

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 1 March 2021

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

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Carly Spence

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – John Armitage

APOLOGIES – Tim Fisher and Nick Lindsay

ABSENT – Malcolm Frank, Maura Regan and Janet Woodcock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Neale (Darlington Mind)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jane Kochanowski (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Christine Shields (Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation), Tony Murphy (Head of Education and Inclusion), Martin Webster (Workforce Development Manager) and Allison Hill (Democratic Officer)

CYP25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP26 MINUTES

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 4 January 2021.

With reference to Item CYP19/Jan/21 Members agreed to amend the resolution in respect of (a).

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 4 January 2021 be approved as a correct record with the exception of Minute CYP19/Jan/21, resolution (a) to be amended to read:

- (a) That this Scrutiny Committee has no comment to make on the proposed schedule of fees and charges for those services within its remit (as there are none) and supports the Children's Services budget allocation recommendations contained within the Revenue Estimates 2021/22 section of the draft Medium Term Financial Plan.

CYP27 PRESENTATION ON THE DARLINGTON MIND CHILDREN IN NEED SELF-HARM PROJECT

Ian Neale, Darlington Mind Young Persons Co-ordinator gave an update on the Children in Need Self-Harm Project and the work of Darlington Mind in supporting young people in all mental health issues and Members advised that young people were worried about Covid-19 and returning to school on 8 March and were generally

struggling with their mental health.

It was reported that there were currently two counsellors offering help to young people and Ian advised Members that they can signpost young people for counselling to him upon completion of a referral form with a view to offering the young person the support they require. This service is available to young people aged 11-18 years and referrals were usually made from schools, parents or self-referral.

Discussion ensued on how to encourage more young people to take up mentoring roles and future plans to have peer mentors within schools. Members also referred to other organisations ie. the Listening Post who are also working with young people's mental health issues.

RESOLVED – That Ian be thanked for his interesting and informative update.

CYP28 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DARLINGTON CARE COLLECTIVE

The Director of Children and Adult Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an outline and overview of the Developing Darlington Care Collective (DDCC), including aims and objectives of the group.

It was reported that the concept of a 'Care Collective' followed on from the National Social Care Recruitment Campaign ("We need you now, they need you always") and was initially discussed during the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

The rationale included providing support to the Care Sector in response to Covid-19, particularly in terms of low-level role capacity and need, supporting mental health and resilience, whilst creating opportunities to develop partnerships and multi-agency working across the health, social care and education sector in Darlington.

It was also reported that a number of priorities had been discussed with cross sector partners across the borough including support for the development of capacity across the Children and Adults Care Sector, particularly Care Homes and Children's Residential Care, should a second wave of Covid19 manifest and to promote good mental health and make every contact count (MECC); the Workforce Development Team had linked with key partners from across the borough to gauge appetite in supporting and being part of the DDCC; and a number of key questions were identified and answered in the initial DDCC Steering Group Meetings.

Martin Webster, Workforce Development Manager outlined the four key focus priorities of the Darlington Care Collective; ways to support the Adult Care Home Sector and Children's Residential Services and support across the board for those working with people; how the Collective were looking at ways to develop volunteering, training and employment opportunities through multi-agency working bringing together 50 key partners from across the Borough, including the Council, Care Homes, Health partners, the Police, Children's residential homes, colleges, universities and the voluntary sector; and the key drivers around supporting the sector in terms of bodes and designing consistent and sustainable models of training to link people into opportunities including access to Work Force Capacity Funding.

The submitted report also outlined specific headline plans for the DDCC in 2021 and

all DDCC partners have agreed to co-produce a shared project plan for 2021 onwards.

Members questions related to apprenticeship schemes and access to funding; support for employment opportunities and getting people engaged into the process and progression of social work.

RESOLVED – (a) That the submitted report be noted in terms of the DDCC progressing and supporting Social Care succession planning and partnership development.

(b) That MECC (Making Every Contact Count) is considered as an informal local area approach to convey health related information to residents.

CYP29 PROGRESS UPDATE ON DIGITAL INCLUSION

Following a request by the Chair, Tony Murphy Head of Education and Inclusion provided Members with a verbal update regarding digital inclusion.

He advised Members that there had been approximately 3,600 devices issued to schools and Academy Trusts up to February to focus on disadvantaged children and the number of devices available to each school was based on the Department for Education (DfE) estimates.

He also advised that school leaders were learning from families that because remote learning had developed throughout the pandemic and a higher degree of formal learning had been developed, the limited number of devices in households was creating problems and detailed allocation and distribution data had been requested from the DfE so that the authority can support schools in the best way.

It was also reported that the Education Strategy Group meet weekly with the DfE to examine the level of need and also to identify any other barriers to learning.

Discussion ensued on the varied home learning experiences within families; the mental health impact on parents and in particular single parents; the barriers to accessing learning for some families who have multiple people trying to access remotely; access issues especially in rural areas; and the access to quiet space which is limited in some households. Members acknowledged that despite schools returning on 8 March this was an issue to remain at the top of this Scrutiny Committee's agenda.

RESOLVED – That the verbal update be noted.

CYP30 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 suggest should be included in the approved work programme.

It was reported that as part of the ongoing review to understand the impact that Covid-19 has had in Darlington and what future actions may be required a second virtual evidence gathering event to hear the 'voice of the child and young person' had been arranged for 4 March 2021, however due to the current government restrictions on schools this had to be delayed and a new date was to be arranged.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.