
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) **Scrutiny Performance 4th Quarter 2009/10** – Members scrutinised the four service plans for which we are responsible for and also those elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy for which this Scrutiny have responsibility. We were pleased to note that the overall targets for the four service plans are being achieved, with the Partnership plan showing above target performance and the general trend on performance is up. Out of the 152 indicators in the four service plans at quarter 4, 43 are performing above target, 70 on target and 38 below target. Members examined the reasons for the under performing areas.
 - (b) **Children’s Social Care Services, Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2009/10** – We examined the Annual Children’s Services Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2009/10 and the breakdown of complaints, compliments and comments received for Children’s Social Care during 1st April, 2009 and 31st March, 2010. Members were pleased to note that there had been a significant reduction in the number of complaints received however noted that the number of compliments had reduced also.
 - (c) **Review of Children’s Services (Social Care) Children’s Homes** – At members request we received a report on the Children’s Services (Social Care) Children’s Homes and an update following the most recent Ofsted Inspections to provide an overview/evaluation of the strengths and concerns in relation to the current service. In the last 5 years 24 young people have left residential with positive outcomes. There are currently 162 looked after children and in the main are with commissioned foster care although there is provision in the borough for residential care in its children’s homes at Eldon Street, Dunrobin Close and Gilling Crescent and the short break centre for disabled children at Harewood Hill Lodge. There are currently two workstreams being undertaken by the Children’s Services Project Team looking at the residential services and potential options for service provision. As part of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership we are looking to improve the range of provision in the North East by the “Tees Valley Sub-regional Commissioning Review of Residential Provision” and the plan is expected to be completed by April 2011.
 - (d) **Annual Report of the Local Admission Forum 2010** – We received the Annual Report of the Local Admissions Forum 2010 which outlined some of the Admission to School practices and procedures this authority operated for the previous academic year. For the 2010/11 period, 92% of families were allocated a place at a secondary school of their choice, whilst at primary school entry the figure is 94%.

- (e) **Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS)** – At my request, members received a report on Darlington’s EOTAS (Education Other Than at School) services which included information on The Phoenix Centre, a pupil referral unit for permanently excluded pupils; The Bridge, a pupil referral unit for pupils who would benefit from alternative provision with a focus on vocational opportunities; the Home and Hospital Teaching Service for young people with severe medical problems; and Elective Home Education of which there are over 100 pupils whose parents have elected to educate at home. The majority of these being from the travelling families, those who are unable to access a place at the school of their choice and those who believe in alternative education provision.
- (f) **School Standards in Darlington** – Members received a report providing information on the cumulative standards of attainment and achievement recorded by schools in Darlington in 2010. Members were pleased to note that performance overall was very encouraging with the Early Years Foundation Stage above target by 1.4%; Key Stage 1 is improving trend on most measures and performing well both regionally and at a national level; Key Stage 2 was more difficult to compare with thirteen primary schools not taking part in SATs testing however comparing year on year teacher assessment progress in Key Stage 2 has also risen and we are ranked 11th out of 132 schools in other local authorities; and at Key Stage 4 an improving trend has been maintained in pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and Maths with 56.4% in 2010 compared to 53.9% in 2009.
- (g) **Community Use of School Facilities** – Members received a report to outline progress to date on the Community Use of School Facilities, including Multi Use Games areas. We have been undertaking review of community use and MUGA’s but this was put on hold when Members were advised that there was work ongoing to put in place support for schools to be able to make their facilities available and the development of a Community Use Guidance document including a key element of the process of opening up a school for community use, the Community Access Agreement. This document will detail which facilities are available and also commits to the type of activity that will be supported. Members have requested a report back on the feedback from the school governors and the take up of Community Access Agreements by the schools.
- (h) **Work Programme 2010/11** – We continue to give consideration to the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2010/11, and examine Cabinet’s Forward Plan, in order to identify areas of particular interest or concern and have included various reports for future meetings. We also gave consideration to topics/subjects that we may wish to review/scrutinise during the Municipal Year 2010/2011.

Councillor Eleanor Lister
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee