

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 remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Monday 12 April 2021 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Potts, P Atkinson, B Bainbridge, A Batey, B Coult, R Crute, C Hampson, K Hopper, I Jewell, L Kennedy, M Simmons and M Wilson

Parent Governor Representative:

Ms J Norman

Faith Representative:

Ms J Bruton

Also Present:

Councillors J Robinson, R Bell, L Brown, J Chaplow, P Crathorne, T Henderson, E Huntington, P Jopling, C Kay, K Liddell, S Quinn, A Reed, A Savory, J Stephenson, O Temple and R Evans

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell, J Charlton and A Willis.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

Councillor Coult declared a non prejudicial interest in item no. 7 as an immediate member of her family was in receipt of an EHCP.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

6 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020

The Committee received a report of the Director of Public Health which provided details of the 2020 Annual report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Public Health (for copy see file of minutes).

The Director of Public Health highlighted the importance of Durham Insights which was a key website that provided statistical information covering a broad range and allowed everyone to access this information. The Durham Insight website included a COVID dashboard that provided information on the vaccine rollout as well as other information relating to COVID in County Durham. The website also included information and in-depth work such as the health assessment of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and other areas including health inequalities.

The Director of Public Health emphasised that a huge amount of work had been undertaken with schools to ensure that when they reopened it was as safe as possible and this work would continue following the Easter break.

Whilst there had been a lot of work undertaken in key settings in relation to the COVID Outbreak Management Plan, the Director of Public Health advised that work had continued in relation to all the key priority areas but gave an update specifically relating to good jobs and places to live, learn and play, where an impact assessment in employment, particularly with regards to young people would be important going forward.

Work with Housing Solutions in relation to fuel poverty had taken place and she summarised work undertaken in relation to the Best Start in Life and how the work of the health needs assessment of children with special educational needs and disabilities had helped the service to understand the needs of the children and also their families and those who worked with them. Smoking in pregnancy was another area of work which included the use of a mobile phone application to assist with

this. The Director of Public Health also highlighted the work on children and young people's mental health in school settings which was continuing.

Councillor Coult asked whether there had been an increased demand on mental health support due to COVID-19 and asked whether there was enough support to help the young people. The Director of Public Health advised there had been an additional impact on mental health and that during the course of last year Harrogate District NHS Foundation Trust who delivered the service on behalf of the Council had enhanced the support around bereavement and there was also a strong level of support from Investing in Children, which was a voluntary sector organisation. There were plans to review services to consider increasing the provision and she suggested that the Committee may consider that a dedicated item was necessary to review at a future meeting.

J Bruton, Co-opted Faith Representative and Head Teacher of a Primary School, confirmed that there had been an increase in mental health issues which was challenging as Primary Schools did not have school Counsellors. She suggested that it would be useful for a list of contacts to be recirculated. The Director of Public Health confirmed that information was sent out weekly from senior members of staff to all Head Teachers and she would ensure that the information was included.

Councillors Jewell and Hopper thanked the Director of Public Health for the work that had been undertaken.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

7 SEND Overview and Focus on SEND in Mainstream Schools

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young Peoples Services which provided an update on Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in County Durham. This included current information available about children and young people with SEND, the Education Health and Care (EHCP) process, and a focus on the strengths and challenges of the mainstream offer (for copy see file of minutes).

The Committee received a joint presentation from the Strategic Manager SEND Strategy and Accessibility and Strategic Manager Specialist Inclusion Support.

Members were advised of the definition of SEND and that a child with SEND was not necessarily required to attend a special school but instead for the service to identify ways in which a child's needs could be met, either in a mainstream school setting or by other agencies.

Members were advised that in County Durham there were just over 13,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and of that figure just over 12000 were of school age. Since 2016 there had been an increase in the numbers of children with SEN by approximately 20%.

The majority of primary needs were classified as Autism, moderate learning difficulties and social emotional and mental health needs, however, it was much more common for children to have a combination of those needs and in some cases all three. Just over a quarter of children and young people had their needs met through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with approximately three quarters having their needs met via SEN support. Since 2016 there had been a 34% increase in the number of children and young people with an EHCP.

Members were given data comparisons in relation to where County Durham's children with an EHCP were educated, which indicated that most attended a special school and this was in line with regional neighbours, although above national comparators. The number of young people with SEND attending post 16 education was much higher in County Durham than both regional and national comparators.

Social and emotional wellbeing was a priority nationally and locally, and the service was working across the partnership with colleagues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health services and the Thrive Model had been adopted by Children and Young People's Services. This model recognised that everyone had a part to play in the promotion of good mental health, but if children were to experience an episode of poor mental health or provide challenge and knew how to get help, advice and support, this model was threaded through areas of work including the SEND Health Framework.

Members were advised of the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, funded by the Department for Education and partners across county Durham were working with schools, of which there had been a good take up. Other key areas of work included the Mental health in Schools Framework which had been taken up by almost 60% of schools and the service expected this to eventually be taken up by all. There were three Mental Health School Support teams in place across the County located in central, east and south areas and work was continuing with Public Health on the Youth Aware Mental Health (YAM) Programme and developing nurturing provision across lots of schools.

The service had developed a resource 'Learning, Safe, Happy and Settled' which supported children and young people back into learning. The resource was

regularly refreshed and updated and had received a wide range of contributions that were linked to the Thrive Model.

In response to a query from Councillor Coult, the Strategic Manager Spec. Inclusion Support confirmed that despite parents finding a diagnosis helpful, this was not a requirement to access services.

Councillor Coult advised that resolving mental health issues at an earlier stage could reduce the need for more significant support at a later stage.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

8 Impact of COVID 19 on Education Services

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided an update on the impact of COVID- 19 on Education Services (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager: Support and Development advised that Head Teachers had been extraordinary during the pandemic and gone above and beyond and leadership advisors had worked weekends to ensure they were available to answer questions. Parents who had elected to home educate had been challenged as it was found that school was a safer environment and he thanked staff for their efforts in ensuring that.

Councillor Coult confirmed that all staff in educational services had gone above and beyond during the pandemic and not just in schools, and she wanted that to be recognised.

Mrs J Norman referred to the outbreak funding that had been allocated and queried whether this was enough to cover the additional costs that had to be met. The Strategic Manager: Support and Development confirmed that the funding was from government and was received by all Councils. DCC had bid for additional Outbreak Funding because the funding received by schools directly from the government was limited to specific areas of spend whereas the Outbreak funding was much more flexible. DCC was distributing the funding on a per capita basis so that every school would benefit from the funding but larger schools would receive more. He suspected that some would feel that it was not sufficient as there were some with greater expenses, but it would certainly still be welcomed.

Members were advised that at the beginning of lockdown in 2020 training moved online and was delivered free of charge. Whilst some of the training remained free of charge, the service had started to charge for some of the Development and Support training. The online training had been welcomed by schools and elements

of this training method would continue alongside face to face training. Contracts had continued remotely and evaluations of both contracts and training during this period were tightly monitored and remained positive. External partnership working had not been interrupted and continued to work with the Education Endowment Foundation, Teacher Development Trust and Durham University and our other local universities.

J Bruton highlighted an issue with staff pregnancy as teachers were unable to be two metres from pupils and following a risk assessment could not attend work, but they could not be signed off on sick pay and a replacement teacher had to be recruited which impacted on the school budget.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

9 Quarter Three 2020/2021 Performance Management Report

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) which presented progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chair referred to the low uptake of the Healthy Start Voucher Scheme and staff training to address this and queried whether there was evidence that the staff training was having an impact on the uptake. The Corporate Equality & Strategy Manager advised that it was difficult to assess the impact as the Health Start Voucher Scheme was reliant on a growing number of people being eligible for universal credit and other benefits and it was too early to give an indication. Other variables would also impact on the scheme such as the impact of COVID, therefore it may take time to provide an assessment.

Ms J Norman referred to the free school meals (FSM) census and whether there had been a reduction in number of children eligible for free school meals that were not claiming and whether there was any data collected from children who were accessing school holiday activities with food provision, that were not eligible for FSM. The Corporate Equality & Strategy Manager confirmed that FSM data had two values, there was the number of children eligible for FSM and then those who had claimed a FSM on the day the survey was taken. Due to school closures on the day of the survey this value did not assist, however the number of children eligible across all settings had increased to one in four children and this was a concern. The information was being used by early help, to target different areas via food poverty groups and holiday hunger activities, to deliver effective programmes across school holidays.

Councillor Bainbridge was concerned that there had been no significant improvement to childhood obesity programme and the Corporate Equality &

Strategy Manager advised that it would be one of the central objectives of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and would be considered by Active Durham to bring leisure and fitness to more children.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

10 Children and Young People's Services Quarter 3: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020-2021

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) and the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position for Children and Young Peoples Services service grouping and highlighted major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position at the end of December (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be received.

11 Refresh of the Work Programme

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Interim) which provided the Children and Young People's Overview and Committee with the opportunity to review and refresh the work programme for 2021/2022 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the work programme had been delivered differently due to COVID and there was still a degree of uncertainty in relation to the number of meetings the committee would have allocated in the forthcoming municipal year and asked members to provide suggestions of what items they felt should be included in the new work programme.

Councillor Crute confirmed that there would be some changes to the Committee due to Members stepping down in the forthcoming County Council elections however the increase in FSM eligibility should remain a priority as should the mental health impact of COVID-19. The Committee had previously identified Education, Health and Care Plans as an area of priority and this was still a priority to the committee. The impact of the pandemic could be felt for several years.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

12 Such other business

The Chair confirmed that J Norman was standing down as Parent Governor Co-optee as her school was converting to Academy status. She thanked her for her contribution to the Committee and its reviews during her time as a Co-opted Member.

Councillor Crute agreed that she had been a regular contributor to the Committee and on behalf of the Committee he also thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair who were both standing down in May.

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their valued contribution.