
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.

Children and Young People Public Health Overview 2017

3. There are a number of means to assess the need of services to improve health and wellbeing of local children and young people and we received a report to provide us with information about the Darlington Children and Young People's Profile 2017; results of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey 2016; and the Darlington Children and Young People Healthy Weight Action Plan.
4. The Child Health Profile 2017 profile showed that the majority of children's experience of health and wellbeing in Darlington was generally good with 19 of the 32 reported indicators being better or similar compared to England; and there have been some improvements from the previous years, including the continued decrease in the under 18 conception rate and smoking status at time of delivery has shown a significant improvement.
5. The Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2016 is a further tool in understanding local need and gathers and analyses information from children and young people in Darlington about their attitudes and behaviours across a range of health related topics. Surveys were conducted in secondary and primary schools and the key messages from the 2016 survey can be found at the following link <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/children-and-young-people/healthy-lifestyle-surveys/>.
6. We received an updated on the 0-19 Child Health Service contract which commenced in April 2016 with Harrogate and District Foundation Trust to deliver the Healthy Child Programme in Darlington.
7. We also received an outline of the Childhood Healthy Weight Action Plan, a multi-agency plan developed with a range of stakeholders, including families and children, to implement the national action plan 'Childhood Obesity: A Plan for

Action 2016' locally and identify and co-ordinate local actions to tackle overweight and obesity in childhood.

8. We are concerned at Darlington's obesity rates for children in Reception and Year 6 which is above the national average and the percentage of children aged 5 years with decayed, missing or filled teeth which is significantly worse than the England average, so it is our intention to undertake a joint review with Members of Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to examine childhood obesity/oral health care and mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people.

Childcare Sufficiency Review 2017/18

9. We examined the findings of the 2017/18 Childcare Sufficiency Review and the authority's 2017/18 Action Plan as a result of the findings.
10. Local authorities are required by the Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities March 2017' to ensure sufficient childcare as far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children; and to report annually to elected Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents.
11. Factors which affect childcare demand include the number of parents in work in the Borough and recent trends showed an improving picture regarding skills and productivity of Darlington residents with an increase in the employment rate and a reduction in the unemployment rate. The number of regeneration projects and availability of appropriate family housing and residential development in the Borough also affect childcare demand.
12. Supply data for 2017 revealed that the early education and childcare market in Darlington has been fairly stable; however there is an unmet demand for accessible after-school provision to meet the needs of working parents; and an unmet demand for affordable, accessible holiday provision.
13. From the 85 settings, schools and child minders providing funded places for two year olds, 75 are Ofsted rated 'outstanding' or 'good', 8 were awaiting their Ofsted Inspection following registration and two were 'met'. Work is still on going to increase the number of places available with child minders; and to increase the number of funded two year old places available along the North Road corridor.
14. With regard to sufficiency of Free, Flexible Entitlement (FFE) places for three and four year olds, it was reported that Darlington continues to have a strong private and voluntary childcare sector of 90 providers across the Borough, including private day nurseries, pre-schools, nursery schools, maintained and academy nursery units and with child minders.

15. From September 2017 every local authority in England has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of 30 hours early education and childcare places for eligible three and four year olds and there will be approximately 820 children resident in the Borough eligible for 30 hours childcare. We also monitor 30 hours demand in rural areas where additional housing is being built.
16. We also had concerns regarding the Disability Access Fund and inclusive childcare for younger children and agreed that feedback regarding unmet demand specifically for disabled children and young people could be ascertained via a parental questionnaire distributed via routes such as Darlington Association on Disability.

Darlington Strategy for Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) 2017-2020

17. We gave our consideration to the content of the draft Special Educational Needs and/or Disability Strategy (SEND) 2017-2020 aimed at delivering improved outcomes for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
18. The Strategy was jointly developed by a range of stakeholders from education, health and social care, as well as parents and carers from the local Parent Carer Forum and Darlington Association on Disability. An Equalities Impact Assessment was also carried out as part of the Strategy development to consider the impacts of the Strategy on disabled children and young people and no negative impacts had been anticipated.
19. Monitoring of the impact of the SEND Strategy will be managed through the SEND Steering Group and progress will be reported annually to the Health and Well Being Board. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will regulate SEND through a framework of inspection of local areas and it is anticipated that all local areas will be inspected by 2021.
20. The most common type of primary need was moderate learning difficulty which equated to 22.27 per cent of the total number of children and young people with SEND followed by social, emotional and mental health at 20.90 per cent, and speech, language and communication needs at 20.77 per cent.
21. We discussed the current Ofsted grading of 'inadequate' at the Beaumont Hill Academy, special school provision and the subsequent cap on the number of children being able to be admitted to the school and the overall lack of settings for young people with high end need which was an issue nationally. It has been agreed to have a Member briefing to provide us with further information on the SEND position in Darlington and to update us further on the position at Beaumont Hill Academy and to look at the financial impact of SEND.
22. We also discussed the suggestion for a risk register within the Strategy and agreed that this would be beneficial to provide reassurance to both the SEND Steering Group and the Health and Well Being Board.

Youth Employment

23. We received an update on the current position on youth employment and the Youth Employment Initiative in progressing young people into education, employment and training.
24. Participation in education and training up to 18 and apprenticeships is rising and based on data from August 2017 92.30 per cent of Year 12 young people and 90.06 per cent of Year 13 young people were in learning; however youth employment remains an issue and the claimant count for the 18-24 year old group has almost doubled the national average.
25. The August 2017 benefit claimant count showed that 6.9 per cent of Darlington 18 to 24 year olds were claiming unemployment benefits compared to 4.8 per cent in the North East. We discussed the potential reasons for this increase which includes a lack of aspiration with the young people and poor attitudes to working. This is being addressed the Tees Valley Combined Authority to develop better labour market information for schools and the Economic Growth Team in determining the reasons for this increase.
26. The Tees Valley Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) which commenced in mid-2016 aims to support 16-29 year olds into employment and training along with its three main delivery partners in Darlington being the Council, Morrison Trust and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. We were pleased to note that 303 Darlington residents had started on the programme of which 113 had already progressed into education, employment and training.
27. We discussed the current position regarding youth employment and are concerned that despite overall employment being above the national average, youth employment remained an issue in Darlington and were advised that this is to be addressed by the Tees Valley Combined Authority. We also discussed apprenticeships and the government employer incentive of £1,000 for those taking on 16-18 year old apprenticeships.

Sufficiency of Children's Services Social Work Workforce

28. We received an update on progress to improve the social work workforce within Darlington Children's Services and since the last report to this Scrutiny we were pleased to learn that significant progress had been made to improve the sufficiency and stability of the social work workforce and as at 30 September 2017, the overall vacancy rate was 17 per cent compared to 29 per cent at the end of October 2016.
29. There had also been a continued approach to maintaining manageable caseloads and the workforce drive has encouraged appointments of 10.94 FTE agency workers into permanent posts across the Assessment and Safeguarding Teams, Children's Access Point Team, Looked After Through Care Team and Independent Review Team, thereby reducing the agency rate to 16 per cent at 30 September 2017.

30. Recruitment actions and the drive to promote Darlington as a place to live and work continues and various actions to retain the workforce have been introduced including a new IT system and upgraded equipment allowing social workers to actively work with children and families from within a range of settings and a review of the flexi time scheme arrangement.

Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee