
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.
3. We had the first meeting of the Joint Review with Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to examine Childhood Obesity in Darlington and the associated links with the low take up of dental health and associated mental health issues in young people in Darlington.
4. A further meeting has been arranged for 31 January 2018 to discuss Dental Health practice in Darlington with the Primary Care Commissioning Manager (Dental) NHS England.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2017/18

5. We examined the performance against key performance indicators for quarter 2 July to September 2017/18.
6. The overall picture of performance is good with improvements made in the following areas:
 - (a) contacts completed within one working day which is at 98 per cent and exceeding the target of 95 per cent;
 - (b) quarter 2 percentage for assessments completed within 45 workings days was 94 per cent above the target of 90 per cent and higher than our statistical neighbours;
 - (c) 100 per cent of child protection reviews were completed within timescale;
 - (d) 94 per cent of statutory visits for Looked After Children were completed within timescale above the target of 90 per cent; and

- (e) At the end of quarter 2, 29.2 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) which is better than the target of 30 per cent and a reduction of 8.3 per cent when compared with quarter 1.
7. Highlighted areas for improvement include:
- (a) the number of re-referrals within 12 months of a previous referral, which was higher than the target of 20 per cent and higher than National, Regional and Statistical benchmarks; and
 - (b) performance for three or more placement moves was 12 per cent of looked after children, which was higher than statistical neighbours, the North East average and England average.
8. Members also noted that 34 per cent of Looked After Children had an up to date dental check which was higher than at the same point in 2016/17 and this will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis through a dental tracker.
9. We discussed the support that is in place for the young people during any breakdown of placement; clarification of 'data cleansing' since the introduction of Liquidlogic and the transfer of data from the 'Care First' system and we sought reassurance that the data cleansing was subject to tight controls to ensure accuracy.
10. We further discussed the need to report to such a high level of detail on a monthly basis now that improvements had been made and we were advised that this was necessary until all improvements are embedded and consistent, and that in future and where appropriate performance will be reported by exception.

Placement Stability for Looked After Children (LAC)

11. We continue to monitor the stability and duration of placements of children who are Looked After and were encouraged to learn that the performance for three or more placement moves during the last 12 months has continued to improve and heading towards the target of 10 per cent.
12. Regarding performance for the percentage of LAC aged under 16 at 31 March who had been Looked After continuously for at least two years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with previous placement together last for at least two years has also continued to improve with an increase from 51.6 per cent in April 2017 to 57.1 per cent in September 2017. Darlington's target is 65 per cent.
13. A new Placement Stability Strategy was introduced in June 2017 which continues to be embedded into daily practice and the effectiveness of the Strategy is beginning to provide a level of assurance given the positive direction of performance.
14. We discussed the issues with some social workers not understanding how to code placements correctly when inputting into Liquidlogic and where advised that all

social workers had been re-trained and received specific guidance on correct coding and confirmed that there was now accurate reporting of data.

15. We also discussed the involvement of schools in placement breakdowns and were advised that the Head of Assessment, Care Planning and Looked After Children coordinates all placement moves and has close contact with schools through the Team Around the School approach to highlight to social workers potential breakdowns of placement.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

16. As with all other Scrutiny Committees, we have looked at Cabinet's proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan. We were supportive of the proposals and particularly discussed the proposed allocation within the Futures Fund of one-off funding towards Neighbourhood Renewal in relation to assisting Looked After Children (LAC) to become 'work ready' after the Council as Corporate Parent for LAC recognises the inequality of opportunity for these children to gain employment.

Meetings

17. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the PHSE Conference on 23 November 2017.

Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee