

COUNCIL
15 JULY 2021

OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Performance Indicators 2020/21 – Year End

2. Children's Services year end performance April to March 2021 was presented to the June meeting which highlighted the following areas of good practice:
 - (a) a high number of Initial Child Protection Conferences (94.4 per cent) were held within 15 working days of the Strategy meeting/section 47 being initiated, which remains higher than statistical neighbour, regional and national average benchmarks;
 - (b) we continue to demonstrate positive performance in relation to children ceasing to be subject to a child protection plan who have been on a plan for 2 or more years;
 - (c) timely visits to children who are subject of child protection plan (89.0 per cent) or children who are in the care (93.1 per cent) of the local authority, remain above or just slightly under target of 90 per cent;
 - (d) children are remaining in placements for longer and there is a reduction in the number of placements that children have had over the last two-year period
 - (e) children in Care who are placed 20 or more miles away from Darlington has reduced to (9.4 per cent) which is below the target of 10 per cent;
 - (f) children, newly into care, (90.9 per cent) receive an initial health assessment within 20 working days and have a review health assessment (91.2 per cent) within the year; and
 - (g) (24.6 per cent) of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) which was positively below target of 30 per cent and 98.1 per cent were in suitable accommodation.
3. Areas highlighted for focus were in respect of:
 - (a) improve the rate of referrals into children's social care being screened and completed within 1 day which was below the target of 90 per cent and work toward decreasing the number of re-referrals, which was above the target of 18 per cent;
 - (b) timeliness of assessments are just below the target of 90 per cent;

- (c) work continues to safely reduce the number of children becoming looked after;
and
 - (d) improve the rate of children receiving a dental check assessment given the closures through 2020.
4. We discussed in particular the re-evaluation of certain targets for 2022/23 and the timescales for these indicators being reset; the current position with Early Help and the effect of the lockdown on families; the general effect the pandemic had on services including the increase in families choosing elective home education (EHE).
 5. The information from the Performance Indicators allows our officers to focus on areas deviating from targets and our directors to ensure resources are allocated as necessary and that Scrutiny reviews this management system and requests clarification on matters of concern.

Work Programme

6. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.
7. Suggestions were offered by committee members of subjects to be considered for scrutiny. Routes to access information and engagement required are being investigated. Quads of aims will be developed where necessary and the Work programme updated once timing can be established.

Councillor Paul Crudass
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee