

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3rd November 2014

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Crumbie, Galletley, Kelley, E.A. Richmond, C. Taylor, L. Vasey and Wright. (9)

APOLOGIES - Councillors L. Hughes and Hutchinson; Ms. Regan and Miss Coltman (4)

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

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None (0)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor C. Hughes. (1)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jenni Cooke, Service Director for Children, Families and Learning; Rachel Kershaw, Head of School and Pupil Support Services; Lynne Henderson, Development and Commissioning Manager (Children's); and Nicola Davies, Commissioning Projects Officer.

CYP13. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interested reported at the meeting.

CYP14. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September, 2014.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

CYP15. SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN – Pursuant to Minute CYP9/Feb/12, the Head of School and Pupil Support Services gave a presentation on the current position with school places within the borough.

The current School Organisation Plan covers 2012 to 2017 and officers were now looking at projections for primary and secondary school places in Darlington up to 2025. These projections take into account the potential fall in birth rate due to the economic situation and housing developments that are planned in the future.

The Head of School and Pupil Support Services reported that there was currently enough capacity available for pupils and in particular there was adequate places in secondary schools which had more capacity and flexibility within their accommodation.

Members questions related to how the Council had met parental preference in primary and secondary schools; and the difficulty in accurately forecasting school places in light of expected large housing developments.

It was highlighted that the Council are working closely with larger housing developments on the Local Plan, Making and Growing Places and there was a

process of on going consultation with the developers and planners to ensure that funding for school places was made available before any new houses are built.

The Head of School and Pupil Support Services also advised the Members that sites had been reserved for potential educational sites although funding was the biggest risk factor as currently the Council receive £1.5m a year from the government for places however on average a primary school costs £4.5m to build.

The School Organisation Plan is reviewed annually and this Scrutiny will continue to monitor the progress of the Plan for 2012-17.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Head of School and Pupil Support be thanked for her interesting and informative presentation.

(b) That this Scrutiny Committee continue to monitor the progress of the School Organisation Plan 2012-17 future school place planning.

CYP16. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY – 0-25 YEARS –
Pursuant to Minute CYP34/Feb/14, the Director of Children, Families and Learning submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the implementation of the national reforms associated with the 0-25 Special Education Needs (SEN) System.

The Children and Families Act came into force on 1 September 2014 and provided the legislation for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The new approach sought to join up help and support across education, health and care for children and their families, from birth to 25.

As a national pathfinder, Darlington has been testing the reforms and identifying new ways of working since early 2012. The submitted report gave Members with an update on the implementation of the reforms in Darlington.

Particular reference was made to The Code of Practice issued jointly by the Department for Education and the Department for Health which provides the framework for how the reforms must be implemented; the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) which are automatically offered to all newly identified children with additional needs in place of the historical Statement of Educational Needs; new legislation which has been introduced providing the ability for families/young people to request a Personal Budget as a way of managing the funding aligned to an EHCP; changes to the schools funding formula and School Based High Needs Funding; and the Multi-Agency working which has been carried out across the professions of Education, Health and Social Care in the development of individual EHCP's.

It was also reported that since March, 2014 Darlington has been supporting the role of the Regional Champion for the North East as a way of disseminating good practice and sharing ways of working with the other 12 Local Authorities in the region.

It was highlighted that significant consultation and engagement had been undertaken throughout all stages of the pathfinder programme and families, children and young people had been instrumental in developing all elements of the new process and were fully supported to be involved through the close working relationship with Darlington Association on Disability.

Members referred in particular to how confident parents can be that the needs of their child will be met in times of financial constraints and the Head of School and Pupil Support Services referred to the Dedicated Schools Grant which sets aside funding for special needs and also advised how the HECIP's will also help with the process of defining need and provision in consultation with the parents. Members also raised questions on the frequency of reviews with parents and the deadlines that have been set by central government for transferring the statements of each child or young person to an EHCP.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That this Scrutiny Committee continue to provide support and appropriate challenge in the development of the new 0-25 special needs system across Darlington.

CYP17. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REVIEW 2014 – The Director of Commissioning submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members of the findings of the 2014 Childcare Sufficiency Review and to set out the Local Authority's 2014-15 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan (also previously circulated).

Members were informed that The Children and Families' Act, 2014 changed the local authority's statutory duty regarding childcare sufficiency. Local authorities still have a duty to ensure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable; however, instead of conducting a large scale sufficiency assessment every three years with annual reviews in the intermediate years, local authorities now have a statutory duty to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and make this report available and accessible to parents. The submitted report highlighted some of the social issues during 2013-14 which affected child care demand in the Borough which is also dependent upon local employment opportunities and the availability of appropriate housing. This included the recession which had a significant impact on Darlington's economy; regeneration projects throughout the Borough; and changes to income support for lone parents and Housing Benefit.

It was reported that supply data showed that in 2013-14, the education and childcare market in Darlington which consists of maintained nursery schools, academy and maintained nursery units, private day nurseries, playgroups, child minders, breakfast, after school and holiday clubs was fairly stable.

In 2014 there was no budget available for childcare sufficiency so it was not possible to conduct valid, reliable parental demand research as in 2008 and 2011. However, a more simplified childcare demand questionnaire has been distributed via People and Families' Information Support (PFIS) and the PFIS unmet demand list has also been utilised. Parental feedback from the 73 questionnaires returned showed that,

as in 2008 and 2011 there was an unmet demand for affordable, after-school and holiday childcare/activities for all age groups and older children (over 8 years) in particular; and an unmet demand for affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare for children and young people with disabilities (up to the age of 18 years).

It was reported that the cost of childcare had been highlighted as a significant barrier for parents in Darlington and Members discussed this point in particular including the cost of childminders in Darlington compared to other parts of the region and the general shortage of childminders.

The Commissioning Projects Officer advised Members that this was a difficult market to plan for and the rates are set individually by each provider however as part of the Action Plan officers will be meeting with the providers to establish any barriers preventing them extending their provision.

RESOLVED – (a) That the findings of the 2014 Childcare Sufficiency Review be noted.

(b) That the Local Authority's 2014-15 Childcare Sufficiency action plan be noted and that this Scrutiny Committee monitor the Action Plan annually.

CYP18. PARENTING PROGRAMME – The Service Director of Children, Families and Learning submitted a report (previously circulated) following a request by Members of this Scrutiny Committee to be advised of the current parenting programme offer in Darlington and to outline the main target audience for the programmes.

The submitted report background to the importance of Parenting Programmes as an essential tool in engaging families in improving parenting and have an impact on the future outcomes for their children and outlined the four parenting programmes on offer in Darlington including Mellow Parenting; Incredible Years; Strengthening Families; and Parenting Factor. A further course, Family Foundations was offered as a pilot aimed at fathers in 2012.

Reference was made to the Munroe Review of Child Protection, the Graham Allen Review Early Intervention the Next Steps, Frank Field's Review and The Foundation Years reports which highlighted the need for positive parenting intervention.

Members discussed in particular the attendance at the parenting programmes and the potential reasons why some programmes were not completed, however it was noted that there had been an increase in the number of parents involved in the various parenting programmes.

Members also discussed the vulnerability of the Early Intervention Team as it was non statutory service and may be again subject to future budget pressures and also on the financial pressures brought about by legal judgements re defining Looked After Children (LAC) which will increase the numbers of LAC in the borough.

RESOLVED – That the submitted report be noted.

CYP19. WORK PROGRAMME – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee and to consider any additional areas which Members suggest should be added to the previously approved work programme.

It was reported that Monitoring and Co-ordination Group had given approval for Members of this Scrutiny Committee to receive a report on Child Sexual Exploitation and the Rotherham Report to the meeting scheduled for 5th January, 2015.

Following a briefing between the Chair, Vice-Chair, a representative from Public Health and the FGM Lead Officer for Durham Police, the Service Director for Children, Families and Learning updated Members on training provided by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board on FGM which had been undertaken by all schools and also on the training and awareness raising that had been undertaken by the Dedicated Officer within the Police.

The Service Director for Children, Families and Learning also reported on national statistics from the 125 acute hospital trusts which showed that in the North of England there were considerably less active cases and newly identified cases than in the rest of England. Following discussion Members agreed that within Durham and Darlington they were confident that adequate training has been carried out and that the links with the Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) Network was good and that no further work be undertaken in relation to FGM by this Scrutiny at the present time.

The Chair advised Members that the Child Poverty Review Group had met recently and examined child poverty by Ward within the borough and the 'hotspots' and had requested further information on the results of the Government Consultation and any changes to the national measures of child poverty; application of other data to the 'hot spot' areas to see correlation; and what other policies are in place targeting specifically these 'hot spot' areas.

It was also reported that a meeting of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Applications Review had been arranged for 4th November, 2014 and the Young Carers Review meeting on 14th January, 2015 and Members will receive updates in due course.

RESOLVED - That the current status of the work programme be noted.

