

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 27 June 2022

PRESENT – Councillors Ali, Bell, Crudass, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, Lucas, Preston, Snedker and Willis

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – John Armitage

APOLOGIES –Carly Spence

ABSENT – Councillor Sowerby, Malcolm Frank, Maura Regan, Tim Fisher and Janet Woodcock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Asst Chief Constable Tonya Antonis (Durham Constabulary)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Head of Education and Inclusion), Alison Poulter (Service Manager - First Response Services) and Allison Hill (Democratic Officer),

CYP1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

RESOLVED – That Councillor Crudass be appointed Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

CYP2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

RESOLVED – That Councillor Willis be appointed Vice-Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

CYP3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP4 TO CONSIDER THE TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23 ON THE DATES AGREED IN THE CALENDAR BY CABINET AT MINUTE C100/FEB/22

RESOLVED - That meetings of this Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be held at 9.30 a.m. on the dates, as agreed on the calendar of meetings by Cabinet at Minute C100/Feb/22.

CYP5 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 APRIL 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CYP6 MISSING AND EXPLOITED OPERATIONAL CHANGE

The Head of Service, Children's Front Door and Early Intervention submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on operational changes, improvements and developments in relation to the Missing and Exploited Service.

The submitted report outlined the changes to the service since the remodeling of the Children's Front Door in March 2020 to ensure that the right service is provided swiftly to children and their families. The remodeling at the Front Door also transformed the Children's Access Point (CAP) into the Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) and is now at the forefront of an ever growing Front Door Service.

It was reported that one area in particular had seen much improvement and change being children who go missing and who are at risk of exploitation and in October 2020 the Missing and Exploitation Team was formed and is a multi-agency group that sits within the Front Door Service.

The submitted report also outlined a further review that had taken place at the end of 2020 which focused on the impact of operational processes and how they supported improvement of practice; outlined the operational processes currently in place including the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker Meeting and the Children Exploitation Operational Group; and outlined how the revised processes will aim to support those children and young people at the most significant risk of harm and how involvement from Children's Services and internal and external partners can bring about a positive impact on children and their families.

Members questioned if training was being offered to the Bus Network; and how the Service intended to measure its success going forward.

The Assistant Chief Constable, Tonya Antonis attended the meeting and advised Members of her many years' experience in safeguarding and that she was encouraged by the work of the team linking missing and exploited and the various multi-agency meetings that were taking place to address a national issue.

She advised Members that the British Transport Police undertake training to spot signs and signals of those at risk; advocated the Crimestoppers Charity as a valuable source of intelligence for the police and that the use of this charity be encouraged as it was anonymous; and also highlighted the St Giles Trust Charity and the services specifically aimed at children experiencing adverse circumstances.

John Armitage, the Primary Schools Forum representative advised Members of the various forums held within schools and confirmed that access to the Front Door was more accessible and more schools were receiving advice and also confirmed that schools were part of the training roll out; and Tony Murphy, the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion referred to the Vulnerable Pupil Panel as a key tool for more specific discussions on vulnerable children who may be experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties within mainstream school settings.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP7 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020/21

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

The submitted report provided year-end (April 2021 to March 2022) 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 also 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 10.5 per cent of children referred by the end of March 2022 had been a re-referral to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral which was below the internal target of 18 per cent; 4.7 per cent of the referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in 2021/22 which was positively just below the target of 5 per cent; 100 per cent of children with a Children Protection Plan (CP) and 100 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had an allocated social worker; in 2021/22 no child had ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for two or more years positively below the target of 5 per cent; 100 per cent of CiC were allocated a qualified social worker and 98.8 per cent of reviews had been completed within required timescales; the number of CiC was 273 by the end of March 2022 with 100 children coming into care and 99 ceasing care during the reporting year and work continues to safely reduce the number of children coming into care; 90.1 per cent of statutory CiC visits had been completed within timescale in line with the target of 90 per cent; 10.6 per cent of CiC had had three or more placements within the previous 12 months and was in line with the internal target of 10 per cent; 74 per cent of CiC aged under 16 years had been in their current placement continuously for at least two years and was positively above the internal target of 68 per cent; 6.6 per cent of CiC had been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of March 2022 below the target of 10 per cent; 90.5 per cent of CiC due a review health assessment by March 2022 had one completed and 83.7 of the children due a dental check had one completed; 23.1 per cent of Care Leavers were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) at the end of March 2022 which was positively below the target of 30 per cent and 100 per cent were in suitable accommodation.

Areas highlighted for improvement were in relation to 72.1 per cent of referrals screened and completed within one working day in 2021/22 was below the target of 90 per cent; social workers completed 84.5 per cent of the C and F assessments within timescale in 2021/22 below the target of 90 per cent, similar to the same period the previous year; 79.3 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting/section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences in 2021/22; at the end of March 2022 the percentage of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within two years of the previous plan ending was 7.1 per cent above the target of 6 per cent, however this was a reduction from 9.4 per cent at the end of March 2021; and 82.9 per cent of children received a statutory CP visit within ten working days in 2021/22 and was below the target of 90 per cent.

Members discussed the continued challenge in Foster Carer sufficiency and its impact on the performance data and the challenges around stability.

Members also discussed access to mental health services and direct mental health support and how that lack of provision can be challenged; the work of the Vulnerable Pupil Panel in assessing the challenges across educational settings, some as a result of the Covid pandemic; and the work of the Education Psychology Service who offer a training programme to prioritise return to school and the work taking place by the authority to support school colleagues. It was also highlighted that a pilot scheme was being undertaken around Mental Health Teams in schools to offer support before any professional counselling service can be assessed and provided.

A Member questioned if there had been a rise in pupils being educated at home and the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion advised Members that there had been a spike in Elective Home Education (EHE) during lockdown however those numbers had now stabilised but the concern now was non-attendance of those pupils on roll and it was agreed that further information and data on EHE/non-attendance be supplied to Members of this Scrutiny Committee to monitor.

RESOLVED – That the performance information reported for year end 2021/22 be noted.

CYP8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Director of Operations 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

Reference was made to the information that had been circulated by the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion, following Members request, on current pre-school supply and demand at ward level and also information on how planned investment in the Liquid Logic Early Years and Education System will enhance the collection of data.

Members noted the information and requested that further discussions are carried with Members regarding childcare sufficiency and the determination of nursery places and location ahead of the scheduled annual report to Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.