shaping all decisions that affect their lives. They need to be supported to achieve their full potential through the provision of appropriate services and live in homes and communities where their rights are respected and they are loved, safe and enjoy life. I am delighted that Dudley has shown its commitment to children and young people by allowing them to be so involved.”

Finance

16. Any costs associated with the promotion of the 11 Million Take Over Day have been met within existing budgets.

Law

17. The Council's powers in relation to its involvement in the Take Over Day are contained in a wide range of legislation including the Education and Children Acts. The Children Act 2004 The Children Act requires the Children’s Commissioner for England to be concerned with the five aspects of well-being covered in Every Child Matters – the national government initiative aimed at improving outcomes for all children. It also requires him to have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Sir Al uses his powers and independence to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely asked for, listened to and that outcomes for children improve over time.

Equality Impact

18. The promotion of Takeover Day in Dudley has been undertaken within existing policies including the Council’s commitment to the ‘Hear by Right’ standards

agreed by the Council in May 2003.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that the Committee:
20. Note the contents of this report.
21. Support the promotion of the 11 Million Takeover Day for 2008.



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