

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 7 September 2020

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WAS NOT A FORMALLY CONSTITUTED MEETING

PRESENT – Councillors C L B Hughes (Chair), Bartch, Mrs Culley, Ali, Bell, Crudass, L Hughes, Lister, Lucas, Renton and Snedker

STATUTORY CO-OPTES – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTES – Nick Lindsay and John Armitage

APOLOGIES – Malcolm Frank and Carly Spence and Tim Fisher

ABSENT – Maura Regan, Glenis Harrison and Janet Woodcock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Dulston (Stronger Communities Portfolio)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Sharon Raine (Head of Performance and Transformation), Allison Hill (Democratic Officer), Joanne Stoddart (Head of Assessment , Care Planning and Looked After Through Care), Paul Richardson (Head of Skills and Employability), Martin Graham (Head of Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement), Ken Ross (Public Health Principal) and Tony Murphy (Head of Education and Inclusion)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

MINUTES

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 June and 13 July 2020.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND PUBLIC HEALTH - POST-COVID-19 PRIORITIES

Ken Ross, the Public Health Specialist gave a presentation to Members on public health and Post Covid-19 priorities.

The presentation outlined the government's obesity strategy launched in July 2020 recognising obesity as a significant risk factor for Covid-19 and which also complements the Darlington Healthy Weight Plan, a whole system approach to providing an environment that supports healthy choice; highlighted how schools were being supported with mental health issues including the successful Trailblazer bid for school based mental health support through transition, focus on children and young people in years 4-8 from September 2021 and the Emotional Health and Resilience Nurse commissioned from the Harrogate and District Foundation Trust.

The presentation also highlighted how the 0-19 Service had at the start of lockdown changed its style of delivery and prioritised families to ensure the most vulnerable had contact by the service which was delivered by various virtual means and the service

had received positive feedback from parents and families who had accessed the service during this time.

Regarding healthy eating Members discussed with the Public Health Specialist and the representatives of the Primary Schools Forum and the 11-19 Partnership what was being offered in schools for lunches, packed lunches, the voucher scheme and free school meals; how to tackle an obesogenic society; and the mental health support within schools and specialized mental health support.

Members thanked Ken Ross for his presentation and also extended thanks to to his team for their work throughout the pandemic.

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to set out the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual report for 2019/20.

The submitted report provided Members with an overview of the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service in relation to Looked After Children, including the Dispute Resolution Process and an overview of the performance of the unit in a range of responsibilities.

The submitted report also provided information on the role of the IRO's and statutory and non-statutory functions that the service is responsible for; detailed staffing levels and caseloads; provided statistical information relating to the number of Looked After Children and number and timeliness of Looked After Reviews; the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans and timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences; the Quality Assurance function; and highlighted the actions scheduled for 2020/21.

Members discussed the report and in particular how Independent Reviewing Officers are forging relationships with Members in view of the suggestions made in the recent Ofsted report; the caseload figure in Darlington of 68 children which remains in the upper limit of the statutory guidance of 70; and the importance of full participation of Looked After Children in their reviews and contact with the IRO.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 4 2019/20

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

The submitted report provided Quarter 4 (January to March) 2019/20 performance information in line with an indicator set agreed by the Monitoring and Co-ordination 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 outlined that where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

It was highlighted that 17.2 per cent of re-referrals were repeated within 12 months, which was better than the target of 18 per cent; 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection Plan and 100 per cent of Children Looked After had been allocated to a qualified social worker; Year to date, 0.6 per cent of children who had their Child Protection Plan (CPP) ceased, had been subject to a CPP for 2 years or more and continues to remain below the target of 5 per cent; 89.0 per cent of statutory looked after children visits had been completed within the timescale and performance against this indicator had continued to improve throughout the year; 73.6 per cent of looked after children aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years), had been in their current placement continuously for at least two years; 94.3 per cent of looked after children who were due a review health check received them within the required timescale; 90.2 per cent of looked after children who were due a review dental check had received them within the required timescale; and 28.1 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The areas highlighted for focus were in respect of referrals screened and completed within one day which was slightly below the target of 90 per cent at 86.8 per cent; 89.5 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the Strategy meeting being held/Section 47 being initiated; timeliness of assessments was 88.7 per cent, just below target of 90 per cent, however it was highlighted that it was important that social workers have time to undertake good quality direct work and was under constant monitoring; 92.0 per cent of statutory child protection visits had been completed within 15 working days, with 79.6 per cent completed within the internal aspirational target of 10 working days; and the rate of looked after children had increased and was currently 120.1 per 10,000 population (270 children), compared to 117.2 per 10,000 population (264) last year.

Members discussed in particular the looked after children who are transferred into the system from another authority and how they are dealt with; use of the Early Help Service to support families prior to statutory intervention and also the Strengthening Families Programme, which Members requested further information on at a future date.

Members also expressed their concerns at the percentage of Children in Care that had had three or more placements within the previous 12 months and the number of Children in Care refusing dental appointments and health assessments and the possible reasons for this.

DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer, April 2019 to March 2020 and to highlight the required actions for April 2020 to March 2021.

The submitted report outlined the Designated Officer's function, in line with national guidance and highlighted that all organisations working with children in Darlington are required to have policies and procedures in place on what their organisation should

do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children. These policies and procedures are in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency procedures.

Members discussed in particular the increase in the number of referrals in this reporting period explained by the high number of allegations from a school for children with Special Educational Needs which accounted for 19 per cent of the total number of allegations, mostly relating to the use of restraint and the Action Plan that had been put in place with the Safeguarding Officer to address this issue and what contact had been made with other authorities who have children attending the setting.

LEARNING AND SKILLS ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the performance of the Learning and Skills Service for the academic year 2019/20.

It was reported that the Learning and Skills Service continues to perform well with a 'Good' Ofsted grade whilst supporting some of the most vulnerable adults, young people and families in Darlington; and have put in place further checks and controls to ensure the service continues to perform at a high level as a result of the shift of provision due to a change in the demographic of the learners.

The submitted report also highlighted some challenges to be faced in 2020/21 with the move towards Tees Valley Combined Authority priorities as part of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget; the challenges faces by Covid-19 and the transition to online learning at the start of lockdown using Google Classroom and the expectation that all further education provision will fully restart from September 2020; and the ongoing challenges of apprenticeship funding.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included in the previously approved work programme.