
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.

Performance Management

2. We continue to examine 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'.
3. We looked in particular at the graphical data relating to the percentage of all infants due a 6-8 week check that are totally or partially breastfed which was under the national average but was slightly better than the North East; Hospital Admissions caused by Unintentional and Deliberate Injuries to Children (0-4 years of age), (4-14) and (15-24), which showed higher levels in Darlington compared to the North East and Members had already raised this as a concern and were interested to know if there was any underlying trend in Darlington compared to the Tees Valley; and Children looked after per 10,000 population under 18 which was showing a steady increase but similar to the North East average but higher than the England average.
4. We were concerned at the average of the percentage of children looked after who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months and who had had their teeth checked by a dentist and had an annual health assessment during the previous twelve months had shown an under performance and agreed that this should be an area of work to focus on in future to make improvements.
5. Members also noted that the number of Looked After Children was currently higher than the North East and National average and we examined the possible reasons for this.
6. On a positive note the percentage of children newly looked after in the year, and still looked after at 31 March who were placed more than 20 miles from their home address from which first placed was showing improved performance; and the percentage of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (within two years of the previous plans end date) was also showing improved performance on last year.
7. We also gave consideration as to how best to receive this statistical data in future to enable us to challenge and ultimately achieve better outcomes for children and young people. We also felt that there was a need for improved benchmarking

among the neighbouring authorities and that targets around key indicators should be reintroduced and included in the Improvement Plan.

Improvement Plan and the Role of Scrutiny Following the Outcomes of the Ofsted Inspection

8. The Interim Director – Children’s Services gave us a presentation on the recent Ofsted inspection which had taken place in respect of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers and the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board, which had resulted in an overall judgement of inadequate and requiring improvement for the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board.
9. Members of this Scrutiny have met with Red Quadrant, the Consultancy Company which has been appointed by the Department for Education (DfE) to work alongside the authority following the publication of the Ofsted report into services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
10. The inspection covered a broad area of operational practice in Children’s Services and although the overall judgement was inadequate, we acknowledge that some areas of service had been judged as good and others improving.
11. We examined the headline findings from the inspection, which highlighted a number of strengths in some areas of service to build on, together with the 18 recommendations for improvement, immediate actions that have already been taken by the authority and the proposed timetable for monitoring and improvement.
12. A further Ofsted Inspection is expected within 12 to 18 months.
13. With regard to the role of Scrutiny, we discussed what we need to develop and assist our role in scrutinising the services provided and how to question and challenge these services in future with the aim of overall improvement for the outcomes of children and young people.

Work Programme

14. 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.
15. Taking into account the Improvement Plan we have agreed that our work programme needs to reflect the requirement to make improvements and how we challenge and scrutinise the services in future, therefore it was agreed to examine the existing work programme in more detail to re-shape in line with the improvements to be made to the services for children and young people.

Troubled Families Programme

16. In August 2014 the Government announced the expansion of the Troubled Families Programme to support vulnerable families with multiple, complex and long standing problems. The current five year programme, which runs from 2015 to 2020, includes a commitment that nationally 400,000 families and in Darlington 950 families would be identified.
17. In Darlington we have a 'dedicated team' model which was built on the already existing Family Intervention Team, who work with families to make positive and sustainable change.
18. The Team is multi agency including a Team Manager, Senior Practitioner, Child Care Social Workers, a Mental Health Social Worker, Child Sexual Exploitation Project workers (Barnardos), Therapeutic Social Workers, DWP Secondee, PCSO, Troubled Family Analyst and Family Support Workers.
19. The programme has enabled the Family Intervention Team to change the way services are delivered to these families and the Whole Family Approach has been embedded into service delivery.
20. In the first six months of the extended programme the team has identified and is working with 150 families and have already met payment by results on 14 families (including three back to work claims).

Councillor Eleanor Lister
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee