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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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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. On 2 November 2016 we met with Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality to discuss and scope the review of services for families with children with disabilities 0-3 years. As part of our investigations we intend to contact the various stakeholders and visit Harewood Hill Lodge to discuss the operation of the service.

**Darlington Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015/16**

4. The Independent Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board attended the meeting to present the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board for 2015/16 and Members made comments thereon.
5. All Local Safeguarding Children Boards are required to produce an Annual Report to account for the Board's activities and to assess the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in place within the local area.
6. The Boards strategic priorities for 2015/16 were multi-agency safeguarding leadership; standards for multi-agency working; case review, learning and development; and maintaining an overview of the safeguarding need of children and young people in Darlington.
7. For next year the Board will base its priorities on learning from the previous year and the Ofsted recommendations and areas identified so far include strengthening of multi-agency communication and engagement; strengthening the performance management and quality assurance arrangements; and also to strengthen the serious case review and notifiable incidents process.

8. As a Scrutiny we feel that we can assist the Safeguarding Board deliver positive outcomes for young people when developing strategies and good practice for joint working across all agencies.
9. We were pleased to see the analysis of attendance by the multi agencies as it is imperative that Board members are accountable ; and we welcomed the focus on challenge within the annual report and to take from the learning how to evidence the effectiveness of arrangements in place and for Members to play an important role in this challenge.

### **Early Help Services – Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Targets**

10. We received an overview of the progress of the MTFP proposal to review the Early Help services to continue an Early Help offer that meets the needs of the families and young people in Darlington and improve the outcomes for those children and young people whilst reducing costs of services in other areas.
11. The proposal to re-align all the Early Help services including Children Centre's, Early Intervention Locality Teams, the Specialist Family Support teams into a service under a single management structure is progressing well with a Head of Service management structure in place from August 2016.
12. Consultation sessions with staff and partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector, including schools took place between July and September however, it was felt that the voice of the schools was not well represented in these sessions therefore a questionnaire has been circulated to all Head teachers and designated safeguarding leads and this has received a 70 per cent response which is more encouraging.
13. All views of staff, partners and service users will be utilised when the model is fully developed and further public consultation will be carried out for the Children Centre delivery model for Darlington.
14. In order to ensure that the strategy is fit for purpose an Early Help Reference Group has been established to review the strategy.
15. The staffing model for the whole service is in its final stages and an Early Help Co-ordinator was appointed and commenced employment in June 2016.
16. We are pleased to note the progress to date and that the project is on time to deliver its 2016/17 savings target of £170,000 and indications are that the 2017/18 savings of £700,000 may also be achieved.
17. We were also pleased to note that following the audit of existing assessments which had revealed services were not always family focused, training programmes have been re-designed to try and address this.
18. This Scrutiny will be continuing to monitor progress of the Early Help Services remodel.

## **Childcare Sufficiency Review 2016/17**

19. 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 and officers report annually to this Scrutiny on how their duty is being met to secure sufficient childcare for children and to make this report available and accessible to parents.
20. The Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan contains targets aimed at improving 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.
21. Supply data for 2015/16 shows that the education and childcare market in Darlington remains fairly stable; however feedback from the childcare demand questionnaire circulated between July 2015 and June 2016 has shown that there again remains an unmet demand for affordable, after-school and holiday childcare provision including accessible and appropriate childcare for children, particularly for older children (over 8 years) and young people with disabilities (up to the age of 18 years).
22. The high costs and lack of flexibility of childcare remains a significant barrier for parents in Darlington however, the picture regarding unmet childcare in Darlington does mirror the national situation.
23. Members noted the findings of the 2016/17 Childcare Sufficiency Review and the Local Authority's 2016/17 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan. We will continue to monitor annually.

### **Meetings**

24. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the 'Improving the Leaving Care System' conference organised by the North East Children in Care Council.

**Councillor Chris Taylor**  
**Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**