

## **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 2 July 2018 at 9.30 am**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor C Potts (Chairman)**

#### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors H Smith, D Bell, J Blakey, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, S Durham, I Jewell, A Patterson, A Reed, M Simmons, A Willis and M Wilson

#### **Parent Governor Representative:**

Mrs J Norman

#### **Co-opted Members:**

Mrs P Parkins

#### **Also Present:**

Councillor M McKeon

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Bainbridge, P Brookes, N Grayson, C Hampson, K Hopper, L Kennedy, and L Mavin. Mrs C Craig, C Johnson and Ms R Evans.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

#### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

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;

- Sharp rise in under 11s referred for mental health help
- Scores of North East Children severely obese by the end of primary school
- Government pledges to improve young carer identification and support

### **Resolved:**

That the presentation be noted

## **7 Progress Update on Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision Review**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented Members with an update on the progress made against the recommendations from the Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision review (for copy see file of minutes).

The Lead Officer for Health and Wellbeing presented the report and gave Members additional information relating to some of the recommendations outlined in the report (for copy see file of minutes). She confirmed that one of the recommendations with regards to increasing FSM take up, could not be implemented due to the data protection regulations. The parent NI number could not be included on school admission application forms, instead schools used an eligibility checking system that required them to obtain details from parents and hold them securely for FSM checking purposes only.

Some schools had not previously used the eligibility checking system and had received increased pupil premium funding. One particular school had received an additional £25k. Children on FSM as of 31 March 2018 were protected until end of Universal Credit roll out 2023. A Local Authority Universal Credit Working Group had been set up to look at the impact of welfare changes.

All but one of Durham's secondary schools used the biometric system and held termly meetings with catering support teams where staff had been advised that the screen should not be seen by other pupils. Schools were being supported to change the location of tills and/or card readers should this be an issue and catering assessments would include a 'spot check' on card readers from Autumn 2018.

Mrs Norman added that children in Key Stage 1 were all eligible for FSM and parents were therefore unlikely to submit details. Schools needed to be proactive in reminding parents to complete the checks to access pupil premium funding.

In response to the Senior Project Worker, Investing in Children, the Lead Officer for Health and Wellbeing confirmed that children had been consulted throughout the Review via

regular meetings between School Nutrition and Action Groups and the School Meals Team.

Councillor Jewell queried whether there were hotspots in the County where parents were unlikely to take up FSM for cultural reasons or pride. The Lead Officer for Health and Wellbeing confirmed that there were children eligible for FSM whose parents preferred to supply them with packed lunch, but it was difficult to identify reasons. The School Meals Team also held regular meetings with the contract provider and high drop out was considered.

The Strategic Manager, Think Family Services referred to the project 'a day out not a hand out' which had been evaluated by Northumbria University. They had found that children who attended holiday activities which provided food, had eaten more fruit and vegetables and drank more water, but also been keen to learn and participate. The holiday clubs had assisted to alleviate parental stress and provide children with a safe environment to play and learn new skills. The programme was to be held in Durham over the next few years. Events were hosted by Culture and Leisure and a range of community events and activities funded by AAPs were listed and publicised.

North Lanarkshire Council had developed the 365 programme which was aimed at primary pupils with FSM entitlement. The Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Children and Young People's Services and Social Inclusion and HR were visiting North Lanarkshire Council to see how the programme was set up.

The Head of Education spoke in relation to the effects of austerity on families. He confirmed the fact that hunger affected children's schoolwork and contributed to attainment issues. He referred to the link between obesity and bad eating habits. Both issues were difficult to assess, but should be a consideration during Ofsted inspections as it was a difficult challenge without knowing what was happening in each individual school.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**8 Draft Children's Strategy**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which presented Members with the draft vision, aims and objectives of the proposed new Children and Young People's Strategy, and received a presentation from the Head of Strategy (for copies see file of minutes).

The presentation included the rationale and proposed vision statement, including 4 key aims and how they would be delivered.

In response to a question from Councillor Jewell the Head of Strategy confirmed that one of the key aims was to ensure the strategy was specific and measurable. Detailed plans had been drafted, however Members were able to advise if there were any areas of vital importance to be included.

Councillor Blakey suggested two areas of importance;

- The number of SEN children who stayed in Education or went on to Employment and;
- CAHMS referral waiting times

The Head of Strategy commented that in terms of disability and employment, performance in the County was poor and consideration on how to improve those figures was essential.

Councillor McKeown referred to a number of young carers, caring for adults with mental health problems. Many were unaware they were caring for people. She also commented on a rise in private sector companies employing young apprentices as cheap labour with no intention of employing them at the end of their apprenticeship. In response the Head of Strategy confirmed that work had been undertaken by Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regards to the DurhamWorks partnership.

Councillor Hall highlighted the ability for the Committee to address issues for the next generation. One area for concern was the transition from primary to secondary school. There was also a significant skills gap between 14-16 year olds. Other areas to consider were home schooling and alternative provision, and unemployment in young people. The Head of Strategy commented that Attainment 8 score was a measure for average achievement which was being used as an alternative to academic achievement.

The Strategic Manager Support & Development added that work had been undertaken in Seaham School and one pupil had observed the difference in school management. In primary school a teacher would speak to pupils about behaviour, however in secondary school immediate sanctions were issued.

Councillor Crute confirmed that issues raised with regards to youth unemployment were being monitored by Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He referred to the impact of austerity which had undoubtedly created more deprivation, and the reductions in Local Authority funding and the National Funding Formula which had both impacted on schools. Despite this, he remained positive that this would improve.

The Head of Education confirmed that children were all equally bright. The determination of teachers was key to success and Durham would aspire to lead in Education in the North and nationally.

The Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Manager referred to comments submitted by Mrs Evans who had queried the input of children and young people into the County Durham Plan and would like to see more explicit links with the Children's Strategy.

In response to a comment from Councillor Charlton, the Head of Strategy confirmed that children with mental health issues were considered under one of the key aims, emotional wellbeing, however specific reference would be made to mental health in the final draft.

Councillor McKeown commented that the North East region was amongst the lowest in terms of achievement and suggested Local Authority partnerships to try and improve.

In response to a comment from Councillor Patterson the Head of Strategy confirmed that children in need would be included within the 4 key aim and confirmed that Councillor Patterson suggested children and young people contributed their views on the Strategy.

**Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

## **9 Child Poverty**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which updated Members on the progress of the Child Poverty Working Group (CPWG) since the last report in September 2017 (for copy see file of minutes).

With regards to Child Poverty, the Chairman commented on an increase in demand for the School Benevolent Fund.

Councillor Crute referred to the replacement of the Child Poverty Act with the Welfare Reform Act in 2016 and the removal of the reference to income and child poverty. Although figures for employment had improved, the quality of employment had reduced and it could not be assumed that working households were not struggling.

Councillor Charlton referred to 'Smarter Budgeting' training and queried the number of staff yet to receive training. The Strategic Manager, Think Family Services confirmed that the training was being embedded into the training programme and would continue to be delivered to a wide range of staff such as Health Visitors, School Nurses, Housing Providers. In answer to a further question from Councillor Charlton, she confirmed that there was a need to target staff working in areas of deprivation.

Councillor Blakey referred to the severity of child poverty and the worry that there were families who were not engaging with any services, and praised volunteers for picking up the work.

Councillor Considine queried the level of involvement School Governors had and the Strategic Manager, Think Family Services confirmed that they were targeted and encouraged to take up the offer of training and to use the 'top tips' included in the leaflet.

The Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Manager again referred to comments submitted by Co-optee Mrs Evans who highlighted that there was a national debate with regards to 'period poverty' and postpubescent missing school due to lack of sanitary products and this had not been highlighted in the leaflet.

Councillor Hall commented on an increase in child poverty due to reduced government funding and it was important that this was highlighted to MP's.

The Senior Project Worker, Investing in Children referred to young care leavers living in poverty and a recent campaign to highlight the struggles of living on £59 per week. She emphasised the Council's responsibility for young people until the age of 25 and the Strategic Manager, Think Family Services, confirmed that the Voluntary and Community Sector Alliance worked closely with Children and Young People's Services to ensure access to a range of services.

Councillor Crute suggested that Members needed to consider how to monitor performance indicators and whether to upgrade any to key performance indicators.

Councillor McKeown referred to the Early Years Foundation Stage standards for speech and language and the effect on teaching to bring children up to the required standards. The Strategic Manager, Think Families Service confirmed that this was a key priority for the One Point Service and there was additional work being done to get children school ready, such as reading in libraries.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**10 Performance Management Quarter 4 2017/2018**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress against the council's corporate performance framework by Altogether priority theme for the fourth quarter of the 2017/18 financial year (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager responded to a question from Councillor Durham regarding the failure to meet the target for the number of social work case file audits. He confirmed that there were various pressure points relating to types and levels of intervention and the service would look at alternative ways to represent the figures following the implementation of Liquid Logic. There was however a period of transition to be expected but the Committee would see improvements.

Councillor Blakey referred to the reduction in teenage pregnancy and asked for Members to be alerted should there be any recent increase.

Councillor Smith referred to recent press which criticised the campaign for breastfeeding. It had been alleged that Mothers were left feeling guilty for their choices, or feeling too pressurised by health visitors and midwives. Councillor Considine confirmed that from experience, she had been provided with more support in Durham than in London and complimented the health service for a positive experience. Mrs Norman added that the Nursing & Midwifery Council were relaxing their stance on breastfeeding. Mrs Parkins queried whether there was a breastfeeding support group specifically aimed at teenage parents.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **11 Refresh of the Work Programme**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships an updated work programme for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2018-19 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a joint review with Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be taking place following the establishment of a review group. She asked for Members to register their interest.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a meeting would be held at Evergreen Primary School, one of the County's special schools. A tour would be provided.

### **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 6 March 2018.