

Message from Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services

Hello,

Everyone must have been wondering what was going on during a certain evening in late September at Priory House. Steam engines were parked outside our council building, their paintwork sparkling in the sunshine. Our Children in Care Council annual awards ceremony was underway! Alice in Wonderland characters welcomed us into a beautiful 'Alice' themed celebration which included the chance to dress up for photographs, sing karaoke, and enjoy a delicious buffet meal. I enjoyed every minute of the celebration evening. To see everyone who was nominated for an award coming up to the stage and receive their trophy from Cllr Hegley and celebrating their achievements was very moving. Our youngest nominee was praised for being 'a great baby' and our older award winners shone out for their skills in learning English, achieving well at college. I spoke to social workers and foster carers who are all so proud of you. The judges had a very difficult job in deciding who should receive an award, as there were so many names to choose from. If you weren't chosen this time there's an opportunity next year! I do enjoy dressing up and so here is a picture of me!



We held our Children's Services staff conferences with over 400 staff coming along to share our vision, as we work together in one team to deliver improved outcomes for children. The feedback has been really positive with staff appreciating the chance to learn more what we do in our different teams, and taking the opportunity to visit our team stalls to find out first hand more about our business. By far the most popular speaker was our own Emily Smith who shared her experiences of people who had made a positive difference in her life. Well done Emily for speaking to such a large audience with such skill. We were able to re-visit our principles which drive everything we do in Children's Services, making sure children can achieve their potential and thrive, and making sure we listen to children and champion them at every opportunity.

We launched our Partnership Vision for Education this month, which is our plan which shows how we will continue to improve educational outcomes for our young people. We know that children need to be healthy, secure and happy in order learn best, so our Vision sets out what each partner agency needs to do to support children and young people at school and college. The Launch was very well attended with many schools signing up. We have asked school governors and leadership teams to sign a pledge committing to delivering the Vision in their school, just as we will ensure our services support you in overcoming any barriers to learning both inside and outside school.

It's important to look outwards and I was able to attend the Children and Adults Annual Conference, where I was able to share good practice from across the country. I particularly enjoyed hearing the views of children in care from Bournemouth and Salford, who shared their experiences with us. Our new Children's Commissioner gave an inspiring speech. I intend to invite her to CBC so that she can meet you and experience first hand the great work our Children in Care Council are doing to positively influence the development of our service.

Best wishes, Sue