

Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

**Friday 17th January 2020**

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)  
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Dale O'Neill  
Linda Summers

In attendance: Julie Bragg, Service Manager (Children and Families)  
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources,  
Improvement and Partnerships)  
Mel Meggs, Director for Children's Services  
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early  
Support  
Mary White, Commissioning & Partnerships Manager

Observers: Councillor Carole Pattison, Cabinet Member for Learning,  
Aspiration and Communities

Apologies: Councillor Paul Davies  
Councillor Amanda Pinnock  
Councillor Richard Smith  
Toni Bromley (Co-Optee)

#### **1 Membership of the Committee**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Paul Davies, Cllr Richard Smith, Cllr Amanda Pinnock and Toni Bromley (Co-optee).

#### **2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

##### **RESOLVED -**

The minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **3 Interests**

No interests were declared.

#### **4 Admission of the Public**

All items were considered in public session.

#### **5 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

#### **6 Public Question Time**

## Children's Scrutiny Panel - 17 January 2020

No questions were received from the public.

### 7 **Number and Age of Children in Care**

The Panel considered a report giving an update on the number and age of children in care presented by Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting (Children in Care and Care Leavers).

In response to a question from the Panel relating to the number of children in care under 1 year old, Julie Bragg advised that there had been an increase in numbers following more pre-birth assessments and plans had been agreed for some children to come into care. The Chair of the Panel, Cllr Marchington, agreed to discuss this matter in more detail at the Lead Member Briefings and report back to the Panel.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to the placement of young people in unregistered homes, Mel Meggs advised that part of the plan for young people leaving care was for them to live in semi-independent accommodation when it was right for them to live without support. Mel Meggs further explained that some young people did not do well in children's homes and thrived when they moved into semi-independent accommodation and often made strides in that environment. Mel Meggs advised the Panel that it would not be appropriate for children to live in unregistered children's homes and Kirklees did challenge non-registered children's homes. The Panel was advised that all necessary checks were undertaken to ascertain if the home was the right place for the child but that it was often a complex issue. The Panel was advised that there had been a recent review of children in care by well qualified staff to ensure that all children were supported properly and officers had been looking at what provision was available in the next 2 years for the 16 plus age range. The Panel was informed that children leaving care still had a co-person until the age of 18 and that they could ring that person should they have any issues. Mel Meggs advised the Panel that it was important to the Service to nurture good relationships between young people leaving care and the Independent Reviewing Officers. Mel Meggs advised the Panel that the Independent Reviewing Officers would check that the quality of care was up to the required standard and as they were independent they provided challenge to the Children's Service and could also escalate issues if necessary.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to reducing the number of children placed outside Kirklees, Julie Bragg advised that the Council was constantly trying to reduce this figure but some children wished to stay in the area where they had been placed due to networks and attachments formed and schools that they were attending. The Panel was informed that placements of children in care outside the district were reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they were meeting the needs of the child. Tom Brailsford informed the Panel that the Council's ambition was to place as few children as possible outside the district and that officers were looking at a number of creative ways to achieve this. Mel Meggs advised that the Council's aspiration was to have no children living outside the area within approximately 5 years. The Panel was informed that the Children's Service were in discussions with other Local Authorities who did not have any children living outside the area to learn from their approaches and practices.

## Children's Scrutiny Panel - 17 January 2020

In response to a question from the Panel relating to how children in care felt about it and what their experiences were, Julie Bragg advised that the Children's Service did work with young people in care to help them to understand their situations which could often be complex and that there were forums such as the Children in Care Council where officers could listen to children and their experiences. Julie Bragg assured the Panel that it was very important to the Service to listen to children as the services and support could only be improved if the Council learnt from their feedback.

Cllr Marchington advised the Panel that a report would shortly be considered by the Corporate Parenting Board on the Voice of the Child and agreed to share the report with the Children's Scrutiny Panel when it was available. The Panel requested that information be included in future reports on the voice of the child and their experiences and officers should demonstrate to the Panel that children were being listened to. Tom Brailsford advised the Panel that a lot of good work was being undertaken within the Service on the children's voice and how this could be embedded across the service.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding special guardianships and what support was offered to wider families, Julie Bragg advised that the Council continued to support the transition from birth to being cared for by family members to make sure the carers were confident and had the support team they required. Julie Bragg further explained that the Carer and Connected Support Team supported carers, families and grandparents and it was about their needs and those of the family and what support they required. The Panel was informed that Children's Services had been working closely with Grandparents Plus and a carer's independent support group had been set up that met regularly and was run by themselves.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Panel noted the report on Number and Age of Children in Care and thanked Julie Bragg for her contributions.
2. The Panel agreed to visit the Independent Reviewing Officers to further explore the support they give to young people leaving care or living in semi-independent accommodation.
3. The Panel agreed that the voice of the child and their experiences should be clearly demonstrated in all future reports to the Panel.
4. The Chair of the Panel agreed to discuss the numbers of children in care under 1 year old at Lead Member Briefings and report back to the Panel.

### **8 Kirklees Children and Young People's Partnership Plan**

The Panel considered a report on the new Kirklees Children and Young People's Partnership agreements and the draft Children and Young People's Plan presented by Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvements and Partnerships) and Mary White, Commissioning and Partnerships Manager.

Mary White informed the Panel that the Kirklees Children and Young People's Partnership was relaunched following consultation and engagement at an event in March 2019 which was attended by 80 participants from a cross section of organisations working with children in Kirklees. The new partnership model was

## Children's Scrutiny Panel - 17 January 2020

developed at the March event and aspired to bring together collective insight, expertise and resources to collaborate to achieve the best start in life for children and young people. The Children's Partnership identified a need to improve outcomes in 3 new priority areas which were:-

- To work to alleviate the impact of poverty on children;
- To support inclusion and better outcomes for LGBT+ young people;
- To grow the Council's youth offer – places to go, people to see, things to do.

Tom Brailsford advised the Panel that a number of key performance indicators had been defined to inform the Service if the partnership arrangements were working as they should be.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to how success was measured and how confident the Service was that they were meeting their aspirations in terms of the Children and Young People's Partnership, Tom Brailsford agreed to bring a further update to the Panel in the future on this matter.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to the voice of the child and how this could be demonstrated, Tom Brailsford advised that formal boards were held where children could attend and give their opinion and children and young people would be asked to feedback into the Partnership Plan. Tom Brailsford informed the Panel that the voice of the child was very important to the Children's Service and it was essential to engage with children and young people and talk to them about their experiences.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Panel noted the report on the new Kirklees Children and Young People's Partnership agreements and the draft Children and Young People's Plan and thanked Tom Brailsford and Mary White for their contributions.
2. That the Panel consider a future report on the measures for success of the Children and Young People's Partnership.

## **9 Children's Scrutiny Panel Work Programme and agenda plan for 2019/20**

The Panel considered the work programme and agenda plan for the 2019/20 and considered issues for inclusion.

Jo-Anne Sanders gave an update on the Almondbury Community School and highlighted the following key issues:-

- The Ofsted report for Almondbury Community School following the inspection in November 2019 was now available to view on the Ofsted website; Leaders and Managers at the School were taking effective action towards removing special measures;
- The Learning Service was focusing on planning the staff transitions and working with the partnerships at the school to begin the staff engagements and would update the Panel at future meetings on progress;
- An evaluation would be taken of the Greenside Building to ensure it would be fit for purpose to house primary age youngsters to meet their learning outcomes and work had begun to assess what was required;
- Further work was being undertaken with the King James Partnership to progress the investment in their physical space.

## Children's Scrutiny Panel - 17 January 2020

The Panel noted that future updates would be provided to the Panel on Almondbury Community School.

The Panel agreed to consider a report on the following:-

- SEND and the 10 point improvement plan – March 2020;
- Elective Home Education Ad Hoc Panel Final report – March 2020.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the 2019/20 Agenda Plan and Work Programme for the Children's Scrutiny Panel be noted and updated as agreed.
2. That the Governance Officer be authorised to liaise with officers on agreed actions.

## **10 Dates of future meetings**

### **RESOLVED –**

The Panel noted the future meeting dates of the Panel during the 2019/20 municipal year:-

- 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020, 11 am
- 17<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 11 am