

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 25 April 2022

PRESENT – Councillors Crudass (Chair), C L B Hughes, Renton, Snedker, Sowerby and Willis

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

APOLOGIES – Councillors Ali, Mrs Culley, Lister and Lucas, Carly Spence, Tim Fisher, Nick Lindsay and John Armitage

ABSENT – Councillor Bell, Malcolm Frank, Maura Regan and Janet Woodcock

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Allison Hill (Democratic Officer), Tony Murphy (Head of Education and Inclusion), Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services) and Calvin Kipling (Virtual Head Teacher)

CYP38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP39 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 FEBRUARY 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 21 February, 2022.

With regard to Minute CYP36/Feb/22, Councillor C Hughes requested that an amendment be made to the Minutes to reflect that a request had been made by Members for an assurance that in relation to Parkside Nursery funding and space issues, referred to in the submitted report, the Assistant Director of Education report back to Members the position regarding the Nursery at a future meeting of Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – That, with the exception to the amendment to CYP36/Feb/22, the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 21 February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CYP40 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 3 2021/22

The Assistant Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

The submitted report provided Quarter 3 (October 2021 to December 2021) 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 10.8 per cent of the children referred during this quarter had been re-referred to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral which was positively below the internal target of 18 per cent; 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan and 100 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had an allocated social worker; no child had ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for two or more years, and continue to positively perform below the target of five per cent; 92.1 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting/Section 47 being initiated during this quarter; the number of Children in Care (CiC) was 271 by the end of December 2021, which was a reduction when compared with the number of children at the end of December 2020 (284) and work continues to safely reduce the number of children coming into care; 100 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had been allocated a qualified social worker and 98.4 per cent of the reviews had been completed within the required timescales; 89.8 per cent of statutory CiC visits were completed within timescale during Q3 in line with the target of 90 per cent; 10.0 per cent of our Children in Care, as of December 2021, had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months and performance was positively below the internal target of 10 per cent; 73.5 per cent of Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) had been in their current placement continuously for at least two years, in line with the internal target of 68 per cent; 6.1 per cent of Children in Care had been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of December 2021 below the target of 10 per cent; 82.7 per cent of children due a review health assessment year to date had one completed and 80.4 per cent of Children in Care that were due a dental check assessment by December 2021 had had one completed; and 17.6 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) at the end of December 2021, which was positivity below target of 30 per cent and 100.0 per cent were in suitable accommodation.

The areas highlighted for focus were in respect of Social workers completed 80.0 per cent of the C&F assessments within timescale which falls below the target of 90 per cent and is similar to the 85.4 per cent for the same period last year; 67.7 per cent of referrals were screened and completed within 1 day by the end of Q3, below the target of 90 per cent and 7.7 per cent of the referrals took over three days to complete; at the end of December 2021, the percentage of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time within two years of the previous plan ending was 8.0 per cent, above the 6 per cent target, however this was a reduction from 9.8 per cent as at the end of Q2 2021/22; and 82.3 per cent of children received a statutory CP visit within 10 working days during Q3 below the target of 90 per cent.

Members expressed their concerns regarding the slippage in the target for referrals screened and completed within one day as this was a statutory responsibility and Members requested assurance that this was not a safeguarding issue. The Assistant Director Children's Services assured Members that this was not a capacity issue and it had been recognised and advised Members that the redesign of the 'front door' should see this performance indicator improve. He also assured Members that he was confident there were no safeguarding issues and the new systems will improve the breakdown of timeliness.

Members questioned the process for schools making referrals and how the governing bodies

were kept informed of this performance data; and also referred to the number of episodes of children reported missing in Darlington who are a Child in Care (CiC) and the processes in place for reporting missing episodes to the local authority.

RESOLVED – That the performance information reported for Quarter 3 2021/22 be noted.

CYP41 VULNERABLE PUPIL PANEL REVIEW

The Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members on the work and impact of the Darlington Vulnerable Pupil Panel (VPP), the multi-agency panel of which the Local Authority is a part.

It was reported that the Panel was created in 2019 to replace the previous arrangements of the School Behaviour and Attendance Partnership and since its inception has formed a dynamic multi-agency partnership which aims to avoid children disengaging from education due to any cause.

It was also reported that the Panel had seen a reduction in permanent exclusion and persistence absence had improved to 9.8 per cent and was 0.7 per cent better than above the national figure for all pupils and 17.1 per cent for disadvantaged pupils which was now 2.9 per cent better than the national figure and the work of the Panel had shown a reduction in the gap between all children and vulnerable groups.

Members of this Scrutiny were currently undertaking a review of the Vulnerable Pupil Panel and it was reported that as part of that Review Members had met with some members of the Parent Carer Forum on 16 March 2022 and discussed any issues and concerns.

Members discussed the overall attendance of the VPP; membership of the Panel which included the headteacher of every primary, secondary and special school, a number of other organisations/local partner agencies and various officers from the authority including the Lead Member for Childrens' Services; and how the VPP operated on a case referral basis and how any partner could refer a children for consideration.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP42 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.

It was suggested that the Assistant Chief Constable be invited to the next ordinary meeting scheduled for 27 June 2022; also a question was raised regarding healthy school dinners and it was agreed that this be included in the Public Health Overview report to Members in September 2022.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.