

COUNCIL
28 SEPTEMBER 2023

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.

Quality Assurance – Darlington-Owned Children’s Homes

2. We received a report to update the Committee on the recent review of service assurance in place for Darlington owned Children’s Homes, share the improvement opportunities identified and the action being taken to strengthen confidence in this area.
3. The submitted report stated that the review was prompted by an inadequate rating of services at one Home last Summer. The review highlighted opportunities to improve the quality management processes in place to ensure that there was a more continuous assurance of service performance to regulatory quality standards. It was noted that the review did not explore how many homes were currently operating or measure services therefore it was not an assessment of, nor intended to infer assessment of, service quality or performance in any of Darlington’s homes.
4. We entered into discussion on staffing in children’s homes and the perceived inappropriate content of a newsletter previously circulated.

Children and Young People Public Health Overview

5. A report was submitted to provide the Committee with an update on the Children and Young People Public Health interventions and programs.
6. We received an overview of the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2023, the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan and the 0-19 Service. The Committee was informed that the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2023 had been delivered for 14 years with a total of over 8500 pupils across 33 schools completing the survey annually. The topic areas covered by the Survey were outlined, and the submitted report stated that work had been undertaken to conduct a pilot of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey in the town’s Further Education settings and Sixth Forms.
7. The overall objectives of the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan were outlined, and the progress made against each of these objectives noted. We heard that the

Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan was in its final year and that work had commenced to evaluate the learning from this plan as well as the approach and apply this to developing a whole systems approach to the population for the Borough.

8. The performance of the 0-19 Service provided by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust was reported on, with the Committee being advised that the service performed well against the statutory and contract performance targets. We heard that the service had introduced new interventions, which included new ante natal virtual sessions, training for staff and peer supporters and more collaborative working with Family Centres. They also had successfully achieved accreditation for the UNICEF Gold Baby Friendly Award and had enhanced and improved its digital offer.
9. The report provided a summary of the Child Health Profile for Darlington, which demonstrated a mixed picture; with some key indicators being worse when compared to national figures and others being better or similar to the national figures. Members enquired as to whether they could receive a sample of the Healthy Lifestyles Survey and an overview of the questions asked and we were interested to know whether children and young people had a role in preparing the survey questions. The Committee was interested to know if the use of food banks was covered as part of the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan.
10. Discussion ensued on the compilation of the obesity statistics, the perceived lack of exercise in schools, the provision of practical classes, such as sewing, cookery, etc. and the activities undertaken at the 'family hubs'. It was pleasing to learn that the insight provided to schools in relation to beliefs and actions of children and young people was considered valuable by teaching staff.

Councillor Hilary Allen
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee