

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Monday 9 April 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors H Smith, B Bainbridge, D Bell, P Brookes, J Charlton, R Crute, C Hampson, K Hopper, I Jewell, L Kennedy, L Mavin and M Simmons

Faith Community Representative:

Mrs C Johnston

Also Present:

Councillor M McKeon

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Blakey, J Considine, N Grayson, A Patterson, A Willis, M Wilson and Mr J Conlon and Ms C Craig.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 and of the special joint meeting with Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

6 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented Members with recent press articles relating to the remit of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

- Durham County Council staff helping thousands of families praised for 'unrelenting positivity'
- Social Workers recognised for making a difference
- Children's centres restructured to offer targeted support
- Child poverty: Pale and hungry pupils 'fill pockets with school food
- Special needs children 'paying price' for education funding 'crisis'
- Infant school children suffering from mental health problems, teacher poll finds

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 One Point Service Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented Members with an update on the One Point Services (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager of the One Point Service gave a joint presentation with regards to One Point Service Update and Impact of the Children's Centres Review (for copy see file of minutes) therefore please refer to item no. 8 for record of discussion.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

8 Impact of the Children's Centres Review

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and Director Children and Young Peoples Services which presented Members with an update on the performance of the Children's Centres following the Council's decision to change the way in which they operated (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager of the One Point Service gave a joint presentation with regards to One Point Service Update and Impact of the Children's Centres Review (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Brookes referred to the £1m reduction in the budget and the rise in the number of referrals and assessments. He queried how the Service had significantly increased the number of assessments when the service had lost staff and funding and had 300 more Looked After Children (LAC's). The Strategic Manager of the One Point Service confirmed that the service was much better at targeting more families in need and had improved the way information was recorded.

The Head of Early Help, Assessment & Safeguarding confirmed that many families which had previously accessed Children Centres in the past had not required intervention. Work had been targeted to the County's most deprived areas and to those most vulnerable.

Early Intervention had enabled the service to reduce the number of Children in Need, however there were more LAC's and this could be attributed to continuing austerity, which was now in its eighth year.

Councillor Crute suggested that it would be beneficial for a Working Group to consider whether economical factors may have contributed to the increase in LAC's.

Councillor Charlton queried the impact of having lost 60 members of staff, the impact this had on Social Workers and caseloads. The Strategic Manager of the One Point Service confirmed that there were approximately 200 staff remaining and most of the staff had left through the ER/VR process, only one who had been made compulsory redundant. Social Workers had 24 caseload on average, or 10-15 families, which would allow enough time to carry out comprehensive assessments.

Councillor Charlton was concerned that it could be difficult for some families to access Children's Centres and queried whether funding was available to enable them to travel. The Strategic Manager of the One Point Service confirmed that the Outreach Programme enabled staff to go out to community buildings to deliver services and should parents agree to attend the Parenting Programme, there was a budget to assist with the cost of attending.

Finally, Councillor Charlton referred to the instability of PCSO's in her own locality as movement caused some issues with consistency. The Head of Early Help, Assessment & Safeguarding confirmed that she had written to the Chief Constable and complimented the valuable work that PCSO's were doing in Durham, however it was a role that was naturally used as a stepping stone to becoming a Police Officer and therefore the turnover was high.

Councillor Jewell queried the referral process of One Point and the Strategic Manager confirmed that as well as self-referral, multiple agencies would monitor patients from the outset of pregnancy. Midwives would identify vulnerability as early as the first appointment and health visitors completed pre-birth home checks (the Home Environment Assessment Tool) to confirm that a parent had baby essentials and a clean and sleeping area. The Head of Early Help, Assessment & Safeguarding confirmed that where possible One Point was co-located with Families First Teams and regular meetings ensured that nobody was overlooked.

In response to a question from a Member of the Public, the Strategic Manager confirmed that One Point did offer volunteer opportunities and had a recruitment process for anyone interested.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

9 Quarter 3 2017/18 - Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented Members with progress against the Council's Corporate

Performance Framework for Altogether Better for Children and Young People for the third quarter of the 2017/18 Financial Year (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Early Help, Assessment & Safeguarding made reference to the Stronger Families Programme. Funding had previously been payment by results, however the financial framework had been updated to include an alternative funding model, Earned Autonomy. 40 Local Authorities had been given the opportunity to apply for up front funding and Durham was one of 11 successful applicants. Earned Autonomy status would permit Durham to move away from the current payment by results arrangements, allowing the Council to make more flexible use of the funding.

In relation to Teenage Pregnancy, Councillor McKeon confirmed that there were areas in the County with limited access to GP's and unable to access information regarding preventative measures. She queried whether there was a further breakdown which could be provided. The Head of Early Help, Assessment & Safeguarding confirmed that there was a data lag and the data reported was 30 months out of date. Figures for local areas were not published as there was a chance that individuals could be identified in certain age brackets, however the outcome for children with teenage parents were much worse and so it was important to try and identify contributing factors.

Councillor McKeon stated that in relation to educational attainment the whole North East region had endured a drop in attainment and asked how closely Durham County Council worked with other North Eastern local authorities to address this. The figures tell us that the North East region is the worst in England for educational attainment and DCC sits within the middle within the North East for secondary attainment.

Councillor Crute confirmed that The North East Regional Employers' Organisation were in the midst of developing their Work Programme and he would put forward the comments regarding the need for more current information on educational attainment.

Councillor Bainbridge referred to the increase in the number of LAC's compared to previous years but pointed out that it was stable and significantly lower than other regions. She praised the success of the Council's social media campaign which had generated a lot of interest from potential foster carers and adopters. The Head of Early Help, Assessment and Safeguarding advised that the recent campaign to recruit foster carers and adopters had generated a lot of interest but checks would be needed to be carried out before this would impact on the number of foster carers in place.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Quarter 3 2017/18 - Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Finance and Transactional Services which provided details of the updated 2017-18 forecast outturn budget position for the CYPS service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position to the end of December 2017 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided Members with information contained within the Council Plan 2016-2019, relevant to the work of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, allowing Members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the three objectives and subsequent outcomes identified within the Council Plan for Altogether Better for Children and Young People.

The Chair suggested that she would like a piece of in-depth scrutiny to be done on elective home education looking at the numbers and reasons for children and young people educated at home. The Head of Early Help, Assessment & Safeguarding confirmed that many children were being home schooled and Councillor Crute confirmed that it would be interesting to assess the quality of education and consider the affect on safeguarding.

Councillor Brookes confirmed that as Chairman of Corporate Parenting he would be keen for the Committee to consider the addition of private children's homes, to the Work Programme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Summary of Minutes from Children and Families Partnership

The Committee noted the summary of minutes from Children and Families Partnership meeting on 15 January 2018.