

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 16 December 2019

PRESENT – Councillors Bartch (Chair), Mrs Culley, Ali, C L B Hughes, Lucas, Renton and Snedker

STATUTORY CO-OPTES – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTES – John Armitage

APOLOGIES – Councillors Bell and L Hughes; Carly Spence, Tim Fisher

ABSENT – Councillors Lister and Preston

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor Crudass

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jane Kochanowski (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Christine Shields (Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation), Nicola Davies (Early Years Project Officer) and Helen Ellison (Head of Education Partnerships)

CYP60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP61 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2019

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

CYP62 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REVIEW 2019-20

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the findings of the 2019/20 Childcare Sufficiency Review and to set out the authority's 2019/20 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan (also previously circulated).

Local authorities are required by the Department for Education's 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities June 2018' to ensure sufficient childcare as far as is reasonably practicable, 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 to report annually to elected Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents.

It was reported that analysis of the overall volume of supply shows there is sufficient

childcare supply to meet demand.

It was reported that factors which affect childcare demand included the number of parents in work in the Borough and recent trends showed an improving picture regarding skills and productivity of Darlington residents with an increase in the employment rate and a reduction in the unemployment rate; the regeneration projects in evidence; the increase in the amount of family housing, residential development in the Borough; and the number of new dwellings all affecting childcare demand.

Supply data for 2019 revealed that the early education and childcare market in Darlington remained fairly stable; however feedback from a pre-school childcare gap analysis carried out in Summer 2018 showed that there was a latent demand for childcare in the borough with cost being the main barrier to high take up of private hours. Parents also would welcome more flexibility to accommodate their work and training arrangements at short notice. These findings were also the outcome of the 2019 parental demand survey, nevertheless, analysis of the overall volume of supply showed that there was sufficient capacity to meet demand; and parent and provider feedback also suggested that there was sufficient capacity to meet overall demand for 30 Hour places.

It was also reported that there was evidence to indicate that providers were under increasing financial pressure with several settings reporting that their operating costs were higher than funding rates. Some settings also reported financial pressures were also impacting on the capacity for some providers to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities; and feedback from parents and employers called for greater flexibility and lower childcare costs.

To enable the local childcare market and schools to fill any childcare gaps identified, it was reported that the childcare sufficiency data will be presented at the Spring 2020 Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers' Network meeting and will be sent to schools and presented at the Spring 2020 Schools Chair of Governors' Briefing.

The local authority will also continue to advertise the right of parents and childcare providers to request the delivery of childcare from school sites (DfE 'Rights to Request', introduced in September 2016).

Members discussed in particular the need to narrow any gaps in the provision of care for those children with disabilities and the rest of the population; the retention of staff in the childcare sector; the lack of flexibility from employers in respect of childcare; take up of nursery placements in the borough; and Members of this Scrutiny Committee agreed to make a recommendation to Cabinet to request improved long term planning and funding from Central Government for Early Education and Childcare.

RESOLVED – (a) That Members note the information and findings of the 2019/20 Childcare Sufficiency Review.

(b) That Members note the Local Authority's 2019/20 Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan and to continue to monitor on an annual basis.

(c) That Members of this Scrutiny Committee meet to consider a recommendation for

Cabinet to request improved long term planning and funding from Central Government for Early Education and Childcare.

CYP63 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2017/22 - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the progress to date against the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2017/22.

The Plan, which covers a five year period, is one of the identified delivery plans within the Sustainable Community Strategy and identifies what key actions will be taken to deliver the agreed Sustainable Community Strategy priority of the best start in life for every child which was adopted by Council on 29 September 2017.

The submitted report highlighted the seven priorities for the next five years and it had been previously agreed by the Multi-agency Steering Group (MASG) to focus on two of the priority actions for year one and moving into year two of the five year delivery plan, it had also been agreed by the MASG to continue with the focus on improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all children and young people (priority three) and Youth unemployment (priority six) be replaced by child poverty (priority four).

The submitted report provided an update on the Year two priorities being to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all children and young people and to reduce the number of children and young people living in poverty; outlined the work of the MASG which is Chaired by the Assistant Director for Commissioning, Performance and Transformation; and advised that 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.

Discussion ensued on the #DarloMillions campaign aimed at addressing family poverty and Members requested a breakdown of available funding and how it is utilised; and 'highlighted the need for improved signposting for all available funding and support. Members were also 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.

Concern was raised in respect of the accessibility of 'Kooth', the online counselling and support tool for those with dyslexia and learning disabilities and Members were assured that this was being addressed. The Director of Commissioning, Performance and Transformation advised Members that the pilot of 'Kooth' was due to end in summer 2020 and the impact and outcomes of this service would then be measured and the demonstration site shared with Members for information.

Members requested further information in respect of the success of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in supporting the mental health needs of children leaving care; and questioned if other types of therapy had been considered.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP64 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 2 2019/20

The Director of Children and Adults Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

The submitted report provided Quarter 2 (July-September) 2019/20 performance information in line with an indicator set agreed by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group and subsequently by each individual Scrutiny Committee.

It was also reported that the indicator set had been realigned to the updated Cabinet Portfolios, agreed at Council on 5 December 2019.

The submitted report highlighted where Children and Young People were performing well and where there was a need to improve. It was also outlined that where indicators are reported annually quarterly updates will not be available.

It was highlighted that the timeliness of assessments was at 92.7 per cent of assessments which was above the target of 90 per cent; 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; there were 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).

The areas highlighted for improvement in Quarter 2 were in respect of statutory child protection visits completed within 15 working days and 73.8 per cent of were completed within the internally set target of 10 working days; and 86.3 per cent of statutory children in care visits were completed within the timescale; and the number of children in care had increased to 278.

Members discussed in particular the number of children in care at the end of each month; the Assistant Director of Children's Services advised Members of the work being undertaken and support in place to keep the child in the family where appropriate.

Members noted the Health Assessments and Dental Health Assessments and questioned if this could be incentivised to encourage older children to attend their reviews; Members were assured that the LAC nurse was able to capture those children that did not attend formal reviews via less formal methods.

Following a request by Members in respect of quality of practice, the Assistant Director of Children's Services advised Members that quality of practice was captured as part of the improvement plan; a position statement outlined the improvements made as part of the plan, all of which added to the quality of practice; and a Quality Impact Statement would be provided at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That the performance information provided for Quarter 2 2019/20 be noted.

CYP65 WORK PROGRAMME

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the current work programme for this Scrutiny Committee.

The work programme has been reviewed and revised for the Municipal Year 2019/20 and has been linked to performance indicators from the Performance Management Framework to provide robust and accurate data for Members to use when considering topics and the work they wish to undertake.

Discussion ensued in respect of baby groups in Darlington and it was suggested a quad of aims be completed to examine the provision of baby groups in Darlington and to carryout out a mapping exercise to identify any gaps; and to also examine what support is provided by the local authority to baby groups.

RESOLVED – That the current status of the work programme be noted.