
OVERVIEW OF LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last ordinary meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:-
 - (a) **Behaviour Support Task and Finish Review Group** - The Behaviour Support Task and Finish Review Group reported the progress it had made within its remit to add value to the behavioural support services. The group has been successful at increasing awareness of the support available and encouraging its further development through the Children's Services Department. The aim is to promote better joined-up working amongst the support services to provide early intervention in order to reduce permanent exclusion. Since the last ordinary meeting of the Council the Behaviour Support Task and Finish Review Group has held discussions with Mr. P. Howarth, Head Teacher at Hummersknott School and Language College, and Rita Taylor and Dave Haddick of the Youth Offending Service. The Committee continued to support the approach being taken by the Group to the Review.
 - (b) **Transformation of Secondary Education in Darlington – Academy Update** – The Committee received its regular update from the Director of Children's Services as to the ongoing progress of the proposed Academy School for Darlington and the Expression of Interest presented to the Special Cabinet on the 13th June 2006.
 - (c) **Health and Safety in Schools** – The Committee welcomed Colin Morrison, Health and Safety Manager, to its last meeting to discuss Health and Safety issues and responsibilities in Schools. A number of areas were discussed, including training for those with Health and Safety responsibilities and systems to monitor schools ensuring compliance with legislation. The Committee found Mr. Morrison's input extremely interesting and informative, and offered its support in improving and ensuring Health and Safety compliance in Schools.
 - (d) **Children and Young Peoples Plan** – Consideration was given to the draft Children and Young People's Plan. The plan brings together key partners to produce a single, strategic, overarching arrangement for all local services designed for children and young people in Darlington. The plan was subject to a significant consultation exercise throughout its development which included the views of children and young people. The Committee were pleased to hear of the work carried out to involve children and young people in the development of this plan and hope it will be effective.
 - (e) **Update on Access to Employment of Looked After Children** – The Committee were pleased to receive an update on the progress and action taken by the Council in relation to the Access to Employment of Looked After Children initiative. It was reassuring to learn of the positive effect this scheme continues to have on the lives of young people.

Some concerns were highlighted in relation to Work Based Learning placements. As a result, the Committee have resolved to continue to monitor the progress of this scheme and provide support and assistance wherever possible.

- (f) **School Attendance in Darlington** – School Attendance in Darlington has continued to be monitored by the Committee. Updates have been received on the Attendance Strategy. Attention was drawn to the three main sections of the strategy – publicity, preventative working and performance monitoring. It was encouraging to note the ongoing work being carried out to improve school attendance within Darlington. The Committee resolved to continue to monitor attendance figures. An undertaking was made to present the final figures for the year 2005/2006 to the next meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.
- (g) **Service Plan Monitoring** – The Committee have been informed of the objectives, performance targets and service actions set for the Children’s Services Department in 2006/07. The production, monitoring and review of departmental and service level plans is a key component of the Council’s overall Performance Management Framework (PMF). All staff within the Children’s Services Department are made aware of their contribution to the attainment of specific objectives, performance targets and service actions through the production and display of service plan posters within the workplace and through Personal Development Reviews. Within the Performance Management Framework, the Scrutiny Committee recognised that it has a key role to play in monitoring progress against service plan objectives, targets and specific actions. Committee Members were issued with copies of the service plan posters.
- (h) **Work Programme 2006/2007** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2006/2007 and examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan in order to identify areas of particular interest or concern, and have highlighted a number of items to be included in the ongoing Work Programme for the forthcoming Municipal Year. These include investigating Vocational Qualification opportunities, Creative Partnerships and Specialisms in Schools in Darlington. The Chair extended an open invitation for the inclusion of additional items on the Committee’s Work Programme.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the following meetings:-

Attended the 20th anniversary celebrations of St. Augustine’s R.C. Primary School;

Pre-agenda meeting with Head of Policy, Children’s Services Department;

Visited the Coleridge Centre in Park East and was given a tour by Skerne Park Primary School Head Teacher, Mrs. Teasdale;

Met with the Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources to discuss Looked After Children;

Attended the Monitoring and Coordination Meeting;

Met with the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member with portfolio for Children's Services; and

Helped to judge the "Healthy Eating Awards" at Hummersknott School and Language College.