
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last ordinary meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee:-
 - (a) **Climate Change** – The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held a Special Meeting on Thursday, 28th February 2008, at Longfield Comprehensive School in Darlington. The focus of the meeting was Climate Change, and the work and projects that are being conducted in Darlington’s schools to raise awareness of Climate Change amongst school children. An invitation was extended to every school in the Borough, and many schools were represented at the meeting by either teachers, pupils or both. Dr. Krista McKinzey, Climate Change Schools Project Officer from the Science Learning Centre North East, attended the meeting and gave a presentation to those in attendance. The meeting then split into two workshop sessions which allowed greater discussion on the work being conducted within Darlington’s schools. It is hoped that this meeting will provide the catalyst for the production of a document that maps the work being conducted in relation to Climate Change in every school in the Borough.
 - (b) **Director of Children’s Services Transition Commission** – Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee received a report that provided an update as to the results of the Director of Children’s Services’ Transition Commission, which involved Primary and Secondary schools in the Borough. The report outlined the aims of the Transition Commission, analysed the current approach adopted in relation to transition, identified the challenges to the current approach, and highlighted the improvements required. The report also provided feedback on the first Darlington Transition Conference, which took place on 31st October 2007, and the development of the Transition Action Plan.
 - (c) **Libraries and Community Learning Service** – A report was submitted to the Committee to provide Members with an update, following the recent Ofsted inspection of the Libraries and Community Learning Service. The Committee were pleased to learn that the majority (eight) of the areas considered by the Inspectors were awarded a Grade 2 (‘Good’), with the three remaining areas considered being rated at Grade 3 (‘Satisfactory’), and that the overall effectiveness of the service was judged to be ‘Good’. The report also highlighted the key strengths identified by the Inspectors, and two key areas for improvement. It was also heartening to hear of the complimentary feedback received from the service’s partners in relation to the service provided and the support offered to the community.
 - (d) **Special Educational Needs: The Educational Provision in Darlington Schools** – Members received an extremely detailed report that provided an update on how the special educational needs (SEN) of children and young people in Darlington are met. The report outlined the numbers of children and young people who have special

educational needs, the provision available and the support and guidance provided to schools. In particular, the report highlighted the Council's increased responsibility to promote inclusion, the consultation that has been conducted on the further delegation of SEN resources to schools without recourse to a statement of special educational need, and the development of transition guidance for schools, settings, parents / carers and children.

- (e) **Placement of Youth Offending Service Preventions Worker in Hummersknott and Skerne Park Schools** – The Committee received a report to update Members on the current placement of one Youth Offending Service (YOS) Preventions Officer at Hummersknott and Skerne Park schools, and to inform Members of the recent changes in relation to the cluster arrangements. It was pleasing to note that the current arrangements are providing clear benefits for the children and young people involved, and that parental engagement has increased in these areas.
 - (f) **Referral Trends / Origin of Referrals to Children's Social Care** – Members received a report to inform the Committee of the referral trends to Children's Social Care, their origins and the processes in place to respond. The report provided Members with statistical data in relation to the Child Protection Referrals in Darlington compared to the national performance rate. It was pleasing to note that the rate of referrals that led to initial assessment has increased from an already high rate to 99.6%, compared to the national performance rate of 56%.
 - (g) **Service Plan Performance 3rd Quarter 2007/08** – A report was submitted to the recent Ordinary Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee that summarised performance against the services plans under the remit of this committee. The report provided a summary of performance as at the end of the 3rd quarter (31st December 2007), highlighted Performance Indicators (PI's) where targets are not being achieved, and where PI's are being exceeded. The Committee continue to find such reports invaluable in its role, and noted the contents of this report.
 - (h) **The Schools Forum** – The Assistant Director (Planning and Resources), Children's Services, submitted a report to inform Members of the Committee of the work and responsibilities of the Schools Forum.
 - (i) **The Local Admissions Forum** - The Assistant Director (Planning and Resources), Children's Services, submitted a report to inform Members of the Committee of the work and responsibilities of the Local Admissions Forum. The Committee now look forward to receiving the Local Admission Forum's Annual Report in due course.
 - (j) **Work Programme 2007/2008** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2007/2008, and examined Cabinet's Forward Plan, in order to identify areas of particular interest or concern. The Chair extended an open invitation for the inclusion of additional items on the Committee's Work Programme.
2. **Looked After Children** – It should be noted that following this Council's commitment to Corporate Parenting, each report that is now submitted to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will contain a standard paragraph outlining how the content of the report will impact on Looked After Children.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee