
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.

Work Programme

2. 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.

Child Poverty Review Group

3. A further meeting of this Review was held on 19th March, 2014 and we met with the Partnership Board Executive Director to discuss the findings contained within the Poverty Reduction Task and Finish Group's report 'The Scope of Poverty in Darlington' and giving particular attention to the areas for future consideration by the Board and the considerations to child poverty in particular. Members were also interested to discuss where Scrutiny can assist in this process.
4. Work is on going between the Partnership, Darlington College, the Credit Union, Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau and the King's Church Foodstore to deliver the recommendations set out within the report.
5. Members were reassured to learn that the issue of pay day lending has been recognised as an area of concern and that further project work needs to be done.
6. Evidence in Darlington shows that there are high incidents of child poverty and in 9 wards with the borough over 30 per cent of children are living in poverty and 66 per cent of those in poverty are working families.
7. The Council's Customer Services Centre includes the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Credit Union and will refer people to the Food Bank thereby offering a 'one stop' service.
8. The overall aim is to bring all agencies together at one contact point within the community and the first ward to offer this will be Cockerton West Ward. On Thursday afternoon people can visit St. Mary's Church where there will be all agencies present, including the Food Bank.
9. The Child Poverty Strategy is currently under review and as a Scrutiny Committee we intend to be involved in the process.

10. The Council's focus on child poverty is through the Children and Young Peoples Plan, the Child Poverty Plan and Partnership work and again we would like to be consulted wherever possible.
11. Members felt that publicity is key for raising awareness of the services that are available and it was suggested that Schools@one darlington could be a useful tool within schools and also Ward Councillors can be utilised to distribute information through their Ward Newsletters.

Durham Music Service

12. We received a very interesting presentation from Ian Robinson, the Deputy Head of Durham Music Service, which is the lead partner in the Durham and Darlington Music Education Hub, who advised us about the history of the organisation which is supported by local authority colleagues and schools throughout Durham and Darlington and how Durham Music Service (DMS) has achieved local, regional and national recognition for delivering positive outcomes for children and young people.
13. The Hub's mission is to ensure that all children and young people regardless of ability and background, have access to the best quality music education. There are numerous programmes delivered to approximately 2800 children within Darlington Primary Schools each year, including 173 students on Free School Meals receiving lessons.
14. There are also ten ensembles in Darlington which involve 292 students and we received details of the numerous events featuring those students from Darlington Schools.
15. The DMS is funded by monies from the Arts Council, parental charges and contribution from the schools via Service Level Agreements, however funding has been reduced by 48 per cent in the last two years and staffing levels have been reduced as a consequence. The Durham Music Service also provide an instrument hire service.
16. Following general discussion on the work of the DMS we considered how we could help support the Service in future and it was suggested that we could help the Service by sourcing free venues for use by the ensembles and also for concerts. Some schools currently offer free of charge a venue for ensemble rehearsals i.e. Hummersknott Academy, however further venues are always needed. The Assistant Director, Children, Families and Learning suggested that she raise this issue at the Joint Heads Forum. It was also suggested that the Town Hall Council Chamber may be an option for a venue and also that there may be businesses in the town who would be willing to offer venues and Councillor C. Hughes, the Cabinet Member with the Children and Young People Portfolio, agreed to take this suggestion forward to the Strategic Partnership.

Sustainable Community Strategy

17. Following the Special Meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 4 March, 2014, we gave further consideration to a working draft of a revised Sustainable Community Strategy.
18. Members commented on an updated version of the One Darlington : Perfectly Placed vision in advance of the preparation of the revision of the Sustainable Community Strategy document.
19. It was highlighted that the document was a working draft and that further development and refinement will be carried out before its final approval by Council in May 2014 and that it had been presented to Scrutiny as a working draft to enable Members of the Committee to contribute to the development of the document in the areas of specific interest to this Scrutiny Committee.
20. Members gave particular attention to the outcome for 'children and young people with the best start in life' and gave their views and will continue to contribute to the on going development of the document.

Performance Management Framework and Possible Links with Future Work Programme

21. We received a presentation from the Head of Organisational Planning on the Performance Management Framework which is currently being developed and how it linked to the Sustainable Community Strategy.
22. The Performance Management Framework will assist us in developing our work programme over the next Municipal Year thereby ensuring that work undertaken will reflect the strategic aims of the Council.
23. Currently work is being undertaken on the high level indicators which have been devised as a set of key indicators to measure performance. The high level indicators are strategic indicators which include all the Partners and will be used to assess the outcomes of the Strategy.
24. We received an overview of the eight strategic outcomes and the indicators which sit alongside each outcome and gave particular attention to the outcome for this Scrutiny Committee for 'giving children and young people the best start in life'. It was recognised that all the outcomes contained within the Strategy may have an impact on children and young people.
25. We also considered the table of indicators and made particular reference to the Social Norms Survey Indicator; Smoking Status and the possible link between E-cigarettes and young people; tracking destinations of young people beyond NEET and if there is a skills gap; and the proportion of children in poverty.

Councillor Eleanor Lister
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee