

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3rd November, 2008

PRESENT – Councillor Hughes (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Burton, Davies, Galletley, Lister, Long and Richmond. (8)

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. M. Frank. (1)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. D. Moyes, Mr. C. J. Taylor and Mr. T.R. Fisher (3)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Lawton and Francis, Mr. R. Egan, Canon S. Bamber and Mr. N. Rees.

ABSENT – Councillor Thistlethwaite, Mrs. V. Mitchell and Ms. S. Robinson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services, George McQueen, Assistant Director (Planning and Resources), Andrew Dunn, Assistant Director (School Improvement and Development), Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director (Children and Families), Anita Hamer, Targeted Services Programme Manager, Pamela Sayer, Behaviour Support and Lynne Kilpatrick, 14-19 Advisor (IAG) within the Children's Services Department.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Jan Fin, Programme Manager, Family Nurse Partnership.

CYP29. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2008.

With reference to Minute CYP22/Sep/08, Councillor Galletley proposed an amendment to the Minute to include the wording that 'a request had been made by certain Members for identification of schools contained within the report and that that request was denied. It was also suggested that a training day be provided for Members of this Committee on Contextual Added Value performance information for schools.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record with the exception of an amendment to Minute CYP22/Sep/08 as above.

CYP30. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP31. FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME – FIRST YEAR PILOT SITES IN ENGLAND - The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to share with Members the findings of the national first year evaluation of the intensive parenting programme working with vulnerable first time young mothers as part of a three year Family Nurse Partnership.

The Family Nurse Partnership has been developed over 25 years in the USA by Professor David Olds, University of Colorado and has produced impressive short and long term results.

Jan Finn, Programme Manager of the Family Nurse Partnership gave a presentation on the report and pilot which began in April, 2007 and is being delivered in Darlington and Durham through a partnership involving the Darlington PCT; County Durham PCT; CYPS, Durham and this Council's Children's Services Department.

The Nurse-Family Partnerships is an evidence-based nurse home-visiting programme designed to improve the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of young first-time parents and their children which involves weekly or fortnightly structured home visits by a special trained nurse from early pregnancy until children are 24 months old.

The presentation also outlined how the Family Nurse Partnership is being delivered in Darlington and what has been learnt in Darlington so far. It was emphasised that the Partnership are already seeing positive effects of an intensive early intervention programme and there is a keen willingness from young parents to learn about the development of their child and health related issues. There has also been an excellent attendance for antenatal appointments and 99 per cent of babies have been born full-term and been of normal weight. The project has also gained national recognition and publicity.

Following the presentation discussion ensued and Members were particular pleased to see that a service of this kind was being provided for vulnerable young families and that it was also being received well by young fathers.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and Members of this Scrutiny Committee support the Family Nurse Partnership pilot project.

(b) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Jan Finn for her interesting and informative presentation.

CYP32. SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS 2007/08 – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members of this Scrutiny Committee on the fixed term and permanent exclusions within Darlington for the academic year of September, 2007 to July, 2008 and to highlight progress being made in reducing exclusions and identify how this has been achieved.

The submitted report highlighted that both fixed and permanent exclusions have dropped significantly during the last academic year and schools have made significant improvements through the use of inclusion units, internal exclusion and isolation, implementing managed moves, individual student support and teacher coaching from the behavioural support team.

It was also reported that there has been a great improvement in both the number of days lost to fixed term exclusion and the number of individual students excluded.

General discussion ensued around the use of Inclusion Units and Members requested that further information be supplied to the Members on internal exclusions; the different methods that are being operated with regard to exclusions in the various schools and some indication of the factors in exclusion based on special needs.

It was also highlighted by a Member of this Committee that the progress made to date on exclusion is to be noted and staff congratulated in this authority being the most improved local authority.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP33. SCHOOL ABSENCE FIGURES 2007/08 – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the levels of school absence and to inform them of the expansion of the persistent absentee agenda.

The submitted report outlined that there has been a further decrease in absence rates in both secondary and primary level for the last academic year and the Council’s position nationally continues to improve.

The Persistent Absentee Agenda is being rolled out across all schools in Darlington with support from the Education Welfare Service and last year this council was the third most improved authority for the reduction in the percentage of persistent absentee in the secondary phase. It was also reported that support will continue to be given to Branksome and the Eastbourne Academy, who meet the criteria for a Persistent Absentee School, to support the interventions which have been put in place. Darlington is also on track to meet the target of no more than 5% per cent of its pupils are persistence absentees by 2011.

It was also reported that the local authority continues to monitor the daily attendance at school of children in its care by using Welfare Call and performance for looked after children was illustrated in the submitted report. Members ask for clarification on the actually numbers that the percentages in the table equate to as in some cases the numbers are very small so the impact on one child on percentages can be enormous.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP34. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENTS IN DARLINGTON – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the appointment of a building contractor for the replacement North Road School, progress to date on the proposals to amalgamate Dodmire Infant and Nursery School with Dodmire Junior School and to advise on the development of community use at the Pheonix Centre.

The Assistant Director (Planning and Resources) reported that it was envisaged that Kier (Northern), the appointed building contractor for the North Road project would be on site towards the end of November.

It was also reported that the Pheonix Centre is now open and pupils are benefitting from updated facilities. The school is being offered for community use through the Healthy Schools initiative and the Adult learning function of the Library Service. In addition it is being utilised by regular meetings of the Polish community and the Neighbourhood Watch Association and it is also being used as a Polling Station.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

CYP35. NEET STRATEGY – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of this Scrutiny Committee of the publication of Darlington’s NEET (Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training) Strategy.

Darlington has established a NEET Reduction Partnership which role it is to look strategically at the characteristics and barriers that prevent young people from engaging in learning and to make

recommendations regarding areas for development. The NEET Reduction Partnership reports to the 14 to 19 Trust which in turn reports to the Children's Trust.

It was reported by the 14 to 19 Advisor that it was anticipated that the target of a reduction of young people who are NEET be reduced by 6.4 per cent in 2008 be achieved and 99.8 per cent of Darlington's Young People who left secondary school in 2008 have been offered a place in training, education or employment.

It was also reported that if the local authority's NEET target for 2010 is reached £233,475 of Government funding will be released to the authority under the Local Area Agreement.

General discussion ensued around the importance of converting offers of places to school leavers into actual starts in training, education and employment and that appropriate offers are being made to young people. It was also emphasised that all parties working collaboratively will increase the rate of conversion work and that the work of the 14-19 Trust was very important in delivering the Strategy.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP36. CHILDREN'S HOMES OVERVIEW – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide information on the provision of children's residential services in this authority's Children's Homes.

The submitted report outlined the extent and remit of the Children's homes in Darlington that provide a service for Looked After Children as well as information on the Short Break Centre for Disabled Children.

Discussion ensued on the Council's role as Corporate Parents and on the staffing of the children's residential services.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That a Task and Finish Review Group be established, in the future, on the provision of children's residential services in Darlington Borough Council Children's Homes.

CYP37. CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08 – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the Annual Report on the operation and effectiveness of the policy and procedure, 1st April, 2007 to 31st March, 2008.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP38. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09 – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that further consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme and Review topics for the Municipal Year 2008/09.

The Director of Children's Services reported at the meeting that a training session could be arranged to allow Members to explore and scrutinise the data in advance of the results of the School Standards and Performance (including performance in National Examinations 2007/08) being made available.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report on School Standards and Performance (including performance in National Examinations 2007/08) be deferred from the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 12th January, 2009, and be included in the Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on Monday, 27th April, 2009.

(b) That the Chair send a letter to Cabinet, outlining this Scrutiny Committee’s disappointment to the fact that the information on the School Standards and Performance (including performance in National Examinations 2007/08) would not be available until the end of March 2009.

(c) That a report on the commissioning and funding arrangements for the provision of education and training for 14 to 19 year olds, be included in the Work Programme for the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held Monday, 12th January, 2009, and the Director of Children’s Services and the lead Learning and Skills Manager for the five Tees Valley Authorities, be invited to attend the meeting.

(d) That the first meeting of the Use of Multi Use Game Areas (MUGA’s) be re-arranged.

CYP39. POLICY REVIEW - (1) Review of Progress on Policy Review Items –

There were no reports to consider.

(2) Review Items Final Report Back – Health and Well Being and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committees Joint Visits to Taste School Meals – Final Report – To report the findings and recommendations of Members of the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee following joint visits to schools to scrutinise the provision and quality of school meals.

The submitted report outlined the joint work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees, the findings and recommendations of those Members who visited three Primary Schools in the Borough to taste a school meal and to consider issues into relation to the provision of school meals.

Discussion ensued on the need to encourage more children to take school dinners; vending machines; packed lunches; making school meals more a ‘social’ experience; mechanisms for payment; and inclusion of secondary and nursery schools in the review.

RESOLVED – (a) That the recommendations, as detailed in the submitted report, be supported.

(b) That the Chair of the Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee be requested to extend the review to include Secondary and Nursery schools and mechanisms for the payment of school dinners, including free school dinners, and that this Committee continue to be involved in the review.

(3) Responses of the Executive to Reports of this Scrutiny Committee – There were no responses to consider.

CYP40. EXECUTIVE CALL-IN - (1) Call-In Items Relating to Key Decisions of the Executive - There were no call-in items.

(2) Other Call-In Items - There were no call-in items.