

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 5 September 2022

PRESENT – Councillors Crudass (Chair), Ali, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, Snedker and Willis

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – None

APOLOGIES – Councillors Lucas and Preston, Carly Stonier, John Armitage

ABSENT – Councillors Bell, Sowerby, Malcolm Frank, Maura Regan, Tim Fisher and Janet Woodcock

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Allison Hill (Democratic Officer), Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion), Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services) and Ken Ross (Public Health Principal)

CYP9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP10 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 JUNE 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 June 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CYP11 DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Assistant Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to present the Annual report and update Members on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer, April 2021 to March 2022 and to highlight the required actions for April 2022 to March 2023.

The submitted report outlined the function of the Designated Officer in line with national guidance and the requirement of all organisations working with children in Darlington to have policies and procedures in place on what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children.

It was reported that these policies and procedures were in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency procedures.

Members questions related to the processes in place for the Designated Officer to be notified about any referrals from education settings and if the Council were confident that

there were sufficient procedures in place within schools to report incidents; and requested clarification on the future priority to examine where the Designated Officer service will be best placed within the local authority.

The Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion confirmed that there were sufficient policies and procedures in place as to what organisations should do when an allegation is made and these are in line with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Multi-agency procedures; and specifically in relation to schools, proactively brief them on any legislative changes.

Members also requested further information on non-substantiated cases and how those were dealt with and also the reasons for these case not reducing.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Annual Report and the work undertaken during 2022/23 and the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2022/23 be agreed and noted.

(b) That all agencies consider how to promote the role of the Designated Officer within their own organisation.

CYP12 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update of the Children and Young People Public Health interventions and programs namely the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2021, Children's Health Profile for Darlington and the 0-19 Service.

It was reported that the Healthy Lifestyles Survey has been delivered for 12 years with a total of up to 8,624 pupils across 33 primary and secondary schools completing the survey annually; the survey of 2021 was the first full survey completed following the pandemic and included some specific topics and questions that had been developed and agreed by young people, schools and other professionals to reflect the impact of the pandemic on young people; and results from the survey can be fed back to young people so that they are aware and understand the lifestyle and behaviour choices of their peers and can use this to inform their own choices and decisions.

The Child Health Profile is produced annually by Public Health England (now Office of Health Improvement and Disparities OHID) for every local authority area in England and provides a snapshot of child health in this area. It is designed to help the Authority; health services and other stakeholders improve the health and wellbeing of children and target Public Health interventions that can improve child health at a local level.

It was reported that the profile for Darlington this year when compared to the England averages showed that the health and wellbeing of children in Darlington was mixed and some key indicators such as breastfeeding, smoking in pregnancy and obesity were worse compared to England; whilst other indicators such as vaccination uptake, admission to hospital for common health conditions being better or similar when compared to England.

With regard to the 0-19 Service, provided by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, this continues to perform well, achieve well against the statutory and contract performance targets and the service continues to receive positive feedback from parents and carers and

other users of the service.

It was also reported that the Service had continued innovative work in relation to infant feeding and introduced new interventions including new ante natal virtual sessions, training for staff and peer supporters and also more collaborative working with Family Centres; has worked towards reaccreditation for the UNICEF Gold Baby Friendly award; continued work with schools including a new 'drop in' offer to schools post pandemic and close working and liaison with specialist mental health teams in Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Mental Health Trust; and the Service continued to enhance and improve the digital offer which proved to be very successful during the pandemic and lockdown.

Members questions to the Public Health Specialist related in particular to smoking and vaping; increasing obesity rates locally and how Public Health comment on future use in terms of planning applications for takeaways within Darlington; the impact of obesity especially in the disadvantaged areas; Public Health input towards the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Document; and how the Healthy Lifestyles Survey is completed within schools and if the survey was representative of all schools within the borough.

The Public Health Specialist advised Members that the function of Public Health was to advise on all policies although in relation to planning there were limitations on the Director of Public Health intervention by national legislation.

Members also requested that they receive more specific data, especially in relation to the Healthy Lifestyles Survey compared to national data.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP13 CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022 - OVERVIEW

The Assistant Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with the Annual Self-Assessment for Children's Services to enable constructive 'critical friend' challenge to take place and drive improvement in public services.

It was reported that Children's Services update each quarter an assessment of social work practice, inclusive of Early Help, based on changes in performance data. To bring the information into a stand-a-lone easy read document an annual self-assessment overview document is completed.

It was highlighted that the aim of the self-evaluation was to answer three questions: What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice in our local authority; How do we know it; and What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice. The self-assessment is used as part of Ofsted's ILACS Annual Engagement Meeting and plays an important role in their understanding of local authorities and how they work.

Members questioned how progress on quality is measured; how the voice of the Social Workers working with children is captured; and how the authority plan to deal with the future effect of fuel costs on Care Centres and Foster Carers.

The Assistant Director Children's Services acknowledged that the uncertain economic climate

may have an impact on Foster Carers considering their current position and advised that there was work on going with existing carers also for potential barriers due to the economic uncertainty and also as a result of the recent pandemic.

RESOLVED – That the report is noted.

CYP14 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

Councillor Johnson proposed a mid-year review of the Medium Term Financial Plan in relation to Children's Services and Councillor C Hughes suggested that Members review the recent work undertaken by this Scrutiny on the Effects of the Pandemic on our Children and Young People and re-examine the recommendations against progress made to date.

The Democratic Officer advised Members that the Annual report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership will now be heard at the ordinary meeting scheduled for 19 December, 2022.

RESOLVED – (a) That the work programme be noted.

(b) That a Quad of Aims be produced in line with the previously approved procedure for the suggested additional items to the Work Programme of this Scrutiny Committee.