
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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 :-

Young Carers

2. We received a report on Young Carers in Darlington, their needs and the support available to them and also considered the Young Carers' Action Plan 2013-16 which has been developed and sets out the actions to be taken by all partners in Darlington to improve the identification of and provision of support to young carers.
3. Two young carers also attended the meeting together with a Youth Worker from the YMCA to speak to us on their personal experiences of caring for their parents including their concerns and worries. Both of the young people stressed how much the support of the Young Carers Group helped them in their day to day issues with being a Young Carer.
4. Young carers are "children and young people under the age of 18 who provide regular and on- going care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuse substances".
5. There are currently 117 young carers involved in the Darlington project however estimates based on BBC research published in November 2010 suggest there may be 712 young carers aged up to 15 years.
6. Caring for a parent or sibling can have detrimental effects on children both during their childhood and in later life including problems at school and completing homework; isolation from other children and family members; conflict between the needs of the person they are looking after and their own needs; and feeling that they are different from other children.
7. Research undertaken by Becker and Becker on Young Adult Carers indicates a lack of support for young carers moving into adulthood therefore the remit of Young Carers Support in Darlington now covers all young carers and young adult carers up to the age of 25. The current Young Carers service is provided by the YMCA.
8. After hearing the views of the young carers and receiving the report we agreed that we would like to do some further work on the Action Plan and also to examine ways of identifying young carers and publicising the Young Carers Service more widely and raise awareness in the various educational facilities across the Borough.

The Child's Journey Commissioning for Resilience

9. We received a report on the current services for Children and Young People and the future direction based on levels of need, evidence and finance.
10. The purpose of the report is to provide a working document that brings together a range of documents in existence and national and local evidence that can be used for different purposes including Inspections/Challenges and determining priority areas for focus in children's services for early intervention.
11. Members agreed that the document was very comprehensive and the information was presented in a user friendly way and we will continue to receive regular updates and will use the document to form our future Work Programme.

Child Poverty Review Group

12. We held our inaugural meeting of this Review Group on 15 April, 2013 and received a presentation from Stephen Crossley, the Regional Child Poverty Action Plan Co-ordinator, Institute for Local Governance, Durham University who reported on the main findings and recommendations in the North East Child Poverty Commission Report.
13. We considered the priorities identified by the 12 local authorities in the North East that provided information for the report by way of Child Poverty Needs Assessments; Child Poverty Strategies and Children and Young People Plans which showed what authorities were doing to tackle Child Poverty.
14. We also examined some of the issues which could have been included in local authority documents and which offer opportunities for alternative forms of action.
15. At our next meeting we intend to look at ways this authority could do more and to examine in further detail the 'living wage' and in-work poverty; social attitudes towards poverty and misconceptions; and ways to target young people and help maximise their potential.

Work Programme

16. 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.
17. Since the last meeting of Council I have attended various meeting with Officers.

Councillor Eleanor Lister
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee