

COUNCIL 5 DECEMBER 2019

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. Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2019/20

3. We examined Quarter 1 (April-June) 2019/20 performance information and highlighted areas where Children and Young People were performing well and where there was a need to improve.
4. We noted that we are performing well in terms of; referrals being screened and completed within target; repeat referrals are performing better than target; all children with a Child Protection Plan and all Children Looked After have an allocated social worker; 29.6 per cent of Care Leavers are not in employment, education or training (NEET) which is better than our target.
5. The areas highlighted for further improvement as they are slightly behind target this quarter are; the timeliness of children and family assessments; statutory visits for children subject to a child protection plan and those who are in care.
6. Members discussed in particular the percentage of Care Leavers that were not in employment, education or training (NEET) and the reasons for them being NEET. The Assistant Director of Children's Services outlined the work of the monthly NEET Reduction Group who meet to develop plans for each young person who falls into this cohort in an effort to re-engage them in education, employment or training. There is also a NEET tracker that is maintained to support this performance and also the Reduction Group hold regular Job Clubs to offer targeted activities.
7. We also were given assurance on a further two areas; safeguarding interventions put in place for young people prior to an Initial Child Protection and the reporting of young people who go missing from residential care and timeliness of return home interviews, including the level of engagement by the young person.
8. Members are still concerned at the continued increase in the number of children in care and the financial impact on the authority, and the number of young people in addition that are placed here from outside the authority.

Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2018/19

9. Ann Baxter, previously the Independent Chair of Darlington Safeguarding Board attended the Scrutiny meeting to outline the final Annual Report 2019/19 of the Board. The Annual Report is a statutory requirement and produced to account for the activities and the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area.
10. The Annual report for 2018/19 was based on the DSCB's three strategic priorities; to ensure effective arrangements are in place that enable children, young people and their families to access appropriate Early Help support when first identified and this support is well coordinated; to ensure effective arrangements are in place to protect children from neglect, abuse and child sexual abuse; and to ensure partners work together to protect children from harm and ensure the voice of the child is evident in all multi-agency work.
11. The Independent Chair also highlighted the new arrangements following a national review on how Local Safeguarding Partnerships should operate in future which will include all partners working together to look at new ways of working for both children and adults as one multi-agency partnership.
12. We discussed the national increase of children coming into care; the increase of home schooling and how this was being monitored from a safeguarding perspective; and how the Home Education Service work with Gypsy Roma Travellers to assist families to place their children in education.
13. Members noted in particular that the breastfeeding rates at 6-8 weeks after birth for Darlington were lower than the England average, although we are better than the Tees Valley; the rate of emergency hospital admissions for children under four in Darlington which was higher than the England average; the rate of inpatient admissions because of self-harm is statistically higher than the England average. Members agreed that these were areas of particular concern that this Scrutiny will be monitoring closely.

Scrutiny Committees – Proposed Terms of Reference

14. We gave consideration to the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Council's Scrutiny Committees following the Leader's intention to implement a number of changes to the Cabinet Portfolios to take effect from December 2019.
15. Members noted the changes to the Terms of Reference with a view to aligning them more closely with the Cabinet Portfolios.

Councillor Jamie Bartch
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee