

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 February 2016

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crumbie, Curry, L. Hughes, Mills, Storr, C. Taylor and Wright. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Crudass and KE Kelly; Mr. Fisher, Ms. Regan (6)
Ms Woodcock and Mr. Rickeard.

ABSENT – Councillor Mrs. D. Jones; Mr. Frank and Ms Miah. (3)

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None.

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – Mrs. G. Harrison. (1)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor C. Hughes; Mr. Durham, Member of the Public. (2)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Alison Murphy, Interim Director – Children’s Services; David Mason, Head of LAC, Youth Offending and Edge of Care Services; Hillary Tillotson, Family Placement Service Manager; Sharon Raine, Head of Organisational Planning; Martin Webster, Workforce Development Commissioner; Gillian Halden, Interim Head of Practice Improvement; Judith Stonebridge, Public Health Speciality Registrar; and Allison Hill, Democratic Support.

CYP31. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP32. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 11 January 2016.

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

CYP33. PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK – The Director of Children and Adult Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members of the improvement journey regarding the Children’s Services performance management and to present performance data up to the end of Quarter 3 2015/16.

Following the Ofsted Inspection in 2015 the two areas which were deemed to be inadequate were children in need of help and protection and leadership management and governance. The areas that have now been identified for improvement are performance and data, leadership and governance, practice and management oversight.

With regard to performance and data the inspection found that performance data was unreliable and the reasons for this were outlined in the submitted report and also what was being done to overcome these issues, which included a review of the suite of performance indicators, establishing a set of Key Performance Indicators and establishing performance targets for the key indicators.

The submitted report also gave an overview of some of the key areas for scrutiny based on data to the end of December 2015.

These areas included current performance for Early Help which showed a positive trajectory of doubling overall numbers in 2015-16; contacts and referrals which showed that the number of contacts since 2013 had remained stable and the average number of contacts at the end of December remained at 517, with month on month variations; child protection performance on the percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) held within 15 days of strategy discussion was at 82.6 per cent, which showed a positive improvement of 10.73 per cent on November and significantly better than the beginning of the reporting year; and Child Protection Plan (CPP) allocation to social worker which was in line with the national requirements of 100 per cent of CPP cases being allocated to a qualified social worker.

It was also reported that the number of Looked after Children (CLA) in our care per 10,000 population aged under 18 had reduced from 88.59 per cent in April 2015 to 81.9 per cent; since April 2015 100 per cent of CPP cases had been allocated to a qualified social worker and there had been an improvement of Looked After Children having three or more moves; the percentage of CLA placed more than 20 miles away from home remains in line with the England performance but slightly higher than the North East and our Statistical neighbours; the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation which remains good in this area and the numbers were low; percentage of care leavers not in education, employment and training which showed in December an increase of eight per cent; and also workforce and sickness data.

Members expressed their concerns regarding the stability of placements for Children Looked After more than three moves and the percentage of Children Looked After who have been looked after for more than two and a half years who have been in the same placement for at least two years which was higher than our statistical neighbours.

Members also questioned the percentage of care leavers not in education, employment or training and the long term strategy to continue to improve performance and narrow the gap between care leavers and their peers. Officers reported that the authority was working with colleges and further work is to be undertaken around apprenticeships with Darlington Borough Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People emphasised how this Scrutiny can be an advocate on behalf of Looked After Children through the Improvement Board and that Academy Trusts should be encouraged to offer apprenticeships for Looked After Children.

RESOLVED – That this Scrutiny note the quarter 3 performance against the Children’s Services key performance indicators.

CYP34. HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER - The Director of Children and Adult Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the current position with regard to Health Assessments for Children Looked After.

It was reported that Local authorities are responsible for making sure a health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs is carried out for every child they look after regardless of where the child lives and the initial health assessment should result in a health plan, available for the first statutory review by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) of the child’s care plan. The first review must be carried out within 20 working days from when the child started to be looked after.

The submitted report outlined the areas that the statutory health assessment should address in line with Schedule 1 of the Care Planning Regulations and the impact of undertaking health assessments for Children Looked After; and referred to the publication ‘Ten Questions to ask if you are scrutinising services for Looked After Children’ produced for elected members and others working in children’s services; the monitoring of performance by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The submitted report also referred to the Ofsted report which was published following the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in September 2015 which highlighted some improvement regarding the completion of initial health assessments within timescales but still deemed not to be good enough; dental checks and immunisations were deemed good and all above the England average; the percentage of Children looked After with up to date dental checks was currently at 86 per cent; the percentage paperwork sent to CDDFT within 7 days was showing some improvement following the introduction of new processes aimed at improving performance; completed annual health assessments were at 94 per cent which was an improvement on 2013-14 when it was 93 per cent and the English average was 88 per cent.

Following the Ofsted report an improvement plan was developed to address issues regarding health raised within report and recommendation 15 was to ensure that all children looked after have timely initial health assessments. Members were advised that the Looked After Health Nurse undertakes regular audits of timeliness of Initial Health Assessments and the full audit data, process and actions were submitted with the report for Members consideration.

Members questioned the potential reasons for the hesitation from families to complete the consent forms and the delays in getting the consent forms and officers advised that the issues around the consent forms were more to do with mistakes

made on signing the form rather than refusal to sign the form in the first instances. Members suggested that the position be monitored.

Members agreed that it is a priority to improve the performance of health checks on Children Looked After and acknowledged that performance was regularly presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Improvement Board.

RESOLVED - That Members note the action being taken to address the dip in performance of health assessments in 2015/16.

CYP35. UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD'S JOURNEY – Pursuant to Minute CYP30/Jan/16, the Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an overview of the child's journey to give a broader understanding of the intervention points throughout Children's Social Care.

The Ofsted inspection which was carried out in June 2015 was conducted under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) and focused on the journey of the child and on the experiences and responses at each intervention through the system, from the identification of vulnerability through to intervention, assessment and care planning.

The submitted report outlined the key areas where the Inspectors track the child's journey from early help, through referral and assessment and being in care to leaving care and key questions to be asked.

It was highlighted that Inspectors will now be keen to know what has been learnt from the recent inspection and what improvements have been made. In January 2016 Ofsted published the latest framework for Joint Targeted Area Inspections which commenced February, 2016 and part of that inspection will be to focus on the evaluation of children's experiences, looking within the joint partnership arrangements in keeping children safe; and an additional 'deep dive' will focus on a particular theme to allow for additional scrutiny on a specific type of harm. The first 'deep dive' will focus on child sexual exploitation and children missing from home, care or education.

Officers are expecting a further inspection at any time within a year of the original inspection in June 2015.

Members discussed the forthcoming inspection and agreed to establish a task and finish group to examine in more detail child sexual exploitation and children missing from care, taking into account the recommendations of the Improvement Board and the improvements that have already been put in place; and to include the police and other agencies in the review.

General discussion ensued on vulnerable children and those missing from care and also on the procedures for placements of Looked After Children in other authorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People advised the Scrutiny Members that the Local Safeguarding Children's Board was currently undertaking a piece of work in relation to placement of this authorities Looked After Children in other local authorities and that it would be useful to have the outcomes of their work before undertaking this task and finish.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That this Scrutiny establish a task and finish review group to examine child sexual exploitation and children missing from care.

CYP36. SOCIAL SERVICES TRAINING UPDATE – The Director of Children and Adults Services submit a report (previously circulated) to advise Members of the 'Consolidating Good Practice' Training Plan.

The submitted report outlined the extensive training and development plan which aims to build on current training and development provision and provide a maximum impact programme of support, centred on specific agreed areas of need highlighted in the Darlington Children's Services Improvement Plan 2015-17.

Members praised the extensive training programme for staff development and agreed that this should be a continuous programme and that staff training records be maintained. Members were also advised that 'train the trainer' models were being looked at for other organisations.

With regard to the training on working with Gypsy and Traveller Communities it was agreed that this training would be useful for Members also.

RESOLVED – That the Consolidating Good Practice Training and Development Plan be noted.

CYP37. WORK PROGRAMME – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and 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.

Members will continue to monitor progress and provide challenge where needed in order to achieve the desired outcomes to improve the services to children and young people in the borough.

From discussion on the performance framework report (see Minute CYP33 above) it was agreed to include reports on the stability of placements for Looked After Children and practice arrangements around the recording of statutory visits in relation to child protection cases .

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the work programme be noted and the additional items be programmed for future meetings.

(b) In accordance with Minute CYP35, a task and finish review group be established to examine Child Sexual Exploitation.