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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-

**Participation in Education and Training to 18 Years**

2. We reviewed the requirements of the Raising of the Participation Age and considered the impact locally and work being undertaken to meet our responsibilities as an authority.
3. The Education and Skills Act (2008) places a duty on all young people to participate in education and training until their 18<sup>th</sup> 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. 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' however there is currently no provision in the Act for enforcement duties on local authorities.
4. We were pleased to note that the latest data on local authority participation levels 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).
5. With regard to the duty on local authorities to promote participation we have been encouraging schools to promote RPA through the 11-19 Partnership and its sub-groups, through newsletters to parents 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.
6. Members expressed some concerns regarding the number of Looked After Children who were NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and that Year 9 pupils may not be fully aware of Apprenticeship Schemes; and also generally that schools were not distributing information about the raising of the participation age and the lack of control over what the Academies are doing. Officers assured us though 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 will also play a key role along with the early intervention work already being undertaken. We will be undertaking a further review in January 2014 to monitor the impact of the actions undertaken by this authority and the progress made to full participation.

### **Child Poverty Strategy**

7. Members received an update on the progress of the Child Poverty Strategy for Darlington which was published in October 2011 and accepted by Council in November 2011. The Strategy 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 we received a report on the progress against each of the priorities listed.
8. 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 report highlighted the ten most concentrated 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.
9. We also examined the policy considerations that need to be addressed in relation to measuring Child Poverty, following the launch of a Government consultation in November 2012 on the indicators used to measure child poverty; a 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 also 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.
10. With regard to the local authorities duties to Child Poverty we have agreed to 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.

### **Review of 2012/13 Reception and Year One Attendance Data**

11. We continually receive updates on actions taken to address the Reception and Year One low attendance issue following the Review undertaken and final report presented to Scrutiny in 27 February, 2012.
12. Actions taken to make improvements have included a Power-point raising awareness presentation of the Reception and Year One attendance related issues to schools and 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.

13. There is also now a legal requirement to submit the attendance data to DfE of Reception age pupils in the 2012-2013 academic year and 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 the Year One data is collected the local authority will be able to compare against previous years for Year One attendance data. We will receive a further report in the autumn.

### **Work Programme**

14. We continue to give consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee and taking into account the ambitious programme of change across the Council and the key role of Scrutiny in ensuring that the programme is able to deliver the service improvements and the budget savings necessary.
15. Since the last meeting of Council I have attended various meeting with Officers.

**Councillor Eleanor Lister**  
**Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**