
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 Quarter 1 2018/19

2. Scrutiny examined performance data for Quarter 1 April to June and areas performing well and where there was still a need to improve.
3. It was highlighted that 94.2 per cent of contacts were completed within 24 working hours an increase by 19.5 per cent compared to Quarter 1 last year; 94.1 per cent of children in had a Review Health Assessment completed; 98 per cent of initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days; 100 per cent of Child Protection Reviews had been completed within the required timescales; 100 per cent of children involved with Child Protection and Looked After had been allocated a Social Worker; and 100 per cent of Looked After Reviews were completed within timescale in Quarter 1.
4. It was also highlighted that 93.2 per cent of statutory visits of Looked After Children in Quarter 1 were completed within timescale which was above the target of 90 per cent; 9.6 per cent of Looked After Children had three or more placement moves within the last 12. an improvement compared to the end of Quarter 1 2017/18; 100 per cent of Return Home Interviews had been completed with 92.5 per cent completed within 72 hours of the child being returned home after the missing episode; and 27.5 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) which was better than the target of 33 per cent and w a reduction of 4.7 per cent when compared with 2017/18 year end figure.
5. Areas that required improvement were the percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days which was below the target of 90 per cent at 83.5 per cent but above the England average of 83 per cent; only 48.7 per cent of dental health checks had been completed at the end of Quarter 1 and progress against this indicator continues to undergo close scrutiny; and although the percentage of Looked After Children who have been in their current placement for two or more years has improved compared to Quarter 1 2017/18 at 63.1 per cent it has still not reached the Council's target of 65 per cent.
6. Members were particularly concerned that a number of indicators were slipping and the percentage of Looked After Children still remained high and we have asked that the Quarter 2 report provides us with more detailed reasons for this slippage and also the impact caused.

7. We were also concerned at the performance indicator for Care Leavers in unsuitable accommodation at 5.9 per cent and despite acknowledging that in reality only equates to one or two young people we wanted clarification on the recording of 'unsuitable accommodation' and assurances that these young people are not living in danger or poor conditions.

Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2017/18

8. We received the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for 2017/18, a statutory service introduced in April 2011 with a key role in the improvement of Care Planning for Looked After Children (LAC) and for challenging drift and delay.
9. The report outlined the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers; detailed the staffing levels and the management of caseloads; provided statistical information relating to the number of Children Looked After, demographics and Looked After Reviews at 31 March; Performance Planning and Adoption; the Dispute Resolution Process to resolve problems arising out of the Care Planning process; and the requirement under Regulation 29 (The Fostering Services Regulations 2001) to review the approval of foster carers at least once a year.
10. The submitted report also highlighted Child Protection Activity; management of the IRO service; and scheduled action for 2018/19.
11. The Head of Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement was questioned how the 'voice of the child' is captured and how did we know what the impact was? He advised that the Independent Review Officer's visit young people prior to their review and ensure that the child's views are recorded within the record of the meeting. The majority of children over the age of 4 years attend their reviews and directly contribute to the discussion and outcome of the meeting.
12. It was highlighted that some young people chose not to participate directly in their Looked After Reviews and will brief an advocate or complete a consultation form.
13. Where an IRO challenge is required in relation to Care Planning this will be escalated to Managers for resolution.
14. We agreed that case examples of good practice would be a useful addition to next year's annual report.

Children and Young People Public Health Overview

15. Members received an overview of the health promoting activities in relation to children and young people and the plans to address these issues.
16. We examined the Darlington Children and Young People's Profile 2018 and the Healthy Lifestyle Survey 2017 as a means of assessing need to plan services to improve health and wellbeing; and the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Action Plan 2017-2022 and the Oral Health Plan 2017-2022.

17. The health and wellbeing of children in Darlington was varied compared to the England average, with 11 of the 32 reported indicators for Darlington being significantly different when compared to England, with four significantly better and 11 significantly worse. These were mainly the high number of children admitted to hospital which is an ongoing priority for all partners.
18. Areas that showed some improvement in the 2018 profile from the previous years included the percentage of children aged 5 years with decayed, missing or filled teeth which had decreased from 35.4 per cent in 2017 profile (2015/16 data) to 26.4 per cent (2016/17 data) and Darlington is now significantly similar to the England average of 23.3 per cent.
19. Childhood obesity has been highlighted as an area for improvement as children in Reception and Year 6 were overweight compared to England averages and the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan 2017-2022 sets out a whole system approach to tackling childhood obesity and reducing inequalities.
20. The Darlington Oral Health Plan 2017-2022 will also complement the work of the Childhood Healthy Weight Action Plan as a high sugar diet is a recognised risk factor in dental decay.
21. The Healthy Lifestyle's Survey 2017 gathers and analyses information from children and young people in Darlington about their attitudes and behaviours across a range of health related topics and 6,340 pupils aged 9 to 16 years from 24 schools in Darlington took part in this year's survey.
22. Members expressed their concerns around energy drinks; the number of young people being admitted to hospital as a result of self-harm; ways to encourage parents to walk their children to school; the level of physical activity within schools and how the authority can influence the schools, in particular the academies; promoting eating within schools as a social event; and to examine ways to restrict the number of hot food takeaways across the town.

Designated Officer Annual Report

23. Scrutiny received the annual report of the Designated Officer (DO) (previously known as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) which outlined the function of the DO, local arrangements, the criterion for a Designated Officer referral; cross boundary issues; statistical information on the number of referrals and annual comparisons; areas of concern and the main category for referral; detailed the source of referrals by profession and employment setting; allegations by staff group; and gave detail of outcomes of cases.
24. The report also provided performance information relating to the Designated Officer Service; freedom of information requests; service improvements and developments 2017/18; and highlighted priorities for 2018/19.

25. Members agreed that it would be useful for them to have a copy of the public information available in relation to the role of the Designated Officer and other relevant safeguarding contacts to help us promote children's safeguarding to faith groups and other organisations within their individual Wards.

Looked After Children Missing from Care who have Autism or Another Disability

26. Members requested information regarding the number of children who are Looked After with autism or another disability, who experience missing from home episodes.
27. There were no children or young people missing from home with a recorded disability including autism throughout the reporting year of 2017/18; however there has been one missing episode for one young person with autism in the current reporting year of 2018/19 and this young person left his foster placement in the early evening but was located and returned home within the hour.
28. We acknowledged that the report received provided information on the children who are already diagnosed with autism or another disability however, our main concern is how un-diagnosed children are picked up from incidents of going missing as this could be the first sign of a potential issue with the young person.
29. Members agreed that they would like to examine a copy of the Return Home Interview Pro-forma with a view to disability or health issues being recorded on it and to also include a criteria to recognise potential issues related to autism.

Meetings

30. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the Public Health England North East Fluoridation Workshop at the Stadium of Light In Sunderland on 19 September 2018.

Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee