

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Monday, 10 December 2018

**PRESENT** – Councillors C Taylor (Chair), Crudass, Mrs Culley, Curry, L Hughes, Kelly and Mills

**STATUTORY CO-OPTees** – None

**NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees** – John Armitage

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Lister, Storr and Wright,

**ABSENT** – Councillors Malcolm Frank, Paul Rickeard, Maura Regan, Tim Fisher, Nick Lindsay, Sajna Miah and Janet Woodcock

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors C L B Hughes

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Jane Kochanowski (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Sharon Raine (Head of Performance and Transformation), Allison Hill (Democratic Officer), Tony Murphy (Head of Education and Inclusion), Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer) and Davies (Early Years Project Officer)

### **CYP25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

### **CYP26 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2018**

**MINUTES** - Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 October 2018.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

### **CYP27 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REVIEW 2018/19**

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the findings of the 2018/19 Childcare Sufficiency Review and to set out the authority's 2018/19 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan (also previously circulated).

Local authorities are required by the Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities June 2018' 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.

It was reported that factors which affect childcare demand included 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; regeneration projects; the availability of appropriate family housing and residential development in the Borough; and the number of new dwellings all affecting childcare demand.

Supply data for 2018 revealed that the early education and childcare market in Darlington remained fairly stable; however feedback from a pre-school childcare gap analysis carried out in Summer 2018 showed that there was a latent demand for childcare in the borough with cost being the main barrier to high take up of private hours. Parents also would welcome more flexibility to accommodate their work and training arrangements at short notice. Analysis of the overall volume of supply showed that there was sufficient capacity to meet demand; and parent and provider feedback also suggested that there was sufficient capacity to meet overall demand for 30 Hour places.

It was also reported that there was evidence to indicate that providers were under increasing financial pressure with several settings reporting that their operating costs were higher than funding rates; financial pressures were also impacting on the capacity for some providers to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities; and feedback from parents and employers called for greater flexibility and lower childcare costs.

To enable the local childcare market and schools to 'plug the childcare gaps' identified, it was reported that the childcare sufficiency data will be presented at the Spring 2019 Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers' Network meeting and will be sent to schools and presented at the Spring 2019 Schools Chair of Governors' Briefing.

The local authority will also advertise the right of parents and childcare providers to request the delivery of childcare from school sites (DfE 'Rights to Request', introduced in September 2016).

Members discussed in particular the unmet demand for after-school provision and holiday childcare and the unmet demand for places for those children with special educational needs and disabilities; the lack of financial support from employers to help employees with childcare needs; the rising cost of childcare; the reduction in schools being able to provide extra curricula activities after school as a result of reduce funding to schools; and the submission by Whinfield Primary School to the Department for Education's School Nurseries Capital Fund for a 52 full time equivalent place nursery with wrap around at the start and end of the day and on-site holiday provision.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That Members note the information and findings of the 2018/19 Childcare Sufficiency Review.

(b) That Members note the Local Authority's 2018/19 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan and to continue to monitor on an annual basis.

The Director of Children and Adult Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

The submitted report provided Quarter 2 (July to September) performance information in line with an indicator set agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group and subsequently by each individual Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report highlighted where Children and Young People were performing well and where there was a need to improve. It was also highlighted that where indicators are reported annually quarterly updates will not be available.

It was highlighted that 97.8 per cent of contacts were completed within 24 working hours, an increase of 25.4 percent compared to last year; 93.6 per cent who had a Review Health Assessment due received their assessment within the required month; 98 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days; 100 per cent Child Protection reviews had been completed within the required timescales; 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection Plan and Children Looked After have an allocated Social Worker; 98.7 per cent of Looked After reviews were completed within timescale; 90.1 per cent of statutory visits of Looked After Children were completed in timescale, which was above the target of 90 per cent; 8.7 per cent of Looked After Children had three or more placement moves within the last 12 months, an improvement of 3.3 per cent when compared to the end of Quarter 2 2017/18 and in line with benchmark data for statistical neighbours at 9.5 per cent and the national average at 10 per cent; and 25 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The areas highlighted for improvement in Quarter 2 included the percentage of dental health checks completed which was currently at 78.5 per cent (73 out of 93), which showed good progress from Quarter 1 however was still an area to undergo close scrutiny; and 80.4 per cent of child protection statutory visits were completed within timescale at the end of Quarter 2 which was slightly behind Quarter 1 performance at 86 per cent and will continue to be closely monitored and managed.

Members discussed the increase in demand for Children and Young People services which has continued to increase from Quarter 1 and the possible reasons for this added pressure on the service.

Members also discussed the number of children and young people from out of the area and that this authority was the highest importer of Looked After Children from other areas because of the number of private children's homes and independent fostering places within the authority. As the number of private homes was increasing Members agreed that this and the planning restrictions imposed on the setting up of private homes may be an area for further examination by this Scrutiny.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services advised Members that the increase in the number of Looked After Children was an area that officers were monitoring closely and the Edge of Care wrap around support that was due to go live in January had a number of projects to actively work towards reducing the numbers.

**RESOLVED** – That the performance information provided for Quarter 2 2018/19 be noted.

## **CYP29 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2017/20**

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on progress to date against the delivery of the Special Educational Needs Accessibility Strategy 2017/2020 and the actions required to comply with legislation.

All local authorities are required by Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 to prepare an accessibility strategy in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body and was approved by Council in 2017.

The Strategy sets out how the Local Authority will work with schools to increase the extent to which disabled children and young people can participate in the school curriculum; improve the physical environment of schools; and improve delivery of information to pupils with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

It was reported that although the strategy was in relation to the authority's maintained schools the Council had developed a Traded Service for Academies providing advice and guidance through working with schools to use the audit tool and in delivery of bespoke training.

The submitted report also outlined some key messages received from supporting and guiding educational settings in their development of Accessibility Plans which underpin the strategy.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That Members note the updated Accessibility Strategy.

(b) That Members note the progress in implementing the Strategy and the steps to support schools embed accessibility further.

## **CYP30 SEND STRATEGY AND FUNDING CONSULTATION REVIEW GROUP**

The Chair of this Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (previously circulated) to present the findings and recommendations of the Review Group established to examine the proposals and submit comment on the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Strategy and Funding and Travel Assistance Policy consultation process.

It was reported that some Members of this Scrutiny Committee had attended the various public consultation events that had been organised during the consultation period of 17 October to 28 November 2018 and Members met on 26 October 2018 to discuss the feedback received at the various consultation events and to propose a Scrutiny response to the proposals in the Strategy.

Members of the Review Group concluded that there was support for the proposals in the SEND Strategy and Funding from both parents and Members, however Members felt that there were some improvements that could be made to services for children

and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The main concern of Members was the lack of local resource bases and agreed that now was an appropriate time to review this provision which was last commissioned in 2010 and also proposed a key person responsible for accountability and communication between parents and schools.

The Head of Education and Inclusion discussed the recommendations in detail with Members and confirmed that they would be included as part of the consultation on the strategic plan for delivering better outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and proposed amendments to the application of the High Needs Block in relation to those children and young people.

The Cabinet Member with the Children and Young People Portfolio also acknowledged and supported the work and recommendations of the Review Group.

**RESOLVED** – That the recommendations below be approved by Scrutiny Members and referred to Cabinet as part of the overall consultation on the Strategy:

- (a) There is adequate monitoring of the funding allocated, especially within the Academies.
- (b) Consideration be given to the appointment of a Parental Liaison Officer.
- (c) That more Resource Bases are commissioned in Darlington mainstream provision.
- (d) The need for a Portage Service in Darlington be re-examined.
- (e) The working arrangements with the health organisations and CAMHS be improved.

### **CYP31 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the current work programme for this Scrutiny Committee.

The work programme has been reviewed and revised for the Municipal Year 2018/19 and has been linked to performance indicators from the Performance Management Framework to provide robust and accurate data for Members to use when considering topics and the work they wish to undertake.

**RESOLVED** – That the current status of the work programme be noted.