
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.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND)

3. We received a presentation from the Assistant Director Commissioning Performance and Transformation and the Lead Officer Learning and Skills on Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) and the development of a strategy for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion 2017/20.
4. SEND refers to all children or young people who have a special educational need and/or a disability and the SEND Reforms which came into operation in September 2014 set out what local authorities must have regard to and linking to specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 not to treat pupils/students with SEND less favourably and to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting pupils/students with SEND at a substantial disadvantage.
5. A Strategy for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion 2017-2020 has been developed which links with other documents including Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan; and work is being undertaken collaboratively with other organisations to deliver the Strategy.
6. SEND inspections by Ofsted and CQC commenced in May 2016 and are to be completed by May 2021 across the local area and Key Lines of Enquiry have been identified from inspections to date and self-assessments and action plans have been devised to address areas for development including the role of elected Members in relation to SEND and what the Reforms mean for the local area.
7. Members noted in particular the increase in the number of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and challenged the reasons for the increase and whether this was linked to improved diagnosis or whether more young people were presenting with ASD; and if there was a cross over in the figures for pupils with speech, language and communication needs.

8. We received data on SEND pupils by primary need but questioned how early years children were being assessed and agreed that it would be beneficial to invite the Head of Early Years to attend a future meeting to advise us further.
9. Members also agreed that as well as receiving facts and figures it would be beneficial to see the outcomes for those families who receive support and to examine ways to encourage the academies to provide some evidence of improvement also.

Children and Young Peoples Plan 2017/22

10. We considered the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2017/22. The production of this plan is no longer a statutory requirement but it is considered best practice for delivering outcomes for children and young people and for setting priorities for the medium term. The Plan also forms part of the Council's Policy Framework requiring approval by Council.
11. A wide range of stakeholders have been included in the engagement activity, including children and young people and the feedback has been used to inform the final Plan.
12. The Plan has four ambitions which are to ensure that all children and young people are safe from any perceived harm; improving the health and wellbeing of all babies, children and young people; improving achievement and academic attainment for all children and young people; and empowering families to be resilient and to achieve economic wellbeing. The Plan also lists the priority actions for the next five years including action plans subject to annual review by the Multi-Agency Steering Group.
13. We were advised that hate crime, mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people and cyber bullying were areas that had been identified by the young people as areas of concern and will be included in the action plan and we agreed that the action plan will be a useful tool to form our work programme for areas of concern.

Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2016-17

14. We received the Annual Independent Reviewing Officer report produced by the Children's Safeguarding Unit which provides an overview of the work by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service in relation to Looked After Children, including the Dispute Resolution Process as required by the statutory guidance.
15. The report provided an overview of performance of the Unit, activities and functions, training and advice given to professionals and identified areas of good practice as well as highlighting areas for further development including improvements to contact with young people, including those who live outside the Borough between reviews; increased participation and attendance of young people and their families in child protection conferences; and an increase permanent appointments which reduced the need for agency staff cover.

Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2017/18

16. We considered performance against key performance indicators for quarter 1 (April to June) 2017/18.
17. The report highlighted where Children and Young People were performing well and where there was a need to improve. It also contained the Children's Social Care Monthly Performance and Quality Assurance Report for Quarter 1.
18. We were pleased to note the improvement in the percentage of newly looked after children for whom an initial health assessment had been completed within 20 working days which demonstrated the effectiveness of Senior Management's collaborative work with partners in Health
19. We were, however, concerned at the percentage of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and agreed that the target of 33 per cent was too low and that the authority should be demonstrating higher aspirations for these young people. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Meetings

20. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the meeting of the Children's Services Improvement Board on 8 September.

Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee