

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 **Wednesday 26 September 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, J Considine, R Crute, S Durham, C Hampson, K Hopper, I Jewell, L Kennedy, L Mavin, A Reed, M Simmons, A Willis, M Wilson and P Howell

Co-opted Members:

Ms R Evans and Mrs P Parkins

Also Present:

Councillors D Hall, P Howell and Mrs R Morris

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Blakey, N Grayson, A Patterson, Mrs J Norman and Mrs C Craig.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2018 and the special meeting on 24 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record subject to Councillor Hall being noted as present at the meeting 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;

- County Durham Students to Shine amid Changes to GCSE's
- Government to ban energy drink sales to children in England
- Ofsted cuts leave parents guessing, say MPs
- £12m to provide opportunities for young people

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Participation in Learning

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided Members with an update on the participation in education or training and a received a presentation from the Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning (for copies see file of minutes).

The presentation provided information on the vision, statutory responsibilities and statistics and those over the current and previous five years. Members were given an insight into the DurhamWorks Programme and information on Partners, the impact of the programme on young people since 2015, the improvements to be made and next steps. There were also a number of caseloads from young people who had been given opportunities that they would not ordinarily have been given, had it not been for the programme.

Members were provided with the most up to date data from June 2018, and advised that when looking at figures for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and Not Known, Durham was marginally below the regional average and slightly higher than the national average.

Members received information on the DurhamWorks Programme which was a European funded programme. There had recently been a further £12m received to fund the programme for a further 3 years. Due to delays in approval, the additional funding had been received late.

Councillor Jewell asked for information on how performance of DurhamWorks was measured and whether there had been any effect following the late allocation of funding. The Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning, advised that in relation to quality assurance there was monthly performance information measured against profile, observations and systematic learner satisfaction surveys. In addition, there were significant audits carried out with clear action plans in compliance of the programme, and there were to be more unannounced observations. He confirmed that the funding was allocated in a period of time when much of the programme was in the process of winding down, so the service had not been able to retain contractors. Some funding had been secured which allowed the service to retain some of the staff and ensured some level of continuity, however many had left to pursue other roles due to the uncertainty. Performance was monitored by observations, learner satisfaction surveys, audits.

Councillor Jewell enquired if the situation were to happen again how would the service address it to which the Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning advised that while the matter could have been elevated sooner, the service needed to maintain positive relations.

Councillor Considine queried the number of post 16 year olds who were affected by the education transport policy. The Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning, confirmed that this issue was currently under investigation, however she added that young people who participated through DurhamWorks were assisted with transport costs. The Interim Head of Education confirmed that the implications of not providing transport was a very significant issue in Durham and a further written response would be circulated to Members.

Councillor Brookes referred to the number of 16-17 year olds who were unable to be located and queried how we could have such accurate information and still be unable to locate them. The Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning, confirmed that they could have moved out of county, but also that some of them did not want to be contacted and would deliberately ignore attempts of communication. She added that the way in which the service communicated with young people needed to be updated – they preferred using smartphones and particularly social media, but there were safeguarding issues associated with the use of social media.

Councillor Brookes highlighted that apprenticeships were often thought of as exploitation and Councillor Durham questioned whether they had always been available or the number of them had increased over most recent years. The Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning, confirmed that there was evidence to suggest that the number of apprenticeships had increased, but also the number of work opportunities. Apprenticeships often led to permanent job opportunities, and even if young people did not retain a position with the employer, they were equipped with certificates of further education. In relation in internships, she confirmed that these were used for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and did not consist of employment only, they were intended to increase vocational skills and Maths and English skills which could lead to apprenticeships. Data would be available next year to measure the success of the programme.

Councillor Kennedy asked whether any work focused on youth workers in the voluntary community sector (VCS) and the Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning, confirmed that youth workers employed by DurhamWorks engaged with the VCS and with youth workers and young people in youth clubs and leisure centres.

Councillor Hall queried the reason why unemployment data was so unreliable and the Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning, confirmed that if a young person claimed universal credit or jobseekers allowance, they were classified as employed, even if they only worked one day per week. The true picture in County Durham was masked by the benefits they were or were not claiming. She referred to hidden unemployment and described young people who were not claiming benefits for many reasons. The service had met with job centre representatives and experienced evaluators but neither could assist in determining a true picture and therefore it was very difficult to engage with them. Where there were areas of greater unemployment there were more staff allocated to the known hot spot areas.

In response to a question from Councillor Hall, the Interim Head of Education confirmed that the curriculum was not appropriate for all children however, alternative provision could provide them with a bespoke pathway, which included access to vocational qualifications. In KS3 the school were asked for information with regards to children 'at risk' and in order to reduce the number that were lost during the transitional period between school and further education or employment.

Mrs Morris was delighted that the funding had been secured and asked if it would be used in the same way or if the service would be reviewing areas based on whether they were working or not. The Strategic Lead, Progression and Learning confirmed that a lot of lessons had been learned and these were incorporated into the evaluation report. She added that for example, with regards to generic provision, young people were only interested if the outcome was guaranteed to lead to a clear employment opportunity.

Mrs Parkins highlighted a former employee with a disability who had flourished in the work environment after seeking employment through the press, but it highlighted the difficulty in gaining the opportunity.

Resolved:

That the presentation be received, and a further progress report be given at a future meeting.

8 Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report

The Committee considered a report of the Independent Chair of County Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report 2017/18 and Young People's Annual Report 2017/18 (for copies see file of minutes).

The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board advised that the work referred to in the report was under the previous Independent Chair and that he was in post as a Transitional Chair to take the LSCB from where they were to move to its new status under the Working Together 2018 guideline.

Members were informed of the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) that had taken place. A project team were in place and the LSCB would have a series of development days to discuss restructure of the partnership, financial arrangements, transitional arrangements for Serious Case Reviews and Child Death Reviews, and to look at providing independent scrutiny. Members were informed that there would be streamlining of sub-groups and there would be a focus on audit and scrutiny to understand policies and procedures.

Councillor Bainbridge queried the categorisation for neglect as there was a high number of children identified but no details of type of neglect they had suffered. She asked what work was done with parents to address this issue. The Independent Chair confirmed that Reducing Neglect was a key priority and the Tackling Neglect Strategy had included a delivery plan with a number of priority actions. Early identification was a key objective and as soon as a child was identified, intervention would be triggered, in order to reduce neglect before the requirement of statutory intervention.

Councillor Brookes referred to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to domestic abuse and queried whether lessons had been learned following the outcome. The Independent Chair confirmed there had been 29 areas of good practice and 43 areas for improvement identified by the inspection. Councillor Brookes then asked what enforcement the LSCB had to ensure that changes would be carried out by partnership organisations. The Independent Chair advised that there had to be commitment from every partnership and a working will from the very top of the organisation with a commitment to deliver against all of the recommendations. He reassured Members that following the feedback from the JTAI and consultation with other agencies, a plan would be implemented, and a series of audits would be carried out in future to mirror the JTAI with additional checks against the Working Together 2018 guidance, ensuring any issues were identified and dealt with accordingly.

Councillor Mavin queried Operation Encompass and the procedure following domestic abuse incidents and whether all schools had signed up to this. The Independent Chair confirmed that this was a reporting system which ensured that a domestic incident involving a child was reported to their school by the following school day. Some schools were aware of domestic abuse and were positive in what they were doing but others needed to be more effective and take time for the procedures to bed in.

Councillor Jewell referred to the complexity of a multi-agency service and queried cross boundary issues which may arise. The Independent Chair confirmed that this would be assessed as part of the scrutiny following the JTAI.

In response to questions from Councillor Durham, the Independent Chair confirmed that he was confident that a robust action plan was in place to identify children at risk from CSE and to pursue perpetrators. As well as a strategic plan, four sub-groups reported to the LSCB, with additional meetings of the sub-group Chairs. The LSCB Business Manager confirmed that a further update would be provided to the Committee when new safeguarding arrangements were in place.

Resolved:

That the annual report be received and for a further report to come to a future meeting on the LSCB new arrangements.

9 Corporate Parenting Annual Report

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Brookes, Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel, introduced the first annual report following Ofsted recommendations in 2016 to ensure political input into practices delivered to children. The report had been produced by young people in conjunction with the Children in Care Council. Councillor Brookes welcomed the news that care leavers no longer had to pay Council Tax and referred to a recent Care Leavers Challenge that Councillor Patterson had participated in, where she had spent a week living on the care leavers allowance of £57.90. Councillor Brookes confirmed that it was alarming that at one point, she had been forced to choose between food or heating. He

thanked Vice Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel, Councillor Smith for the work that she been involved with.

Resolved:

That the annual report be received.

10 Performance Management Q1 2018/2019

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Management Team which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework for the Altogether Better for Children and Young People priority theme for the first quarter of the 2018/19 financial year (for copy see file of minutes).

In relation to the casefile audit programme for social work, Councillor Durham queried why it had been suspended and if it would be reinstated. The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager advised that the casefile audit had been postponed while the service went through a restructure and until the results of JTAI were received.

Ms Evans stated that it was great to see families in receipt of universal services being well supported, but due to budget restraints, many services in rural areas had been reduced and could impact on targeted and specialist services.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 Budget Revenue and Capital Outturn 2017/2018

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Finance which provided details of the 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 June 2018 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Budget Revenue and Capital Forecast Q1 2018/2019

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Finance which provided details of the outturn budget position for the CYPS service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for 2017/18 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 Verbal update on Review Activity

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update on the review activity Members agreed to carry out, with regards to the Role of the Social worker from a Child's Perspective.

Evidence gathering had taken place over seven meetings and one site visit from December 2017 to June 2018. The Evidence related to the point in time when the review activity occurred.

During the course of the review the working group received evidence from Social Workers; Newly Qualified Social Workers; Managers in children's social care and young people who had experience of the system.

The key findings fell into three categories:

- Service Improvement – that included the introduction of electronic referral forms; an up to date IT system; a robust quality assurance programme and service restructure.
- Training and Development – routes into social work were varied; the social worker academy continued to grow.
- What Children Said – Children and Young People had varying experiences of their social workers; most young people wanted to be contacted via telephone.

From the key findings the review group formulated seven recommendations. The report was still a work in progress and was being checked for comment and accuracy, but the draft report would be shared with the Committee before it went to Cabinet in December.

In relation to other review activity – a working group had been established to consider Children's Private Residential Care Homes and the first meeting would take place on Monday 29 October 2018. All members of the review group had been informed of the meeting dates.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

14 Response to Consultations

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided a copy of their response to three consultations which had recently closed (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

15 Children and Families Partnership Minutes

The Committee noted the summary of minutes from Children and Families Partnership meeting on 19 June 2018.

At the close of business the Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the next meeting would be at Evergreen School in Bishop Auckland and Members were invited to take a tour of the school following the meeting.