

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 25 June 2015 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, D Bell, K Corrigan, K Dearden, O Gunn, C Hampson, J Hart, D Hicks, K Hopper, P Lawton, J Measor, S Morrison, M Nicholls, M Simmons and H Smith

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Kinch

Also Present:

Councillor T Smith

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Hall, L Pounder, M Stanton, P Stradling, Mr K Gilfillan, Mrs G Harrison, Mr G Moran (Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle) and Mr R Patel (Parent Governor Representative)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular new Members of the Committee.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2015 and of the joint meeting with Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 April 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With reference to Item No. 10 relating to the Self Harm report, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that when agreeing the minutes it was found to be too late to change the report for Cabinet and the issues raised would be addressed when it comes back to Committee in November with a progress update on the recommendations.

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 - Update on Press Coverage

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles were:-

- Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson opened the new Trinity special school;
- Exam results in the County continue to improve – congratulations from the Committee were given to all involved especially the young people;
- To reduce inactivity a National Child Management Programme to test fitness in Primary Schools has been recommended by health campaigners; and
- 4 schoolboys from Newton Aycliffe have been praised for helping a homelessness man. They offered him money and when he refused they bought him a hot drink. The Committee praised the individuals for showing unconditional respect for the man.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Overview Presentation - Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training Update

The Committee noted a report of Director of Children and Adult Services and received a presentation by Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer, Progression and Learning, CAS relating to young people not in education, employment or training (for copies see file of Minutes).

The Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer highlighted the following information in his presentation:-

- Statutory Responsibilities as a Local Authority
- Trends in Performance for County Durham, North East and England
- April 2015 Performance for County Durham, North East and England
- County Durham April 2015 Performance for Academic ages 16, 17 and 18
- Current and Future Programmes available

Councillor O Gunn asked if the trends were available geographically as she was interested to find out if numbers were higher in certain areas. The Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer said that these were available and long term trends showed that they were higher in areas such as Stanley, Peterlee, Seaham, Ferryhill and Newton Aycliffe. The Strategic Manager, Reform, CAS added that Peterlee has shown lower levels more recently than historical figures show. Practitioners have focused on young people in the area to

encourage take up of education, employment and training. The Chairman added that there is an improving picture across the board.

Referring to finance, Councillor M Nicholls required about capital funding receipts and was informed that £17.87m had been earmarked covering all elements. Councillor J Armstrong pointed out that this was European funding and had not yet been released. He expressed concerns that if the money was re-directed it would be the young people who would suffer as a result.

Councillor Gunn referred to the talent match referred to in the current and future programme and asked how Councillors would find out what was going on in their own areas. The Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer said he would take this back to the Services to look at how they could share this information. The Strategic Manager, Reform, CAS advised that there is a locality section available on One Touch User that publicises what is being carried out in each area. Councillor J Armstrong suggested using AAPs as was an ideal vehicle for information sharing.

The Chairman thanked the Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer for his presentation.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

8 Performance Management Report Quarter 4 2014/15

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Management Team which presented Members with progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Better for Children and Young People theme, as well as other significant performance issues for the 2014/15 financial year (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information, highlighted the key achievements and key performance improvements issues, giving a detailed analysis of the figures within the report.

In response to a question from Councillor J Hart relating to reference 17 of Appendix 3 of the report, the Strategic Manager, Reform, CAS explained that a lot of work was undertaken with teachers carrying out assessments and when carrying out the review of Childrens Centre's a whole range of issues were looked at. This included identifying early years children who were vulnerable and to drive forward to initiate contact and engagement with them. Their focus was on speech and language with a commitment to ensure the children were ready to start school.

Councillor Hart touched on free child care and expressed concern about results decreasing. The Strategic Manager, Reform, CAS responded by saying that the service would also support vulnerable children and they would be concerned if they saw a dip in performance but they would be able to action this.

Referring to childcare settings, Councillor Hart was informed that both private and local authority led nurseries were regulated by Ofsted.

Councillor K Dearden asked for an explanation of the number of looked after children sitting their GCSEs referred to in reference 22 of Appendix 3 and compared to the total of pupils referred to in reference 19 of Appendix 3. The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information confirmed that only those looked after children who were in their last year of secondary school were included in the figures and that 2 children had achieved 5 GCSE's at A* - C.

The Chairman expressed concern in the increase of children who were overweight or obese and noted that we were now higher than the national figure. The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information advised that Public Health had been consulted on this issue and interventions put in place through the Healthy Weight Alliance. He advised of cooking skills available in Children's Centre's to help combat the difficulties for parents in knowing what and how to prepare healthy meals. He also referred to health trainers that had been appointed by County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust to work with children whose BMI was over a certain level. They would also provide advice on physical activity and diet. He went on to explain that this was a complex issue and suggested that it could be helpful for a Public Health colleague to attend a future scrutiny meeting.

Mr D Kinch referred to reference 25 of Appendix 3 relating to child protection cases and was concerned that this target was always in the red. The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information advised that the North East and England the average was around 95% and that Durham was consistent with this. It would only take one conference to be missed and the target would not be hit. The Strategic Manager, Reform, CAS added that every individual case was looked at to gain a full understanding and was monitored on a regular basis to ensure conferences did take place and were re-arranged when required. Mr Kinch asked if we did see results and asked if the delays were related to staffing problems. The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information explained that there are a number of reasons why conferences sometimes have to be re-arranged, however, every effort was made to ensure this happened within timescales and that senior managers are made aware and agree to any proposals to change conferences dates.

Councillor Armstrong referred to tracker 20 of page 30 in the report in relation to self-harm and said that it was very important to continue to monitor. The Strategic Manager, Performance and Information suggested that he cover this section within the next performance report.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

9 Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2013/2014

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services, which shared with Members the Annual Report of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Business Manager LSCB summarised the report and highlighted that the board planned to reduce the number of children looked after, reported the priorities for 2014/15 and advised that the priorities for 2015/16 would come back to the Committee in the next report.

In response to a query from Councillor Hart, the Business Manager LSCB advised that there were a number of stresses on the budget and contributions from each partner had reduced. However, the board were meeting priorities and there was no indication that they would not be met in the near future. The board would be monitoring the finances and carrying out six monthly reviews.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

10 Draft Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Director of Public Health that informed of the draft proposals for the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-20 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator highlighted objective 3 as one of the key objectives relating to Altogether Better for Children and Young People theme and asked for feedback by 12 July 2015.

The Chairman introduced Eve Mason to the Committee who was carrying out her work experience with the Council. Ms Mason commented that people from deprived areas tended to suffer more, especially if they had a bad family life. She suggested that helping building relationships within the school environment with support workers and young people may alleviate the dependency on alcohol. Ms Mason also suggested that the service should continue to test purchase and retailers should always ask for ID. She concluded that cheap alcohol prices encouraged people to drink more.

The Chairman thanked Eve for her comments and welcomed the view from a young person.

Councillor Armstrong said that intelligence needs to be improved and the dangers that alcohol and child sexual exploitation brings. He advised that Safer Stronger OSC would be looking into this area. He added that young people needed education on the dangers of alcohol.

Councillor P Lawton advised of a Youth Council in Spennymoor whereby they were trying to get young people on board so that they could pass on messages to their peers. She felt that it was important to move away from stereotypes of adults always being the ones to give advice to young people. She asked who she could contact for further information. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator advised that she would provide all Members with details of a new Lifeline Service, operational since 1 April 2015.

Referring to Licensing powers, Councillor Hart asked if anything could be done locally. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator advised that areas in Middlesbrough were being piloted using Public Health. Councillor Gunn added that the culture of alcohol needs to change and the changes to advertising. She referred to TV/radio programmes whereby alcohol is used as a prop. She also pointed out that at school fairs alcohol featured in raffles prizes.

Ms Mason pointed out that football clubs do not help the culture when advertising alcohol.

Picking up on Ms Mason's point about school counselling, Councillor Armstrong said that most young people would want peers to carry this out and not necessarily older people.

Councillor Hart commented that the majority of alcohol bought for young people comes from family members. He also made a point that with regards to driving he believed there should be a zero tolerance. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator agreed that we should match Scotland in this regard.

Councillor Dearden emphasised the need to provide somewhere safe for young people to discuss their problems and added that it was important to try to change the attitude of young people towards alcohol. Councillor Lawton said that the youth group in Spennymoor provides a safe haven for young people and advised that she has been liaising with Catherine Richardson of Public Health.

Ms Mason commented that cigarettes were not advertised so did not believe that alcohol should be.

Members agreed that a national campaign was needed to drive this issue forward and recognised that issues such as alcohol, suicide and self harm were linked.

Resolved:

That feedback be given to the Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator by 12 July 2015.

11 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive, which provided Members with an updated work programme for 2015-16 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that 2 special meetings had been arranged for 25 September 2015 and 2 December 2015.

In relation to the topics which Members wished to investigate further, it was suggested by the Chairman and Vice Chairman that the issue of child poverty be investigated. A report would be going to Cabinet late Summer. Councillor Armstrong advised that with a heavy work programme and potential changes due to the budget on 8 July 2015 caution is given to any extra work. He added that the Committee may wish to look at how child poverty was measured. Mr Kinch agreed and said that the Committee needed to be clear on the definition. Members agreed that this was an area for investigation but that criteria relevant to the children of County Durham should be set.

Councillor Hart said that he would be interested in keeping an eye on the academisation of schools and the effect on attainment. Councillor Armstrong added that feedback had shown that the County schools compared favourably compared to Academies.

Resolved:

That the work programme be agreed with the addition of an overview on Educational Attainment and that Committee carry out a review on child poverty.

12 Summary of Minutes from Children and Families Partnership

The Committee considered the minutes of the Children and Families Partnership on 25 March 2015 (for copies see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the minutes be noted.