

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 November 2016

PRESENT – Councillor C Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Crumbie, Curry, KE Kelly, Lister, Mills, Storr, Tostevin and Wright. (10)

APOLOGIES – Janet Woodcock, Lorraine Fox, Tim Fisher and Suzanne Joyner.

ABSENT – None (0)

STATUTORY CO-OPTEEES – None. (0)

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor C Hughes.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jane Kochanoski, Assistant Director of Children’s Services; Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services; Nicola Davies, Commissioning Projects Officer; Simon Hart, Independent Chair LCSB; and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

CYP17. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP18. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September, 2016.

With regard to Minute CYP12/Sep/16 in relation to Initial Health Assessments, it was reported that the Children’s Services Improvement Board had reported at its recent meeting that improvements have been made to the health assessments being undertaken within 20 days. It was also agreed that the Improvement Plan be circulated to all Members .

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

CYP19. DARLINGTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT – 2015/16 – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) for Members to comment on the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board for the period 2015/16.

Simon Hart, the Independent Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board attended the meeting and presented the report and highlighted the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

All Local Safeguarding Children Boards are required to produce an Annual Report which will account for the Board’s activities over the previous year and to make an assessment of the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area.

The 2015/16 Annual Report is based on the Board's four strategic priorities being multi-agency safeguarding leadership; standards for multi-agency working; case review, learning and development; and maintaining an overview of the safeguarding needs of children and young people.

It was reported that following the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Care Services in Darlington in July 2015 it was necessary for the Board to make some revisions to its Business Plan and strategic priorities and this has been reflected in the report.

The Board's priorities for 2016-17 will be based on learning from the previous year and Ofsted recommendations and areas identified for 2016-17 are to strengthen the multi-agency communication and engagement strategy; strengthen the performance management and quality assurance arrangements; and to strengthen the serious case review and notifiable incidents process.

Members discussed how the Children and Young People Scrutiny can assist the Safeguarding Board deliver positive outcomes for young people when developing strategies and good practice and in developing joint working across all agencies.

Members were pleased to see within the annual report the analysis of attendance by multi agencies and agreed that it was imperative for board members to be accountable and agreed that future annual reports need to reflect impact rather than process.

Members also welcomed the focus within the annual report on challenge for the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board to take the learning and consider how it can be further applied as well as how it can evidence the effectiveness of the arrangements in place and Members acknowledged that they had a role in effective challenge.

It was also highlighted that one of the Board's priorities was working towards 'whole system development' aimed at bringing all agencies together to form a whole system available to the young person and their family so that support can be organised accordingly.

A question was raised with regard to the relationship between the Board and the academies and the Independent Chair reassured Members that he had requested a meeting with all schools and academies and acknowledged that schools and learning was at the centre of safeguarding and all schools played an important role.

Members also discussed the sharing of results from the serious case reviews as they felt that it was important for Members to have this information to be able to scrutinise what improvements are being made for young people.

RESOLVED – That the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report for 2015/16 be noted.

CYP20. EARLY HELP SERVICES – MTFP TARGETS – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to give Members an

overview of the progress on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) proposal to review the Early Help services to ensure that the MTFP targets are met with a view to continuing to offer an Early Help offer that meets the needs of the families and young people of Darlington.

It was reported that as part of the Children's Services Transformation, Early Help services were identified as a key area for review to improve the outcomes for children and young people while reducing costs of services in other areas.

As part of the MTFP it was proposed to re-align all the Early Help Services including Children Centres, Early Intervention Locality Teams (Early Help staff), and the Specialist Family Support teams into a service under a single management structure. The aim of the proposed service was to prevent the escalation of needs to limit the demand on acute services including social care and to ensure that children who can be maintained with the family can do so with support that improves the outcomes for the children.

It was reported that progress to date included the completion of the realigning of the Head of Service management structure in August 2016; consultation sessions with staff and partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector, including schools during July to September; the establishment of an Early Help Reference Group to review the strategy and undertake the necessary revisions to ensure all partners organisations are signed up to the new document by November 2016; the proposed staffing model for the whole service is in its final stages of completion; and the Children Centre model of a Hub and Spoke model was progressing and a suitable Town Centre premise had been identified for consideration.

It was also reported that an Early Help Co-ordinator commenced employment in June 2016 and the introduction of Liquid Logic system as a single recording case management tool will assist the early help teams improve the ability to analyse the work undertaken which is now fully operational.

The comments received from the consultation revealed that there was a need to reduce the number of different teams that deliver services within the Council and that services should not be based in localities, as this limits the effectiveness and consistency of approach.

The project was on target to deliver savings of £170,000 for 2016/17 and indications were that the 2017/2018 savings of £700,000 may be achieved.

With regard to the audit of existing assessments which had been undertaken and referred to in the submitted report, Members questioned what the audit had revealed and were advised that assessments had not always been family focused and that training programmes had now been re-designed to address this. Following the training with schools and partner agencies a re-audit of all cases will be carried out.

Members also referred to the lack of school engagement at the consultation sessions which were held during July to September which had prompted a questionnaire to be circulated to all head teachers and designated safeguarding leads and were advised that there had now been a 70 per cent response to the questionnaire. The

Community Representative also advised Members that it would be useful to circulate the questionnaire to the safeguarding leads within the Private and Voluntary Independent Nurseries.

RESOLVED – (a) That Members note the progress to date and the savings achieved.

(b) That this Scrutiny continues to monitor the progress on the MTFP proposals in relation to the Early Help Services.

CYP21. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REVIEW 2016/17 – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform members of the findings of the 2016/17 Childcare Sufficiency Review and to set out the authority's 2016/17 Action Plan.

Local authorities are required by the Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities March 2016' to ensure sufficient childcare as far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children; and to report annually to elected Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents.

It was reported that of the 67 settings, schools and child minders providing funded places for two year olds 53 are Ofsted rated 'outstanding' or 'good'; also the take up rate in Darlington has risen from 59 per cent in Spring 2015 to 83 per cent in Summer 2016 which equates to 440 children occupying a funded place and is Darlington's highest take-up rate since the scheme began.

Supply data for 2015/16 shows that the education and childcare market in Darlington remains fairly stable; however feedback from the childcare demand questionnaire which was distributed via People and Families' Information Support between July 2015 and June 2016, showed that as in 2008 and 2011 there remains an unmet demand for affordable, after-school and holiday childcare/activities for all age groups, particularly for older children (over 8 years); and an unmet demand for affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare for children and young people with disabilities (up to the age of 18 years).

The 2016/17 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan (also previously circulated) sets out how the local authority will support the market to improve access to out of school and holiday childcare/activities, particularly for children aged 5 to 14 years or 18 years for disabled young people and to ensure that all childcare/activities are inclusive.

It was also reported that the high costs and lack of flexibility of childcare had been highlighted as a significant barrier for parents in Darlington and the picture regarding unmet childcare in Darlington mirrored the national situation.

Members discussed the provision of out of school clubs and were advised that the Early Years Team will be carrying out a quality/inclusion audit of the borough's out of school/holiday provision.

Members questioned the unmet demand for children with disabilities; and the percentage of parents with a disabled child being more likely to have a negative perception of quality of care/education in settings. Members commented that the word 'perceptions' suggested that the reported situation was not a reality and the wording of this needs to be carefully considered, as often this is a reality.

RESOLVED – (a) That Members note the findings of the 2016-17 Childcare Sufficiency Review.

(b) That Members note the Local Authority's 2016/17 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan and continue to monitor annually.

CYP22. WORK PROGRAMME - The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) on the current work programme for this Scrutiny Committee.

Members previously agreed a revision to the work programme to enable the Committee to analyse information for each topic area aligning it to the eight outcomes and the three conditions in the Sustainable Community Strategy and relevant performance indicators from the Performance Management Framework.

The Chair referred to the meeting in January when school improvement and educational performance will be discussed, including the decline in performance for mathematics and English with a view to 'deep dive' examination by Members following the report. The Cabinet portfolio holder for Children and Young People referred to a Local Government Association document 'The council role in school improvement' and suggested that Members may also find it helpful to have some information on the role of the Regional School Commissioner to take action in underperforming schools.

The Chair also advised that some Members had met with Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality on 2 November 2016 to discuss and scope the review of services for families with children with disabilities 0-3 years. Members will be contacting health key stakeholders to discuss the service and will report back to a future meeting of this Scrutiny.

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