
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.

Work Programme

2. We continue to give consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee and taking into account the ambitious programme of change across the Council and the key role of Scrutiny in ensuring that the programme is able to deliver the service improvements and the budget savings necessary.

Performance Indicators Quarter 4 2017/18 and Proposed Indicators for 2018/19

3. Members examined the outturn performance data against key performance indicators for 2017/18 and gave consideration to the proposed basket of performance indicators for 2018/19. We also note the proposed schedule of performance reporting for 2018/19.
4. Areas that were performing well were contacts completed within one working day which had exceeded the target of 95 per cent at 96.7 per cent and only 0.6 per cent of contacts were completed in more than three working days; 96 per cent of referrals during quarter four were completed within one working day above the target of 90 per cent; the percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days was 93.3 per cent which had consistently exceeded the target of 90 per cent and was higher than our statistical neighbours and the England average; 100 per cent of child protection reviews have been completed within timescale; 100 per cent of Looked After Children reviews completed within timescale; and 93.4 per cent of Looked After Children statutory visits were completed within timescale.
5. We were also pleased to note that 100 per cent of all Children in Need, Children Protection and Children in Care had been allocated a Social Worker and had been consistently sustained; and 32.2 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) which was above the target of 33 per cent and of the 19 Care Leavers currently NEET, 12 were not available to work due to illness, pregnancy or parenting.
6. Areas where there was a need for further improvement included the number of re-referrals within 12 months of a previous referral at 247, which, although showing an improvement, still remained higher than the local target of 20 per cent; the percentage of children who had been in their current placement for two years or more and who had been in care for two and half years or more had increased to 65.1 per cent at the end of March 2018 reaching the target of 65 per cent, however

performance remains behind benchmarks and therefore remains an area for improvement; the percentage of children placed 20 miles or more away from homes has increased to 12 per cent at the end of March compared to the 2016/17 year end performance at 7.8 per cent; and at the end of March there were 87.5 per cent (140/160) of children with an up to date dental check in the past 12 months although there were an additional 12 children (7.5 per cent) who had refused a dental check this showed an increase on previous year-end performance which was 75.9 per cent.

7. We were concerned at the number of children who had refused a dental check and these were the older children 16/17 years but were reassured to hear that Officers were looking at different ways to engage with these young people to ensure that they have regular dental and health checks.

Early Interventions for Looked After Children Missing From Care

8. Members, at the meeting held on 16 April 2018, requested further information regarding children who are Looked After and who experience missing from home episodes. We received a report that outlined some of the reasons children and young people may go missing; the link between children and young people who go missing and exploitation; and Ofsted feedback regarding the management of children and young people who go missing from home and care.
9. We also considered the interventions in place to address and reduce missing episodes for children and young people including this authority's procedures for managing children and young people who go missing; placement stability and the duty on the local authority to place a child or young person in the most appropriate placement; and a Secure Order which can be obtained from the Court if all other options for the child or young person have been exhausted.
10. We were also interested to know if the authority kept data on how many of the children and young people who go missing (across the board and not just LAC) have a diagnosis of autism or any other learning disability as the Members felt that they were more at risk of sexual exploitation.

Appointment of Co-opted Members

11. Kate Chisholm, Chair of the Primary School Forum and Head Teacher of Skerne Park Academy and Nick Lindsay, 11-19 Partnership and Head Teacher of Longfield Academy have been formerly appointed to be co-opted Members of this Scrutiny Committee and will be invited to attend all future meetings of this Scrutiny Committee.

Childhood Obesity and Dental Health Care

12. The Members of the Joint Review Group, established by this Scrutiny Committee to examine Childhood Obesity and Dental Health Care and any associated Mental Health Links submitted a report to make an interim recommendation in relation to any prospective water fluoridation scheme in Darlington. The submitted report outlined the investigations of the Joint Review Group in relation to poor dental

health outcomes in Darlington with strong links between the highest obesity rates and the poorest dental health being most prevalent in the most deprived areas of the Borough.

13. At the meeting we heard from Joy Warren, Joint Co-ordinator, UK Freedom from Fluoride Alliance; and Alan Hall and Michael Watson, members of the public who expressed their concerns at the introduction of a water fluoridation scheme in Darlington.
14. Dr David Landes, Public Health England also attended the meeting and advised the Members that there was a long history of residents who drink fluoride naturally and that Hartlepool have had fluoridated water since the 1840's and that there was a large body of evidence to show a reduction of dental disease in those areas; and areas which had a water fluoride scheme. He advised that there was also a 59 per cent reduction in general levels of anaesthesia. He also advised Members that a water fluoridation scheme would benefit those in the most deprived areas of the Borough.
15. Members agreed to support the joint work underway to gather information required for consideration about any prospective water fluoridation scheme in Darlington and recommended to Cabinet that it undertake a technical appraisal for consideration of a water fluoridation scheme in Darlington and/or the Tees Valley.

Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee