



**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Agenda

9.30 am

Monday, 16 June 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

**Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.**

1. Introductions/ Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 7 April 2025 (Pages 3 - 4)
4. To consider the proposed dates and times of meetings of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2025/26 –
  - Monday 1 September 2025 – 09:30
  - Monday 20 October 2025 – 09:30
  - Monday 05 January 2025 – 09:30
  - Monday 02 March 2025 – 09:30
  - Monday 20 April 2025 – 09:30
5. Work Programme –  
Report of the Group Director of Operations  
(Pages 5 - 16)
6. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting

## 7. Questions

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'A. Wennington', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Amy Wennington**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Friday, 6 June 2025**

**Town Hall**  
**Darlington.**

### **Membership**

Councillors Ali, Allen, Crudass, Johnson, Layton, Marshall, Renton, Dr. Riley, Storr and Toms

### **Statutory Co-optees**

Carly Stonier

### **Non Statutory Co-optees**

Maura Regan, Janet Woodcock, John Armitage and Sally Hudson

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Michael Conway, Mayoral and Democratic Officer, Operations Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays email: [Michael.Conway@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Conway@darlington.gov.uk) or telephone 01325 406309

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 7 April 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors Allen (Chair), Ali, Crudass, Layton, Storr and Toms

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Johnson and Dr. Riley

**ABSENT** – Councillors Dulston and Renton

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services) and Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion)

### CYP36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

### CYP37 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 MARCH 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 3 March 2025

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 3 March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### CYP38 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

The Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion presented members with an update on Elective Home Education in Darlington. Parents have a legal right to choose to electively home educate their child and the local authority has certain duties regarding the monitoring of education being provided and enforcement action where it is judged a suitable education is not being provided. Members were informed that a refreshed version of the legislation is currently being considered by the House of Lords before ratification after which it will be implemented by local authorities.

Members were informed that parents have a legal right to withdraw children into home education assuming full responsibility for the child's education, with the local authority having responsibility for monitoring that suitable education is provided. Darlington employ an Elective Home Education advisor for this role who also sits on the Vulnerable Pupils Panel. Members were notified that the post-COVID period showed a significant rise in children being home educated – 2023-24 shows 390 children compared to 250 in 2021-22.

Discussions were held including the features of the new legislation with officers clarifying that the full details are not yet available but that an update can be provided to this committee once the full details are known – members agreed to receive an update in an upcoming meeting of this Committee. A member also highlighted that it would be useful to have numbers or percentages for the various reasons that parents choose to home educate.

Furthermore, another member expressed an interest in any figures relating to anti-social behaviour and home schooling.

Questions were raised including how many officers are working with home education with the response that both Children's and Education services are working together to prepare for the expectations of the new legislation. It was asked how schools support those being home educated with the schools' representative assuring members that a great deal of integrated work takes place highlighting that Darlington's small size ensures that closer relationships can be forged than in larger locales with families being made aware of the education pathways available to them. Officers added that a robust health offer is also present in Darlington for those being home educated, ensuring access to vaccinations and other health services available in a school setting.

A member noted the increase in numbers in Home Education and questioned as to whether a reason for this is clear. Officers informed members that numbers in elective home education were relatively stable in the pre-COVID period and the increase appears to be a direct result of the pandemic however the new compulsory registration rules in the new legislation will allow for more accurate figures and trend-mapping. Officers were asked to confirm how quickly they anticipate the new legislation will be implemented with confirmation that a swift changeover is expected due to staff readiness.

It was also asked as to whether families in receipt of free school meals receive equivalent benefits when home educating. Officers clarified that parents who electively home educate take on the full responsibility for the child's schooling, including meals however when the local authority is made aware of a parent considering home education, a meeting is offered in order to make them aware of the various aspects and costs of home education, for example, books and examinations.

**RESOLVED** - Members noted the content of the report, the council's legal duties and current arrangements as well as upcoming changes in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

## **CYP39 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

**RESOLVED** – That the work programme be noted.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
16 JUNE 2025**

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**WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2025/26 Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included.

**Summary**

2. Members are requested to consider the attached draft work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the next Municipal Year which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and discussions held at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Annual Briefing which took place on 28 May 2025.
3. Once the work programme has been approved by this Scrutiny Committee, any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure (**Appendix 2**).

**Recommendation**

4. Members are requested to consider and approve the attached draft work programme as the agreed work programme for the Municipal year 2025/26 and any other additional items which they might wish to include.

**Amy Wennington  
Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Author: Mike Conway 6309

Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan. The Work Programme contains items which enable Members to scrutinise those areas that contribute the priority of 'Homes' - affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents and 'Living Well' – a healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder.
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. The format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.
6. The Council Plan was adopted on 18 July 2024, and outlines Darlington Borough Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for action over the next three years. It gives strategic direction to the Council and Council services, defining priorities, identifying key actions, and shaping delivery.
7. The Council Plan identifies six priorities, including 'Children and Young People', which aims to support the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations. Eight key deliverables are identified as part of this priority.

### Forward Plan and Additional Items

8. Once the Work Programme has been agreed by this Scrutiny Committee, any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a quad of aims.
9. A copy of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

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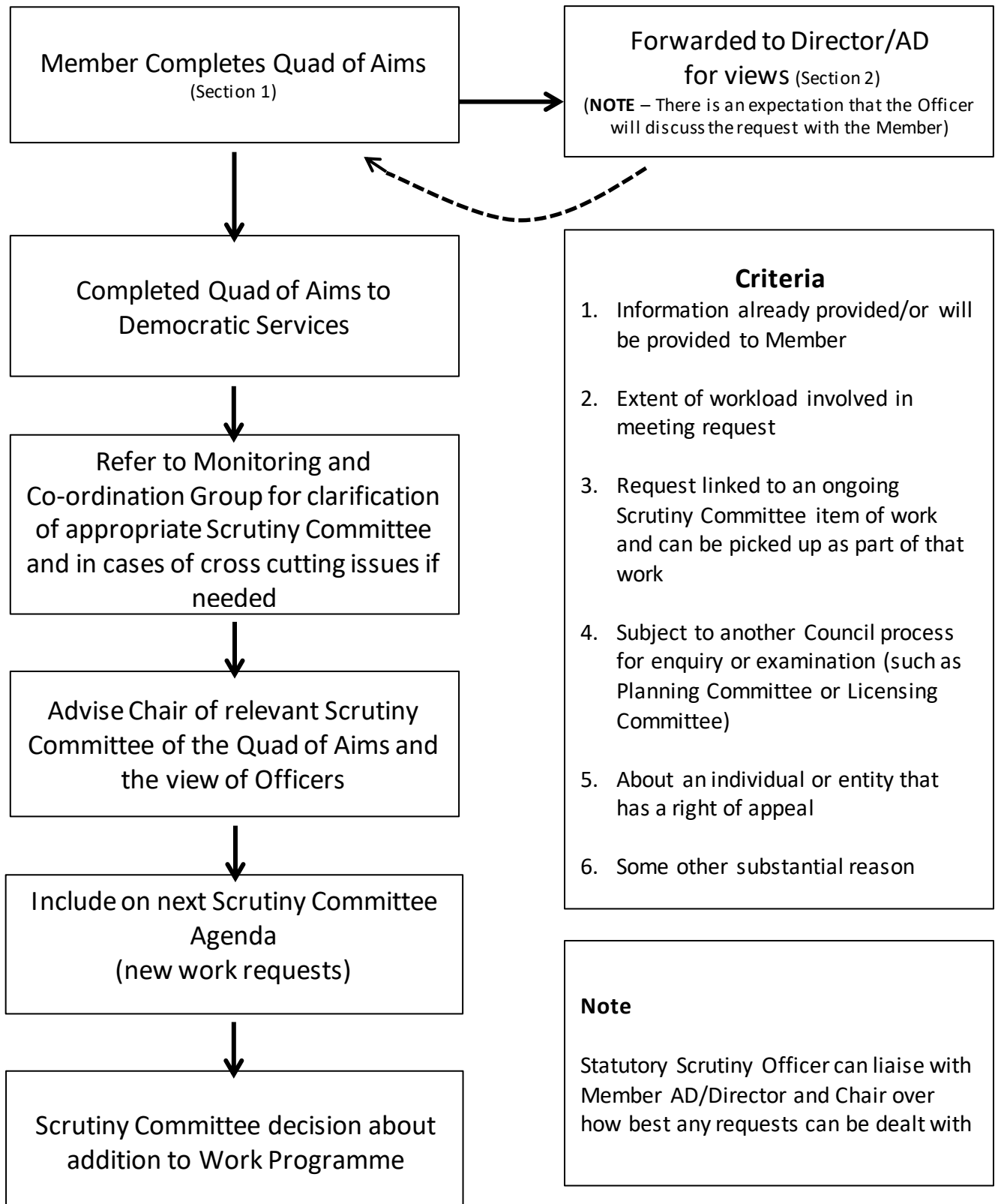
## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role / Notes
<b>Children and Young People Public Health Overview</b>	01/09/25	Joanne Hennessey		Annual Monitoring
<b>Performance Monitoring Q4</b>	01/09/25	Chris Bell		To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
<b>Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report</b>	20/10/25	Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley		Annual Monitoring
<b>Performance Monitoring Q1</b>	20/10/25	Chris Bell		To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
<b>Children's Services Self-Assessment</b>	20/10/25	Chris Bell		To provide Scrutiny with the Annual Self- Assessment for Children's Services so that constructive 'critical friend' challenge takes place to drive improvement in public services
<b>Local Designated Officer Annual Report (LADO)</b>	20/10/25	Martin Graham		To examine the Annual Report and assure Members that allegations made against staff who work with children are reported and how they are actioned
<b>Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2024/25</b>	20/10/25	Martin Graham		To examine the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer produced by the Children's Safeguarding Unit.
<b>Children and young Peoples Plan</b>	20/10/25	Christine Shields		To update Members on the refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan
<b>Learning and Skills Service Annual Report</b>	20/10/25	Paul Richardson		Annual Monitoring
<b>Exclusion and Suspension Update</b>	05/01/26	Tony Murphy		

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role / Notes
School Avoidance Update	05/01/26	Tony Murphy		Long term school absence
Transitional Services	05/01/26	Joss Harbron / Chris Bell		
Medium Term Financial Plan	05/01/26	Brett Nielsen		
Transport Policy	02/03/26	Tony Murphy		To update members on the Council's transport policy
Annual Fostering Report	02/03/26			Annual Monitoring
Performance Monitoring Q2	02/03/26	Chris Bell		To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	02/03/26	TBD / Amanda Hugill		Annual Monitoring
Childcare Sufficiency Review	02/03/26	Tony Murphy		Annual Monitoring
SEND Strategy Update	20/04/26	Tony Murphy		To update members on the Council's SEND strategy
Performance Monitoring Q3	20/04/26	Chris Bell		To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
Support for Darlington Youth Partnership	TBD	TBD		

## PROCESS FOR ADDING AN ITEM TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME



## QUAD OF AIMS (MEMBERS' REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY)

### SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS

**NOTE** – This document should only be completed if there is a clearly defined and significant outcome from any potential further work. This document should **not** be completed as a request for or understanding of information.

REASON FOR REQUEST?	RESOURCE (WHAT OFFICER SUPPORT WOULD YOU REQUIRE?)
PROCESS (HOW CAN SCRUTINY ACHIEVE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME?)	HOW WILL THE OUTCOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Signed Councillor .....

Date .....

**SECTION 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTORS/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS**  
**(NOTE – There is an expectation that Officers will discuss the request with the Member)**

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<div>1. (a) Is the information available elsewhere? Yes ..... No ..... If yes, please indicate where the information can be found (attach if possible and return with this document to Democratic Services) ..... (b) Have you already provided the information to the Member or will you shortly be doing so? .....</div> <div>2. If the request is included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme what are the likely workload implications for you/your staff? .....</div> <div>3. Can the request be included in an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and picked up as part of that? .....</div> <div>4. Is there another Council process for enquiry or examination about the matter currently underway? .....</div> <div>5. Has the individual or entity some other right of appeal? .....</div> <div>6. Is there any substantial reason (other than the above) why you feel it should not be included on the work programme ? .....</div>	<div>Criteria</div> <div>1. Information already provided/or will be provided to Member</div> <div>2. Extent of workload involved in meeting request</div> <div>3. Request linked to an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and can be picked up as part of that work</div> <div>4. Subject to another Council process for enquiry or examination (such as Planning Committee or Licensing Committee)</div> <div>5. About an individual or entity that has a right of appeal</div> <div>6. Some other substantial reason</div>
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**Signed .....**   **Position .....**   **Date .....**

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FORWARD PLAN**



| DARLINGTON

Borough Council

**FORWARD PLAN  
FOR THE PERIOD: 4 JUNE 2025 - 30 OCTOBER 2025**

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Consultation on the Renewal of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order and Introduction of a Borough Wide Public Space Protection Order	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025
Physical Activity Strategy	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025
Representation on Other Bodies 2025/26	Cabinet 10 Jun 2025
Climate Change Progress	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Rent 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Consultation on a Homes Strategy for the Borough	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Council Plan Performance Reporting Update - Quarter 4	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Disabled Facilities Grant 2025/26	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Dolphin Centre – Invest to Save Projects	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2025-2030	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Introduction of a Boroughwide Article 4 Direction to control changes of use to Houses of Multiple Occupation	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Outturn 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Revenue Budget Outturn 2024/25	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Schedule of Transactions	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Town Centre Regeneration	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report	Cabinet 8 Jul 2025
Annual Review of the Investment Fund	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Blue Badge Application Procedures	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Climate Change and Nature Restoration Strategy	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Community Asset Transfer Policy	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2023/24	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 1 2025/26	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26 - Quarter 1	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Single Use Plastic Policy	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Strategic Asset Plan	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Treasury Management Annual Report and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2024/2025	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Woodland Road Waiting Restrictions	Cabinet 9 Sep 2025
Procurement Plan Update	Cabinet 7 Oct 2025

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