

COUNCIL
30 JANUARY 2020

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.

Childcare Sufficiency Review 2019/20

3. We received the findings of the 2019/20 Childcare Sufficiency Review and the authority's Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan for 2019/20.
4. Local authorities have a duty to ensure there is sufficient childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 or up to 18 for disabled children and we receive an annual report on how the authority are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare.
5. There are a number of factors which affect childcare demand including the number of parents in work in the Borough; regeneration projects in evidence; the increase in the amount of family housing and residential development in the Borough; and the number of new dwellings all affecting childcare demand.
6. Supply data for 2019 has again revealed that the early education and childcare market in Darlington remained fairly stable and there was sufficient capacity to meet overall demand for 30 hour places, however there was a latent demand for childcare with cost being the main barrier to take up of private hours.

Children and Young People's Plan 2017/22 – Progress Update

7. We received an update on the progress to date against the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2017/22 and the key actions that will be taken to deliver the agreed Sustainable Community Strategy priority of the best start in life for every child.
8. We examined the seven priorities for the next five years and moving into year two of the five year delivery plan it had agreed by the Multi Agency Steering Group to continue with the focus on improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all children and young people (priority three) and that Youth unemployment (priority six) be replaced by child poverty (priority four).
9. The Communications Team continue their work with Children's Services on any communications activities deemed necessary in relation to specific elements of the CYPP or other projects that may link to the CYPP.

10. We discussed the benefits take up campaign #DarloMillions which is aimed at addressing family poverty and we have requested a breakdown of the funding available and Members were advised of Voluntary and Community Sector Funding in place help address social isolation in adults and older people and to support vulnerable families with children and young people.
11. An online counselling and support tool for children and young people aged 11-10 (Kooth) is currently being piloted across the region. Members expressed their concern regarding the accessibility of 'Kooth' for those with dyslexia and learning disabilities. Officers gave assurance that this was being addressed by the team leading the development of the software. The pilot will be completed by the end of Summer 2020, at which point the impact and outcomes of the service will be shared with Members of this Scrutiny Committee.
12. We also requested further information in respect of the success of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in supporting the mental health needs of children leaving care and any other types of therapy that had been considered.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2019/20

13. We examined Quarter 2 (July-September) 2019/20 performance information and those areas where Children and Young People were performing well and those areas where there was a need to improve.
14. It was noted that we are performing well on timeliness of assessments which was above target; 92.8 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days from the Strategy meeting being held/Section 47 being initiated. 100 per cent of children with a Child Protection Plan and 100 per cent of Children Looked After had an allocated social worker; and 23.1 per cent of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET).
15. Areas highlighted for improvement were in respect of statutory child protection visits completed within 15 working days and the percentage of statutory children in care visits completed within timescale. It was noted that the number of children in care had increased to 278.

Councillor Jamie Bartch
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee