
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.

Accessibility Strategy – Children’s Services (Special Education Needs and Disability)

3. We gave consideration to the draft Children’s Services Accessibility Strategy and the Equality Impact Assessment.
4. It is a requirement of all local authorities under the Equality Act 2010 to prepare an accessibility strategy in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body and sets out how we intend to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school’s curriculum, improve the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and benefits, facilities and services and to improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils.
5. The new Strategy will be reviewed every three years and will provide information and guidance to all maintained schools but also could, where practicable, be extended to all educational establishments in the area.
6. The development of the new Strategy will link to the Local Offer and explains the legal requirements and the Council’s actions to meet them.
7. All schools, including the academies were included in the consultation period and have been made aware of the Strategy and will be able to access the final training plan that will be put in place should they wish.
8. Members agreed that it although the statutory responsibility is for this authority to support all of its maintained schools it should be stated in the Strategy that as well as maintained schools and academies, sixth-form colleges and further education 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.

9. The draft Accessibility Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for approval in due course.

Children at Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation

10. We received an overview of the services delivered for children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE).
11. Recent changes to the definition of CSE by the Home Office now includes reference to the use of technology, CSE does not always involve physical contact and a new reference to sexual exploitation even if the sexual activity appears to be consensual.
12. Barnardos provide the services in Darlington and have done since January 2011, funded by this authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner.
13. We examined the processes in place when a young person is referred to the service and the assessment of their level of risk and looked at various graphical referral data; and how we work close with the Education and Raise Awareness of Sexual Exploitation (ERASE) team.
14. 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. Less than five of these referrals had been made in respect of a male young person although research tells us boys and young men are equally at risk and can be victims of child sexual exploitation.
15. Research has also shown that there are links between CSE and missing from home or care and this will be addressed, along with the risk to young boys and men in future work.
16. A future challenge for CSE will be 'sexting' and the work with Barnardos and schools will be essential in raising awareness of the dangers of 'sexting' and to put in place preventative measures. This has also been highlighted in the new definition of CSE which reflects the new emerging pressures on our young people.
17. We will continue to monitor the position in Darlington.

Meetings

18. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:
 - (a) Attended a meeting of the Children's Services Improvement board.
 - (b) Attended a meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.

Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee