

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7th January, 2013

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Galletley, L. Hughes, Hutchinson, Kelley, E.A. Richmond and C. Taylor. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors J..M. Lyonette, J. Vasey and Wright. (3)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – Mr. R. Egan and Mr. D. Moyes. (2)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director, Children, Families; Paul Richardson, Head of 16-19 (Learning and Skills); Helen Ellison, Lead Officer, Learning and Skills and 14-19; Julian Kenshole, Head of People, Strategy and Improvement; and Chris Archer, Lead Officer, Early Years.

CYP17. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP18. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5th November, 2012.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

CYP19. WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2012/13 – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee and to consider any additional areas which Members suggest should be added to the previously approved work programme.

Following discussion on the work programme it was proposed to receive an annual update on the Behaviour Attendance Partnership as a follow up from the presentation to this Scrutiny on 5th November, 2012, with particular interest in any developments with School Governors and the Partnership; the report on Ethnic Group Interaction with Children and Young People be programmed for the meeting scheduled for 4th March; and that an introductory report on Oral Health Care in relation to children assessing dental care be brought to the meeting on 4th March, with a view to undertaking a Review.

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the work programme be noted.

(b) That an annual review of the Behaviour Attendance Partnership be included in the Work Programme of this Scrutiny Committee.

CYP20. PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO 18 YEARS – The Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) for Members of this Scrutiny Committee to review the requirements of the Raising of the Participation Age and to look at the impact locally and work being undertaken to meet the local authority's responsibilities.

The Education and Skills Act (2008) places a duty on all young people to participate in education and training until their 18th birthday. The 'Raising of the Participation Age' is a phased approach with young people being required to stay on in education and training until 17 years old by 2013 and 18 years old by 2015, and young people will be able to choose how they participate post 16. It was also reported that the Act places a duty on the local authority to 'promote the effective participation in education and training of all 16 and 17 year olds resident in their area'.

The submitted report highlighted the latest data on local authority participation levels and the data for June 2012 showed that 93 per cent of 16 year olds participated in education or training compared to the national average of 96 per cent; 87 per cent of 17 year olds participated in education or training matching the North East and national average; and participation in Darlington has been rising, particularly at Level 3 (A-Level). The submitted report also highlighted a number of issues that have to be considered as part of the implementation of RPA.

With regard to the duty on local authorities to promote participation the authority has been encouraging schools to promote RPA through the 11-19 Partnership and its sub-groups, through newsletters to parent and letters to pupils, and through staff in contact with the young people. Information has also been made available to Council Staff through articles in the Briefing; on the Council's website and by targeting key groups; and disseminating information more widely through Darlington Together, Interface, Secondary School Admission Booklets and external groups such as provider networks and the North East Chamber of Commerce. This promotion of RPA sits alongside existing work to increase participation (and skills levels) undertaken by the local authority, schools, post 16 providers and other partners.

Members discussion ensued on the report and in particular concerns were expressed around the number of Looked After Children who were NEET (not in Employed, Education or Training); that Year 9 pupils were not aware of the Apprenticeship Schemes; and concerns generally that schools were not distributing information about the raising of the participation age and the lack of control over the Academies. Officers assured Members that the Careers Education Group was addressing these and other issues across the schools and the Foundation for Jobs Programme have made some investment in teaching staff to raise the profile within schools. The work of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership also played a key role along with the early intervention work being undertaken by the authority.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report and actions being undertaken be noted.

(b) That a further report be received in January 2014 to monitor the impact of the actions undertaken by the local authority and the progress towards full participation.

CYP21. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY – The Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the progress of the Child Poverty Strategy for Darlington.

The Child Poverty Strategy was published in October 2011 and accepted by Council in November 2011 and outlines a series of priorities for Economy and Skills; Financial Inclusion; Early Years and Health; Early Intervention and Prevention; and

Housing and Sustainable Communities and the submitted report outlined the progress against each of the priorities listed.

Child poverty is defined as a family earning less than 60 per cent of the median average income and as of 31 August 2010 there were 4,815 children living in poverty in Darlington which equates to 21 per cent of all children and young people. The submitted report highlighted where need is most concentrated in ten wards within the Borough and in terms of individuals and communities highlighted the groups found to be most vulnerable to child poverty and its associated negative effects.

The submitted report also highlighted the policy considerations that need to be addressed in relation to measuring Child Poverty, which followed the launch of a Government consultation in November 2012 on the indicators used to measure child poverty; the report which was published in October 2012, commissioned by the North East Child Poverty Commission which explored the approaches to tackling child poverty used by Local Authorities in the North East and the six emergent priorities from Child Poverty Needs Analyses and Child Poverty Strategies within the North East; and the Welfare Reform Agenda as the government is currently implementing a series of reforms to the welfare system which have the potential to disproportionately impact upon children, young people and families.

With regard to the local authorities duties with regard to Child Poverty it was proposed by the Chair that this Scrutiny Committee establish a Review Group to consider ways to ensure that ending child poverty is everybody's business across their organisation and that all strategies and plans support this aim.

Further discussions ensued and concerns expressed with regard to the Welfare Reform Agenda and the work being undertaken by the Council to prepare for the impact of the forthcoming changes and the Welfare Reform Officer Group and also a new stream of the Darlington Partnership established to develop and take forward initiatives and programmes.

RESOLVED – (a) That the progress on the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy be noted.

(b) That the recommendations made by the North East Child Poverty Commission with regard to future policy options be noted.

(c) That this Scrutiny Committee establish a Review Group to examine how future plans and strategies of this authority take into account child poverty.

(c) That Members note the impact that current and planned welfare reforms are likely to have on child poverty and the groups most likely to be affected.

CYP22. REVIEW OF 2012/13 RECEPTION AND YEAR ONE ATTENDANCE DATA

– Pursuant to Minute CYP5/Jun,12, the Director of People submitted a further report (previously circulated) to update Members on actions taken to address the Reception and Year One low attendance issue.

The submitted report outlined the current position of Year 1 attendance and the actions taken to make improvements, including a Power-point raising awareness presentation of the Reception and Year One attendance related issues to schools. Following identification of the schools with the lowest attendance it was decided appropriate to target parents of the specified school with the 'attendance is important' message.

It was also reported that the legal requirement to submit the attendance data to DfE extended to Reception age pupils in the 2012-2013 academic year. Following submission of Darlington Reception attendance data this academic year it will form the baseline, however there will be no comparisons available at local level until next year. When Year 1 data is collected the local authority will be able to compare against previous years for Year One attendance data.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That a further report be received in Autumn 2013.