

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 **Friday 11 January 2019 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors H Smith, B Bainbridge, J Charlton, R Crute, S Durham, K Hopper, I Jewell, A Patterson, A Reed, M Simmons, A Willis and M Wilson

Parent Governor Representative:

Mrs J Norman

Also Present:

Councillors M McKeon

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell, J Blakey, P Brookes, J Considine, N Grayson, L Kennedy and Mrs R Evans.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

Minutes of the special meeting held on 10 September 2018 and the meeting of the 7 November 2018 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

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;

- Missing Special Needs Support a national scandal
- Report claims millions of children suffering from the rising tide of UK poverty
- County Durham outperforms National average in performance tables
- Children exceed sugar limit at age 10

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Update on the Work of the Healthy Weight Alliance

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which provided an update of work carried out and planned by County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance (HWA) (for copy see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the PH Advanced Practitioner (VC,YP&F), which outlined the context of healthy weight in County Durham, key national and local drivers, work to date and planned, and shared goals for the future (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Charlton confirmed that she had been contacted by two different Mothers who had been in tears following the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) and notification that their children were classified as obese. Councillor Charlton confirmed that both children ate healthy balanced meals and exercised regularly.

The Advanced Practitioner in Public Health confirmed that the NCMP was a national programme and the local authority had no control over the measurements taken and they were based on Body Mass Index (BMI). She advised that circumstances such as where the child takes part in activities they could develop muscle mass that weighs heavy or where a child has a growth spurt were not a consideration. Using the healthy weight pathway, it was important that where children were overweight, conversations took place early. Councillor Charlton suggested that this information should be communicated clearly to parents.

In response to a question from Mrs Norman, the Advanced Practitioner in Public Health confirmed that the FISCH (Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health) Programme was still in operation and the HWA were looking to improve the response rate. She added that it was important to engage with parents and have conversations about children's weight at an earlier stage in order for the measurements to become a normal milestone. In response to a further question from Mrs Norman, the Advanced Practitioner in Public Health confirmed that the FISCH Programme was conducted by the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) and targeted towards whole year groups in order to reduce stigma and encourage healthy eating and increased activity. Mrs Norman suggested that a letter could be sent prior to the NCMP which explained the programme and the outcomes to parents. The Advanced Practitioner advised that she would not wish to jeopardise the excellent take up and support of the NCMP in County Durham, as it was unique in comparison to other areas of the country.

In response to a question from Councillor Durham with regards to whether cooking courses were available on the adult learning programme, the Advanced Practitioner in

Public Health confirmed that there were broad courses on offer, but this was something being discussed with Adult Services.

Councillor Jewell remarked on the way in which poverty had changed over the last 30 years, observing that years ago children were prone to being undernourished, but were now often overweight. He suggested that diet and exercise should be addressed, but the onus should not always be on schools to pick it up, it should be something that was established within the home environment. Environmental factors such as the use of motor vehicles also had an impact on activity.

The Advanced Practitioner in Public Health advised that deprived areas usually had the largest number of takeaways and there was no restriction on those that were already established, but through the Councils own policies, they could restrict new applications. There was a lot of work to do with food choices within vulnerable communities. She advised of other work carried out in the Public Health Team such as Safer Streets, Bikeability and 20s, hopefully giving people more inclination to walk or cycle. Area Action Partnerships were driving work forward in relation to active communities.

Councillor Reed was delighted that all children were screened by the NCMP as previously it was only foster children and queried whether children with diagnosed health issues were taken into consideration. The Advanced Practitioner in Public Health advised that external colleagues were usually involved if children had health issues or were from complex families.

Councillor Smith advised that as a retired Paediatrician, she had experience of many parents having a false perception of their child's weight. The Advanced Practitioner in Public Health advised that some parents also tended to use other children as a benchmark, as did adults: 60-70% of adults were clinically obese and therefore it was considered normal. She reiterated that having early conversations about weight could assist in addressing these challenges.

Councillor McKeon queried the system of engagement with young people and confirmed that if conversations about weight were not done in the correct way, it could have a long term detrimental impact on mental health. The Advanced Practitioner advised that a key element of work was the mental health and wellbeing of young people and some factfinding workshops had been facilitated to consider the perceptions of children and their families.

Councillor Bainbridge suggested that County Durham News was used to promote family activities or events. The Advanced Practitioner in Public Health advised that the focus was on activities, healthy diet and fun, and the aim was to make activities routine for communities.

The Chair thanked the Advanced Practitioner in Public Health for the presentation and advised that she had previously been an advocate for the daily mile and was delighted to see the popularity of the Active 30 initiatives. The Advanced Practitioner advised that by replacing the Daily Mile with Active 10, 20 and 30 we had maintained a good level of participation as some schools that were struggling to find the time for the Daily Mile may have been lost if it had been pursued, whereas they were able to participate in Active 10 or 20.

Councillor Wilson advised that her local primary school was taking part in Active 10 and the whole school took part, including teachers, helpers and all children regardless of ability – the same could not be said for the daily mile as children with physical impairments were not always able to participate. She advised that the school may not have taken part in the daily mile but were happy to participate in active 10.

Resolved:

- a) That the report and presentation be noted.
- b) That a further update be provided to the Committee during the next work programme.

8 Quarter 2: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2018/19

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which provided details of the forecast outturn budget for Children and Young People's Service and highlighted major variances in comparison with the budget, based on the position to the end of quarter two 2018/19 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Patterson referred to major financial pressures on schools and children's services and the importance of monitoring their budgets. She referred to school funding and those forecasted to suffer a deficit and queried recovery plans and, those that had a deficit for more than three years their viability.

The Finance Manager CYPS advised that the School Funding Team worked alongside the Corporate Director of Resources education services to address those schools in deficit and recovery plans may include a change in provision or to academise a school which would write off the deficit, at a cost to the Council. The Finance Manager advised that schools needed exclusive permission from the 151 Officer (Corporate Director of Resources) should they set a deficit budget and a pointed message was sent to consider whether the school was financially viable.

Councillor Patterson asked if an update could be given on schools in deficit and The Finance Manager advised that he could not confirm a timescale, but would report back to Committee with further information.

The Finance Manager advised that he would provide a response to Councillor Durham following the meeting, with regards to a further breakdown of information regarding the overspend for looked after children.

With regards to the transportation of children in care, Councillor Jewell asked whether the service had considered revising the current operation to ensure best value for services. The Finance Manager confirmed that consideration was always given to alternative provision and this would continue, but advised that sometimes taxis were less costly than volunteer drivers. With regards to supervised contact, assistance for public transport was given to parents to actively minimise the cost, but contact issued by the court was not at the discretion of the team and the requirements had to be met.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 Quarter 2: Performance Management Report 2018/19

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships, 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 copy see file of minutes).

In response to a question from Councillor Bainbridge The Strategy and Equalities Manager advised that there was not sufficient data for looked after children (LAC) and care leavers up to the age of 25, however this would be available for future reporting.

Councillor Durham queried whether there was a connection between the rise in enquiries and the rise in LAC. The Strategy and Equalities Manager confirmed that the number of enquiries had not increased since 2017 and although there had been a significant increase in LAC, it had risen steadily over a number of years. With regards to the case file audits which were given a scaling score of 6 and above, Councillor Durham queried whether there was a number of cases audited for a representative sample. The Strategy and Equalities Manager confirmed that there were approximately 3500 case files and the focus was on the quality of the information rather than the quantity of files audited. He explained that the new case file audit system was collaborative and included a meeting between a social worker and an auditor and each individual audit took a couple of hours to complete. In response to a further question from Councillor Durham, the Strategy and Equalities Manager confirmed that these audits related to the quality of working practices and a different process was in place for determining whether a child should be looked after.

Councillor Patterson referred to the social worker caseloads for the Families First Team and sought clarification on the information contained in the report as this was not legible in the report. The Strategy and Equalities Manager confirmed that overall the number of cases was reducing and advised that;

- 18% had 30+ cases
- 34% had 25-29 cases
- 15% had 20-24 cases
- 33% had under 20 cases

Councillor Patterson queried the quality of caseload files compared to the last quarter and the Strategy and Equalities Manager confirmed that there was no comparable data as there was a new system in place, however he confirmed that 60% was higher than the proportion of cases in the previous quarter which were good.

The Head of Early Help Inclusion and Vulnerable Children suggested it would be helpful to include an explanation of the quality assurance framework in the next report along with more detail to members to explain the information on audit activity of case files.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.