

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 at Wellfield Community School on **Wednesday 9 November 2016 at 9.40 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors D Bell, J Hart, P Lawton and H Smith

Faith Community Representative:

Mrs A Swift

Co-opted Members:

Miss K Ashcroft

Also Present:

Councillor T Smith

The meeting was not quorate and any item of business which was not for information would be considered at the next meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J Armstrong, K Corrigan, D Hall, C Hampson, D Hicks, K Hopper, L Pounder, S Morrison, M Simmons, P Stradling and Mr D Kinch.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 could not be approved as the meeting was not quorate so they would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 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 referred Members to recent press articles relating to the remit of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The articles were:

- Council looks to Increase support for Care Leavers - Care leavers could soon be given more help to beat the "benefits trap" with Durham County Council looking at funding up to 10 people into apprenticeships and jobs every year.
- Play Parks Across Co Durham in line for Modern Revamp thank to £1.75 m funding.
- National Award for Co Durham Schools - More than a dozen County Durham schools have been recognised by the British Council for outstanding international teaching and learning.

Councillor Hart questioned the identification and selection of media stories for this item to which the Chair noted his comments.

7 Young Carers Update

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Director Transformation and Partnerships and the Interim Corporate Director Children & Young People's Services which provided an update on Young Carers in County Durham (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the Strategic Manager, Children's Services Reform that provided the background; priorities in December 2015 when the last update was received; progress since December 2015 including the Horizons project which helped young people in the transition to adulthood; Raising Aspirations a Bridge Young Carers Project which supports young carers to attend university open days, Referrals to the Bridge Young Carers Project has increased with 190 referrals from a range of agencies and 132 assessments. Breaks and opportunities continue to be offered to young carers ranging from non-residential breaks, residential breaks and opportunities such as driving lessons to bus passes and sports equipment.

Progress has been made in the development of an E-Learning module, Carers Card Discount Scheme and the Young Carers Service has been marketed. The Bridge Project had worked with Macmillan Cancer Care to support carers of cancer sufferers and this work has been shortlisted for a Children and Young People Now national award. Members were advised that improvements had been made to the website and Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership had received a Young Carer Neighbourhood Charter. Priorities for 2016/17 were to continue to improve engagement among all services and to continue to implement the Young Carer Charter to improve the identification of children and young people with caring responsibilities. It was highlighted that when adults are being discharged from hospital questions should be asked as to who will be taking on caring responsibilities and responsibilities for administering drugs (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

Councillor Hart asked if they reached all children who were carers would they have the resources available.

Officers responded that not all young carers had a detrimental impact. The lower level needs were to ensure that they were attending school. The One Point service meant that children were in their sights and they could refer to more intense services if needed.

The Head of Education advised that all schools had a duty to support young carers and had a universal service to support young carers and sometimes it was just arranging for pupils to arrive late at school to enable them to take younger siblings to school or allow them to bring a mobile telephone into lessons.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation and asked if she could provide Members with an update at a later stage.

The Chairman welcomed pupils from Wellfield School who had joined the meeting and the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager gave a presentation to the pupils on Scrutiny in Durham.

8 Educational Attainment of Looked After Children

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Director of Transformation & Partnership and Interim Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services that provided Members with details of the educational attainment of looked after children (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Members received a presentation from the Strategic Lead, Special Education Needs and Disabilities, Standards and Improvement, Virtual School Head that outlined the Headlines; SEND data for Key Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4; attendance and exclusion and areas for further development (for copy of slides, see file of minutes).

The Virtual Head explained that all looked after children were her pupils and her case managers acted as pushy parents with schools. The Virtual Head advised members that at Key Stage 2 (KS2) looked after children in Durham performed better than any other KS2 children in Durham. At KS4 30% of looked after children achieved five GCSEs A*-C and one girl had achieved a total of 11 GCSEs nine of which were A* including maths which was an outstanding achievement. Members were informed that looked after girls outperformed looked after boys but there were more looked after boys than girls.

Durham's looked after children attend school regularly with an overall attendance of 98% and a persistence attendance of 3%. Members were advised there were no permanent exclusions and 6% fixed term exclusions, but this was too high and work was being undertaken with schools to reduce this figure.

The Virtual Head advised that there were several areas for development which included writing for KS1 looked after children; grammar, punctuation and spelling for looked after children at KS2 and English and maths for KS4 looked after children. Further development was needed in for transfer between phases including post 16 to raise aspirations.

Councillor T Smith congratulated the Virtual Head on the excellent results and queried whether the Virtual School be rolled out to Children in Need.

The Virtual Head responded that the remit of the Virtual School had been extended to include adopted children and Children In Need could possibly be included in the future and went on to advise members that currently results among adopted children were lower than looked after children but coming out of the care system and going into a stable family was stressful for children.

Councillor Hart asked if the Virtual Head provided pastoral support.

Officers responded that each case worker had 15 children and a school would contact them in the first instance. Inclusion workers all had a speciality i.e. music, Lego and writing.

Councillor Hart sought clarification if there was a designated teacher/governor for looked after children in every school and how foster carers can get the balance right as pushy parents. The Virtual Head responded that there was a designated person in each school who also received the relevant training. They also trained foster carers on the basics in education and what role they could take and if this was not done they would step in and ask the questions of the school. They had also invested a lot of resources in to support looked after children with reading through the letterbox programme; looked after children were also supported to attend after school clubs and summer clubs.

Councillor T Smith sought clarification if the Virtual School used tutors to help and support looked after children in readiness for GCSE and 'A' level examinations. The Virtual Head responded that they had access to specialist teachers but would buy in subject specialists to provide one to one support if needed.

9 Education Services Update

The Committee considered the Report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services that provided Members with updated information on educational outcomes in County Durham and related updates on the focus and provision of education services (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manger Education Development Services presented the report and circulated to Members details of the KS4 2016 outcomes; the new GCSE performance measures in 2016 and the regional results (for copy, see file of minutes).

Members were advised that the early learning goals gap at Early Years Foundation Stage had reduced considerably and was level to the national figure for all. The gender gap had been closed by two percentage points and the gap between children receiving free school meals and all children was reducing.

The Strategic Manager for Educational Development and Improvement indicted that 2025 two year olds had been placed in County Durham during the current term and that these figures placed Durham 24th out of 152 local authorities.

In terms of Ofsted outcomes Durham was also a highly effective local authority with 90% of good or better PVI settings and 93% of good or better primary schools.

At Key Stage (KS) 1 outcomes had been a priority for the local authority and while the gap between national and local had been reducing this was the first year where national figures were exceeded. At KS2 attainment levels across the local authority continued to be strong against national levels and the trend of improvement continued.

Although results at KS4 were not validated until later in the school year they indicate progress of pupils, English has significantly improved and there was moderate improvement in maths. Members were advised of new GCSE performance measures, Attainment 8 which is the points score awarded to a pupil across 8 qualifications with English and maths being double weighted and Progress 8 which is based on a calculation of pupil's performance across the same eight qualifications using the base line from KS2.

Members were advised that A Level, AS Level and vocational qualifications had gone through major reforms but despite this results for County Durham students had remained broadly consistent with the success of previous years.

It was reported that nationally the government had dropped its plan for a Bill to force all schools to become academies and consultation continues on the 'Schools that work for Everyone' green paper which include lifting a ban on new grammar schools and allowing faith schools to select 100% of its pupils based on their faith.

Councillor Hart asked for the figures in relation to academies.

The Officer responded that the results would be validated in January so he would be able to provide the figures after this date.

In response to a question from Councillor T Smith in relation to whether modern foreign language teaching was in decline the Strategic Manager replied that language teaching nationally was in decline.

10 Annual Report of the Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Report

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services that presented the report to Members on the Annual report of the Adoption Service and Adoption Panel Report for April 2015 – March 2016 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Children's Services was in attendance to present the report and highlighted changes to the Adoption Service, challenges, key achievements and priorities for the coming year. Members were informed that the performance of the adoption service had been assessed as good by Ofsted in the recent inspection.

Members were advised that the adoption process via the courts could be a slow process and outcomes may not be as expected as courts had in some cases chosen to provide guardianship orders to extended family rather than adoption.

Councillor Hart referred to the reasons for people not progressing through the adoption recruitment process and queried smoking or recent cessation of smoking as a reason for applications that had not been progressed and how the numbers for cessation of smoking was falling.

The Head of Children's Services indicated that the bar for parents was set high and there were health risks from smoking and passive smoking and the County Council had a no smoking policy.

11 Annual Report of the Fostering Panels and the Fostering Service

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children & Young People's Services that provided Members with details on the activity of the fostering service (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Head of Children's Services was in attendance to present the report and highlighted the robust marketing strategy to increase the number of fostering applicants to Durham; further develop the Fostering Plus Scheme to provide care for children with complex needs; implement a review of the fostering service to ensure efficient and effective use of resources the outcome of this review is expected Spring 2017 and to deliver initiatives to promote fostering such as social media campaigns, liveried vehicles and targeted recruitment to specialist fostering programmes.

The Chair suggested presenting information on Fostering recruitment to Area Action Partnerships to which the Head of Children's Services agreed this would be very welcome as they wanted to get the word out far and wide.

12 Durham Local Safeguarding Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the Independent Chair of Local Safeguarding Children's Board that presented to Members the Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report for 2015-16 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Independent Chair of Local Safeguarding Children's Board presented the Annual Report set out the priorities of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board for 2016-2019; achievements and progress made in the past year and areas for development. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board had delivered taxi driver awareness training of Child Sexual Exploitation to over 1000 taxi drivers and had delivered a comprehensive training plan to frontline staff and managers. They had increased visibility and partnership working through the implementation of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Marketing and Communications Strategy.

In relation to further development the Independent Chair advised that quality assurance and performance management processes were further developed to provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of the quality and impact of frontline practice; that quality assurance and audit work contribute to understanding the impact of training and embedding lessons learned from serious case reviews and developing more effective feedback processes from children, young people and families who have received child protection services to support ongoing service improvement.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board Business Unit Manager advised Members that the Annual Report for Young People 2015/16 would be officially launched on the 15 November 2016 with the County Durham Young Persons' Police, Crime and Victims Commissioner.

The Chair asked if members of the committee could receive a copy of the Annual Report for Young People 2015/2016 following its launch. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board Business Unit Manager agreed that she would send it to the Scrutiny Officer for distribution.