
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Work Programme

2. We continue to give consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee and taking into account the ambitious programme of change across the Council and the key role of Scrutiny in ensuring that the programme is able to deliver the service improvements and the budget savings necessary.
3. We also discussed the possibility of a Special Meeting in Autumn to discuss the Work Programme in more detail and agreed to receive a future report on the outcomes of the Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in Darlington being undertaken between 23 June and 17 July 2015; and the impact of future developments on Primary School Places when we consider the School Organisation Plan in November.

Performance Management Information – Quarter 4

4. We received a presentation providing us with graphical information on Quarter 4 performance relating to those strategic indicators for areas under the remit of this Scrutiny Committee ‘giving children and young people the best start in life’ and ‘enough support when needed’.
5. We will continue to receive relevant performance management and will continue to monitor and understand more clearly the services being delivered.

Co-opted Members - Community Representative

6. We agreed to establish a Panel of Members to appoint to the two vacant Community Representative positions on this Committee since the resignation of David Moyes in June 2014 and Emma Coltman in January 2015.
7. It was reported that six applications had been received to become a Community Representative following an advertisement in the Darlington Together Magazine in April.
8. Councillors Crumbie, Crudass and Wright will sit on the Panel to consider the applications and make the necessary appointments.

Child Poverty Review Group – Final Report

9. We have completed our review of Child Poverty and presented our findings and recommendations to all Scrutiny Members at the meeting held on 22 June, 2015.
10. Members undertook this review to examine child poverty and vulnerable children.
11. The Review Group met on six occasions and received a presentation from the Regional Child Poverty Action Plan Co-ordinator on the North East Child Poverty Commission Report: Local Authorities, Local Duties and Local Action.
12. Although there is no longer a requirement to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, it is considered good practice to still produce a strategic document across partners and the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-2017 'The Best Start in Life for Every Child and Young Person' identifies how to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) priority of 'the best start in life for every child'.
13. We concluded that to reduce child poverty there is a clear need to narrow the gap and give young people wider ambition to have the best start in life however this is an ongoing issue and there is a need to look at the major services to address.
14. Results have shown that the Pupil Premium Funding within schools has not maintained a narrowing of the gap and it continues to widen. Therefore it is the view of this Review Group that resources need to be focused on family support and parenting programmes.
15. Part of our recommendations include continued publicity of existing services and raise awareness and to continue to work with the Darlington Partnership on the wider Inclusion Strategy to reduce child poverty.
16. The recommendations of the Review Group were approved by Scrutiny Members and it was agreed to forward the findings and recommendations of the Review Group to Cabinet.
17. We will continue to monitor child poverty and request updates on the work of the Darlington Partnership on the Inclusion Strategy.

Special Educational Needs and Disability : 0-25 Years – Update

18. Following on from a report received in November, 2014 we received a further update on the implementation of the national reforms associated with 0-25 Special Education Needs (SEN) System.
19. The Children and Families Act which came into force on 1 September 2014 provides the legislation for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

20. As a national pathfinder and regional champion providing a role of support for other Local Authorities, Darlington has been testing the reforms and identifying new ways of working since early 2012.
21. Julia Newton, from the Parent-Carer Forum also attended the meeting to outline the work of the Forum, which is hosted by Darlington Association on Disability to listen to the views of parents and carers.
22. Parent-Carer Forum has, over the last twelve months, carried out work on speech and therapy services; and preparing young people for adulthood by exploring housing options to development and meet their needs.
23. Julia emphasised that Members play a vital role in passing on the views of families within their wards and that all Members should be encouraged to do so.

Members Toolkit

24. The Engagement Manager gave us details of the Members Toolkit which is being developed as a web based tool to support Members in their community roles.
25. It is intended that the toolkit will include induction information and Council Strategies and we have appointed Councillor Crudass to join other Scrutiny, Cabinet , new and existing and rural Members on a working group to assist development of the Toolkit.

Councillor Eleanor Lister
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee