

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 February 2017

PRESENT – Councillor C Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Curry, L.Hughes, Storr and Tostevin. (5)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Crudass, Crumbie, KE Kelly, Lister, Mills and Wright; Tim Fisher and Paul Rickeard.

ABSENT – None (0)

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None. (0)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None. (0)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jane Kochanowski, Assistant Director Children’s Services, Jean Langthorne, Family Support Manager, Eleanor Marshall, School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

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

CYP31. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 9 January 2016.

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

CYP32. ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY – CHILDREN’S SERVICES (SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY) – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members of this Scrutiny Committee on the current status of the development of the Children’s Services Accessibility Strategy (also previously circulated) and the actions required to comply with legislation including the Equality Impact Assessment (also previously circulated).

All local authorities are required by Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 to prepare an accessibility strategy in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body which will set out how the Local Authority will, over a prescribed period, increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school’s curriculum; improve the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities and services provided by the schools; and improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The legislation also requires schools to develop Accessibility Plans, which should link to their SEN and Disability (SEND) Information, or to include the Plan within the SEND Information report.

The submitted report outlined the process involved in developing the new Strategy and how it meets its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010, Reasonable Adjustments duty, Children and Families Act 2014, SEN and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2014, supporting children and young people with medical conditions, and special educational needs and disability regulations 2014; and detailed the outcome of the consultation exercise with schools which concluded on 3 February 2017.

Members questions related to the involvement of the academies in the development of the Strategy and the School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer advised the Members that all schools had been made aware of the Strategy through Schools Governing Bodies and given the opportunity to comment during the consultation period and academies will be able to access the final training plan that will be put in place. It was also reported that in the case of academies the consultation will inform their requirements for support or other training needs.

Members also questioned how the local authority can ensure that all young people under their responsibility are getting quality of care from the academies and how this can be monitored. The School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer confirmed with Members that the SEN Disability and Inclusion Commissioning Strategy, which is linked to the Accessibility Strategy will cover the duty on all children and that accessibility planning was very specific to schools; however the local authority does not have any control over the monitoring of academies but do offer them training and tools to audit the systems that they have in place.

Members also referred specifically to the high percentage of SEN children in Darlington receiving SEND support or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Educational Need; and the percentage of all children in the area that were living in poverty and questioned the reasons as to why the number of children entitled to free school meals in nursery and primary schools and in secondary schools was above the national average. It was agreed that the Assistant Director of Children's Services would carry out a benchmarking exercise with the neighbouring authorities and report back to Members.

It was also agreed that although the statutory responsibility is for this authority to support all its maintained schools it should be stated in the Strategy that as well as maintained schools and academies, sixth-form colleges and further education (FE) colleges with 16-19 provision are also required to produce Accessibility Plans, and that the best practice outlined in the Strategy will support them to do this.

RESOLVED –That this Scrutiny Committee notes:-

- (a) the development of the draft Accessibility Strategy;
 - (b) the initial consultation findings; and
 - (c) the approval timescales.
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CYP33. CHILDREN AT RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION – The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to give Members an overview of service delivery and outcomes regarding children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE).

The submitted report outlined the definition of child sexual exploitation and the recent changes by the Home Office to the definition which now included reference to the use of technology, CSE does not always involve physical contact and the new specific reference to sexual exploitation even if the sexual activity appears consensual; and outlined the services that Barnardo's have provided within Darlington since January 2011, funded by this authority and the Police and Crime Commissioners.

The submitted report also detailed the processes in place when a young person is referred to the service and undergone an assessment of their individual needs, including the level of risk; provided graphical referral data; gave examples of service user feedback; explained how the council work closely with the Education and Raise Awareness of Sexual Exploitation 'ERASE' team and the links between CSE and Missing; governance arrangements in place; and outlined the challenges faced and the future work planned for 2017 around child sexual exploitation.

It was reported that during 2016 the service recorded 30 referrals where the risks of CSE were deemed either high or medium and all cases had been supported by a Barnardo's CSE Project worker. Of these 30 cases, 11 have subsequently closed following successful intervention and 19 are currently open and receiving a service.

The success of the intervention is measured using the Barnardo's Outcome Assessment grading scale in addition to user and carer feedback. It was reported that between July and December 2016 77 per cent of cases recorded improved mental health and wellbeing and 77 per cent recorded a reduction in level of risk/harm.

The Family Support Manager advised Members that due to the links between CSE and missing from home/care the CSE Project Workers are planning to deliver training to staff in both the Council's Children's homes and also the Independent Children's Homes to raise awareness of any danger/risk signals.

Members questioned if Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was covered by CSE and how primary schools will be educated on the risks of CSE as they do not have PCSE lessons at that age.

The Family Support Manager advised Members that there were no signs of FGM in Darlington at present and the CSE Champions will be a way to get information to younger children in primary school settings.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services confirmed that all schools were aware of CSE and issues of 'sexting'. Work with Barnardos and schools will be essential to raise awareness and put in place preventative measures. It was highlighted the new definition of CSE reflected the new pressures on young people and the new risk matrix includes the increasing reports of 'sexting'.

Further discussion ensued on the importance of maintaining case records and the attendance of social workers at the Missing and Exploited Group (MEG) as social workers have the overall responsibility for CSE cases; and use of the new improved software programme 'liquid logic' to collect more rich data. Members agreed that it would be useful for them to see in more detail how the software logs work and to meet with social workers.

RESOLVED – That the report and future challenges be noted.

CYP34. WORK PROGRAMME - The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the work programme for this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

The Chair advised Members that he would like this Scrutiny Committee to work jointly with the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on children's mental health; and to request a report to the next meeting on the impact on children regarding the proposed changes to hospital services in Darlington as part of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) Enquiry, in particular the services for children of forces families and the maternity services.

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